



MARJORIE DOBBINS



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A
BOOK OF NARRATIVES

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PREFACE

THE editors of this book of narratives have one object in view — to lead the reader to see life closely and imaginatively. It is not especially planned as a guide for young writers who want to sell their first attempts to the omnivorous magazines; and we much doubt if any one will learn from it the temporary tricks for turning out “current fiction.”

The aim of all great literature is to interpret life, and the special aim of fiction is to see life imaginatively. Emile Zola once said that all a novel can hope to be is a corner of nature seen through a temperament. To inculcate something of this supreme art of seeing life, by the methods of fiction, is the purpose of the present collection.

As we understand it, the purpose of writing courses in college, especially while drill in correct usage goes on, is to train the logical powers. We believe that there can be no better training in logic than that which exercises the faculties for close observation of life and for constructive imagination. Our commentary and notes are entirely devoted to defining and illustrating this exercise. We hope that the book will also be of help in the general study of fiction.

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PART I
WHAT IS A STORY?

PART I

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS A STORY?

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A STORY is composed of the imagined or actual facts of life arranged in such a way as to make human conduct more intelligible and more entertaining than it is to the ordinary observer. A story is always more than a mere copy of reality. In life events follow one another; but except for this line of sequence they often remain formless. A narrative which merely follows the continuity of life does not necessarily have plot. A strictly chronological account of a day's excursion or picnic may well be such a narrative. As soon, however, as the stuff of experience is deliberately composed so that it *tells a story*, it forms a narrative with plot. Plot, then, is the formative and essential element of any real story.

Many students believe what they call the "invention" of a plot to be a supremely difficult task. It is, of course, difficult to be logical. But inventing a plot demands only a logical consideration of what one sees and hears in everyday existence. It demands, that is, a curiosity about cause and effect beyond what is superficially evident. To the mere observer life is but a spectacle. It is a moving picture for which no explanation has been provided. As soon as the observer begins to think logically about the show of life before him at any given moment he begins, consciously or not, to plot it. He cannot know,

of course, all of the past which controls the event he perceives, nor can he divine the actual future it will create. Yet he knows that the event has had a past and will have a future. He then calls upon his logical faculty, or, as some prefer to say, his imagination, to create facts as nearly as possible like the reality which his logical curiosity desires. In other words, with the help of his imagination he constructs a plot in which the spectacle that arrested his attention will appear as part of a piece of fiction.

This method of transforming part of the show of life into a story may be illustrated by assuming that the initial impulse toward the composition of Maupassant's story, *A Piece of String*, was observation of a specific event. If you saw a shabby old peasant stoop to pick up something in the road and noticed that he was full of confusion at being detected, and then, if you thought nothing further about the incident, you would be regarding it merely as a spectacle. But if you had said to yourself, "I'll wager that old fellow has found a purse and that he doesn't want me to know it," you would have been at the beginning of a series of inferences which could lead to the plot of *A Piece of String*. You might proceed by asking yourself a number of questions. "What kind of fellow is the old peasant? What gave him that crafty and wary look? What was it he picked up, anyway? It might have been a worthless object, a pretty stone, or even a piece of string. Well, he would never be able to convince anyone who saw his furtive glance that he had not found something valuable. If I had lost a purse, I should *know* that he had found it. I should laugh at him if he asserted that the object he picked up was only a piece of string. Yet supposing he were innocent, would not such scorn as mine at his protestations of innocence worry the stupid old fellow literally almost to death?"

In reflecting in this fashion, you have simply given free rein to a natural curiosity. Yet in answering these questions

satisfactorily to your experience of life and accepting the suggestions as imaginative truth, you will find yourself equipped with all the necessary elements of a plot. Sustained and logical reflection upon any clearly marked incident is pretty sure to provide the mind with material which may readily be arranged to form a plot. The path from incident seen, heard, or read, to a plot is but one of the courses which lead the mind naturally to the construction of facts necessary to a piece of fiction.

2. *Problem*

Every story which is not the mere exhibition of a quaint character — that is, a character sketch — presents some problem. This does not mean that every story must teach a moral lesson or suggest desirable conduct. It means that every piece of fiction illustrates what the author believes to be some general truth about life. Indeed, the desire to present such a truth may be the initial impulse toward writing a story. Let us suppose that Maupassant from his reflective observation of life had arrived at the belief that many people suffer cruelly from unjust suspicion. The irony of his own futile efforts to explain away some unmerited accusation by the trivial and inadequate truth may have struck him. He determines, therefore, to write a story illustrating concretely this conclusion of his. Let us suppose, then, that he sets out to find just the chain of events which would bring out most sharply and most ironically the whole point. Those which he finally determines upon are perfectly suited to making the problem concrete without losing for it any of its vital significance. The object picked up is the least valuable in the world; consequently, no one will believe the man who asserts that it was this instead of a purse that he found. Maître Hauchecorne is exactly the sort of man to treasure such a trivial object, and he is just crafty enough to bring the suspicion of his fellows upon him. The power

of this story lies in the exquisite fitness of the plot in all its circumstances to the essential meaning of the fable.

The Necklace, another story of Maupassant's (appearing in Part II of this volume), can be regarded as illustrating this same method of finding a plot. Nearly everyone must have figured to himself the anguish and real financial hardship that might come from the loss of some valuable borrowed article. That is a problem that we have all faced imaginatively. You may have lost a valuable cuff-button, an heirloom borrowed from one of your friends. You worry greatly about the loss, but manage to have another made so much like the original that the owner never suspects the substitution. This suggests to your mind the common problem, but it is not pointed enough as an illustration to make the idea seem memorable. The events must affect more profoundly the lives of the actors in the drama. Accordingly the object chosen becomes a necklace so valuable as to require a large sum of money to replace it, and Mme. Loisel, the loser, is made a person in such straitened circumstances that enormous sacrifices and efforts are needed if she is to pay for a new necklace. These details in themselves deepen the *current* of the story. The discovery that the original necklace was paste and worth only a trifling sum does not change the nature of the problem; but by making the supreme efforts of Mme. Loisel entirely unnecessary, this invention gives the story a pessimistic irony which renders it a supremely vivid presentation of the problem.

In both of these examples it has been assumed that the author found a story to illustrate an idea which life had taught him. Yet whatever the author's initial impulse, his story will inevitably present a problem. Even when this impulse is the more usual one of an incident heard or actually beheld, the incident will fail to seem material for a story until it can be regarded as in some sense typical. Only then does it possess the meaning which relates it to the author's experience and

illuminates that of his readers. In any case literary inspiration comes to those who through their steady observation of life see in it illustrations of the ideas which thoughtful living has given them. The problem of a story in this sense is its informing spirit, as the plot is its body.

3. *Character*

The plots of stories, we have found, are dead things unless manifestations of characteristic action of men and women. The problem is arresting only if it illustrates some recognizable situation of human nature. The part that character plays in any constructed story is thus obviously large. For events are interesting and convincing only when they are the natural expression of the characters who enact them.

Let us suppose that the plot of *A Piece of String* was brought to Maupassant's attention by hearing an anecdote related. The incident as it was told concerned a young man who had found some trivial object on the road, who had been suspected, by one who saw him, of having found a lost purse, and who had been unable to convince the police of his innocence. This might well strike the trained writer as material for fiction. Yet until he has chosen a character to play the central part, he will regard its possibilities as both vague and various. Any writer attempting to work this suggestion into story form will have to search his own experience for the most suitable character he can find there. The author of *Rhyolitic Perlite*, an American college student given this plot to make over, naturally thinks of one of the most peculiar of his professors — a crabbed and self-centered geologist. This man is made to pick up a stone valuable only to a curious scientist, and the story becomes a chapter in his life. Maupassant, for his part, on hearing the suppositious incident, at first may have conceived the story as being that of a young man whose career was ruined by the suspicion cast upon him. This young man may have been

imagined as robbed of the confidence of all his fellow townsmen, deserted by his sweetheart, and finally forced to leave the town in disgrace. However, as soon as the author determined that the object picked up should be a piece of string, he saw that an old man, a peasant rendered avaricious and crafty by his hard struggle with life, would be a better hero than the young man he had first selected. Maître Hauchecorne, once definitely conceived, brings with him, as it were, many of the details of the story. The setting is one in which he would inevitably move. The market at Goderville, the smells of the animals, the inn, and the countrymen crowded there are the environment which Maître Hauchecorne demanded if he were to live at all. As soon as a character is definitely conceived, its dominating power over the other elements of the story is a fact that must be early recognized by a young writer seeking to compose life as he knows it into a narrative. Henry James has confessed that his stories usually began with a character who assumed so vivid a reality that it fairly demanded vitalizing action for itself. His stories are thus the inevitable result of characters grown too strong to lie quiescent in the brain of their creator.

It is well to remember that a story is effective only if the characters are obviously fitted to enact the events of the plot and if they can bring with them a *milieu* full of the circumstance and detail of everyday life. Only then will they seem like real men and women.

An author's mastery over the characters in his story depends, of course, on the ability to draw from his thoughtful observation of men and women. He must have learned to see not only the picturesque idiosyncrasies which make them distinctive and individual, but also the hidden springs of action — the typical motives which make them recognizable like other men. Uriah Heep, in *David Copperfield*, by rubbing his hands, writhing like a snake, and protesting his humility, arrests our atten-

tion and suggests his nature, but he wins our comprehension by allowing us to know that, being a hypocrite, he is using his humility as a cloak to spread over his wicked schemes to get Mr. Wakefield into his sinister control and force a marriage with Agnes. The attempt to write fiction is a direct aid to the comprehension of life, because it immediately stimulates a closer observation of men and a more sustained and profound consideration of their actions.

Despite the necessity for the individual to draw almost entirely upon his own critical experience in dealing with the characters in his stories, a few practical suggestions about the arrangement of material drawn from life may be given. Certain facts about the important characters in every piece of fiction all readers wish to know.

First in importance, perhaps, are personal facts. The reader must know enough of a character's appearance, his mannerisms, and even his intellectual peculiarities to be able to visualize him or at least to distinguish him as an individual. In particular, the reader must apprehend clearly the traits of character which are largely to motivate the plot. Maupassant in both *A Coward* and *The Necklace* begins with the personal facts about the central characters and leads up to that trait which is to affect the plot vitally. In the remark of Viscount de Signoles, "If ever I fight a duel, I shall choose pistols. With that weapon I am sure of killing my man," we see all the bravado and social bluster which is to precipitate the tragic and ironical catastrophe. Yet neither in this case nor in that of Mme. Loisel does the author attempt an exhaustive characterization in the preliminary exposition. A judicious author will carry his reader as soon as possible into the actual story. He will allow the characters to reveal much of their nature in their introductory speeches and progressively in their action. The Viscount's conduct at Tortoni's tells really no more about his character than is given in the exposition,

yet without the preliminary description his action in provoking the duel would have seemed almost insanely precipitate. The Viscount's baseness is, of course, not completely revealed until the climax itself is reached. This is as it should be. Every story in which the relation between character and plot is properly vital will be a revelation of the nature of the principal figures. In general, then, if the salient personal facts of the characters be presented in the introductory exposition, the figures themselves can be trusted to reveal their inner natures while they play their parts in the actual story.

4. *Setting*

The setting of a story, as we have suggested, is largely determined by the important characters. Maître Hauchecorne inevitably brought with him the life of a small French village; Professor Lee in *Rhyolitic Perlite*, the life of a middle-western college town. Yet the choice of the actual picturesque details of the setting is a separate and independent act of artistic creation. Nothing in Maître Hauchecorne's nature forced the author's selection of the market day in Goderville. Yet the various scenes connected with the market stir all the natural environment of the old peasant into vivid and picturesque life. The scene in turn communicates its vitality to the characters.

Circus day in Perrytown doubtless seemed to the author of *Rhyolitic Perlite* the obvious American equivalent of market day in rural France. It offered, too, a similar opportunity for detecting the central character in his suspicious act and for giving it the necessary publicity. Besides, it presents the reader with a variety of details which are in themselves entertaining. But it does more. These details adventitious to the plot evoke much that is typical and recurrent in the life of a small town in the Middle West. The sense of amused recognition which the reader feels aids in making the story utterly real for him. These

inorganic picturesque details combine to make what is called *local color*. The proper use of local color is indicated from its position in the above story. It ought seldom to be an end in itself or to engage the author's attention until the characters and their story have assumed definite outline in his mind. Local color is interesting because it entertains the reader at the same moment when it is satisfying his sense of recognition.

5. *The Principle of Emphasis*

Everyone, then, who attempts to compose reality into narrative must consider as elements of his story, plot, problem, character, and setting. The question of the most effective arrangement of these elements of a story is largely one of obtaining proper emphasis. Plot, problem, character, and setting may enter the mind of an author in any order. When they have been combined, however, to such an extent that the author can see clearly the outline of his story, he must decide how to direct the reader's attention to those parts of his narrative which he considers most important. These are commonly the beginning of the action, the climax, and the dénouement.

Every story begins with a description of some fairly well established condition of affairs. Into⁴ this *status quo* comes some person or event that disturbs the stability and compels a readjustment of the relations between the characters. Such an event marks the beginning of the narrative action. The climax is the point at which the struggle between the forces of conservation and those of disintegration is most intense. It is the point toward which all the events in the story converge either in prophecy or in retrospect. The dénouement is that moment in the story at which the nature of the new *status quo* determined by the story is made clear. All of these points deserve a varying degree of emphasis.

The climax is obviously the crucial point in a narrative.

Of this the author must have a definite idea before he begins to write a word. Toward this summit the reader must be led from the very beginning of the story with quickening interest. It must receive, therefore, most emphatic attention. The problem, then, that confronts every author of any short story at the threshold of his tale is, "How can I introduce character, setting, and other preliminary circumstance to my reader without emphasizing them to such an extent that his sense of progress toward a climax will be destroyed?"

Trollope's method of solving this common problem in *Malachi's Cove* is simple, natural, and consecutive enough to be studied as a model. He begins with a description of the actual setting of the story — first of the wild, precipitous coast of Cornwall, and then of the fissure in the rock in which old Malachi lived and from which he eked his precarious living. Yet the mind does not rest in these details as an end in themselves. They give us a forward view by suggesting the nature of the characters to appear. We expect some one savage and elemental, and Mally does not disappoint us. In the somewhat extended description of her, Trollope is able to introduce further details of the setting, which would have been tiresome and confusing if given all at once at the beginning. Up to this point the author has been engaged in pure exposition. He has been describing the existing state of affairs which some external force is to provoke into the movement of a story. This exciting influence is Barty Gunliffe and his insistence upon gathering seaweed in Mally's Cove. In the changes which Barty's appearance will produce in the life of Mally we realize that our story will lie.

Laurella in *L'Arrabbiata* is almost exactly the same sort of character as Mally. Her story is introduced, however, in a different way. The various stages of the narrative are not so clearly indicated as those in *Malachi's Cove*. The landscape which Paul Heyse describes bears no intrinsic emo-

tional relation to the girl. It is designed partly to create atmosphere and partly to serve as a sort of diagram of the subsequent actions of the characters. Even when Laurella appears, the reader does not know what the scene of the story is to be or with whom her fortunes are to be complicated. This obscurity does not establish the inferiority of *L'Arrabbiata* in proper emphasis. It merely shows that various points of incidence of that emphasis are less clearly marked.

Barty's first appearance, then, is clearly a point of emphasis. It marks the beginning of the action. From that moment the intensity of the story is heightened. The speed of the narrative movement is quickened. Introduction at this point of explanatory material, or entirely new strains of narrative interest, would throw out of proportion all emphasis hitherto made. The story must move upward in interest to the climax already definitely conceived. In *Malachi's Cove* the interest grows through the conversation which the boy and the girl have in the cove. Through it the wild and elemental obstinacy of the girl becomes increasingly evident until we are sure that her outraged sense of justice will express itself in some violent act. So we are ready for the climax. Laurella's conversation with the priest serves the same purpose of leading us to the climax, though in a less definite way. Her vehement fear of love leads us to expect some action of ferocity in her efforts to escape it.

In both the stories, as soon as the reader is made to realize that an exciting incident of some sort is bound to come, the author makes a distinct pause. In so doing he is observing a fundamental principle of emphasis. He is holding the reader in suspense. Trollope describes leisurely the stormy sea, the boy and the girl at their dangerous work, and finally the seething pool; Heyse describes in a leisurely fashion Antonio's waiting for Laurella. But in each story, as soon as the real action of the climax begins, events are made to move very rapidly.

After Barty has slipped on the edge of the pool, or Antonio has roughly seized Laurella, the speed and intensity of the narrative is unchecked, until the action of the climax reaches an end. In *Malachi's Cove* this end occurs when Mally's grandfather meets her with the apparently lifeless Barty, in *L'Arrabbiata* when Antonio and Laurella reach shore.

After the climax has been reached, the intensity and speed of the narration should subside immediately. Only thus will the necessary contrast be established that gives the desired emphasis to the decisive moment. The final part of a story is called variously the falling action, the outcome, or the close. The events which comprise this part of the tale are inevitably the results of the decision made in the climax, yet they need not be obvious at that moment. In *Malachi's Cove*, a new element of suspense is introduced after the climax has been passed, in that we are in doubt whether Mally will free herself from the unjust accusation or not. In *L'Arrabbiata* our minds are not entirely at rest until we know whether Antonio is to win Laurella or not.

The actual close of *Malachi's Cove* is a bit old-fashioned. It leaves nothing to the imagination. The older writers of narrative felt that they must lead the readers to a new *status quo* as fixed and as stable as the one which was disrupted into the action of the story. Many modern writers would have omitted Trollope's last three paragraphs. The close of *L'Arrabbiata* is less rigid. The imagination is left with work to do in the establishment of a new equilibrium.

The analysis of these two stories has perhaps suggested methods of giving the various elements of a narrative proper emphasis. Only when the attention of the reader is attracted in greater degree to those events which the author considers of great importance has he grasped the writer's artistic intention. Unless composed in accordance with these principles of emphasis, a narrative cannot reveal its meaning.

The stories which follow in this section are arranged in pairs. Both stories in a group are much alike in one of their narrative elements. In comparing and contrasting the two similar stories, the student may be able to appraise the value of the component parts of a tale and thus to discover what comprises originality in viewing life and in composing it into narrative.

I. THE PIECE OF STRING ¹

GUY DE MAUPASSANT

It was market-day, and over all the roads round Goderville the peasants and their wives were coming towards the town. The men walked easily, lurching the whole body forward at every step. Their long legs were twisted and deformed by the slow, painful labors of the country:—by bending over to plough, which is what also makes their left shoulders too high and their figures crooked; and by reaping corn, which obliges them for steadiness' sake to spread their knees too wide. Their starched blue blouses, shining as though varnished, ornamented at collar and cuffs with little patterns of white stitch-work, and blown up big around their bony bodies, seemed exactly like balloons about to soar, but putting forth a head, two arms, and two feet.

Some of these fellows dragged a cow or a calf at the end of a rope. And just behind the animal, beating it over the back with a leaf-covered branch to hasten its pace, went their wives, carrying large baskets from which came forth the heads of chickens or the heads of ducks. These women walked with steps far shorter and quicker than the men; their figures, withered and upright, were adorned with scanty little shawls pinned over their flat bosoms; and they enveloped their heads each in a white cloth, close fastened round the hair and surmounted by a cap.

Now a char-à-banc passed by, drawn by a jerky-paced nag. It shook up strangely the two men on the seat. And the woman

¹ Reprinted from *The Odd Number* with the kind permission of Harper and Brothers. This story is discussed at length in the Introduction, pages 4-5, 7-8.

at the bottom of the cart held fast to its sides to lessen the hard joltings.

In the market-place at Goderville was a great crowd, a mingled multitude of men and beasts. The horns of cattle, the high and long napped hats of wealthy peasants, the head-dresses of the women, came to the surface of that sea. And voices clamorous, sharp, shrill, made a continuous and savage din. Above it a huge burst of laughter from the sturdy lungs of a merry yokel would sometimes sound, and sometimes a long bellow from a cow tied fast to the wall of a house.

It all smelled of the stable, of milk, of hay, and of perspiration, giving off that half-human, half-animal odor which is peculiar to the men of the fields.

Maître Hauchecorne, of Bréauté, had just arrived at Goderville, and was taking his way towards the square, when he perceived on the ground a little piece of string. Maître Hauchecorne, economical, like all true Normans, reflected that everything was worth picking up which could be of any use; and he stooped down — but painfully, because he suffered from rheumatism. He took the bit of thin cord from the ground, and was carefully preparing to roll it up when he saw Maître Malandain, the harness-maker, on his door-step, looking at him. They had once had a quarrel about a halter, and they had remained angry, bearing malice on both sides. Maître Hauchecorne was overcome with a sort of shame at being seen by his enemy looking in the dirt so for a bit of string. He quickly hid his find beneath his blouse; then in the pocket of his breeches; then pretended to be still looking for something on the ground which he did not discover; and at last went off towards the market-place, with his head bent forward, and a body almost doubled in two by rheumatic pains.

He lost himself immediately in the crowd, which was clamorous, slow, and agitated by interminable bargains. The peasants examined the cows, went off, came back, always in

great perplexity and fear of being cheated, never quite daring to decide, spying at the eye of the seller, trying ceaselessly to discover the tricks of the man and the defect in the beast.

The women, having placed their great baskets at their feet, had pulled out the poultry, which lay upon the ground, tied by the legs, with eyes scared, with combs scarlet.

They listened to propositions, maintaining their prices, with a dry manner, with an impassible face; or, suddenly, perhaps, deciding to take the lower price which was offered, they cried out to the customer, who was departing slowly:

“All right, I’ll let you have them, Maît’ Anthime.”

Then, little by little, the square became empty, and when the *Angelus* struck mid-day those who lived at a distance poured into the inns.

At Jourdain’s the great room was filled with eaters, just as the vast court was filled with vehicles of every sort — wagons, gigs, char-à-bancs, tilburys, tilt-carts which have no name, yellow with mud, misshapen, pieced together, raising their shafts to heaven like two arms, or it may be with their nose in the dirt and their rear in the air.

Just opposite to where the diners were at table the huge fireplace, full of clear flame, threw a lively heat on the backs of those who sat along the right. Three spits were turning, loaded with chickens, with pigeons, and with joints of mutton, and a delectable odor of roast meat, and of gravy gushing over crisp brown skin, took wing from the hearth, kindled merriment, caused mouths to water.

All the aristocracy of the plough were eating there, at Maît’ Jourdain’s, the innkeeper’s, a dealer in horses also, and a sharp fellow who had made a pretty penny in his day.

The dishes were passed round, were emptied, with jugs of yellow cider. Every one told of his affairs, of his purchases and his sales. They asked news about the crops. The weather was good for green stuffs, but a little wet for wheat.

All of a sudden the drum rolled in the court before the house. Every one, except some of the most indifferent, was on his feet at once, and ran to the door, to the windows, with his mouth still full and his napkin in his hand.

When the public crier had finished his tattoo he called forth in a jerky voice, making his pauses out of time:

“Be it known to the inhabitants of Goderville, and in general to all — persons present at the market, that there has been lost this morning, on the Beuzeville road, between — nine and ten o’clock, a pocket-book of black leather, containing five hundred francs and business papers. You are requested to return it — to the mayor’s office, at once, or to Maître Fortuné Houlbrière, of Manneville. There will be twenty francs reward.”

Then the man departed. They heard once more at a distance the dull beatings on the drum and the faint voice of the crier.

Then they began to talk of this event, reckoning up the chances which Maître Houlbrière had of finding or of not finding his pocket-book again.

And the meal went on.

They were finishing their coffee when the corporal of gendarmes appeared on the threshold.

He asked:

“Is Maître Hauchecorne, of Bréauté, here?”

Maître Hauchecorne, seated at the other end of the table, answered:

“Here I am.”

And the corporal resumed:

“Maître Hauchecorne, will you have the kindness to come with me to the mayor’s office? M. le Maire would like to speak to you.”

The peasant, surprised and uneasy, gulped down his little glass of cognac, got up, and, even worse bent over than in the morning, since the first steps after a rest were always particularly difficult, started off, repeating:

"Here I am, here I am."

And he followed the corporal.

The mayor was waiting for him, seated in an arm-chair. He was the notary of the place, a tall, grave man of pompous speech.

"Maître Hauchecorne," said he, "this morning, on the Beuzeville road, you were seen to pick up the pocket-book lost by Maître Houibrèque, of Manneville."

The countryman, speechless, regarded the mayor, frightened already by this suspicion which rested on him he knew not why.

"I, I picked up that pocket-book?"

"Yes, you."

"I swear I didn't even know nothing about it at all."

"You were seen."

"They saw me, me? Who is that who saw me?"

"M. Malandain, the harness-maker."

Then the old man remembered, understood, and, reddening with anger:

"Ah! he saw me, did he, the rascal? He saw me picking up this string here, M'sieu' le Maire."

And, fumbling at the bottom of his pocket, he pulled out of it the little end of string.

But the mayor incredulously shook his head:

"You will not make me believe, Maître Hauchecorne, that M. Malandain, who is a man worthy of credit, has mistaken this string for a pocket-book."

The peasant, furious, raised his hand and spit as if to attest his good faith, repeating:

"For all that, it is the truth of the good God, the blessed truth, M'sieu' le Maire. There! on my soul and my salvation I repeat it."

The mayor continued:

"After having picked up the thing in question, you even

looked for some time in the mud to see if a piece of money had not dropped out of it."

The good man was suffocated with indignation and with fear: "If they can say!—if they can say . . . such lies as that to slander an honest man! If they can say!—"

He might protest, he was not believed.

He was confronted with M. Malandain, who repeated and sustained his testimony. They abused one another for an hour. At his own request Maître Hauchecorne was searched. Nothing was found upon him.

At last, the mayor, much perplexed, sent him away, warning him that he would inform the public prosecutor, and ask for orders.

The news had spread. When he left the mayor's office, the old man was surrounded, interrogated with a curiosity which was serious or mocking as the case might be, but into which no indignation entered. And he began to tell the story of the string. They did not believe him. They laughed.

He passed on, button-holed by every one, himself button-holing his acquaintances, beginning over and over again his tale and his protestations, showing his pockets turned inside out to prove that he had nothing.

They said to him:

"You old rogue, *va!*"

And he grew angry, exasperated, feverish, in despair at not being believed, and always telling his story.

The night came. It was time to go home. He set out with three of his neighbors, to whom he pointed out the place where he had picked up the end of string; and all the way he talked of his adventure.

That evening he made the round in the village of Bréauté, so as to tell every one. He met only unbelievers.

He was ill of it all night long.

The next day, about one in the afternoon, Marius Paumelle,

a farm hand of Maître Breton, the market-gardener at Ymauville, returned the pocket-book and its contents to Maître Houlbrèque, of Manneville.

This man said, indeed, that he had found it on the road; but not knowing how to read, he had carried it home and given it to his master.

The news spread to the environs. Maître Hauchecorne was informed. He put himself at once upon the go, and began to relate his story as completed by the *dénouement*. He triumphed.

“What grieved me,” said he, “was not the thing itself, do you understand; but it was the lies. There’s nothing does you so much harm as being in disgrace for lying.”

All day he talked of his adventure, he told it on the roads to the people who passed; at the cabaret to the people who drank; and the next Sunday, when they came out of church. He even stopped strangers to tell them about it. He was easy, now, and yet something worried him without his knowing exactly what it was. People had a joking manner while they listened. They did not seem convinced. He seemed to feel their tittle-tattle behind his back.

On Tuesday of the next week he went to market at Goderville, prompted entirely by the need of telling his story.

Malandain, standing on his door-step, began to laugh as he saw him pass. Why?

He accosted a farmer of Criquetot, who did not let him finish, and, giving him a punch in the pit of his stomach, cried in his face:

“Oh you great rogue, *val!*” Then turned his heel upon him.

Maître Hauchecorne remained speechless, and grew more and more uneasy. Why had they called him “great rogue”?

When seated at table in Jourdain’s tavern he began again to explain the whole affair.

A horse-dealer of Montivilliers shouted at him:

"Get out, get out old scamp; I know all about your string!"
Hauchecorne stammered:

"But since they found it again, the pocket-book!"

But the other continued:

"Hold your tongue, daddy; there's one who finds it and there's another who returns it. And no one the wiser."

The peasant was choked. He understood at last. They accused him of having had the pocket-book brought back by an accomplice, by a confederate.

He tried to protest. The whole table began to laugh.

He could not finish his dinner, and went away amid a chorus of jeers.

He went home, ashamed and indignant, choked with rage, with confusion, the more cast-down since from his Norman cunning, he was, perhaps, capable of having done what they accused him of, and even of boasting of it as a good trick. His innocence dimly seemed to him impossible to prove, his craftiness being so well known. And he felt himself struck to the heart by the injustice of the suspicion.

Then he began anew to tell of his adventure, lengthening his recital every day, each time adding new proofs, more energetic protestations, and more solemn oaths which he thought of, which he prepared in his hours of solitude, his mind being entirely occupied by the story of the string. The more complicated his defence, the more artful his arguments, the less he was believed.

"Those are liars' proofs," they said behind his back.

He felt this; it preyed upon his heart. He exhausted himself in useless efforts.

He was visibly wasting away.

The jokers now made him tell the story of "The Piece of String" to amuse them, just as you make a soldier who has been on a campaign tell his story of the battle. His mind, struck at the root, grew weak.

About the end of December he took to his bed.

He died early in January, and, in the delirium of the death-agony, he protested his innocence, repeating:

“A little bit of string — a little bit of string — see, here it is, M’sieu’ le Maire.”

II. RHYOLITIC PERLITE

PAUL PALMERTON

[Indiana University]

[In this story the plot of *The Piece of String* has been placed in an American setting. Those elements of interest which depend upon discovering a new plot are therefore absent. Yet the second story contains distinctive elements of originality which the thoughtful reader will enjoy finding and appraising. Other differences will appear in the firmness of the narrative texture. The student's theme is a much less closely wrought work of art. In it the atmosphere, the setting and even the characters are less integral parts of the whole. Many of the differences in effect are due to this fact. A careful comparison of the two stories will show in their true relation the formative importance of the four essential elements of every narrative.]

THE street carnival at Perrytown was in full swing. The public square was filled with people, with the hum of voices, and with the cries of the "spielers" announcing their peerless attractions. The country folk listened and grinned, and moved aimlessly in little currents this way and that. From the whole crowd rose the genial warm odor of tobacco and chewing candy.

In one corner of the square a merry-go-round was running, its ticket box close to the curb on the north side of Sixth Street. Professor Lee, teacher of geology at Perry College in the eastern part of the town, had been to the postoffice to get a dime's worth of stamps, and was returning, rather to his disgust, through the jolly, shoving crowd. He crossed to the north side of the square and was pushing his way past the merry-go-round and its tiny ticket office, when he caught sight of a stone lying in the foot of space between the office and the curb. To the ordinary observer it would have been but a stone, as large as a man's fist, gray, and covered with specks of a glassy substance. To Professor Lee, geologist, it was infinitely more.

It was rhyolitic perlite, a lava formation from Yellowstone Park. It was to be described further as heavy and vesicular, of dark and light crystals which were obsidian and quartz respectively.

To Professor Lee it was even more than this — it was a whole book in his particular subject.

Professor Lee had recognized the stone immediately, and he was about to pick it up and pocket it when he noticed that the girl in the box-office window was staring at him. Why this made him hesitate he could not have said; but he gave the stone a push with his foot and contemplated it. How had such a treasure come there? To whom did it belong? Had some one in the crowd just dropped it, or had the merry-go-round brought it along in its travels? Possibly it was the property of the girl in the box-office and had fallen out on the curb. He looked to see if she were waiting for him to pick it up, but she was merely staring at him abstractedly. She did not appear to Professor Lee like a person who would cultivate an interest in perlites. He gave the stone another push a little farther from the window and turned his back to the girl. Then he began to wipe his forehead with his handkerchief, which he presently let fall to the pavement. Stooping, he picked up both the handkerchief and the stone together and thrust them into his coat pocket. He did not look at the girl again, but kept on down Sixth Street toward the college.

At five o'clock that afternoon, Professor Lee, expert in perlites, bent over his new specimen and rejoiced. At the same hour the owner of the merry-go-round pounded on the ticket-office and cursed. He cursed the ticket-girl, the merry-go-round, the amusement business in general, and he cursed with reason, for his big leather wallet containing five hundred dollars in cash was missing. He persisted in his statement that he had left it at the ticket-office. The ticket-girl protested just as strongly that he had not, and, moreover, she was positive that

she had seen him take it up after making out accounts. It stuck out of his pocket — he must have dropped it. Then suddenly the girl remembered. A shabby little man had let his handkerchief fall over something on the curb near the window, and picking up both objects, had walked away hurriedly — just as she thought he was going to buy a ticket for the merry-go-round. It was clear where the purse had gone.

That evening, after his discovery, Professor Lee wrote letters to several of his learned friends, telling them among other things of his curious find. Thus it happened that he was again out of stamps the next morning and needed to go to the postoffice. He went up Sixth Street and turned the corner into the square. The ticket-girl saw him and shrieked, and the city police, forewarned, collared him. When the manager and the ticket-girl appeared in court, Professor Lee declared his innocence. He admitted some justice in their suspicions, but he explained all the circumstances, just why he had crossed the square, and how he happened to see the stone. He even quoted from the letters he had written, and a messenger was sent to fetch the stone, the arrival of which seemed to Professor Lee to complete his vindication. It is true that his setting forth of his reasons for dropping his handkerchief over the stone struck the professor himself as a trifle lame. But there is no accounting for impulses of that kind — certainly he had no evil intention. He was a respectable citizen, a member of a distinguished faculty and of societies of learned men.

These last remarks did not appear to impress the manager or the ticket-girl. The latter had first thought of him as a shabby little man, and she adhered to her description. The professor might be Christopher Columbus, but he had dropped his handkerchief to hide something and had sneaked off with it, and she had no opinion of a man who would *stoop* to that sort of thing. The manager was rather more puzzled. He could not believe that the professor was an utter fool. Yet, on the

face of it, the professor's story was balderdash — a pebble from Wyoming lying around loose on the Perrytown square, and then the handkerchief-dropping over a mere stone. Professors, no doubt, did queer things, and most of all reasoned queer ways, but this was hardly credible. The judge was obviously of somewhat similar opinion. Professor Lee himself began to realize that it was an absurd situation, and when the case was dismissed for lack of evidence, he somehow felt that the matter would not be forgotten.

In the local paper, however, it went unrecorded — through an editorial policy of never offending anyone — and for a few days the professor took heart.

Then, one morning he was walking to class with a colleague who remarked off-hand: "Well, I hear you were in court the other day. What was it all about?"

Professor Lee rushed into an explanation. His friend at first appeared to be vastly amused. But when the detail of the handkerchief was mentioned he grew silent.

Professor Lee added: "Of course it was an absurd situation, absurd of me to drop my handkerchief, and, then, the utter improbability of finding rhyolitic perlite in Perrytown!"

"Yes, of course," said his friend. "It sounds like a tall story. You can't blame people for talking."

"Who's talking?" asked Professor Lee.

"Oh, it's going the rounds. You know Perrytown."

Professor Lee was faintly alarmed. He knew Perrytown very well. Perrytown would spread it broadcast as a huge joke on an eccentric pedagogue.

• But after a few days Professor Lee noted a curious thing. Nobody else spoke to him about his arrest. He imagined also that some of his acquaintances were a trifle distant — or was it just his imagination? Certainly there was a marked hush one evening when he turned up rather late at the meeting of the Faculty Club.

It was this which decided him to appeal to the president of the college, a kindly old man of seventy. He was listened to to the end.

"It is precisely the story I had heard," said the president. "You need not worry, people are not maligning you."

"But they are," said Professor Lee. "They are saying —" He stopped.

"No," said the president, "they are apparently saying nothing which you do not admit. This is just one of life's little ironies. Of course, your friends will see you through."

Professor Lee left the president's office much discouraged. Who were his friends on the faculty of Perry College? He realized that he was a recluse. He had acquaintances. Men in other institutions sought his opinion. But friends? What difference did it make, then, what any of them thought?

He worked now all day in his laboratory, and for some reason seemed to lose interest in meeting classes. At the beginning of the second term there was a marked falling off among his students. Were they turning against him? With great embarrassment he finally asked one of his seniors, a boy who always had the highest marks, what he thought the trouble might be.

"Why, to tell you the truth, I suppose it is partly that case in court. You know how the fellows exaggerate things."

"What do they say?"

"Well, they are saying now that you admit that you found a valuable stone, worth hundreds of dollars to you, and that you covered it with your handkerchief."

"Look here," interrupted Professor Lee. "It was just rhyolitic perlite — a fine specimen, I admit; but nothing I could sell, you understand."

"I suppose it was just the story of the handkerchief, then," said the senior; "you know how the fellows talk."

The atmosphere of Perrytown — it was really nothing more definite than that — grew more and more distasteful to Pro-

fessor Lee. He could see vaguely that there would be no way of purifying it. Perrytown was a bad place — he knew it well. The people were mean and suspicious.

Yet the people of Perrytown were genuinely surprised when the following year Professor Lee's name did not recur on the faculty list. There were rumors that he had received a "call." But nobody was sure where he had gone.

In a few years he was forgotten. His case was still explained to newcomers on the faculty, and occasionally rehashed in fraternity houses where there might be some mild speculation as to its merits. The man himself, however, was only a name, a name to hang a tale on — and nobody had convictions one way or the other about the truth of the tale.

Yet to this day everyone who wishes may see, under a neat little glass case in the geological laboratory, a gray stone, as large as man's fist, heavy and vesicular, containing specks of dark and light crystals, which are obsidian and quartz respectively.

III. MALACHI'S COVE

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

[Mally in *Malachi's Cove* and Laurella in *L'Arrabbiata* are much alike. Both conceal under their savage exteriors large capacities for heroic devotion. The woman in each conquers the hoyden. Yet these unusual characters are made to reveal their similar natures through completely different plots. Setting and all the attendant circumstances are also unlike. Though the narrative interest in the two stories is different, the stories present essentially the same problem. They make the same reading of human life. *Malachi's Cove* is discussed at length in the introduction, pages 12-14.]

ON the northern coast of Cornwall, between Tintagel and Bossiney, down on the very margin of the sea, there lived not long since an old man who got his living by saving seaweed from the waves, and selling it for manure. The cliffs there are bold and fine, and the sea beats in upon them from the north with a grand violence. I doubt whether it be not the finest morsel of cliff scenery in England, though it is beaten by many portions of the west coast of Ireland, and perhaps also by spots in Wales and Scotland. Cliffs should be nearly precipitous, they should be broken in their outlines, and should barely admit here and there of an insecure passage from their summit to the sand at their feet. The sea should come, if not up to them, at least very near to them, and then, above all things, the water below them should be blue, and not of that dead leaden colour which is so familiar to us in England. At Tintagel all these requisites are there, except that bright blue colour which is so lovely. But the cliffs themselves are bold and well broken, and the margin of sand at high water is very narrow,—so narrow that at spring-tides there is barely a footing there.

Close upon this margin was the cottage or hovel of Malachi Trenglos, the old man of whom I have spoken. But Malachi,

or old Glos, as he was commonly called by the people around him, had not build his house absolutely upon the sand. There was a fissure in the rock so great that at the top it formed a narrow ravine, and so complete from the summit to the base that it afforded an opening for a steep and rugged track from the top of the rock to the bottom. This fissure was so wide at the bottom that it had afforded space for Trenglos to fix his habitation on a foundation of rock, and here he had lived for many years. It was told of him that in the early days of his trade he had always carried the weed in a basket on his back to the top, but latterly he had been possessed of a donkey which had been trained to go up and down the steep track with a single pannier over his loins, for the rocks would not admit of panniers hanging by his side; and for this assistant he had built a shed adjoining his own, and almost as large as that in which he himself resided.

But, as years went on, old Glos procured other assistance than that of the donkey, or, as I should rather say, Providence supplied him with other help; and, indeed, had it not been so, the old man must have given up his cabin and his independence and gone into the workhouse at Camelford. For rheumatism had afflicted him, old age had bowed him till he was nearly double, and by degrees he became unable to attend the donkey or even to assist in rescuing the coveted weed from the waves.

At the time to which our story refers Trenglos had not been up the cliff for twelve months, and for the last six months he had done nothing towards the furtherance of his trade, except to take the money and keep it, if any of it was kept, and occasionally to shake down a bundle of fodder for the donkey. The real work of the business was done altogether by Mahala Trenglos, his granddaughter.

Mally Trenglos was known to all the farmers round the coast, and to all the small tradespeople in Camelford. She was a

wild-looking, almost unearthly creature, with wild-flowing, black, uncombed hair, small in stature, with small hands and bright black eyes; but people said that she was very strong, and the children around declared that she worked day and night, and knew nothing of fatigue. As to her age there were many doubts. Some said she was ten, and others five-and-twenty, but the reader may be allowed to know that at this time she had in truth passed her twentieth birthday. The old people spoke well of Mally, because she was so good to her grandfather; and it was said of her that though she carried to him a little gin and tobacco almost daily, she bought nothing for herself;— and as to the gin, no one who looked at her would accuse her of meddling with that. But she had no friends, and but few acquaintances among people of her own age. They said that she was fierce and ill-natured, that she had not a good word for any one, and that she was, complete at all points, a thorough little vixen. The young men did not care for her; for, as regarded dress, all days were alike with her. She never made herself smart on Sundays. She was generally without stockings, and seemed to care not at all to exercise any of those feminine attractions which might have been hers had she studied to attain them. All days were the same to her in regard to dress; and, indeed, till lately, all days had, I fear, been the same to her in other respects. Old Malachi had never been seen inside a place of worship since he had taken to live under the cliff.

But within the last two years Mally had submitted herself to the teaching of the clergyman at Tintagel, and had appeared at church on Sundays, if not absolutely with punctuality, at any rate so often that no one who knew the peculiarity of her residence was disposed to quarrel with her on that subject. But she made no difference in her dress on these occasions. She took her place on a low stone seat just inside the church door, clothed as usual in her thick red serge petticoat and loose

brown serge jacket, such being the apparel which she had found to be best adapted for her hard and perilous work among the waters. She had pleaded to the clergyman when he attacked her on the subject of church attendance with vigour that she had got no church-going clothes. He had explained to her that she would be received there without distinction to her clothing. Mally had taken him at his word, and had gone, with a courage which certainly deserved admiration, though I doubt whether there was not mingled with it an obstinacy which was less admirable.

For people said that old Glos was rich, and that Mally might have proper clothes if she chose to buy them. Mr. Polwarth, the clergyman, who, as the old man could not come to him, went down the rocks to the old man, did make some hint on the matter in Mally's absence. But old Glos, who had been patient with him on other matters, turned upon him so angrily when he made an allusion to money, that Mr. Polwarth found himself obliged to give that matter up, and Mally continued to sit upon the stone bench in her short serge petticoat, with her long hair streaming down her face. She did so far sacrifice to decency as on such occasion to tie up her back hair with an old shoe-string. So tied it would remain through the Monday and Tuesday, but by Wednesday afternoon Mally's hair had generally managed to escape.

As to Mally's indefatigable industry there could be no manner of doubt, for the quantity of seaweed which she and the donkey amassed between them was very surprising. Old Glos, it was declared, had never collected half what Mally gathered together; but then the article was becoming cheaper, and it was necessary that the exertion should be greater. So Mally and the donkey toiled and toiled, and the seaweed came up in heaps which surprised those who looked at her little hands and light form. Was there not some one who helped her at nights, some fairy, or demon, or the like? Mally was so snappish in her answers

to people that she had no right to be surprised if ill-natured things were said of her.

No one ever heard Mally Trenglos complain of her work, but about this time she was heard to make great and loud complaints of the treatment she received from some of her neighbours. It was known that she went with her complaints to Mr. Polwarth; and when he could not help her, or did not give her such instant help as she needed, she went — ah, so foolishly! — to the office of a certain attorney at Camelford, who was not likely to prove himself a better friend than Mr. Polwarth.

Now the nature of her injury was as follows. The place in which she collected her seaweed was a little cove; the people had come to call it Malachi's Cove from the name of the old man who lived there;— which was so formed, that the margin of the sea therein could only be reached by the passage from the top down to Trenglos's hut. The breadth of the cove when the sea was out might perhaps be two hundred yards, and on each side the rocks ran out in such a way that both from north and south the domain of Trenglos was guarded from intruders. And this locality had been well chosen for its intended purpose.

There was a rush of the sea into the cove, which carried there large, drifting masses of seaweed, leaving them among the rocks when the tide was out. During the equinoctial winds of the spring and autumn the supply would never fail; and even when the sea was calm, the long, soft, salt-bedewed, trailing masses of the weed could be gathered there when they could not be found elsewhere for miles along the coast. The task of getting the weed from the breakers was often difficult and dangerous,— so difficult that much of it was left to be carried away by the next outgoing tide.

Mally doubtless did not gather half the crop that was there at her feet. What was taken by the returning waves she did not regret; but when interlopers came upon her cove, and gathered her wealth,— her grandfather's wealth,— beneath her

eyes, then her heart was broken. It was this interloping, this intrusion, that drove poor Mally to the Camelford attorney. But, alas, though the Camelford attorney took Mally's money, he could do nothing for her, and her heart was broken!

She had an idea, in which no doubt her grandfather shared, that the path to the cove was, at any rate, their property. When she was told that the cove, and sea running into the cove, were not the freeholds of her grandfather, she understood that the statement might be true. But what then as to the use of the path? Who had made the path what it was? Had she not painfully, wearily, with exceeding toil, carried up bits of rock with her own little hands, that her grandfather's donkey might have footing for his feet? Had she not scraped together crumbs of earth along the face of the cliff that she might make easier to the animal the track of that rugged way? And now, when she saw big farmers' lads coming down with other donkeys, — and, indeed, there was one who came with a pony; no boy but a young man, old enough to know better than rob a poor old man and a young girl,— she reviled the whole human race, and swore that the Camelford attorney was a fool.

Any attempt to explain to her that there was still weed enough for her was worse than useless. Was it not all hers and his, or, at any rate, was not the sole way to it his and hers? And was not her trade stopped and impeded? Had she not been forced to back her laden donkey down, twenty yards she said, but it had, in truth, been five, because Farmer Gunliffe's son had been in the way with his thieving pony? Farmer Gunliffe had wanted to buy her weed at his own price, and because she had refused he had set on his thieving son to destroy her in this wicked way.

"I'll hamstring the beast the next time as he's down here!" said Mally to old Glos, while the angry fire literally streamed from her eyes.

Farmer Gunliffe's small homestead — he held about fifty

acres of land — was close by the village of Tintagel, and not a mile from the cliff. The sea-wrack, as they call it, was pretty well the only manure within his reach, and no doubt he thought it hard that he should be kept from using it by Mally Trenglos and her obstinacy.

“There’s heaps of other coves, Barty,” said Mally to Barty Gunliffe, the farmer’s son.

“But none so nigh, Mally, nor yet none that fills ’emselves as this place.”

Then he explained to her that he would not take the weed that came up close to hand. He was bigger than she was, and stronger, and would get it from the outer rocks, with which she never meddled. Then, with scorn in her eye, she swore that she could get it where he durst not venture, and repeated her threat of hamstringing the pony. Barty laughed at her wrath, jeered her because of her wild hair, and called her a mermaid.

“I’ll mermaid you!” she cried. “Mermaid, indeed! I wouldn’t be a man to come and rob a poor girl and an old cripple. But you’re no man, Barty Gunliffe! You’re not half a man.”

Nevertheless, Bartholomew Gunliffe was a very fine young fellow, as far as the eye went. He was about five feet eight inches high, with strong arms and legs, with light curly brown hair and blue eyes. His father was but in a small way as a farmer, but, nevertheless, Barty Gunliffe was well thought of among the girls around. Everybody liked Barty,—excepting only Mally Trenglos, and she hated him like poison.

Barty, when he was asked why so good-natured a lad as he persecuted a poor girl and an old man, threw himself upon the justice of the thing. It wouldn’t do at all, according to his view, that any single person should take upon himself to own that which God Almighty sent as the common property of all. He would do Mally no harm, and so he had told her. But Mally was a vixen, — a wicked little vixen; and she must be taught

to have a civil tongue in her head. When once Mally would speak him civil as he went for weed, he would get his father to pay the old man some sort of toll for the use of the path.

"Speak him civil?" said Mally. "Never; not while I have a tongue in my mouth!" And I fear old Glos encouraged her rather than otherwise in her view of the matter.

But her grandfather did not encourage her to hamstring the pony. Hamstringing a pony would be a serious thing, and old Glos thought it might be very awkward for both of them if Mally were put into prison. He suggested, therefore, that all manner of impediments should be put in the way of the pony's feet, surmising that the well-trained donkey might be able to work in spite of them. And Barty Gunliffe, on his next descent, did find the passage very awkward when he came near to Malachi's hut, but he made his way down, and poor Mally saw the lumps of rock at which she had laboured so hard pushed on one side or rolled out of the way with a steady persistency of injury towards herself that almost drove her frantic.

"Well, Barty, you're a nice boy," said old Glos, sitting in the doorway of the hut, as he watched the intruder.

"I ain't a doing no harm to none as doesn't harm me," said Barty. "The sea's free to all, Malachi."

"And the sky's free to all, but I must'n get up on the top of your big barn to look at it," said Mally, who was standing among the rocks with a long hook in her hand. The long hook was the tool with which she worked in dragging the weed from the waves. "But you ain't got no justice nor yet no sperrit, or you wouldn't come here to vex an old man like he."

"I didn't want to vex him, nor yet to vex you, Mally. You let me be for a while, and we'll be friends yet."

"Friends!" exclaimed Mally. "Who'd have the likes of you for a friend? What are you moving them stones for? Them stones belongs to grandfather." And in her wrath she made a movement as though she were going to fly at him.

“Let him be, Mally,” said the old man; “let him be. He’ll get his punishment. He’ll come to be drowned some day if he comes down here when the wind is in shore.”

“That he may be drowned then!” said Mally, in her anger. “If he was in the big hole there among the rocks, and the sea running in at half tide, I wouldn’t lift a hand to help him out.”

“Yes, you would, Mally; you’d fish me up with your hook like a big stick of seaweed.”

She turned from him with scorn as he said this, and went into the hut. It was time for her to get ready for her work, and one of the great injuries done her lay in this, — that such a one as Barty Gunliffe should come and look at her during her toil among the breakers.

It was an afternoon in April, and the hour was something after four o’clock. There had been a heavy wind from the northwest all the morning, with gusts of rain, and the sea-gulls had been in and out of the cove all the day, which was a sure sign to Mally that the incoming tide would cover the rocks with weed.

The quick waves were now returning with wonderful celerity over the low reefs, and the time had come at which the treasure must be seized, if it was to be garnered on that day. By seven o’clock it would be growing dark, at nine it would be high water, and before daylight the crop would be carried out again if not collected. All this Mally understood very well, and some of this Barty was beginning to understand also.

As Mally came down with her bare feet, bearing her long hook in her hand, she saw Barty’s pony standing patiently on the sand, and in her heart she longed to attack the brute. Barty at this moment, with a common three-pronged fork in his hand, was standing down on a large rock, gazing forth towards the waters. He had declared that he would gather the weed only at places which were inaccessible to Mally, and he was looking out that he might settle where he would begin.

"Let 'un be, let 'un be," shouted the old man to Mally, as he saw her take a step towards the beast, which she hated almost as much as she hated the man.

Hearing her grandfather's voice through the wind, she desisted from her purpose, if any purpose she had had, and went forth to her work. As she passed down the cove, and scrambled in among the rocks, she saw Barty still standing on his perch; out beyond, the white-curling waves were cresting and breaking themselves with violence, and the wind was howling among the caverns and abutments of the cliff.

Every now and then there came a squall of rain, and though there was sufficient light, the heavens were black with clouds. A scene more beautiful might hardly be found by those who love the glories of the coast. The light for such objects was perfect. Nothing could exceed the grandeur of the colours, — the blue of the open sea, the white of the breaking waves, the yellow sands, or the streaks of red and brown which gave such richness to the cliff.

But neither Mally nor Barty were thinking of such things as these. Indeed they were hardly thinking of their trade after its ordinary forms. Barty was meditating how he might best accomplish his purpose of working beyond the reach of Mally's feminine powers, and Mally was resolving that wherever Barty went she would go farther.

And, in many respects, Mally had the advantage. She knew every rock in the spot, and was sure of those which gave a good foothold, and sure also of those which did not. And then her activity had been made perfect by practice for the purpose to which it was to be devoted. Barty, no doubt, was stronger than she, and quite as active. But Barty could not jump among the waves from one stone to another as she could do, nor was he able to get aid in his work from the very force of the water as she could get it. She had been hunting seaweed in that cove since she had been an urchin six years old, and she knew

every hole and corner and every spot of vantage. The waves were her friends, and she could use them. She could measure their strength, and knew when and where it would cease.

Mally was great down in the salt pools of her own cove, — great, and very fearless. As she watched Barty make his way forward from rock to rock, she told herself, gleefully, that he was going astray. The curl of the wind as it blew into the cove would not carry the weed up to the northern buttresses of the cove; and then there was the great hole just there, — the great hole of which she had spoken when she wished him evil.

And now she went to work, holding up the dishevelled hairs of the ocean, and landing many a cargo on the extreme margin of the sand, from whence she would be able in the evening to drag it back before the invading waters would return to reclaim the spoil.

And on his side also Barty made his heap up against the northern buttresses of which I have spoken. Barty's heap became big and still bigger, so that he knew, let the pony work as he might, he could not take it all up that evening. But still it was not as large as Mally's heap. Mally's hook was better than his fork, and Mally's skill was better than his strength. And when he failed in some haul Mally would jeer him with wild, weird laughter, and shriek to him through the wind that he was not half a man. At first he answered her with laughing words, but before long, as she boasted of her success and pointed to his failure, he became angry, and then he answered her no more. He became angry with himself, in that he missed so much of the plunder before him.

The broken sea was full of the long straggling growth which the waves had torn up from the bottom of the ocean, but the masses were carried past him, away from him, — nay, once or twice over him; and then Mally's weird voice would sound in his ear, jeering him. The gloom among the rocks was now becoming thicker and thicker, the tide was beating in with in-

creased strength, and the gusts of wind came with quicker and greater violence. But still he worked on. While Mally worked he would work, and he would work for some time after she was driven in. He would not be beaten by a girl.

The great hole was now full of water, but of water which seemed to be boiling as though in a pot. And the pot was full of floating masses, — large treasures of seaweed which were thrown to and fro upon its surface, but lying there so thick that one would seem almost able to rest upon it without sinking.

Mally knew well how useless it was to attempt to rescue aught from the fury of that boiling cauldron. The hole went in under the rocks, and the side of it towards the shore lay high, slippery, and steep. The hole, even at low water, was never empty; and Mally believed that there was no bottom to it. Fish thrown in there could escape out to the ocean, miles away, — so Mally in her softer moods would tell the visitors to the cove. She knew the hole well. Pournadioul she was accustomed to call it; which was supposed, when translated, to mean that this was the hole of the Evil One. Never did Mally attempt to make her own the bunch of weed which had found its way into that pot.

But Barty Gunliffe knew no better, and she watched him as he endeavoured to steady himself on the treacherously slippery edge of the pool. He fixed himself there and made a haul, with some small success. How he managed it she hardly knew, but she stood still for a while watching him anxiously, and then she saw him slip. He slipped, and recovered himself; — slipped again, and again recovered himself.

“Barty, you fool!” she screamed; “if you get yourself pitched in there, you’ll never come out no more.”

Whether she simply wished to frighten him, or whether her heart relented and she had thought of his danger with dismay, who shall say? She could not have told herself. She hated

him as much as ever, — but she could hardly have wished to see him drowned before her eyes.

“You go on, and don’t mind me,” said he, speaking in a hoarse, angry tone.

“Mind you! — who minds you?” retorted the girl. And then she again prepared herself for her work.

But as she went down over the rocks with her long hook balanced in her hands, she suddenly heard a splash, and, turning quickly round, saw the body of her enemy tumbling amidst the eddying waves in the pool. The tide had now come up so far that every succeeding wave washed into it and over it from the side nearest to the sea, and then ran down again back from the rocks, as the rolling wave receded, with a noise like the fall of a cataract. And then, when the surplus water had retreated for a moment, the surface of the pool would be partly calm, though the fretting bubbles would still boil up and down, and there was ever a simmer on the surface, as though, in truth, the cauldron were heated. But this time of comparative rest was but a moment, for the succeeding breaker would come up almost as soon as the foam of the preceding one had done, and then again the waters would be dashed upon the rocks, and the sides would echo with the roar of the angry wave.

Instantly Mally hurried across to the edge of the pool, crouching down upon her hands and knees for security as she did so. As a wave receded, Barty’s head and face was carried round near to her, and she could see that his forehead was covered with blood. Whether he was alive or dead she did not know. She had seen nothing but his blood, and the light-coloured hair of his head lying amidst the foam. Then his body was drawn along by the suction of the retreating wave; but the mass of water that escaped was not on this occasion large enough to carry the man out with it.

Instantly Mally was at work with her hook, and getting it fixed into his coat, dragged him towards the spot on which she

was kneeling. During the half minute of repose she got him so close that she could touch his shoulder. Straining herself down, laying herself over the long bending handle of the hook, she strove to grasp him with her right hand. But she could not do it; she could only touch him.

Then came the next breaker, forcing itself on with a roar, looking to Mally as though it must certainly knock her from her resting-place, and destroy them both. But she had nothing for it but to kneel, and hold by her hook.

What prayer passed through her mind at that moment for herself or for him, or for that old man who was sitting unconsciously up at the cabin, who can say? The great wave came and rushed over her as she lay almost prostrate, and when the water was gone from her eyes, and the tumult of the foam, and the violence of the roaring breaker had passed by her, she found herself at her length upon the rock, while his body had been lifted up, free from her hook, and was lying upon the slippery ledge, half in the water and half out of it. As she looked at him, in that instant, she could see that his eyes were open and that he was struggling with his hands.

"Hold by the hook, Barty," she cried, pushing the stick of it before him, while she seized the collar of his coat in her hands.

Had he been her brother, her lover, her father, she could not have clung to him with more of the energy of despair. He did contrive to hold by the stick which she had given him, and when the succeeding wave had passed by, he was still on the ledge. In the next moment she was seated a yard or two above the hole, in comparative safety, while Barty lay upon the rocks with his still bleeding head resting upon her lap.

What could she do now? She could not carry him; and in fifteen minutes the sea would be up where she was sitting. He was quite insensible and very pale, and the blood was coming slowly, — very slowly, — from the wound on his forehead. Ever so gently she put her hand upon his hair to move it back

from his face; and then she bent over his mouth to see if he breathed, and as she looked at him she knew that he was beautiful.

What would she not give that he might live? Nothing now was so precious to her as his life, — as this life which she had so far rescued from the waters. But what could she do? Her grandfather could scarcely get himself down over the rocks, if indeed he could succeed in doing so much as that. Could she drag the wounded man backwards, if it were only a few feet, so that he might lie above the reach of the waves till further assistance could be procured?

She set herself to work and she moved him, almost lifting him. As she did so she wondered at her own strength, but she was very strong at that moment. Slowly, tenderly, falling on the rocks herself so that he might fall on her, she got him back to the margin of the sand, to a spot which the waters would not reach for the next two hours.

Here her grandfather met them, having seen at last what had happened from the door.

“Dada,” she said, “he fell into the pool yonder, and was battered against the rocks. See there at his forehead.”

“Mally, I’m thinking that he’s dead already,” said old Glos, peering down over the body.

“No, dada; he is not dead; but mayhap he’s dying. But I’ll go at once up to the farm.”

“Mally,” said the old man, “look at his head. They’ll say we murdered him.”

“Who’ll say so? Who’ll lie like that? Didn’t I pull him out of the hole?”

“What matters that? His father’ll say we killed him.”

It was manifest to Mally that whatever anyone might say hereafter, her present course was plain before her. She must run up the path to Gunliffe’s farm and get necessary assistance. If the world were as bad as her grandfather said, it would be

so bad that she would not care to live longer in it. But be that as it might, there was no doubt as to what she must do now.

So away she went as fast as her naked feet could carry her up the cliff. When at the top she looked round to see if any person might be within ken, but she saw no one. So she ran with her all speed along the headland of the cornfield which led in the direction of old Gunliffe's house, and as she drew near to the homestead she saw that Barty's mother was leaning on the gate. As she approached, she attempted to call, but her breath failed her for any purpose of loud speech, so she ran on till she was able to grasp Mrs. Gunliffe by the arm.

"Where's himself?" she said, holding her hand upon her beating heart that she might husband her breath.

"Who is it you mean?" said Mrs. Gunliffe, who participated in the family feud against Trenglos and his granddaughter. "What does the girl clutch me for in that way?"

"He's dying then, that's all."

"Who is dying? Is it old Malachi? If the old man's bad, we'll send some one down."

"It ain't dada, it's Barty! Where's himself? where's the master?" But by this time Mrs. Gunliffe was in an agony of despair, and was calling out for assistance lustily. Happily Gunliffe, the father, was at hand, and with him a man from the neighbouring village.

"Will you not send for the doctor?" said Mally. "Oh, man, you should send for the doctor!"

Whether any orders were given for the doctor she did not know, but in a very few minutes she was hurrying across the field again towards the path to the cove, and Gunliffe with the other man and his wife were following her.

As Mally went along she recovered her voice, for their step was not so quick as hers, and that which to them was a hurried movement, allowed her to get her breath again. And as she went she tried to explain to the father what had happened,

saying but little, however, of her own doings in the matter. The wife hung behind listening, exclaiming every now and again that her boy was killed, and then asking wild questions as to his being yet alive. The father, as he went, said little. He was known as a silent, sober man, well spoken of for diligence and general conduct, but supposed to be stern and very hard when angered.

As they drew near to the top of the path, the other man whispered something to him, and then he turned round upon Mally and stopped her.

“If he has come by his death between you, your blood shall be taken for his,” said he.

Then the wife shrieked out that her child had been murdered, and Mally, looking round into the faces of the three, saw that her grandfather’s words had come true. They suspected her of having taken the life, in saving which she had nearly lost her own.

She looked round at them with awe in her face, and then, without saying a word, preceded them down the path. What had she to answer when such a charge as that was made against her? If they chose to say that she pushed him into the pool, and hit him with her hook as he lay amidst the waters, how could she show that it was not so?

Poor Mally knew little of the law of evidence, and it seemed to her that she was in their hands. But as she went down the steep track with a hurried step, — a step so quick that they could not keep up with her, — her heart was very full, — very full and very high. She had striven for the man’s life as though he had been her brother. The blood was yet not dry on her own legs and arms, where she had torn them in his service. At one moment she had felt sure that she would die with him in that pool. And now they said that she had murdered him! It may be that he was not dead, and what would he say if ever he should speak again? Then she thought of that moment when

his eyes had opened, and he had seemed to see her. She had no fear for herself, for her heart was very high. But it was full also, — full of scorn, disdain, and wrath.

When she had reached the bottom, she stood close to the door of the hut waiting for them, so that they might precede her to the other group, which was there in front of them, at a little distance on the sand.

“He is there, and dada is with him. Go and look at him,” said Mally.

The father and mother ran on stumbling over the stones, but Mally remained behind by the door of the hut.

Barty Gunliffe was lying on the sand where Mally had left him, and old Malachi Trenglos was standing over him, resting himself with difficulty upon a stick.

“Not a move he’s moved since she left him,” said he, “not a move. I put his head on the old rug as you see, and I tried ’un with a drop of gin, but he wouldn’t take it, — he wouldn’t take it.”

“Oh, my boy! my boy!” said the mother, throwing herself beside her son upon the sand.

“Haud your tongue, woman,” said the father, kneeling down slowly by the lad’s head, “whimpering that way will do ’un no good.”

Then having gazed for a minute or two upon the pale face beneath him, he looked up sternly into that of Malachi Trenglos.

The old man hardly knew how to bear this terrible inquisition.

“He would come,” said Malachi; “he brought it all upon hisself.”

“Who was it struck him?” said the father.

“Sure he struck hisself, as he fell among the breakers.”

“Liar!” said the father, looking up at the old man.

“They have murdered him! — they have murdered him!” shrieked the mother.

“Haud your peace, woman!” said the husband again. “They shall give us blood for blood.”

Mally, leaning against the corner of the hovel, heard it all, but did not stir. They might say what they liked. They might make it out to be murder. They might drag her and her grandfather to Camelford Gaol, and then to Bodmin, and the gallows; but they could not take from her the conscious feeling that was her own. She had done her best to save him, — her very best. And she had saved him!

She remembered her threat to him before they had gone down on the rocks together, and her evil wish. Those words had been very wicked; but since that she had risked her life to save his. They might say what they pleased of her, and do what they pleased. She knew what she knew.

Then the father raised his son’s head and shoulders in his arms, and called on the others to assist him in carrying Barty towards the path. They raised him between them carefully and tenderly, and lifted their burden on towards the spot at which Mally was standing. She never moved, but watched them at their work; and the old man followed them, hobbling after them with his crutch.

When they had reached the end of the hut she looked upon Barty’s face, and saw that it was very pale. There was no longer blood upon the forehead, but the great gash was to be seen there plainly, with its jagged cut, and the skin livid and blue round the orifice. His light brown hair was hanging back, as she had made it to hang when she had gathered it with her hand after the big wave had passed over them. Ah, how beautiful he was in Mally’s eyes with that pale face, and the sad scar upon his brow! She turned her face away, that they might not see her tears; but she did not move, nor did she speak.

But now, when they had passed the end of the hut, shuffling along with their burden, she heard a sound which stirred her. She roused herself quickly from her leaning posture, and stretched

forth her head as though to listen; then she moved to follow them. Yes, they had stopped at the bottom of the path, and had again laid the body on the rocks. She heard that sound again, as of a long, long sigh, and then, regardless of any of them, she ran to the wounded man's head.

"He is not dead," she said. "There; he is not dead."

As she spoke Barty's eyes opened, and he looked about him.

"Barty, my boy, speak to me," said the mother.

Barty turned his face upon his mother, smiled, and then stared about him wildly.

"How is it with thee, lad?" said his father. Then Barty turned his face again to the latter voice, and as he did so his eyes fell upon Mally.

"Mally!" he said, "Mally!"

It could have wanted nothing further to any of those present to teach them that, according to Barty's own view of the case, Mally had not been his enemy! and, in truth, Mally herself wanted no further triumph. That word had vindicated her, and she withdrew back to the hut.

"Dada," she said, "Barty is not dead, and I'm thinking they won't say anything more about our hurting him."

Old Glos shook his head. He was glad the lad hadn't met his death there; he didn't want the young man's blood, but he knew what folks would say. The poorer he was the more sure the world would be to trample on him. Mally said what she could to comfort him, being full of comfort herself.

She would have crept up to the farm if she dared, to ask how Barty was. But her courage failed her when she thought of that, so she went to work again, dragging back the weed she had saved to the spot at which on the morrow she would load the donkey. As she did this she saw Barty's pony still standing patiently under the rock, so she got a lock of fodder and threw it down before the beast.

It had become dark down in the cove, but she was still drag-

ging back the seaweed, when she saw the glimmer of a lantern coming down the pathway. It was a most unusual sight, for lanterns were not common down in Malachi's Cove. Down came the lantern rather slowly, — much more slowly than she was in the habit of descending, and then through the gloom she saw the figure of a man standing at the bottom of the path. She went up to him, and saw that it was Mr. Gunliffe, the father.

“Is that Mally?” said Gunliffe.

“Yes, it is Mally; and how is Barty, Mr. Gunliffe?”

“You must come to 'un yourself, now at once,” said the farmer. “He won't sleep a wink till he's seed you. You must not say but you'll come.”

“Sure I'll come if I'm wanted,” said Mally.

Gunliffe waited a moment, thinking that Mally might have to prepare herself, but Mally needed no preparation. She was dripping with salt water from the weed which she had been dragging, and her elfin locks were streaming wildly from her head; but, such as she was, she was ready.

“Dada's in bed,” she said, “and I can go now if you please.”

Then Gunliffe turned round and followed her up the path, wondering at the life which this girl led so far away from all her sex. It was now dark night, and he had found her working at the very edge of the rolling waves by herself, in the darkness, while the only human being who might seem to be her protector had already gone to his bed.

When they were at the top of the cliff Gunliffe took her by her hand, and led her along. She did not comprehend this, but she made no attempt to take her hand from his. Something he said about falling on the cliffs, but it was muttered so lowly that Mally hardly understood him. But, in truth the man knew that she had saved his boy's life, and that he had injured her instead of thanking her. He was now taking her to his heart, and as words were wanting to him, he was showing his love after this silent fashion. He held her by the hand as

though she were a child, and Mally tripped along at his side asking him no questions.

When they were at the farmyard gate, he stopped there for a moment.

"Mally, my girl," he said, "he'll not be content till he sees thee, but thou must not stay long wi' him, lass. Doctor says he's weak like, and wants sleep badly."

Mally merely nodded her head, and then they entered the house. Mally had never been within it before, and looked about with wondering eyes at the furniture of the big kitchen. Did any idea of her future destiny flash upon her then, I wonder? But she did not pause here a moment, but was led up to the bedroom above stairs, where Barty was lying on his mother's bed.

"Is it Mally herself?" said the voice of the weak youth.

"It's Mally herself," said the mother, "so now you can say what you please."

"Mally," said he, "Mally, it's along of you that I'm alive this moment."

"I'll not forget it on her," said the father, with his eyes turned away from her. "I'll never forget it on her."

"We hadn't a one but only him," said the mother, with her apron up to her face.

"Mally, you'll be friends with me now?" said Barty.

To have been made lady of the manor of the cove forever, Mally couldn't have spoken a word now. It was not only that the words and presence of the people there cowed her and made her speechless, but the big bed, and the looking-glass, and the unheard-of wonders of the chamber made her feel her own insignificance. But she crept up to Barty's side, and put her hand upon his.

"I'll come and get the weed, Mally; but it shall all be for you," said Barty.

"Indeed, you won't then, Barty dear," said the mother;

“you’ll never go near the awesome place again. What would we do if you were took from us?”

“He mustn’ go near the hole if he does,” said Mally, speaking at last in a solemn voice, and imparting the knowledge which she had kept to herself while Barty was her enemy; “ ’specially not if the wind’s any way from the nor’ard.”

“She’d better go down now,” said the father.

Barty kissed the hand which he held, and Mally, looking at him as he did so, thought that he was like an angel.

“You’ll come and see us to-morrow, Mally,” said he.

To this she made no answer, but followed Mrs. Gunliffe out of the room. When they were down in the kitchen, the mother had tea for her, and thick milk, and a hot cake, — all the delicacies which the farm could afford. I don’t know that Mally cared much for the eating and drinking that night, but she began to think that the Gunliffes were good people, — very good people. It was better thus, at any rate, than being accused of murder and carried off to Camelford prison.

“I’ll never forget it on her — never,” the father had said.

Those words stuck to her from that moment, and seemed to sound in her ears all the night. How glad she was that Barty had come down to the cove, — oh, yes, how glad! There was no question of his dying now, and as for the blow on his forehead, what harm was that to a lad like him?

“But father shall go with you,” said Mrs. Gunliffe, when Mally prepared to start for the cove by herself. Mally, however, would not hear of this. She could find her way to the cove whether it was light or dark.

“Mally, thou art my child now, and I shall think of thee so,” said the mother, as the girl went off by herself.

Mally thought of this, too, as she walked home. How could she become Mrs. Gunliffe’s child; ah, how?

I need not, I think, tell the tale any further. That Mally did become Mrs. Gunliffe’s child, and how she became so the

reader will understand; and in process of time the big kitchen and all the wonders of the farmhouse were her own. The people said that Barty Gunliffe had married a mermaid out of the sea; but when it was said in Mally's hearing I doubt whether she liked it; and when Barty himself would call her a mermaid she would frown at him, and throw about her black hair, and pretend to cuff him with her little hand.

Old Glos was brought up to the top of the cliff, and lived his few remaining days under the roof of Mr. Gunliffe's house; and as for the cove and the right of seaweed, from that time forth all that has been supposed to attach itself to Gunliffe's farm, and I do not know that any of the neighbours are prepared to dispute the right.

IV. L'ARRABBIATA ¹

PAUL HEYSE

THE sun had not yet risen. Over Vesuvius a broad grey cloud of mist, stretching toward Naples, darkened the villages on that part of the coast. The sea lay calm. Along the seawall, built in a narrow cove under the high Sorrentine cliffs, fishermen and their wives were already bestirring themselves. By means of stout cables they were drawing to shore the boats and nets which had been out overnight. Others were rigging their barks, or pulling oars and masts from the huge barred vaults in the rocks. No one was idle. Even the aged, who could make no more voyages, formed links in the chain of those who pulled at the nets. Here and there on the flat roofs little old grandmothers were standing with their spindles or were busying themselves with their grandchildren while the daughters helped their husbands.

"Look there, Rochella, there is our Padre Curato," said one old woman to a little thing of ten at her side, who was swinging her own small spindle. "He is just climbing into a boat. Antonino will take him across to Capri. Maria Santissima, how sleepy his Reverence looks!"

With this she waved her hand to a small friendly looking priest, who, having carefully lifted up his black coat and spread it over the wooden seat, was just settling himself in the bark. The others on shore stopped work in order to watch the departure of their padre, who was bowing and smiling pleasantly to right and left.

"Why does he have to go to Capri, grandma?" asked the child. "Do the people over there have to borrow our priest because they haven't any?"

¹ Translation copyrighted by the editors. This story is discussed on pages 12-14.

“Don't be so silly,” said the old woman. “They have enough priests, and fine churches, and even a hermit, which we haven't. But over there is a great Signora. For a long time she lived in Sorrento and was so very sick that when they thought she couldn't last through the night, the padre had to go to her often with the Most Holy Host. But the Holy Virgin helped her and she has become happy again and well, and can bathe in the sea every day. When she went from here to Capri, she gave a pile of ducats to the church and to the poor. She wouldn't leave, they say, until the padre promised to go over to see her so that she could confess to him. We're lucky to have him for a priest. He is as gifted as an archbishop and in great demand with people of rank. May the Madonna be with him!” And with this she waved down to the little boat that was just casting off.

The priest looked anxiously across the bay toward Naples. “Shall we have good weather, my boy?” he asked.

“The sun isn't up yet,” answered the young man; “but when it comes, it will make short work of that bit of mist.”

“Go ahead then, so that we arrive before the heat.”

Antonino had just reached for the long oar to push the boat out, when he stopped and looked up toward the top of the steep path that leads from the village of Sorrento down to the quay. The slender figure of a girl, hurrying down the stones and waving her handkerchief, came into view. She was poorly enough clad and carried a little bundle under her arm. She had a way of tossing her head that might have been noble had there not been a touch of wildness about it. The black braids which she had wound about her forehead became her like a crown.

“What are we waiting for?” asked the priest.

“Somebody else, who probably wants to go to Capri, is coming down. If you don't mind, Padre, — we'll not go any the slower for that. She's only a young thing, hardly eighteen.”

At this instant the girl stepped out from behind the wall that bordered the winding path. "Laurella?" said the priest. "What has she to do in Capri?"

Antonino shrugged his shoulders. The girl hurried forward looking straight before her.

"Hello, l'Arrabbiata!"¹ cried several of the young sailors. They would probably have said more if the presence of the curate had not restrained them; for the haughty, silent way in which the young girl took the greeting seemed to irritate several of the bolder spirits among them.

"How do you do, Laurella?" said the priest. "How are you? Will you go to Capri with us?"

"If I may, Padre."

"Ask Antonino. He is captain of the ship. Each is master of his own and God is master of us all."

"Here is a half carlino," said Laurella, without looking at the young boatman, "if you can take me for that?"

"You can use it better than I," the boy muttered as he pushed back some of the baskets of oranges to make room for her. He was to sell them at Capri, for the little island does not produce enough for the consumption of its many tourists.

"I won't go for nothing," said the girl, and her black eyebrows scowled.

"Come, child," said the priest, "he is a good boy and does not want to get rich on your bit of poverty. Come, climb in," and he offered her his hand, — "sit down beside me. See, he has put down his coat so that you will have a more comfortable place. He was not so good to me, but young people . . . they're all that way. More pains are taken for one young lady than for ten holy fathers. There, there, do not excuse yourself, Tonino. The dear Lord so arranged it, that like is attracted to like."

¹ "Cross-patch."

Laurella, in the mean time, had got into the boat. Without saying a word to anybody, she pushed the coat to one side, and sat down. The young sailor muttered something between his teeth, then he pushed vigorously against the quay and the little boat flew out into the bay.

"What have you in your bundle?" asked the priest as they glided over the sea, which was just lighting up with the first rays of the sun.

"Silk, yarn, and a loaf of bread, Padre. I'm going to sell the silk to a lady in Capri who makes ribbons, and the yarn is for another woman."

"Did you spin it yourself?"

"Yes, sir."

"If I remember correctly, you learned how to weave ribbons, too?"

"Yes, sir. But mother is worse again so that I can't leave the house, and we can't pay for a loom of our own."

"Worse? Dear, dear! But she was sitting up when I called at Easter."

"Spring is always the worst time for her. Since the big storms and the earthquakes she has had to be in bed all day because of her pain."

"Keep on praying and begging, child. The Holy Virgin may intercede. And be good and industrious so that your prayer may be heard."

After a pause: "When you came down to the shore — they called, 'Hello l'Arrabbiata!' Why do they call you that? It isn't a nice name for a Christian, who should be meek and humble."

A flush covered the girl's brown face and her eyes flashed.

"They make fun of me because I do not sing and dance and talk a lot like the others. They ought to let me alone. I do nothing to them."

"But you can be friendly to everybody. Let the others

dance and sing. Their life is easier. But a good word sounds well, even if you are not happy."

She bowed her head and contracted her dark eyebrows as though she wanted to hide her black eyes beneath them. For a while they rowed in silence. The sun now stood gloriously above the mountains, the peak of Vesuvius towered through the blanket of vapors that still covered its base; and the houses on the plain of Sorrento gleamed white in their green orange-gardens.

"Have you heard anything from that painter, Laurella, that Neopolitan, who wanted to marry you?" asked the priest.

She shook her head.

"He came to draw a picture of you. Why did you not let him?"

"What did he want it for? There are others prettier than I. And then . . . who knows what he would have done with it. He might have bewitched me with it and lost me my soul, or he might have even brought about my death, my mother said."

"Don't believe such sinful things," said the preacher earnestly.

"Are you not always in God's hand, without whose will not a hair can fall from your head? And can a man with such a picture in his hand be stronger than God? From that you should see that he was fond of you. Did he want to marry you?"

She was silent.

"And why did you refuse him? He is said to have been a good man, and very handsome, and he could have supported you and your mother better than you can do with your bit of spinning and silk winding."

"We are poor people," she said fiercely, "and my mother has been sick for such a long time. We should only have been a burden to him. And I am not good enough for a signor. When his friends came to see him, he would have been ashamed of me."

"How you talk! I tell you he was a good man. He even wanted to move over to Sorrento. It will be a long time before another man like that comes. He was sent from heaven to help you."

"I don't want a husband at all!" she said stubbornly, as if talking to herself.

"Have you taken a vow, or do you want to enter a convent?"

She shook her head.

"People who hold your stubbornness up to you are right, even though the name they call you for it isn't very pretty. Remember that you are not alone in the world and that you make your mother's life and her illness harder because of your perversity. What weighty reasons can you have for refusing every honest hand that reaches out to support you and your mother? Answer me, Laurella."

"I have a reason," she answered softly, and hesitatingly, "but I cannot tell it."

"You cannot tell it? Not even to me? Not to your father confessor whom you used to trust as wishing you well? Or did you not?"

She nodded.

"Do unburden your heart, child. If you are right, I will be the first one to say so. But you are young and do not know the world very well, and you might regret it later if you have thrown away your happiness because of childish notions."

She threw a quick shy glance over her shoulder at the boy who sat behind them with his cap drawn down over his eyes, busily rowing. He was looking over the side into the water and seemed to be sunk in his own thoughts. The priest saw the glance and leaned closer to her.

"You did not know my father," she whispered, and her eyes darkened.

"Your father? He died, didn't he, when you were barely

ten years old. What has your father — may his soul rest in paradise — to do with your stubbornness?"

"You did not know him, Padre. You do not know that he alone is to blame for mother's illness."

"How is that?"

"Because he ill-treated her, and beat her, and kicked her. I still remember the nights when he would come home raging. She would never say a word to him and would do everything he wanted. But he beat her so that my heart would nearly break. Then I would pull the cover over my head and would pretend to be asleep, but I would cry all night. And then when he would see her lying on the floor, he would change suddenly. He would pick her up and kiss her so that she would cry out he was going to suffocate her. Mother forbade me to say a word about it; but it weakened her so that in all these years since his death she has never been well. And if she should die, which Heaven forbid, I shall know who is to blame."

The little priest nodded his head gently and seemed undecided as to how far he should agree with his parishioner. Finally he said: "Forgive him as your mother has forgiven him. Do not think of those sad things, Laurella. Better times are in store for you and they will make you forget all this."

"I shall never forget it," she said, with a shudder. "And listen, Padre, that is why I never want to marry. I never want to submit to anyone who would abuse me and then caress me. Now, when somebody wants to strike me or kiss me I know how to protect myself. But my mother couldn't protect herself, either from the blows or from the kisses, because she loved him. I . . . I never want to love anyone so much that I should become sick and miserable for his sake."

"You talk and act just like a child that knows nothing about what happens in the world. Are all men like your poor father? Do they all yield to every mood and passion and abuse their wives? Have you not seen enough honest people in the neigh-

borhood, and enough wives that live in peace and harmony with their husbands?"

"Nobody knew about my father either, and how he acted to my mother; for she would have died ten thousand times rather than have told anybody or complained. And all of that because she loved him. If that's the way love is, if it closes your lips when you should cry for help, and makes you defenseless against worse harm than your worst enemy could do to you, I will never give my heart to any man."

"I tell you that you are a child and do not know what you are saying. Your heart will not ask you if you want to love or not; and when the right time comes, all this that you have put in your head will not help you." Again, after a pause — "And that painter, did you believe him capable of being cruel to you?"

"He made eyes like those I saw my father make when he would step away from mother and want to take her in his arms again and say nice things to her. That sort of eyes I know very well. They can belong to a man who allows himself to beat a wife who has never done him any harm. It frightened me to see those eyes again."

Then she was persistently silent. The priest was silent too. He remembered many a pretty passage from the Bible that he could have held up to the girl. But the presence of the young sailor, who had become restless toward the end of the confession, closed his mouth.

When, after two hours, they had arrived in the little harbor of Capri, Antonino lifted the reverend father out of the boat, carried him through the shallow water, and set him down respectfully. But Laurella did not wish to wait for Antonino to return. She pulled her skirts together, took her wooden shoes in her right hand, her bundle in the left, and splashed hurriedly to shore.

"I shall probably stay late in Capri," said the padre, "and you need not wait for me. Perhaps I shall not come home until

to-morrow. And you, Laurella, when you get back, greet your mother for me. I shall call on her this week. Shall you be going back before night?"

"Yes, if I have a chance," said the girl, and pretended to be arranging her dress.

"You know that I have to go back," said Antonino, in what he thought a very indifferent tone of voice. "I'll wait for you until Ave Maria. If you do not get here by then it will be all the same to me."

"You must come, Laurella," interrupted the little man. "You cannot leave your mother alone all night Is it far, where you are going?"

"To a vineyard in Anacapri."

"And I must go toward Capri. God bless you, child, and you, my son."

Laurella kissed his hand and murmured a farewell which the Padre and Antonino might divide between them. Antonino, however, did not appropriate it. He took off his hat to the padre and did not look at Laurella.

When both had turned their backs to him, however, he let his eyes rest only a short time on the reverend father, who was ploughing his way with difficulty through the bed of loose gravel; and then he turned toward the girl, who, with her hands before her eyes to protect them against the glare, had started for the hill on the opposite side. At a point where the road entered the walls on the heights, she stood still a moment as though to take breath and look round. The quay lay at her feet; round her towered the cliffs; the sea was a strangely glorious blue. It was well worth a minute's stop. But it happened that her glance, hurrying past Antonino's boat, met the glance which he had sent after her. They each made a movement as people do who want to excuse themselves for something that has happened only by mistake, then the girl, with a dark expression about her mouth, continued her way.

It was just an hour after noon, but Antonino had already been sitting for two hours upon the bench before the tavern which the fisherman frequented. Something seemed to be on his mind, for he would jump up every five minutes, step out into the sunshine, and carefully scrutinize the two roads that led to the left and to the right toward the two island villages. The weather seemed suspicious to him, he would say to the landlady of the tavern. To be sure, it was still clear, but he knew what this color in the sky and sea meant. It had looked just like that before the last great storm when he had been able to reach shore with the English family only with the greatest effort. The landlady would probably remember.

"No," said the landlady.

Well, she should think of him, if it didn't change before nightfall.

"Are there many tourists in the town?" asked the landlady after a while.

"It is just beginning. Until now we have had pretty bad times. Those who come for bathing still delay."

"We have had a late spring. Have you made more money than we at Capri?"

"If I had had only the boat, I shouldn't have been able to eat macaroni twice a week. Now and then I had to take a letter to Naples, or row a signor out into the bay for fishing; but that was all. But you know that my uncle has some big orange gardens and is a rich man. " 'Tonino', he said, 'as long as I live you shall not suffer want. And afterwards you will be taken care of.' So with God's help, I got through the winter."

"Has your uncle any children?"

"No. He was never married and was abroad for a long time, where he picked up many a good piaster. Now he intends to open a large fishery and put me in charge of the entire business so that I can look after it."

"So your future is made, Antonino."

The young sailor shrugged his shoulders.

"Everybody has his own burden to carry," he said. Then he jumped up and looked to the right and the left as though questioning the weather, although he must have known that there was only one weather side.

"I'll bring you another bottle. Your uncle can pay for it," said the hostess.

"Just a glass. You have a fiery wine here, and my head is already getting hot."

"It doesn't get into the blood. You can drink as much as you want. Here comes my husband. You'll have to stay a while and talk to him."

With his net hung over his shoulders, his red cap pulled down about his curly hair, the stately host of the inn was just returning from the heights. He had taken the fish which had been ordered by the rich signora who wanted them for the dinner of the padre of Sorrento. When he became aware of the young sailor, he waved him a hearty welcome and then sat down beside him on the bench and began to talk and ask questions. His wife was just bringing a second bottle of the pure unadulterated Capri, when the sand at the left crunched, and Laurella came down the road from Anacapri. She nodded her head slightly, and stood still as though undecided.

Antonino jumped up. "I must go," he said. "It's a girl that came over this morning with the Signor Curato and who wants to go home to-night to her sick mother."

"Oh come, it's a long time till night," said the fisherman. "She will have time to drink a glass of wine, too. Wife, bring another glass."

"Thanks, but I'll not drink," said Laurella, and remained at some distance.

"Fill up the glass, wife. Fill up the glass. She wants to be persuaded."

"Let her alone," said the boy. "She's determined. What

she doesn't want, no saint can make her take." And with this he took a hurried farewell, ran down to the boat, untied the rope, and stood waiting for the girl. She said good-bye to the hostess of the inn and walked hesitatingly after. First she looked around on all sides, as if she expected that there would be other passengers. The quay, however, was deserted; the fishermen were sleeping or were out in the bay with their lines and nets. A few women and children were sitting at their doors, sleeping or spinning, and the strangers who had come across in the morning were waiting for a cooler time of day to go back. She could not look about for long, however; for before she could stop him, Antonino had taken her in his arms and carried her like a child to the boat. Then he jumped in after her, and with a few strokes of the oars they were out in the open sea.

She seated herself in the bow and half turned her back to him, so that he could see her only from the side. Her expression was now even more serious than usual. Her hair hung down over the low forehead, a willful expression trembled around the fine nostrils, her full mouth was tightly closed. After they had gone on silently for a while, she felt the heat of the sun, took the bread out of its cloth, and put the latter over her hair. Then she began to make her dinner of the bread, for she had eaten nothing at Capri.

Antonino could not long watch her in idleness. He took two oranges from a basket he had brought over full in the morning, and said: "Here is something to eat with your bread, Laurella. Don't think that I kept them for you. They rolled out of the basket into the boat, and I found them when I put the empty baskets back again."

"You eat them. This bread is enough for me."

"They are refreshing in the heat, and you've been walking a long time."

"They gave me a glass of water back there that refreshed me."

“As you will,” he said and let them fall back into the basket.

A new silence. The sea was calm as a mirror and hardly stirred about the keel. Even the white sea birds that nest in caves on the shore went about their work of pillage in silence.

“You might take these two oranges to your mother,” Antonino began again.

“We still have some left at home, and when they are gone, I’ll go and buy some more.”

“Take them to your mother with my compliments.”

“She does not know you.”

“You could tell her who I am.”

“I do not know you either.”

It was not the first time that she had denied knowing him in this way. A year before, when the painter had first come to Sorrento, it happened one Sunday that Antonino, with some other young fellows of the town, was playing boccia in a square near the main street. There, the painter for the first time met Laurella, who walked past without seeing him as she carried a water jug on her head. The young Neopolitan, struck by her beauty, stood still and watched her, although he was directly in the course of the game and could have got out of the way by moving a few steps to either side. A ball, none too gently thrown, that hit his ankle, reminded him that this was not the place to lose himself in thought. He looked around as though he expected an apology. The young sailor who had rolled the ball stood silent and defiant among his friends and the stranger found it better to avoid an argument and to pass on. But people had talked about the affair and they talked still more when the painter openly courted Laurella. “I do not know him,” she had said rather unwillingly, when the artist had asked her if she was refusing him because of that impolite boy. And she, too, had heard about the gossip. But since then, whenever she met Tonino, she had recognized him well enough.

So now they sat in the boat like the bitterest enemies and

the hearts of both were beating violently. Antonino's face, which was usually good-natured, was intensely red; his oars struck the waves so that the foam flew over him, and at intervals his lips trembled as though he were speaking evil words. She pretended not to notice him, looked unconcerned, and leaned over the edge of the boat to let the water run through her fingers. Then she took the cloth from her head and arranged her hair as though she were all alone in the boat. Only her eyebrows wrinkled and she held her wet hands on her cheeks to cool them in vain.

Now they were in the middle of the bay and neither near nor far was there a sail to be seen. The island had been left behind and the shore lay far off in the hazy sunlight. Not even a seagull flew through the deep loneliness. Antonino looked around. A thought seemed to strike him. The red suddenly disappeared from his cheeks and he let the oars fall. Involuntarily Laurella, tense but fearless, looked at him.

"This must stop," the boy suddenly burst out. "This has been going on long enough and it's a wonder that I haven't gone to pieces over it. 'You don't know me,' you say. Haven't you seen that I have been passing you like a madman, with my heart full of things to say to you? You put on your sullen look and turn your back on me."

"What did I have to say to you?" she replied shortly. "I have seen that you wanted to pick up an acquaintance with me; but I didn't want people to gossip about me for nothing at all. I don't want you for a husband, you or anyone else!"

"Anyone else? You won't always talk like that! Because you sent the painter away? Bah! You were just a child then. You'll get lonesome sometime, and then, silly as you are, you'll take the first one you see."

"Nobody can tell his future. It may be that I will change my mind. What business is it of yours?"

"What business is it of mine?" he cried, and jumped up from

the rowing bench so that the little boat shook. "What business is it of mine? And you still ask that when you know how I feel? May anyone whom you treat better than me die in misery!"

"Did I ever promise you anything? Can I help it that your head's a little off? What sort of right have you over me?"

"Oh," he cried, "it isn't written down. No lawyer put it into Latin and sealed it, but this I know, I've as much right to have you as to enter heaven if I've been an honest man. Do you think I like to stand and watch you when you go to church with some one else, and the girls go past me and shrug their shoulders? Do you think I'll let myself be made a fool of like that?"

"Do as you like. You can't frighten me no matter how much you threaten. I'll do as I please, too."

"You won't talk that way very long," he said trembling. "I am man enough not to let my life be ruined any longer by such stubbornness. Do you know that you are in my power here and that you must do what I want?"

She drew back slightly, but her eyes flashed.

"Kill me if you dare," she said slowly.

"One shouldn't do things half way," he said and his voice was hoarse. "There is room for both of us in the sea. I can't help you, child." He spoke sympathetically as from a dream. "But we must go over — both of us — at the same time — and *now!*" He shouted this last at the top of his voice and suddenly took hold of her with both arms. But almost immediately he pulled back his right hand. Blood spurted from it. In her passion she had bitten him sharply.

"Must I do what you want?" she cried, and with a quick turn she pushed him away. "Let's see if I'm in your power!" With this she jumped overboard and disappeared for a second in the depths.

She reappeared almost immediately. Her dress was wrapped tightly about her. Her hair, loosened by the waves, hung down

heavily over her neck. Her arms moved steadily and without a word she swam away from the boat toward the shore. A sudden fear seemed to have paralyzed the boy's senses. He stood in the boat half stooping, his eyes staring after her, as though a miracle were happening. Then he shook himself, jumped for the oars and rowed after her with all the strength he could command, while the floor of the boat became redder with his blood.

Although she was swimming quickly he was beside her in a moment. "Maria Santissima!" he cried, "Come back to the boat. I've been a fool. God knows what befogged my brain. Something flashed in my brain like lightning from heaven and I was afire and didn't know what I was doing or saying. I shan't ask you to forgive me, Laurella, just come back to the boat and save your life!"

She swam on as though she had heard nothing.

"You can't reach shore. It's two good miles from here. Think of your mother. If something should happen to you she'd die of horror."

With a glance she measured the distance to the shore. Then, without saying a word, she swam to the boat and grasped the sides with both hands. He stood up to help her. His coat, which had been lying on the bench, slipped into the ocean when the boat tipped to one side with her weight. She pulled herself up gracefully and climbed into her old place. Then, when he saw that she was safe, he took his oars again. She, however, wrung out her dress and pressed the water from her braids. In doing this she looked at the bottom of the boat and noticed the blood. She glanced quickly at his hand. It held the oar as though it were not wounded. "Here," she said, and she handed him her cloth. He shook his head and kept on rowing. Finally she stood up, stepped over to him, and bound the cloth tightly round the deep wound. Then in spite of his struggle she took the oar and sat down beside him.

She did this without looking at him. With her eyes fastened on the oar that was reddened with blood she drove the boat along with strong strokes. They were both pale and quiet. When they approached the land they met some fishermen going to put their nets out over night. They called to Antonino and teased Laurella. Neither looked up or answered.

The sun still stood high over Procida when they reached the quay. Laurella shook her dress, now completely dried, and sprang out. The old spinning woman who had seen them go away in the morning still stood on the roof. "What's the matter with your hand, Tonino?" she called to him. "Dear Jesus! the boat is swimming in blood."

"It's nothing, Granny," said the boy. "I tore it on a nail that was sticking out too far. It'll be all right by to-morrow. That confounded blood on my hand makes it look worse than it is."

"I'll come down and put herbs on it, my lad. Wait a minute, I'll be there directly."

"Don't bother, Granny. It's taken care of already, and to-morrow it will be gone and forgotten. I've got a healthy skin that grows over every wound."

"Addio," said Laurella and turned into the path that led up hill.

"Goodnight," cried the boy without looking up. Then he took the oars and baskets from the boat and climbed up the little stone steps to his hut.

Alone in his two rooms, he paced back and forth. Through the little open windows which could be closed only by means of wooden blinds, the wind was blowing. It was more refreshing here than on the ocean and the loneliness did him good. For a long time he stood in front of the little picture of the Virgin and devoutly contemplated the halo of silvered paper which was pasted around her head. It never occurred to him to

pray. What should he ask for — since he no longer hoped?

The sun seemed to stand still to-day. He longed for darkness, for he was tired. The loss of blood had weakened him more than he would admit to himself. He felt sharp pains in his hand. He sat down on the couch and loosened the bandage. The pent-in blood shot out again and the hand seemed swollen near the wound. He washed it carefully and held it in the cool water for a time. When he looked at it again he could plainly see the marks of Laurella's teeth.

"She was right," he said. "I was a beast and don't deserve better treatment. To-morrow I'll send the cloth back to Giuseppe. She won't have to see me again." Then he washed out the cloth carefully and spread it to dry in the sun. After he had bound up the wound as best he could with his left hand and his teeth, he threw himself down on the bed and closed his eyes.

The bright moon and the pain in his hand woke him out of a light sleep. His hand pulsed with pain. He had just jumped up to cool it in water when he heard a noise at his door. "Who is there?" he called, and opened the door. Laurella stood before him. Without a greeting she stepped in. She threw off the covering she had wound about her head and breathed deeply.

"You came to get your cloth," he said. "You could have spared yourself the trouble. I was going to ask Giuseppe to bring it to you in the morning."

"I did not come for the cloth," she answered quickly. "I have been on the mountain to get you some herbs to stop the bleeding. Here —" and she lifted the cover of the basket.

"Too much trouble," he said, but without bitterness. "Too much trouble. It's better now, much better. And if it *were* worse, I should deserve it. What do you want here at this time of night. What if somebody should meet you here?"

They do not know what they are talking about, but you know how they gossip."

"They don't worry me," she said fiercely. "I want to see the wound and put some herbs on it. You can't do that with your left hand."

"I tell you it isn't necessary."

"Let me see it and I'll believe you."

Without another word she took the hand which could not protect itself and unbound the cloth. When she saw the swelling she started and cried, "Jesu — Maria!"

"It's a bit swollen," he said. "That will go away in a day and a night."

She shook her head. "You won't be able to go on the sea for a week."

"I believe I'll be out day after to-morrow. But what's the difference?"

In the meantime she had fetched the basin and washed the wound again while he submitted like a child. She laid the healing leaves of the herb upon it, and they relieved the burning at once. Then she bound up the hand with a piece of linen she had brought.

When it was done he said, "Thank you. And listen — if you want to do me another favor, forgive me for letting such foolishness come into my head to-day. Forget everything I have said and done. I don't know myself how it happened. You never gave me occasion for it. You certainly didn't. You shall never hear anything from me again that will offend you."

"But I should ask your pardon," she interrupted. "I should have acted differently and better, and not exasperated you by my sullenness. And now the wound."

"It was self-defense and high time that I got control of myself. And, as I said, it's nothing. Don't talk of forgiving. You did me good and I thank you for it. So now go back to

your bed. And here, here is your cloth. You can take it along."

He handed it to her but she stood still and seemed to be struggling with herself. Finally she said: "You lost your coat for my sake, and I know that it held the money from your oranges. That just occurred to me on the way over. I cannot give it back to you for we have nothing, and if we did have, it would belong to mother. But here is a silver cross that the painter put on the table the last time he came to see us. I haven't looked at it since then and I do not want to keep it in the box any longer. If you sell it — my mother said it was probably worth a couple of piasters — your loss would be made up. What would still be lacking, I could get with my spinning at night, when mother is sleeping."

"I will take nothing," he said shortly, and he pushed back the bright cross that she had taken from her pocket.

"You must accept it," she said. "Who knows how long you will be unable to earn anything with that hand of yours. Here it is and I never want to see it again with my eyes."

"Throw it in the ocean, then."

"It isn't a gift I'm giving you. It's no more than your right that's due you."

"Right? I have no right to anything from you. If I should ever meet you again, do me the honor of not looking at me, so that I shall not think you are trying to remind me of what I owe you. And now, goodnight, and let it be the last."

He put the cloth in the basket and the cross on the top and closed the cover. When he looked up, her face frightened him. Great heavy tears rolled down her cheeks. She did not brush them away.

"Maria Santissima!" he cried. "Are you sick? You're trembling from head to foot."

"It's nothing; I'll go home," and she staggered toward the door. Then her sobs overcame her and she leaned her head

against the door-post and wept loudly and passionately. And before he could help her, she turned suddenly and threw her arms round his neck.

"I can't stand it," she cried, and held him to her as a dying man clings to life. "I can't stand it — to have you say nice things to me and send me away with all the guilt on my conscience. Beat me, kick me, curse me, or, if it is true that you love, now, after all the wrong I've done you, here, take me and keep me, and do what you want with me. Don't send me away from you like this."

More and more passionate sobs interrupted her.

For awhile he held her in his arms, silently. At last he cried, "Do I still love you? . . . Dear Mother of God, do you think that all my heart's blood poured out of that little wound! Don't you feel it pounding in my breast as though it wanted to come out to you? But if you say this only to tempt me, or because you sympathize with me, go, and I'll forget that too. You shall not think you owe it to me because you know I've suffered for you."

"No," she said firmly. She raised her wet eyes from his shoulder and looked passionately into his face. "I do love you; and if I could only tell you how long I have feared it and fought against it! . . . But now I'll be different, because I can't stand it not to look at you when you pass in the street. And now I'll kiss you too, so that if you should ever doubt again you can say to yourself, 'Laurella has kissed me, and she kisses no man except him whom she wants for her husband!'"

She kissed him three times, and then she freed herself from his arms and said, "Good night, beloved! Go to sleep now and heal your hand. Don't come with me, for I'm afraid of nobody — but you."

With this she slipped through the door and disappeared in the shadow of the wall. For a long time he looked through the window out on the sea where all the stars seemed to dance.

When the little Padre Curato came from the confessional where Laurella had been kneeling for a long time, he smiled to himself. "Who would have believed," he thought, "that God would so soon take pity on this wayward heart. And I reproached myself for not having threatened any more forcibly the demon pride. Our eyes are too short-sighted to see the ways of Heaven. God bless them and may I live to have Laurella's oldest son row me across the ocean in his father's place! Well, well, well, — l'Arrabbiata!"

V. THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO

EDGAR ALLAN POE

[The essence of the plot in this story and the following is identical. In Poe's tale the incident is presented barely. Motivation and depiction of character are slighted in order to make the mere horror of the central incident stand forth nakedly. All of the masterly devices which were at the author's command have been used to heighten this melodramatic effect. The incident in Balzac's story is almost meticulously explained in terms of motive, antecedent action, and character, which are carefully placed in setting and attendant circumstance. The difference in artistic effect thus made will be found to be striking. In fact, despite the similarity in mere plot, *La Grande Bretèche* arouses an entirely new narrative interest.]

THE thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I best could, but when he ventured upon insult, I vowed revenge. You, who so well know the nature of my soul, will not suppose, however, that I gave utterance to a threat. *At length* I would be avenged; this was a point definitely settled — but the very definiteness with which it was resolved precluded the idea of risk. I must not only punish, but punish with impunity. A wrong is unredressed when retribution overtakes its redresser. It is equally unredressed when the avenger fails to make himself felt as such to him who has done the wrong.

It must be understood that neither by word nor deed had I given Fortunato cause to doubt my good will. I continued, as was my wont, to smile in his face, and he did not perceive that my smile *now* was at the thought of his immolation.

He had a weak point — this Fortunato — although in other regards he was a man to be respected and even feared. He prided himself on his connoisseurship in wine. Few Italians have the true virtuoso spirit. For the most part their enthusiasm is adopted to suit the time and opportunity — to practice imposture upon the British and Austrian millionaires. In

painting and gemmary, Fortunato, like his countrymen, was a quack, — but in the matter of old wines he was sincere. In this respect I did not differ from him materially: I was skillful in the Italian vintages myself, and bought largely whenever I could.

It was about dusk, one evening during the supreme madness of the carnival season, that I encountered my friend. He accosted me with excessive warmth, for he had been drinking much. The man wore motley. He had on a tight-fitting party-striped dress, and his head was surmounted by the conical cap and bells. I was so pleased to see him that I thought I should never have done wringing his hand.

I said to him: "My dear Fortunato, you are luckily met. How remarkably well you are looking to-day! But I have received a pipe of what passes for Amontillado, and I have my doubts."

"How?" said he, "Amontillado? A pipe? Impossible! And in the middle of the carnival!"

"I have my doubts," I replied; "and I was silly enough to pay the full Amontillado price without consulting you in the matter. You were not to be found, and I was fearful of losing a bargain."

"Amontillado!"

"I have my doubts."

"Amontillado!"

"And I must satisfy them."

"Amontillado!"

"As you are engaged, I am on my way to Luchesi. If any one has a critical turn, it is he. He will tell me ——"

"Luchesi cannot tell Amontillado from Sherry."

"And yet some fools will have it that his taste is a match for your own."

"Come, let us go."

"Whither?"

“To your vaults.”

“My friend, no; I will not impose upon your good nature. I perceive you have an engagement. Luchesi ——”

“I have no engagement — come.”

“My friend, no. It is not the engagement, but the severe cold with which I perceive you are afflicted. The vaults are insufferably damp. They are incrustated with nitre.”

“Let us go, nevertheless. The cold is merely nothing. Amontillado! You have been imposed upon. And as for Luchesi, he cannot distinguish Sherry from Amontillado.”

Thus speaking, Fortunato possessed himself of my arm. Putting on a mask of black silk, and drawing a roquelaure closely about my person, I suffered him to hurry me to my palazzo.

There were no attendants at home; they had absconded to make merry in honor of the time. I had told them that I should not return until the morning, and had given them explicit orders not to stir from the house. These orders were sufficient, I well knew, to insure their immediate disappearance, one and all, as soon as my back was turned.

I took from their sconces two flambeaux, and giving one to Fortunato, bowed him through several suites of rooms to the archway that led into the vaults. I passed down a long and winding staircase, requesting him to be cautious as he followed. We came at length to the foot of the descent, and stood together on the damp ground of the catacombs of the Montresors.

The gait of my friend was unsteady, and the bells upon his cap jingled as he strode.

“The pipe,” said he.

“It is farther on,” said I; “but observe the white webwork which gleams from these cavern walls.”

He turned towards me, and looked into my eyes with two filmy orbs that distilled the rheum of intoxication.

“Nitre?” he asked at length.

"Nitre," I replied. "How long have you had that cough?"

"Ugh! ugh! ugh! — ugh! ugh! ugh! — ugh! ugh! ugh!
— ugh! ugh! ugh! — ugh! ugh! ugh!"

My poor friend found it impossible to reply for many minutes.

"It is nothing," he said at last.

"Come," I said, with decision, "we will go back; your health is precious. You are rich, respected, admired, beloved; you are happy, as once I was. You are a man to be missed. For me it is no matter. We will go back; you will be ill, and I cannot be responsible. Besides, there is Luchesi ——"

"Enough," he said; "the cough is a mere nothing; it will not kill me. I shall not die of a cough."

"True — true," I replied; "and, indeed, I had no intention of alarming you unnecessarily — but you should use all proper caution. A draught of this Medoc will defend us from the damps."

Here I knocked off the neck of a bottle which I drew from a long row of its fellows that lay upon the mold.

"Drink," I said, presenting him the wine.

He raised it to his lips with a leer. He paused and nodded to me familiarly, while his bells jingled.

"I drink," he said, "to the buried that repose around us."

"And I to your long life."

He again took my arm, and we proceeded.

"These vaults," he said, "are extensive."

"The Montresors," I replied, "were a great and numerous family."

"I forget your arms."

"A huge human foot d'or, in a field azure; the foot crushes a serpent rampant, whose fangs are embedded in the heel."

"And the motto?"

"*Nemo me impune lacessit.*"

"Good!" he said.

The wine sparkled in his eyes and the bells jingled. My own

fancy grew warm with the Medoc. We had passed through walls of piled bones, with casks and puncheons intermingling, into the inmost recesses of the catacombs. I paused again, and this time I made bold to seize Fortunato by an arm above the elbow.

"The nitre!" I said; "see, it increases. It hangs like moss upon the vaults. We are below the river's bed. The drops of moisture trickle among the bones. Come, we will go back ere it is too late. Your cough ——"

"It is nothing," he said; "let us go on. But first, another draught of the Medoc."

I broke and reached him a flagon of De Grave. He emptied it at a breath. His eyes flashed with a fierce light. He laughed, and threw the bottle upward with a gesticulation I did not understand.

I looked at him in surprise. He repeated the movement — a grotesque one.

"You do not comprehend?" he said.

"Not I," I replied.

"Then you are out of the brotherhood."

"How?"

"You are not of the masons."

"Yes, yes," I said, "yes, yes."

"You? Impossible! A mason?"

"A mason," I replied.

"A sign," he said.

"It is this," I answered, producing a trowel from beneath the folds of my roquelaure.

"You jest," he exclaimed, recoiling a few paces. "But let us proceed to the Amontillado."

"Be it so," I said replacing the tool beneath the cloak, and again offering him my arm. He leaned upon it heavily. We continued our route in search of the Amontillado. We passed through a range of low arches, descended, passed on, and,

descending again, arrived at a deep crypt, in which the foulness of the air caused our flambeaux rather to glow than flame.

At the most remote end of the crypt there appeared another less spacious. Its walls had been lined with human remains, piled to the vault overhead, in the fashion of the great catacombs of Paris. Three sides of this interior crypt were still ornamented in this manner. From the fourth the bones had been thrown down, and lay promiscuously upon the earth, forming at one point a mound of some size. Within the wall thus exposed by the displacing of the bones we perceived a still interior recess, in depth about four feet, in width three, in height six or seven. It seemed to have been constructed for no especial use within itself, but formed merely the interval between two of the colossal supports of the roof of the catacombs, and was backed by one of their circumscribing walls of solid granite.

It was in vain that Fortunato, uplifting his dull torch, endeavored to pry into the depth of the recess. Its termination the feeble light did not enable us to see.

“Proceed,” I said; “herein is the Amontillado. As for Luchesi ——”

“He is an ignoramus,” interrupted my friend, as he stepped unsteadily forward, while I followed immediately at his heels. In an instant he had reached the extremity of the niche, and finding his progress arrested by the rock, stood stupidly bewildered. A moment more, and I had fettered him to the granite. In its surface were two iron staples, distant from each other about two feet, horizontally. From one of these depended a short chain, from the other a padlock. Throwing the links about his waist, it was but the work of a few seconds to secure it. He was too much astounded to resist. Withdrawing the key, I stepped back from the recess.

“Pass your hand,” I said, “over the wall; you cannot help feeling the nitre. Indeed it is *very* damp. Once more let me *implore* you to return. No? Then I must positively leave

you. But I must first render you all the little attentions in my power."

"The Amontillado!" ejaculated my friend, not yet recovered from his astonishment.

"True," I replied; "the Amontillado."

As I said these words I busied myself among the pile of bones of which I have before spoken. Throwing them aside, I soon uncovered a quantity of building stone and mortar. With these materials and with the aid of my trowel, I began vigorously to wall up the entrance of the niche.

I had scarcely laid the first tier of the masonry when I discovered that the intoxication of Fortunato had in a great measure worn off. The earliest indication I had of this was a low moaning cry from the depth of the recess. It was *not* the cry of a drunken man. There was then a long and obstinate silence. I laid the second tier, and the third, and the fourth; and then I heard the furious vibrations of the chain. The noise lasted for several minutes, during which, that I might hearken to it with the more satisfaction, I ceased my labors and sat down upon the bones. When at last the clanking subsided, I resumed the trowel, and finished without interruption the fifth, the sixth, and the seventh tier. The wall was now nearly upon a level with my breast. I again paused, and holding the flambeaux over the masonwork, threw a few feeble rays upon the figure within.

A succession of loud and shrill screams, bursting suddenly from the throat of the chained form, seemed to thrust me violently back. For a brief moment I hesitated — I trembled. Unsheathing my rapier, I began to grope with it about the recess; but the thought of an instant reassured me. I placed my hand upon the solid fabric of the catacombs, and felt satisfied. I reapproached the wall. I replied to the yells of him who clamored. I reëchoed — I aided — I surpassed them in volume and in strength. I did this and the clamorer grew still.

It was now midnight, and my task was drawing to a close. I had completed the eighth, the ninth, and the tenth tier. I had finished a portion of the last and the eleventh; there remained but a single stone to be fitted and plastered in. I struggled with its weight; I placed it partially in its destined position. But now there came from out the niche a low laugh that erected the hairs upon my head. It was succeeded by a sad voice, which I had difficulty in recognizing as that of the noble Fortunato. The voice said: —

“Ha! ha! ha! — he! he! he! — a very good jest indeed — an excellent jest. We will have many a rich laugh about it at the palazzo — he! he! he! — over our wine — he! he! he!”

“The Amontillado!” I said.

“He! he! he! — he! he! he — yes, the Amontillado. But is it not getting late? Will they not be awaiting us at the palazzo — the Lady Fortunato and the rest? Let us be gone.”

“Yes,” I said, “let us be gone.”

“*For the love of God, Montresor!*”

“Yes,” I said, “for the love of God!”

But to these words I hearkened in vain for a reply. I grew impatient. I called aloud, —

“Fortunato!”

No answer. I called again, —

“Fortunato!”

No answer still. I thrust a torch through the remaining aperture and let it fall within. There came forth in return only a jingling of the bells. My heart grew sick — on account of the dampness of the catacombs. I hastened to make an end of my labor. I forced the last stone into its position; I plastered it up. Against the new masonry I reërected the old rampart of bones. For the half of a century no mortal has disturbed them. *In pace requiescat.*

VI. LA GRANDE BRETÈCHE ¹

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

ABOUT a hundred yards from Vendôme, on the banks of the Loir, is an old brown house, covered with very steep roofs, and so completely isolated that there is not so much as an evil-smelling tannery, nor a shabby inn such as you see at the entrance of all little towns, in its neighborhood. In front of this dwelling is a garden overlooking the river, where the box edgings, once carefully clipped, which bordered the paths, now cross them and straggle as they fancy. . . . The paths, formerly gravelled, are full of purslain; so that, strictly speaking, there are no paths at all. . . . An arbor is still standing, or rather the remains of one, and beneath it is a table which time has not yet completely demolished. From the aspect of this garden, now no more, the negative joys of the peaceful life of the provinces can be inferred, just as we infer the life of some worthy from the epitaph on his tomb. To complete the sad and tender ideas which take possession of the soul, a sundial on the wall bears this inscription, Christian yet bourgeois, *Ultimam Cogita*. The roofs are dilapidated, the blinds always closed, the balconies are filled with swallows' nests, the gates are locked. Tall herbs and grasses trace in green lines the chinks and crevices of the stone portico; the locks are rusty. Sun and moon, summer and winter and snow have rotted the wood, warped the planks, and worn away the paint. The gloomy silence is unbroken save by the birds, the cats, the martens, the rats, the mice, all free to scamper or fly, and to fight, and to eat themselves up.

¹ Reprinted from *Fame and Sorrow and Other Stories* (translated by Katharine Prescott Wormeley) with the kind permission of Little, Brown and Company.

An invisible hand has written the word *Mystery* everywhere. . . . This empty and deserted house is a profound enigma, whose solution is known to none. It was formerly a small fief, and is called La Grande Bretèche. During my stay at Vendôme, where Desplein had sent me in charge of a rich patient, the sight of this strange dwelling was one of my keenest pleasures. It was better than a ruin. A ruin possesses memories of positive authenticity; but this habitation, still standing, though slowly demolished by an avenging hand, contained some secret, some mysterious thought, — it betrayed at least a strange caprice. More than once of an evening I jumped the hedge, now a tangle, which guarded the enclosure. I braved the scratches; I walked that garden without a master, that property which was neither public nor private; for hours I stayed there contemplating its decay. Not even to obtain the history which underlay (and to which no doubt was due) this strange spectacle would I have asked a single question of any gossiping countryman. Standing there I invented enchanting tales; I gave myself up to debauches of melancholy which fascinated me. Had I known the reason, perhaps a common one, for this strange desertion, I should have lost the unwritten poems with which I intoxicated myself. To me this sanctuary evoked the most varied images of human life darkened by sorrows; sometimes it was a cloister without the nuns; sometimes a graveyard and its peace, without the dead who talk to you in epitaphs; to-day the house of the leper, to-morrow that of the Atrides; but above all was it the provinces with their composed ideas, their hour-glass life.

Often I wept there, but I never smiled. More than once an involuntary terror seized me, as I heard above my head the muffled whirr of a ringdove's wings hurrying past. The soil is damp; care must be taken against the lizards, the vipers, the frogs, which wander about with the wild liberty of nature; above all, it is well not to fear cold, for there are moments

when you feel an icy mantle laid upon your shoulders like the hand of the Commander on the shoulder of Don Juan. One evening I shuddered; the wind had caught and turned a rusty vane. Its creak was like a moan issuing from the house, at a moment, too, when I was ending a gloomy drama in which I explained to myself the monumental dolor of that scene.

That night I returned to my inn, a prey to gloomy thoughts. After I had supped the landlady entered my room with a mysterious air, and said to me, "Monsieur, Monsieur Regnault is here."

"Who is Monsieur Regnault?"

"Is it possible that Monsieur doesn't know Monsieur Regnault? Ah, how funny!" she said, leaving the room.

Suddenly I beheld a long, slim man, clothed in black, holding his hat in his hand, who presented himself, much like a ram about to leap on a rival, and showed me a retreating forehead, a small, pointed head and a livid face, in color somewhat like a glass of dirty water. You would have taken him for the usher of a minister. This unknown personage wore an old coat much worn in the folds, but he had a diamond in the frill of his shirt, and gold earrings in his ears.

"Monsieur, to whom have I the honor of speaking?" I said.

He took a chair, sat down before my fire, laid his hat on my table and replied, rubbing his hands: "Ah! it is very cold. Monsieur, I am Monsieur Regnault."

I bowed, saying to myself: "*Il bondo cani!* seek!"

"I am," he said, "the notary of Vendôme."

"Delighted, monsieur," I replied, "but I am not in the way of making my will, — for reasons, alas, too well-known to me."

"One moment!" he resumed, raising his hand as if to impose silence. "Permit me, monsieur, permit me! I have learned that you sometimes enter the garden of La Grande Bretèche and walk there —"

"Yes, monsieur."

“One moment!” he said, repeating his gesture. “That action constitutes a misdemeanor. Monsieur, I come in the name and as testamentary executor of the late Comtesse de Merret to beg you to discontinue your visits. One moment! I am not a Turk; I do not wish to impute a crime to you. Besides, it is quite excusable that you, a stranger, should be ignorant of the circumstances which compel me to let the handsomest house in Vendôme go to ruin. Nevertheless, monsieur, as you seem to be a person of education, you no doubt know that the law forbids trespassers on enclosed property. A hedge is the same as a wall. But the state in which that house is left may well excuse your curiosity. I should be only too glad to leave you free to go and come as you liked there, but charged as I am to execute the wishes of the testatrix, I have the honor, monsieur, to request that you do not again enter that garden. I myself, monsieur, have not, since the reading of the will, set foot in that house, which, as I have already had the honor to tell you, I hold under the will of Madame de Merret. We have only taken account of the number of the doors and windows so as to assess the taxes which I pay annually from the funds left by the late countess for that purpose. Ah, monsieur, that will made a great deal of noise in Vendôme!”

There the worthy man paused to blow his nose. I respected his loquacity, understanding perfectly that the testamentary bequest of Madame de Merret had been the most important event of his life, the head and front of his reputation, his glory, his Restoration. So then, I must bid adieu to my beautiful reveries, my romances! I was not so rebellious as to deprive myself of getting the truth, as it were officially, out of the man of law, so I said, —

“Monsieur, if it is not indiscreet, may I ask the reason of this singularity?”

At these words a look which expressed the pleasure of a man who rides a hobby passed over Monsieur Regnault's face. He

pulled up his shirt-collar with a certain conceit, took out his snuff-box, opened it, offered it to me and, on my refusal, took a strong pinch himself. He was happy. A man who hasn't a hobby doesn't know how much can be got out of life. A hobby is the exact medium between a passion and a monomania. At that moment I understood Sterne's fine expression to its fullest extent, and I formed a complete idea of the joy with which my Uncle Toby — Trim assisting — bestrode his war-horse.

"Monsieur," said Monsieur Regnault, "I was formerly head-clerk to Maître Roguin in Paris. An excellent lawyer's office of which you have doubtless heard? No? And yet a most unfortunate failure made it, I may say, celebrated. Not having the means to buy a practice in Paris at the price to which they rose in 1816, I came here to Vendôme, where I have relations, — among them a rich aunt, who gave me her daughter in marriage."

Here he made a slight pause, and then resumed:

"Three months after my appointment was ratified by Monseigneur the Keeper of the Seals, I was sent for one evening just as I was going to bed (I was not then married) by Madame la Comtesse de Merret, then living in her château at Merret. Her lady's-maid, an excellent girl who is now serving in this inn, was at the door with the countess's carriage. Ah! one moment! I ought to tell you, monsieur, that Monsieur le Comte de Merret had gone to die in Paris about two months before I came here. He died a miserable death from excesses of all kinds, to which he gave himself up. You understand? Well, the day of his departure Madame la Comtesse left La Grande Bretèche, and dismantled it. They do say that she even burned the furniture, and the carpets, and all appurtenances whatsoever and wheresoever contained on the premises leased to the said — Ah! beg pardon; what am I saying? I thought I was dictating a lease. Well, monsieur, she burned everything, they say, in the meadow at Merret. Were you ever at Merret, monsieur?"

Not waiting for me to speak, he answered for me: "No. Ah! it is a fine spot! For three months, or thereabouts," he continued, nodding his head, "Monsieur le Comte and Madame la Comtesse had been living at La Grande Bretèche in a very singular way. They admitted no one to the house; madame lived on the ground-floor, and monsieur on the first floor. After Madame la Comtesse was left alone she never went to church. Later, in her own château she refused to see the friends who came to visit her. She changed greatly after she left La Grande Bretèche and came to Merret. That dear woman (I say dear, though I never saw her but once, because she gave me this diamond), — that good lady was very ill; no doubt she had given up all hope of recovery, for she died without calling in a doctor; in fact, some of our ladies thought she was not quite right in her mind. Consequently, monsieur, my curiosity was greatly excited when I learned that Madame de Merret needed my services; and I was not the only one deeply interested for that very night, though it was late, the whole town knew I had gone to Merret."

The good man paused a moment to arrange his facts, and then continued: "The lady's maid answered rather vaguely the questions which I put to her as we drove along; she did, however, tell me that her mistress received the last sacraments that day from the curate of Merret, and that she was not likely to live through the night. I reached the château about eleven o'clock. I went up the grand staircase. After passing through a number of dark and lofty rooms, horribly cold and damp, I entered the state bedroom where Madame la Comtesse was lying. In consequence of the many stories that were told about this lady (really, monsieur, I should never end if I related all of them) I expected to find her a fascinating coquette. Would you believe it, I could scarcely see her at all in the huge bed in which she lay. It is true that the only light in that vast room, with friezes of the old style powdered with dust enough to make

you sneeze on merely looking at them, was one Argand lamp. Ah! but you say you have never been at Merret. Well, monsieur, the bed was one of those old-time beds with a high tester covered with flowered chintz. A little night-table stood by the bed, and on it I noticed a copy of the *Imitation of Christ*.

“Allow me a parenthesis,” he said, interrupting himself. “I bought that book subsequently, also the lamp, and presented them to my wife. In the room was a large sofa for the woman who was taking care of Madame de Merret, and two chairs. That was all. No fire. The whole would not have made ten lines of an inventory. Ah! my dear monsieur, could you have seen her as I saw her then, in that vast room hung with brown tapestry, you would have imagined you were in the pages of a novel. It was glacial, — better than that, funereal,” added the worthy man, raising his arm theatrically and making a pause. Presently he resumed:

“By dint of peering round and coming close to the bed I at length saw Madame de Merret, thanks to the lamps which happened to shine on the pillows. Her face was as yellow as wax, and looked like two hands joined together. Madame la Comtesse wore a lace cap, which, however, allowed me to see her fine hair, white as snow. She was sitting up in the bed, but apparently did so with difficulty. Her large black eyes, sunken no doubt with fever, and almost lifeless, hardly moved beneath the bones where the eyebrows usually grow. Her forehead was damp. Her fleshless hands were like bones covered with thin skin; the veins and muscles could all be seen. She must once have been very handsome, but now I was seized with — I couldn't tell you what feeling, as I looked at her. Those who buried her said afterwards that no living creature had ever been as wasted as she without dying. Well, it was awful to see. Some mortal disease had eaten up that woman till there was nothing left of her but a phantom. Her lips, of a pale violet, seemed not to move when she spoke. Though

my profession had familiarized me with such scenes, in bringing me often to the bedside of the dying, to receive their last wishes, I must say that the tears and the anguish of families and friends which I have witnessed were as nothing compared to this solitary woman in that vast building. I did not hear the slightest noise, I did not see the movement which the breathing of the dying woman would naturally give to the sheet that covered her; I myself remained motionless, looking at her in a sort of stupor. Indeed, I fancy I am there still. At last her large eyes moved; she tried to lift her right hand, which fell back upon the bed; then these words issued from her lips like a breath, for her voice was no longer a voice:

“‘I have awaited you with impatience.’

“Her cheeks colored. The effort to speak was great. The old woman who was watching her here rose and whispered in my ear: ‘Don’t speak; Madame la Comtesse is past hearing the slightest sound; you would only agitate her.’ I sat down. A few moments later Madame de Merret collected all her remaining strength to move her right arm and put it, not without great difficulty, under her bolster. She paused an instant; then she made a last effort and withdrew her hand which now held a sealed paper. Great drops of sweat rolled from her forehead.

“‘I give you my will,’ she said. ‘Oh, my God! Oh!’

“That was all. She seized a crucifix which lay on her bed, pressed it to her lips and died. The expression of her fixed eyes still makes me shudder when I think of it. I brought away the will. When it was opened I found that Madame de Merret had appointed me her executor. She bequeathed her whole property to the hospital of Vendôme, save and excepting certain bequests. The following disposition was made of La Grande Bretèche. I was directed to leave it in the state in which it was at the time of her death for a period of fifty years from the date of her decease; I was to forbid all access to it, by any and

every one, no matter who; to make no repairs, and to put by from her estate a yearly sum to pay watchers, if they were necessary, to insure the faithful execution of these intentions. At the expiration of that time the estate was, if the testatrix's will had been carried out in all particulars, to belong to my heirs (because, as monsieur is doubtless well aware, notaries are forbidden by law to receive legacies); if otherwise, then La Grande Bretèche was to go to whoever might establish a right to it, but on condition of fulfilling certain orders contained in a codicil annexed to the will and not to be opened until the expiration of the fifty years. The will has never been attacked, consequently — ”

Here the oblong notary, without finishing his sentence, looked at me triumphantly. I made him perfectly happy with a few compliments.

“Monsieur,” I said, in conclusion, “you have so deeply impressed that scene upon me that I seem to see the dying woman, whiter than the sheets; those glittering eyes horrify me; I shall dream of her all night. But you must have formed some conjectures as to the motive of that extraordinary will.”

“Monsieur,” he replied, with comical reserve, “I never permit myself to judge of the motives of those who honor me with the gift of a diamond.”

However, I managed to unloose the tongue of the scrupulous notary so far that he told me, not without long digressions, certain opinions on the matter emanating from the wise-heads of both sexes whose judgments made the social law of Vendôme. But these opinions and observations were so contradictory, diffuse, that I well-nigh went to sleep in spite of the interest I felt in this authentic story. The heavy manner and monotonous accent of the notary, who was no doubt in the habit of listening to himself and making his clients and compatriots listen to him, triumphed over my curiosity. Happily, he did at last go away.

“Ha, ha! monsieur,” he said to me at the head of the stairs, “many persons would like to live their forty-five years longer, but, one moment!”— here he laid the forefinger of his right hand on his nose as if he meant to say, Now pay attention to this! — “in order to do that, to do *that*, they ought to skip the sixties.”

I shut my door, the notary’s jest, which he thought very witty, having drawn me from my apathy; then I sat down in my armchair and put both feet on the andirons. I was plunged in a romance *à la* Radcliffe, based on the notarial disclosures of Monsieur Regnault, when my door, softly opened by the hand of a woman, turned noiselessly on its hinges.

I saw my landlady, a jovial, stout woman, with a fine, good-humored face, who had missed her true surroundings; she was from Flanders, and might have stepped out of a picture by Teniers.

“Well, monsieur,” she said, “Monsieur Regnault has no doubt recited to you his famous tale of La Grande Bretèche?”

“Yes, Madame Lepas.”

“What did he tell you?”

I repeated in a few words the dark and chilling story of Madame de Merret as imparted to me by the notary. At each sentence my landlady ran out her chin and looked at me with the perspicacity of an innkeeper, which combines the instinct of a policeman, the astuteness of a spy, and the cunning of a shop-keeper.

“My dear Madame Lepas,” I added, in conclusion, “you evidently know more than that. If not, why did you come up here to me?”

“On the word, now, of an honest woman, just as true as my name is Lepas — ”

“Don’t swear, for your eyes are full of the secret. You knew Monsieur de Merret. What sort of man was he?”

“Goodness! Monsieur de Merret? well, you see, he was a handsome man, so tall you never could see the top of him, —

a very worthy gentleman from Picardy, who had, as you may say, a temper of his own; and he knew it. He paid everyone in cash so as to have no quarrels. But, I tell you, he could be quick. Our ladies thought him very pleasant."

"Because of his temper?" I asked.

"Perhaps," she replied. "You know, monsieur, a man must have something to the fore, as they say, to marry a lady like Madame de Merret, who, without disparaging others, was the handsomest and the richest woman in Vendôme. She had an income of nearly twenty thousand francs. All the town was at the wedding. The bride was so dainty and captivating, a real little jewel of a woman. Ah! they were a fine couple in those days!"

"Was their home a happy one?"

"Hum, hum! yes and no, so far as anyone can say; for you know well enough that the like of us don't live hand and glove with the like of them. Madame de Merret was a good woman and very charming, who no doubt had to bear a good deal from her husband's temper; we all liked her though she was rather haughty. Bah! that was her bringing up, and she was born so. When people are noble — don't you see?"

"Yes, but there must have been some terrible catastrophe, for Monsieur and Madame de Merret to separate violently."

"I never said there was a catastrophe, monsieur; I know nothing about it."

"Very good; now I am certain that you know all."

"Well, monsieur, I'll tell you all I do know. When I saw Monsieur Regnault coming after you I knew he would tell you about Madame de Merret and La Grande Bretèche; and that gave me the idea of consulting monsieur, who seems to be a gentleman of good sense, incapable of betraying a poor woman like me, who has never done harm to anyone, but who is, somehow, troubled in her conscience. I have never dared to say a word to the people about here, for they are all gossips, with

tongues like steel blades. And there's never been a traveller who has stayed as long as you have, monsieur, to whom I could tell all about the fifteen thousand francs — ”

“My dear Madame Lepas,” I replied, trying to stop the flow of words, “if your confidence is of a nature to compromise me, I wouldn't hear it for worlds.”

“Oh, don't be afraid,” she said, interrupting me. “You'll see — ”

This haste to tell made me quite certain I was not the first to whom my good landlady had communicated the secret of which I was to be the sole repository, so I listened.

“Monsieur,” she said, “when the Emperor sent the Spanish and other prisoners of war to Vendôme I lodged one of them (at the cost of the government), — a young Spaniard on parole. But in spite of his parole he had to report every day to the sub-prefect. He was a grandee of Spain, with a name that ended in *os* and in *dia*, like all Spaniards — Bagos de Férédia. I wrote his name on the register, and you can see it if you like. Oh, he was a handsome young fellow for a Spaniard, who, they tell me, are all ugly. He wasn't more than five feet two or three inches, but he was well made. He had pretty little hands which he took care of — ah, you should just have seen him! He had as many brushes for those hands as a woman has for her head. He had fine black hair, a fiery eye, a rather copper-colored skin, but it was pleasant to look at all the same. He wore the finest linen I ever saw on anyone, and I have lodged princesses, and, among others, General Bertrand, the Duc and Duchesse d'Abrantès, Monsieur Decazes and the King of Spain. He didn't eat much; but he had such polite manners and was always so amiable that I couldn't find fault with him. Oh! I did really love him, though he never said four words a day to me; if anyone spoke to him, he never answered, — that's an oddity those grandees have, a sort of mania, so I'm told. He read his breviary like a priest, and he went to mass and to

all the services regularly. Where do you think he sat? close to the chapel of Madame de Merret. But as he took that place the first time he went to church nobody attached any importance to the fact, though it was remembered later. Besides, he never took his eyes off his prayer-book, poor young man!"

My jovial landlady paused a moment, overcome with her recollections; then she continued her tale:

"From that time on, monsieur, he used to walk up the mountain every evening to the ruins of the castle. It was his only amusement, poor man! and I dare say it recalled his own country; they say Spain is all mountains. From the first he was always late at night in coming in. I used to be uneasy at never seeing him before the stroke of midnight; but we got accustomed to his ways and gave him a key to the door, so that we didn't have to sit up. It so happened that one of our grooms told us that one evening when he went to bathe his horses he thought he saw the grandee in the distance, swimming in the river like a fish. When he came in I told him he had better take care not to get entangled in the sedges; he seemed annoyed that anyone had seen him in the water. Well, monsieur, one day, or rather, one morning, we did not find him in his room; he had not come in. He never returned. I looked about and into everything, and at last I found a writing in a table drawer where he had put away fifty of those Spanish gold coins called 'portugaise,' which bring a hundred francs apiece; there were also diamonds worth ten thousand francs sealed up in a little box. The paper said that in case he should not return some day, he bequeathed to us the money and the diamonds, with a request to found masses of thanksgiving to God for his escape and safety. In those days my husband was living, and he did everything he could to find the young man. But, it was the queerest thing! he found only the Spaniard's clothes under a big stone in a sort of shed on the banks of the river, on the castle side, just opposite to La Grande Bretèche. My husband went

so early in the morning that no one saw him. He burned the clothes after we had read the letter, and gave out, as Comte Férédia requested, that he had fled. The sub-prefect sent the whole gendarmerie on his traces, but bless your heart! they never caught him. Lepas thought the Spaniard had drowned himself. But, monsieur, I never thought so. I think he was somehow mixed up in Madame de Merret's trouble; and I'll tell you why. Rosalie has told me that her mistress had a crucifix she valued so much that she was buried with it, and it was made of ebony and silver; now when Monsieur de Férédia first came to lodge with us he had just such a crucifix, but I soon missed it. Now, monsieur, what do you say? isn't it true that I need have no remorse about those fifteen thousand francs? are not they rightfully mine?"

"Of course they are. But how is it you have never questioned Rosalie?" I said.

"Oh, I have, monsieur; but I can get nothing out of her. That girl is a stone wall. She knows something, but there is no making her talk."

After a few more remarks, my landlady left me, a prey to a romantic curiosity, to vague and darkling thoughts, to a religious terror that was something like the awe which comes upon us when we enter by night a gloomy church and see in the distance beneath the arches a feeble light; a formless figure glides before us, the sweep of a robe — of priest or woman — is heard; we shudder. La Grande Bretèche, with its tall grasses, its shuttered windows, its rusty railings, its barred gates, its deserted rooms, rose fantastically and suddenly before me. I tried to penetrate that mysterious dwelling and seek the knot of this most solemn history, this drama which had killed three persons.

Rosalie became to my eyes the most interesting person in Vendôme. Examining her, I discovered the traces of an ever-present inward thought. In spite of the health which bloomed

upon her dimpled face, there was in her some element of remorse, or of hope; her attitude bespoke a secret, like that of devotees who pray with ardor, or that of a girl who has killed her child and forever after hears its cry. And yet her postures were naïve, and even vulgar; her silly smile was surely not criminal; you would have judged her innocent if only by the large neckerchief of blue and red squares which covered her vigorous bust, clothed, confined, and set off by a gown of purple and white stripes. "No," thought I; "I will not leave Vendôme without knowing the history of La Grande Bretèche. I'll even make love to Rosalie, if it is absolutely necessary."

"Rosalie!" I said to her one day.

"What is it, monsieur?"

"You are not married, are you?"

She trembled slightly.

"Oh! when the fancy takes me to be unhappy there'll be no lack of men," she said laughing.

She recovered instantly from her emotion, whatever it was; for all women, from the great lady to the chambermaid of an inn, have a self-possession of their own.

"You are fresh enough and taking enough to please a lover," I said, watching her. "But tell me, Rosalie, why did you take a place at an inn after you left Madame de Merret? Didn't she leave you an annuity?"

"Oh, yes, she did. But, monsieur, my place is the best in all Vendôme."

This answer was evidently what judges and lawyers call "dilatatory." Rosalie's position in this romantic history was like that of a square on a checkerboard; she was at the very centre, as it were, of its truth and its interest; she seemed to me to be tied into the knot of it. The last chapter of the tale was in her, and, from the moment that I realized this, Rosalie became to me an object of attraction. By dint of studying the girl I came to find in her, as we do in every woman whom

we make a principal object of our attention, that she had a host of good qualities. She was clean, and careful of herself, and therefore handsome. Some two or three weeks after the notary's visit I said to her, suddenly: "Tell me all you know about Madame de Merret."

"Oh, no!" she replied, in a tone of terror, "don't ask me that, monsieur."

I persisted in urging her. Her pretty face darkened, her bright color faded, her eyes lost their innocent, liquid light.

"Well!" she said, after a pause, "if you will have it so, I will tell you; but keep the secret."

"I'll keep it with the faithfulness of a thief, which is the most loyal to be found anywhere."

"If it is the same to you, monsieur, I'd rather you kept it with your own."

Thereupon, she adjusted her neckerchief and posed herself to tell the tale; for it is very certain that an attitude of confidence and security is desirable in order to make a narration. The best tales are told at special hours, — like that in which we are now at table. No one ever told a story well, standing or fasting.

If I were to reproduce faithfully poor Rosalie's diffuse eloquence, a whole volume would scarce suffice. But as the event of which she now gave me a hazy knowledge falls into place between the facts revealed by the garrulity of the notary, and that of Madame Lepas, as precisely as the mean terms of an arithmetical proposition lie between its two extremes, all I have to do is to tell it to you in few words. I therefore give a summary of what I heard from Rosalie.

The chamber which Madame de Merret occupied at La Grande Bretèche was on the ground-floor. A small closet about four feet in depth was made in the wall, and served as a wardrobe. Three months before the evening when the facts I am about to relate to you happened, Madame de Merret had been

so seriously unwell that her husband left her alone in her room and slept himself in a chamber on the first floor. By one of those mere chances which it is impossible to foresee, he returned, on the evening in question, two hours later than usual from the club where he went habitually to read the papers and talk politics with the inhabitants of the town. His wife thought him at home and in bed and asleep. But the invasion of France had been the subject of a lively discussion; the game of billiards was a heated one; he had lost forty francs, an enormous sum for Vendôme, where everybody hoards his money, and where manners and customs are restrained within modest limits worthy of all praise, — which may, perhaps, be the source of a certain true happiness which no Parisian cares anything at all about.

For some time past Monsieur de Merret had been in the habit of asking Rosalie, when he came in, if his wife were in bed. Being told, invariably, that she was, he at once went to his own room with the contentment that comes of confidence and custom. This evening, on returning home, he took it into his head to go to Madame de Merret's room and tell her his ill-luck, perhaps to be consoled for it. During dinner he had noticed that his wife was coquettishly dressed; and as he came from the club the thought crossed his mind that she was no longer ill, that her convalescence had made her lovelier than ever, — a fact he perceived, as husbands are wont to perceive things, too late.

Instead of calling Rosalie, who at that moment was in the kitchen watching a complicated game of "brisque," at which the cook and the coachman were playing, Monsieur de Merret went straight to his wife's room by the light of his lantern, which he had placed on the first step of the stairway. His step, which was easily recognized, resounded under the arches of the corridor. Just as he turned the handle of his wife's door he fancied he heard the door of the closet, which I mentioned to you, shut; but when he entered, Madame de Merret was alone, standing

before the fireplace. The husband thought to himself that Rosalie must be in the closet; and yet a suspicion, which sounded in his ears like the ringing of bells, made him distrustful. He looked at his wife, and fancied he saw something wild and troubled in her eyes.

"You are late in coming home," she said. That voice, usually so pure and gracious, seemed to him slightly changed.

Monsieur de Merret made no answer, for at that moment Rosalie entered the room. Her appearance was a thunderbolt to him. He walked up and down the room with his arms crossed, going from one window to another with a uniform movement.

"Have you heard anything to trouble you?" asked his wife, timidly, while Rosalie was undressing her. He made no answer.

"You can leave the room," said Madame de Merret to the maid. "I will arrange my hair myself."

She guessed some misfortune at the mere sight of her husband's face, and wished to be alone with him.

When Rosalie was gone, or supposed to be gone, for she went no further than the corridor, Monsieur de Merret came to his wife and stood before her. Then he said coldly:

"Madame, there is some one in your closet."

She looked at her husband with a calm air, and answered, "No, monsieur."

That "no" agonized Monsieur de Merret, for he did not believe it. And yet his wife had never seemed purer or more saintly than she did at that moment. He rose and went towards the closet to open the door; Madame de Merret took him by the hand and stopped him; she looked at him with a sad air and said, in a voice that was strangely shaken: "If you find no one, remember that all is over between us."

The infinite dignity of his wife's demeanor restored her husband's respect for her, and suddenly inspired him with one of those resolutions which need some wider field to become immortal.

“No, Josephine,” he said, “I will not look there. In either case we should be separated forever. Listen to me: I know the purity of your soul, I know that you lead a saintly life; you would not commit a mortal sin to save yourself from death.”

At these words, Madame de Merret looked at her husband with a haggard eye.

“Here is your crucifix,” he went on. “Swear to me before God that there is no one in that closet and I will believe you; I will not open that door.”

Madame de Merret took the crucifix and said, “I swear it.”

“Louder!” said her husband; “repeat after me, — I swear before God that there is no person in that closet.”

She repeated the words composedly.

“That is well,” said Monsieur de Merret, coldly. After a moment’s silence he added, examining the ebony crucifix with silver, “That is a beautiful thing; I did not know you possessed it; it is very artistically wrought.”

“I found it at Duvivier’s,” she replied; “he bought it of a Spanish monk when those prisoners-of-war passed through Vendôme last year.”

“Ah!” said Monsieur de Merret, replacing the crucifix on the wall. He rang the bell. Rosalie was not long in answering it. Monsieur de Merret went quickly up to her, took her into the recess of a window on the garden side, and said to her in a low voice:

“I am told that Gorenflot wants to marry you, and that poverty alone prevents it, for you have told him you will not be his wife until he is a master-mason. Is that so?”

“Yes, monsieur.”

“Well, go and find him; tell him to come here at once and bring his trowel and other tools. Take care not to wake any one at his house but himself; he will soon have enough money to satisfy you. No talking to anyone when you leave this room, mind, or —”

He frowned. Rosalie left the room. He called her back; "Here, take my pass-key," he said.

Monsieur de Merret, who had kept his wife in view while giving these orders, now sat down beside her before the fire and began to tell her of his game of billiards, and the political discussions at the club. When Rosalie returned she found Monsieur and Madame de Merret talking amicably.

The master had lately had the ceilings of all the reception rooms on the lower floor restored. Plaster is very scarce at Vendôme, and the carriage of it makes it expensive. Monsieur de Merret had therefore ordered an ample quantity for his own wants, knowing that he could readily find buyers for what was left. The circumstance inspired the idea that now possessed him.

"Monsieur, Gorenflot has come," said Rosalie.

"Bring him in," said her master.

Madame de Merret turned slightly pale when she saw the mason.

"Gorenflot," said her husband, "fetch some bricks from the coach-house, — enough to wall up that door; use the plaster that was left over, to cover the wall."

Then he called Rosalie and the mason to the end of the room, and, speaking in a low voice, added, "Listen to me, Gorenflot; after you have done this work you will sleep in the house; and to-morrow morning I will give you a passport into a foreign country, and six thousand francs for the journey. Go through Paris where I will meet you. There, I will secure to you legally another six thousand francs, to be paid to you at the end of ten years if you still remain out of France. For this sum, I demand absolute silence on what you see and do this night. As for you, Rosalie, I give you a dowry of ten thousand francs, on condition that you marry Gorenflot, and keep silence, if not —"

"Rosalie," said Madame de Merret, "come and brush my hair."

The husband walked up and down the room, watching the

door, the mason, and his wife, but without allowing the least distrust or misgiving to appear in his manner. Gorenflot's work made some noise; under cover of it Madame de Merret said hastily to Rosalie, while her husband was at the farther end of the room. "A thousand francs annuity if you tell Gorenflot to leave a crevice at the bottom"; then aloud she added, composedly, "Go and help the mason."

Monsieur and Madame de Merret remained silent during the whole time it took Gorenflot to wall up the door. The silence was intentional on the part of the husband to deprive his wife of all chance of saying words with a double meaning which might be heard within the closet; with Madame de Merret it was either prudence or pride.

When the wall was more than half up, the mason's tool broke one of the panes of glass in the closet door; Monsieur de Merret's back was at that moment turned away. The action proved to Madame de Merret that Rosalie had spoken to the mason. In that one instant she saw the dark face of a man with black hair and fiery eyes. Before her husband turned the poor creature had time to make a sign with her head which meant "Hope."

By four o'clock, just at dawn, for it was in the month of September, the work was done. Monsieur de Merret remained that night in his wife's room. The next morning, on rising, he said, carelessly: "Ah! I forgot, I must go to the mayor's office about that passport."

He put on his hat, made three steps to the door, then checked himself, turned back, and took the crucifix.

His wife trembled with joy. "He will go to Duvivier's," she thought.

The moment her husband had left the house she rang for Rosalie. "The pick-axe!" she cried, "the pick-axe. I watched how Gorenflot did it; we shall have time to make a hole and close it again."

In an instant Rosalie had brought a sort of cleaver, and her mistress, with a fury no words can describe, began to demolish the wall. She had knocked away a few bricks, and was drawing back to strike a still more vigorous blow with all her strength, when she saw her husband behind her. She fainted.

“Put madame on her bed,” said her husband, coldly.

Foreseeing what would happen, he had laid this trap for his wife; he had written to the mayor, and sent for Duvivier. The jeweller arrived just as the room had been again put in order.

“Duvivier,” said Monsieur de Merret, “I think you bought some crucifixes of those Spaniards who were here last year?”

“No, monsieur, I did not.”

“Very good; thank you,” he said, with a tigerish glance at his wife. “Jean,” he added to the footman, “serve my meals in Madame de Merret’s bedroom; she is very ill, and I shall not leave her till she recovers.”

For twenty days that man remained beside his wife. During the first hours, when sounds were heard behind the walled door, and Josephine tried to implore mercy for the dying stranger, he answered, without allowing her to utter a word:

“You swore upon the cross that no one was there.”

As the tale ended the women rose from table, and the spell under which Bianchon had held them was broken. Nevertheless, several of them were conscious of a cold chill as they recalled the last words.

PART II

HOW TO SEE A STORY IN
EVERYDAY LIFE

PART II

INTRODUCTION

HOW TO SEE A STORY IN EVERYDAY LIFE

IN the preceding section we attempted to tell what a story is by defining its elements as they exist in life and as they are recomposed in the mind of a writer. In the present section we shall illustrate more fully what kind of observations count for the teller of tales, how he hits on a plot, and how he elaborates a situation out of the latent possibilities of incident and character.

But it should be borne in mind that, whether the tales are written out or not, a great deal of daily pleasure may be had by cultivating in one's mind some of the methods of fiction, and in looking at life as if it were material for fiction. For skill in *seeing a story* implies only an aptitude for relating to each other the circumstances of life, for harmonizing them, for giving them emphatic shape and meaning. It implies an aptitude for keeping life fresh and interesting. Hence it is one of the elements of that art of seeing life steadily and seeing it whole which a famous critic has called the aim of culture.

One of the first aids in his craft which the teller of tales discovers is the oft remarked unity of human affairs. He sees that since all our acts, all phases of our character, even our most trifling moods and whims, ultimately affect one another, there may always be for the student of the fiction of life a suggestion in any incident or in any trait of character. It is a link in the endless chain of circumstance and therefore part of a story. Given two or three links, he should be able to construct more of the chain imaginatively. He need not pry into private affairs,

but from what he sees he can make a fictional world, closely resembling the actual world, and there satisfy his curiosity, his sense of cause and effect. This is an exercise in logic, and it should be remarked here that to discover causes and effects, whether in life or in a story, is exercising the logical imagination. All imagination results from the demands of logic. For logic is only our term for expressing the inevitable unity of things in our world. What we mean by seeing a story in everyday life may thus become the most practical training of the mind.

To illustrate some of these points let us look into the possibilities of a story in the following section, *The Necklace*. The plot and characters that Maupassant emphasizes represent but one phase in many suggested by the general situation. That situation is this: a borrowed necklace is lost, and to pay for the one replaced the losers work a life-time, only to discover at last that the original was not genuine, but paste, worth at most a few hundred francs. This is the plot element in its broadest terms. It can be made the theme of a dozen different stories by as many changes of emphasis. Maupassant's treatment concerns an ambitious young wife who dreams of social success, and who, finally, for the sake of an evening at a ball, spends most of her husband's savings on a dress, and then, not quite satisfied, borrows a diamond necklace from a friend. She loses the necklace, and to pay for the one they substitute she and her husband work like drudges for years. In the end they learn the truth. The necklace was paste — like madame's social ambitions.

It may seem a simple matter to manage this plot. Indeed, I have heard people say that anyone who had happened to think of this clever little notion could most certainly *sell it*. There are, however, a good many points to attend to before it will become a logical affair. Why should madame care so much about going to the ball? Why must she have a necklace? Why did she not at once tell her friend, Madame Forestier, about

losing it? Or why, before this, did not Madame Forestier tell her that it was only paste? Monsieur Loisel was a practical sort of man; why did he not look at the affair more clearly? In Maupassant's handling of the characters all these questions are answered with perfect reason — that is, you do not raise such questions at all. The more you think over the story, as he wrote it, the more logically imagined you will perceive it to be — to the point of genius.

The first axiom for seeing a story in everyday life is, then: *See it as part of a logical sequence of cause and effect.*

We said that Maupassant's story represents but one phase of a general plot. If the emphasis is shifted definitely from the fact of losing the necklace to the people who lose it, we may see a different story forming round this plot. It might, for example, be the story of how the husband and wife, Monsieur and Madame Loisel, in the face of their misfortune, became more united, less trivial, developing real energy and real ambition; and how, when they discover that they have been working to replace a paste necklace, that makes no difference to them; they themselves have become genuine. Or, it might be the story of a romantic little wife who sought to hold the affection of her rather brutal husband by dressing well and trying always to appear beautiful. For fear of him, this Madame Loisel would have to contrive all by herself the replacing of the necklace. But the discovery of its value might still bring them together, teaching the husband the pathetic effects of his brutality and the extent of his wife's devotion. Again, with another shift of emphasis, there would be the humorously pathetic tale of Monsieur Loisel — how he had for years been trying to make ends meet in spite of his young wife's extravagance, and how he was almost glad to have her realize at last, by whatever means, that economy ought to be their rule. For a few days Madame Loisel begins a new life, with repentance and resolutions. Then she discovers that the necklace is only paste, and

immediately celebrates by plunging into greater extravagance than ever. Each of these stories would require a slightly different arrangement of the facts. In the last instance, for example, the Loisels should not be very poor, and the lost necklace need not be so costly as to have ruined them. There might also be various stories with Madame Forestier as the motivating force. How she pretended to Madame Loisel that the necklace was genuine, and (for reasons to be carefully developed by the writer) was too proud to admit her rather harmless deceit. Or it might be that Madame Forestier, on learning that the necklace was lost, suddenly conceived the notion (for reasons to be carefully developed by the writer) of making a few thousand francs on its value. Complex and dramatic situations should easily result from such a start in falsehood. The story of the cabman in whose cab the necklace was probably lost could be written up from various points of view: his temptation to keep the necklace; or his discovery, on trying to sell it, that it was paste, and all that might conceivably follow from that. The drama of this man, treated in conjunction with some of the other elements of the larger plot, would lead to rather exciting developments. *To Fool the Ignorant* is a version of the cabman's story that shows how far the constructive imagination of an undergraduate will travel in the borders of this very interesting case.

It is true that so versatile, so workable a plot as that of *The Necklace* is rare. Most plots neither are in themselves so pointed, nor do they make so large an area of suggestion. On the other hand, a writer with small logic and less imagination would probably not see in the bare plot, or what we call the plot element, a story *in life*. He would see only a snappy anecdote, a strange case. Written up solely for the surprise of the dénouement, this plot will make little impression. It is only when related to character that it takes on meaning; for only then does the unusual element in the plot — the fact that

the diamonds turn out to be paste — humanize and moralize the whole.

Thus we come to a second axiom: *In order to see a plot as part of a logical sequence in life, look at it from the point of view of some one character, or some character relationship, and make it over to fit special conditions.*

From these ideas it may properly be concluded that most of those infrequent, strange, dramatic incidents, and those odd and whimsical traits of character about which we often exclaim that they would make a story if we only knew how to write them up, are by no means the best material for the imagination. They belong to no thoroughly conceivable sequence. They suggest few relationships. They are thus often quite *unrelatable*. If persistently made into a story, they make of it, in turn, a mere *tour de force*.

We do not mean to say that the strange and the whimsical are never good subjects for fiction (for *making over*). Too obviously, they form a large part of current fiction. But the reason why most stories dealing with such things die within the month or the year they are born is a point in our case. It is not because they deal with the exceptional rather than the universal, — for there is no such distinction in true art, — but because they fail to relate the exceptional logically to life. It is because they see their phenomena as apart from life rather than as a part of life. In order to emphasize the strange, the melodramatic, the balefully tragic, they isolate it. Such elements a logical imagination, on the contrary, nearly always relates to life, or at least makes into a commentary on life.

Some of the most significant masters of current literature are masters of the strange. There are Mrs. Wharton and Joseph Conrad and Rudyard Kipling as the latest supreme examples. But let us take a name more solidly famous. George Eliot's most artistic book might well have been, in the hands of Robert Chambers, Rex Beach, and other super-writers of the moment,

only an excellent dime novel. The villain, Dunstan Cass, finds himself badly out of funds. He sells his brother Godfrey's horse, Wildfire, for a hundred and twenty pounds. But, unfortunately, before the money has been paid over, Dunstan rides Wildfire at a stake fence and kills him. He then robs an old miser of two bags of gold and immediately falls into a pond outside the miser's hut. The weight of the gold drowns him. A few days later Godfrey's despised, opium-eating wife freezes to death in a lane near by, and her baby crawls through the miser's doorway. The miser at first thinks that the child's golden head is his gold come back, but surprise covers his disappointment and he takes the child in. Thus the death of his blackmailing brother, the death of his opium-eating wife, and the disposal of his golden-haired daughter all conspire to allow Godfrey to marry his sweetheart, Nancy Lammeter. Thus stated, how melodramatic — fit only for a "movie" — do the plot elements of a great classic appear. The genius of logical imagination renders these elements consonant and full of significance.

So, in the selections that follow, it will be seen that the incidents of *The Fiancée* or of *A Page From a Doctor's Life* are typical rather than exceptional, and that the very clever plots of *Wellington* and *Left Behind* are striking only because they appeal to our sense of fitness.

The problem of the story-writer who wishes to make an effect with the unusual is, then, not to choose the unusual for its own sake, but for the sake of throwing over it a coloring of imagination to render it significant for the rest of experience. Mrs. Sembower's story of *The Chaperon* has an odd enough plot. It is surely an infrequent occurrence for a country girl to go alone to the city to have her portrait painted because she has won a newspaper guessing contest. It may be regarded as only less infrequent that the "city artist" should fall in love with her. A student, starting to work up a story on this undefined

plot, is apt to think of the chief composing force in it as the inevitable love affair — “The girl wins the prize and of course the painter falls in love with her, so she wins a husband, too. The romance is the point to emphasize.” But these plot elements are not the composing forces of Mrs. Sembower’s story. The chief composing force is the girl’s home life and her reaction upon city conventions. This is a plain everyday motif, and it touches on the romantic elements in the plot for emphasis of itself. The reader feels that the story forms not a whimsical, but a thoroughly mature, comment on manners.

Our third axiom therefore results from the preceding illustrations: *An incident or a character becomes significant, not when we isolate it, but when we see so many of its contacts and bearings that it begins to play a part in our imagination.*

That is, whenever we see the *full* meaning of any act, trait of character, emotion, or opinion, we see a whole story. And whenever we can suggest the whole story through the little of it that we have space to tell, we have seen the story *in life*. The faculty for doing this is logical imagination, and we shall conclude this chapter with a further word about that faculty.

We began our discussion by remarking on the unity of life. This unity is felt rather than known. The planet is too big, too shadowy, to allow us to *know* very many things outside the little lighted spot of our personal experience. If anyone could really make the great analysis of things as they are — we all like to guess how they ought to be — he could rule the planet. But because the world is so big, the future is dim and seems dimly related to the past. When, however, we shut off a corner of the world and limit our attention to that, we can make a temporary explanation of causes and effects. The act of doing this is making a story, and the skill required for it is logical imagination. For this corner must be described logically — just as if it were part of the actual world; and yet it must be imaginary — just as if it were a little world in itself where we know the

extent of all influences and relationships. Logical imagination is the highest faculty of mind, the faculty which great philosophers, great dramatists, great statesmen have in common.

The great stories are those which most perfectly construct an imaginary corner of the world. They are such novels as *Middlemarch* or *Far from the Madding Crowd*, from which we quote in Section IV. After reading *Middlemarch* you know nearly one hundred people. You know thirty of them well enough to say not only what they think of each other and how their affairs affect each other, but also well enough to prophesy what their opinions and acts would be in a totally new set of contingencies. *Middlemarch* is a little world in itself, something like your own locality, but differing chiefly, when you stop to think of it, in the greater definiteness of its affairs. From it an infinite number of confusing influences and extra possibilities are shut off in order to permit us to see life there in its story form. So long as *Middlemarch* is a place in fiction we can see it steadily and see it whole; put it back into its actual geography, call it your own town of Madison, Wisconsin, or Northampton, Massachusetts, and it grows instantly less clear. The reason is that it now becomes part of the whole world. If we could surround Madison with a brass wall, all its affairs would gradually become definite and its problems would be solvable. It would be just like a place in fiction — and it is a nice question whether you would prefer to live within the brass wall or without it. At all events, if you can see the affairs of your town as fiction you will be developing the kind of imagination that one day may help to straighten them out.¹

¹ As an exercise of the logical imagination the writer once gave his students the following problem to solve: If your state were to be surrounded to-night by an impassable brass wall, what would happen during the first week of isolation? What would be the state of affairs after a year? What would be the state of affairs after a century? Would the people finally be more or less contented than before? Would the people inside be more efficient than those outside? Would they take more interest or less interest in their public affairs? Would

Fiction has of late influenced the world more than any other art. So, whether you are dealing with a whole countryside, as in *Middlemarch*, or with two people in a tenement, as in *A Page from a Doctor's Life*, you are trying to hold a bit of the world steady enough for a moment to see it straight, and the exercise is one which, could it become a habit of mind among our citizens, would make the world over more rapidly than the plans of all the politicians of Europe and America.

they be broader or narrower minded? Would the people inside the wall want to get out more than the people outside would want to get in?

For the first week of this discussion we advanced in theory no faster than the brass-bound people would probably do in practice. All was contradiction and confusion. But soon certain fundamental policies defined themselves, and then the more fanciful imagination of the class began to work logically. We arrived at the following airy conclusions: The effort to pass the impassable wall would never cease — and this would prove to be the greatest wit-sharpener and tool-sharpener and the greatest boon to intramural civilization. The relation between population and means to a completely healthy life would adjust itself with surprising rapidity. This would be partly effected, as in certain South Sea islands, by a scheme of birth control. There would be within a hundred years a marked change in the character of the intramural race owing to food and climatic influences. People would become more and more alike, and would react against this tendency so strongly that there would be a whimsical and amusing faddism throughout society. As an instance of what changes in the countryside would be most apparent to the eye, we discovered vast spaces glassed over and wonderfully ventilated, in which to grow tropical products. We found that dress, traffic, and all the mechanics of daily life would soon become so perfect that everyone would have the chance to reach an advanced state of intellectual culture, but that this achievement would not be the greatest source of honor or of personal satisfaction. That alone would come from personal contribution to work on the vast excavations and mines at the great wall. From this final conclusion we proceeded to look at the startling analogy in metal-bound Europe of to-day.

VII. THE FIANCÉE ¹

MARGUERITE AUDOUX

[The art of looking at things vividly is, of course, essential to developing stories out of everyday experience. In this sketch, by the author of that very vivid book, *Marie Claire*, you meet in a railway carriage a pleasant country couple who are going to the city to their son's wedding. They have not yet seen the fiancée, — they are all expectation. One of the other passengers remarks humorously that you yourself are perhaps the fiancée come to get a secret look at your future parents. This little situation, in no way developed into a plot, but only *looked at* with that sharpness of imagination which is always so charming in *Marie Claire*, is all there is of the sketch. It is but a glimpse, yet how remotely suggestive.]

I WAS going back to Paris after a few days' holiday. When I got to the station the train was crowded. I peeped into every carriage, hoping to find a place. There was one in the last carriage, but two big baskets, out of which ducks and hens were peeping, filled the seat. After a long moment's hesitation, I decided to get in. I apologized for disturbing the passengers, but a man in a blouse said:

“Wait a moment, mademoiselle; I'll take the baskets down.”

And while I held the basket of fruit which he had on his knees, he slipped the baskets with the ducks and hens under the seat. The ducks did not like it, and told us so. The hens dropped their heads as if they had been insulted, and the peasant's wife talked to them, calling them by their names.

When I was seated, and the ducks were quiet, the passenger opposite me asked the peasant whether he was taking the birds to market.

“No, sir,” said the man. “I am taking them to my son, who is going to be married the day after to-morrow.”

¹ Reprinted from *Everybody's Magazine* with the kind permission of the editors and of the author.

His face was beaming, and he looked around as if he wanted everybody to know how happy he was. An old woman who was hunched up in the corner among three pillows, and who filled double the space she should occupy, began grumbling about peasants who took up such a lot of room in the train.

The train started, and the passenger who had asked about the birds was opening his newspaper, when the peasant said to him:

“My boy is in Paris. He is working in a shop, and he is going to marry a young lady who is in a shop, too.”

The passenger let his open paper drop to his knees. He held it with one hand and, leaning forward a little, asked:

“Is the fiancée pretty?”

“We do not know,” said the man. “We haven’t seen her yet.”

“Really?” said the passenger. “And if she were ugly, and you did not like her?”

“That is one of the things that can always happen,” answered the countryman. “But I think we shall like her, because our boy is too fond of us to take an ugly wife.”

“Besides,” said the little woman next me, “if she pleases our Philip, she will please us, too.”

She turned to me, and her gentle eyes were full of smiles. She had a little, round, fresh face, and I could not believe that she was the mother of a son who was old enough to marry. She wanted to know whether I was going to Paris too, and when I said yes, the passenger opposite began to joke.

“I should like to bet,” he said, “that this young lady is the fiancée. She has come to meet her father- and mother-in-law, without telling them who she is.”

Everybody looked at me, and I got very red. The countryman and his wife said, together:

“We should be very pleased if it were true.”

I told them that it was not true, but the passenger reminded them that I had walked up and down twice as if I were looking

for somebody, and that I had been a long time making up my mind to get into that carriage.

All the other passengers laughed, and I explained as well as I could that this was the only place I had found.

"Never mind," said the countrywoman. "I shall be very happy if our daughter-in-law is like you."

"Yes," said her husband. "I hope she will look like you."

The passenger kept up his joke; he glanced at me maliciously and said to the peasants:

"When you get to Paris you will see that I am not wrong. Your son will say to you, 'Here is my fiancée.'"

A little while afterward the countrywoman turned toward me, fumbled in her basket, and pulled out a cake, saying that she had made it herself that morning. I didn't know how to refuse her, but I said I had a bad cold and a touch of fever, and the cake went back into the basket. Then she offered me a bunch of grapes, which I was obliged to accept. And I had the greatest difficulty in preventing her husband from going to get me something hot to drink when the train stopped.

As I looked at these good people, who were so anxious to love the wife their son had chosen, I felt sorry that I was not to be their daughter-in-law. I knew how sweet their affection would have been to me. I had never known my parents, and had always lived among strangers.

Every now and again I caught them staring at me.

When we arrived at the station in Paris I helped them lift their baskets down, and showed them the way out. I moved a little away from them as I saw a tall young man rush at them and hug them. He kissed them over and over again, one after the other. They smiled and looked very happy. They did not hear the porters shouting as they bumped into them with the luggage.

I followed them to the gate. The son had passed one arm through the handle of the basket with the hens, and thrown

the other round his mother's waist. Like his father, he had happy eyes and a broad smile.

Outside it was nearly dark. I turned up the collar of my coat, and I remained a few steps behind the happy old couple, while their son went to look for a cab. The countryman stroked the head of a big hen with spots of all colors, and said to his wife:

"If we had known that she was not our daughter-in-law, we might have given her the spotted one."

His wife stroked the spotted hen, too, and said: "Yes, if we had known."

She made a movement toward the crowd of people who were coming out of the station, and, looking into the distance, said:

"She is going off with all those people."

The son came back with a cab. He put his father and mother into it and got up on to the box by the driver. He sat sideways so as not to lose sight of them. He looked strong and gentle, and I thought, "His fiancée is a happy girl."

When the cab had disappeared I went slowly out into the streets. I could not make up my mind to go back to my lonely little room. I was twenty years old, and nobody had ever spoken of love to me.

VIII. A PAGE FROM THE DOCTOR'S LIFE

F. W. STUART, JR.

[Harvard University]

[Like the last, this piece shows how to color the fictional element in the everyday material about one. It does not show how to relate it to a significant plot, as in the case of the succeeding selections. How to emphasize *plot*, how to imbed it in the fictional element and make it truly formative there, is, of course, the writer's most important problem. To make these two sketches over into stories with plot is an interesting exercise.]

POVERTY VILLAGE was well named. So evident was this fact that its inhabitants accepted the name without protest. As is the habit of "Poverty Villages," it stood on the flats near the water. Its rows of neglected, weather-stained houses teemed with unfortunates whose share of this world's goods just sufficed to keep body and soul together. Poverty was the lot of all who lived within its borders, and only too often poverty was the near neighbor of pauperism and crime. Few were they who came from the outer world into Poverty Village, and these usually to minister to its miseries — the policeman and the priest, the nurse, the doctor, and the undertaker.

Thus it happened that one unusually hot August afternoon the "city doctor" was going about Poverty Village waging his unequal battle against want and ignorance. Wearily he turned into an alley, stopped for a moment in front of one of its houses, and gazed, almost wistfully, at the knob of the door-bell. In Poverty Village the door-bell has only one purpose. To it the undertaker attaches the piece of crape which tells of death. A look of disappointment passed over the doctor's face as he saw that death had not yet come to bring relief to the unfortunate whom he was about to visit. With a heavy heart he

climbed the stairway and entered a bare, scantily furnished room.

At an open window sat the patient, a young man about twenty-seven years old. The extreme emaciation, the hectic flush, and the hacking cough told only too plainly that consumption was soon to count him another victim. In response to the doctor's "How are you?" he replied eagerly, "About the same. I'm glad you've come." His voice was so hoarse as to be hardly intelligible. He was suffering from tubercular laryngitis. He could speak only with great difficulty, and was unable to swallow at all until his larynx had been painted with cocaine. So three times a day the doctor came to give him a few moments of relief, a few moments which he might use to take a little food and drink.

As the doctor took out his instruments and prepared to perform his act of mercy, the patient, with a nod toward the table, said, "See what they have brought me."

Sadness and sarcasm could be detected in the weak, painful voice. There on the table were a chocolate cake, a Bible, and a hymn book, brought by the friendly charity visitor who had charge of "the case." The doctor could not repress a smile as he looked at the rich cake, which would have proved a severe test even for his robust digestion.

He picked up the Bible, one of the kind so often distributed by religious societies. It was printed on poor paper and with such fine type that it would seem as if the Bible societies and the oculists must have entered into a secret compact whereby both were to benefit. With an air of impatience the doctor laid the Bible down, and picked up the hymn book. This he opened at random, and his eyes fell on the words

"One sweetly solemn thought
Comes to me o'er and o'er,
Nearer my Father's house am I
Than e'er I was before."

The doctor had not attended church since his college days, but, as he read the words of the hymn, he was carried back to his Sunday school, to the days when he pictured the Almighty as an old man with a long white beard, seated in an armchair such as was to be found in every New England parlor. He remembered how lustily he had joined in singing those words, when the cares of life and the solemnity of death were unknown to him.

But now in the presence of the sufferer who was really so near his Father's house there seemed something incongruous in the fact that he, who was doing his best to fight off death, should read of this sweetly solemn thought. Perhaps it was with regret that the doctor looked back to those careless schoolboy days. His thoughts were interrupted by the querulous voice of the patient, who said, "Doctor, please hurry. I've suffered to-day terribly from the heat. I'm so thirsty."

The doctor thus called to his duty laid down the hymn book, and in a moment had deftly painted the patient's throat with cocaine. He then reached under the sink and drew forth the patient's dinner. And how insufficient a dinner it was — a pint of milk which through long standing had become warm and insipid.

Relieved of his pain and somewhat refreshed by the milk, the sick man brightened considerably and began to apologize to the doctor for his impatience. He became confidential and related his sad story, only too familiar to the doctor — the old, old story of bad heredity, bad environment, and bad habits. Like many an ill-nourished boy he had early acquired a love for stimulants, and alcohol had made him an easy prey to consumption. The talking soon tired him, and with a look at the chocolate cake he finished by saying, "I would give a dozen of them for one cold glass of beer."

There was something so earnest, so pitiful, in his manner

that the doctor immediately seized the milk can and hurried to the nearest bar-room. He returned with the beer, and then bade his patient good-bye until evening.

In the evening his patient appeared to be quite comfortable and in a very happy mood. With considerable humor he told how the charity visitor had called and caught him drinking beer. His description of the horror of that most worthy woman as she gazed now at the untouched cake and now at the empty can was full of homely wit. One thing troubled him a little. He had felt obliged to tell her that it was the doctor who had purchased the beer for him. That she had made clear to him her opinion of a man who apparently preferred *Puck*, *Judge*, and beer to Bible, hymn book, and cake, was quite evident. And he feared that she would at the first opportunity make things unpleasant for his real friend. He was quickly reassured on this point by the doctor, who, however, kept discreetly to himself his opinion of some of that form of religious dissipation which passes for "charity work." Soon, doctor and patient parted with a "goodnight" which sounded more cheerful than for a long time.

Toward morning a loud ring called the doctor to his door. There stood the mother of his patient sobbing in agony and crying: "Come quick; my boy is dead." When the doctor reached the house he found the patient lying, as it were, peacefully asleep, but his sleep was the sleep of death.

With a sense of relief the doctor looked for the last time into the upturned face, and left the house. He went down to the foot of the street and stood at a place where he could look out over the harbor. Dawn had just begun to tinge the eastern sky. The atmosphere was like the stillness of a dream. The doctor tried for some moments to understand the mystery that lay behind him. In the sad story of the young man there appeared a peculiar irony, especially in the fact that the enemy

which had lured him to his death had given him his last painless moments. As the doctor recalled the sufferings and thought of the quiet of the death chamber, it seemed as if in this case one might well speak of the Angel of Death.

Then, a milkwagon rushing past disturbed his thoughts. He turned about and went on into the toil of the day.

IX. THE NECKLACE ¹

GUY DE MAUPASSANT

[This story is commented upon at length in the Introduction to Part II, pages 110-113. It is interesting to discuss what may have been the initial suggestion from which any story is written. In this case, was it the character of Madame Loisel, a type of woman that the author wished to define; or, was it the clever surprise at the end of the narrative? This surprise, at first thought, strikes us as the outstanding and original feature of the plot.]

SHE was one of those pretty and charming girls who are sometimes, as if by a mistake of destiny, born in a family of clerks. She had no dowry, no expectations, no means of being known, understood, loved, wedded, by any rich and distinguished man; and she let herself be married to a little clerk at the Ministry of Public Instruction.

She dressed plainly because she could not dress well, but she was as unhappy as though she had really fallen from her proper station; since with women there is neither caste nor rank; and beauty, grace, and charm act instead of family and birth. Natural fineness, instinct for what is elegant, suppleness of wit, are the sole hierarchy, and make from women of the people the equals of the very greatest ladies.

She suffered ceaselessly, feeling herself born for all the delicacies and all the luxuries. She suffered from the poverty of her dwelling, from the wretched look of the walls, from the worn-out chairs, from the ugliness of the curtains. All those things, of which another woman of her rank would never even have been conscious, tortured her and made her angry. The sight of the little Breton peasant who did her humble house-work aroused in her regrets which were despairing, and distracted

¹ Reprinted from *The Odd Number* with the kind permission of Harper and Brothers.

dreams. She thought of the silent antechambers hung with Oriental tapestry, lit by tall bronze candelabra, and of the two great footmen in knee-breeches who sleep in the big arm-chairs, made drowsy by the heavy warmth of the hot-air stove. She thought of the long *salons* fitted up with ancient silk, of the delicate furniture carrying priceless curiosities, and of the coquettish perfumed boudoirs made for talks at five o'clock with intimate friends, with men famous and sought after, whom all women envy and whose attention they all desire.

When she sat down to dinner, before the round table covered with a table-cloth three days old, opposite her husband, who uncovered the soup-tureen and declared with an enchanted air, "Ah, the good *pot-au-feu!* I don't know anything better than that," she thought of dainty dinners, of shining silverware, of tapestry which peopled the walls with ancient personages and with strange birds flying in the midst of a fairy forest; and she thought of delicious dishes served on marvellous plates, and of the whispered gallantries which you listen to with a sphinx-like smile, while you are eating the pink flesh of a trout or the wings of a quail.

She had no dresses, no jewels, nothing. And she loved nothing but that; she felt made for that. She would so have liked to please, to be envied, to be charming, to be sought after.

She had a friend, a former school-mate at the convent, who was rich, and whom she did not like to go and see any more, because she suffered so much when she came back.

But one evening her husband returned home with a triumphant air, and holding a large envelope in his hand.

"There," said he, "here is something for you."

She tore the paper sharply, and drew out a printed card which bore these words:

"The Minister of Public Instruction and Mme. Georges Ramponneau request the honor of M. and Mme. Loisel's com-

pany at the palace of the Ministry on Monday evening, January 18th."

Instead of being delighted, as her husband hoped, she threw the invitation on the table with disdain, murmuring:

"What do you want me to do with that?"

"But, my dear, I thought you would be glad. You never go out, and this is such a fine opportunity. I had awful trouble to get it. Everyone wants to go; it is very select, and they are not giving many invitations to clerks. The whole official world will be there."

She looked at him with an irritated eye, and she said, impatiently:

"And what do you want me to put on my back?"

He had not thought of that; he stammered:

"Why, the dress you go to the theatre in. It looks very well, to me."

He stopped, distracted, seeing that his wife was crying. Two great tears descended slowly from the corners of her eyes towards the corners of her mouth. He stuttered:

"What's the matter? What's the matter?"

But, by a violent effort, she had conquered her grief, and she replied, with a calm voice, while she wiped her wet cheeks:

"Nothing. Only I have no dress, and therefore I can't go to this ball. Give your card to some colleague whose wife is better equipped than I."

He was in despair. He resumed:

"Come, let us see, Mathilde. How much would it cost, a suitable dress, which you could use on other occasions, something very simple?"

She reflected several seconds, making her calculations and wondering also what sum she could ask without drawing on herself an immediate refusal and a frightened exclamation from the economical clerk.

Finally, she replied, hesitatingly:

"I don't know exactly, but I think I could manage it with four hundred francs."

He had grown a little pale, because he was laying aside just that amount to buy a gun and treat himself to a little shooting next summer on the plain of Nanterre, with several friends who went to shoot larks down there, of a Sunday.

But he said:

"All right. I will give you four hundred francs. And try to have a pretty dress."

The day of the ball drew near, and Mme. Loisel seemed sad, uneasy, anxious. Her dress was ready, however. Her husband said to her one evening:

"What is the matter? Come, you've been so queer these last three days."

And she answered:

"It annoys me not to have a single jewel, not a single stone, nothing to put on. I shall look like distress. I should almost rather not go at all."

He resumed:

"You might wear natural flowers. It's very stylish at this time of the year. For ten francs you can get two or three magnificent roses."

She was not convinced.

"No; there's nothing more humiliating than to look poor among other women who are rich."

But her husband cried:

"How stupid you are! Go look up your friend Mme. Forestier, and ask her to lend you some jewels. You're quite thick enough with her to do that."

She uttered a cry of joy:

"It's true. I never thought of it."

The next day she went to her friend and told of her distress. Mme. Forestier went to a wardrobe with a glass door, took

out a large jewel-box, brought it back, opened it, and said to Mme. Loisel:

“Choose, my dear.”

She saw first of all some bracelets, then a pearl necklace, then a Venetian cross, gold and precious stones of admirable workmanship. She tried on the ornaments before the glass, hesitated, could not make up her mind to part with them, to give them back. She kept asking:

“Haven't you any more?”

“Why, yes. Look. I don't know what you like.”

All of a sudden she discovered, in a black satin box, a superb necklace of diamonds and her heart began to beat with an immoderate desire. Her hands trembled as she took it. She fastened it around her throat, outside her high-necked dress, and remained lost in ecstasy at the sight of herself.

Then she asked, hesitating, filled with anguish:

“Can you lend me that, only that?”

“Why, yes, certainly.”

She sprang upon the neck of her friend, kissed her passionately, then fled with her treasure.

The day of the ball arrived. Mme. Loisel made a great success. She was prettier than them all, elegant, gracious, smiling, and crazy with joy. All the men looked at her, asked her name, endeavored to be introduced. All the attachés of the Cabinet wanted to waltz with her. She was remarked by the minister himself.

She danced with intoxication, with passion, made drunk by pleasure, forgetting all, in the triumph of her beauty, in the glory of her success, in a sort of cloud of happiness composed of all this homage, of all this admiration, of all these awakened desires, and of that sense of complete victory which is so sweet to woman's heart.

She went away about four o'clock in the morning. Her

husband had been sleeping since midnight, in a little deserted anteroom, with three other gentlemen whose wives were having a very good time.

He threw over her shoulders the wraps which he had brought, modest wraps of common life, whose poverty contrasted with the elegance of the ball dress. She felt this and wanted to escape so as not to be remarked by the other women, who were enveloping themselves in costly furs.

Loisel held her back.

“Wait a bit. You will catch cold outside. I will go and call a cab.”

But she did not listen to him, and rapidly descended the stairs. When they were in the street they did not find a carriage; and they began to look for one, shouting after the cabmen whom they saw passing by at a distance.

They went down towards the Seine, in despair, shivering with cold. At last they found on the quay one of those ancient noctambulant coupés which, exactly as if they were ashamed to show their misery during the day, are never seen round Paris until after nightfall.

It took them to their door in the Rue des Martyrs, and once more, sadly, they climbed up homeward. All was ended, for her. And as to him, he reflected that he must be at the Ministry at ten o'clock.

She removed the wraps, which covered her shoulders, before the glass, so as once more to see herself in all her glory. But suddenly she uttered a cry. She had no longer the necklace around her neck!

Her husband, already half-undressed, demanded:

“What is the matter with you?”

She turned madly towards him:

“I have — I have — I’ve lost Mme. Forestier’s necklace.”

He stood up, distracted.

“What! — how? — Impossible!”

And they looked in the folds of her dress, in the folds of her cloak, in her pockets, everywhere. They did not find it.

He asked:

“You’re sure you had it on when you left the ball?”

“Yes, I felt it in the vestibule of the palace.”

“But if you had lost it in the street we should have heard it fall. It must be in the cab.”

“Yes. Probably. Did you take his number?”

“No. And you, didn’t you notice it?”

“No.”

They looked, thunderstruck, at one another. At last Loisel put on his clothes.

“I shall go back on foot,” said he, “over the whole route which we have taken, to see if I can’t find it.”

And he went out. She sat waiting on a chair in her ball dress, without strength to go to bed, overwhelmed, without fire, without a thought.

Her husband came back about seven o’clock. He had found nothing.

He went to Police Headquarters, to the newspaper offices, to offer a reward; he went to the cab companies — everywhere, in fact, whither he was urged by the least suspicion of hope.

She waited all day, in the same condition of mad fear before this terrible calamity.

Loisel returned at night with a hollow, pale face; he had discovered nothing.

“You must write to your friend,” said he, “that you have broken the clasp of her necklace and that you are having it mended. That will give us time to turn round.”

She wrote at his dictation.

At the end of a week they had lost all hope.

And Loisel, who had aged five years, declared:

“We must consider how to replace that ornament.”

The next day they took the box which had contained it, and

they went to the jeweller whose name was found within. He consulted his books.

“It was not I, madame, who sold that necklace; I must simply have furnished the case.”

Then they went from jeweller to jeweller, searching for a necklace like the other, consulting their memories, sick both of them with chagrin and with anguish.

They found, in a shop at the Palais Royal, a string of diamonds which seemed to them exactly like the one they looked for. It was worth forty thousand francs. They could have it for thirty-six.

So they begged the jeweller not to sell it for three days yet. And they made a bargain that he should buy it back for thirty-four thousand francs, in case they found the other one before the end of February.

Loisel possessed eighteen thousand francs which his father had left him. He would borrow the rest.

He did borrow, asking a thousand francs of one, five hundred of another, five louis here, three louis there. He gave notes, took up ruinous obligations, dealt with usurers, and all the race of lenders. He compromised all the rest of his life, risked his signature without even knowing if he could meet it; and, frightened by the pains yet to come, by the black misery which was about to fall upon him, by the prospect of all the physical privations and of all the moral tortures which he was to suffer, he went to get the new necklace, putting down upon the merchant's counter thirty-six thousand francs.

When Mme. Loisel took back the necklace, Mme. Forestier said to her, with a chilly manner:

“You should have returned it sooner, I might have needed it.”

She did not open the case, as her friend had so much feared. If she had detected the substitution, what would she have thought, what would she have said? Would she not have taken Mme. Loisel for a thief?

Mme. Loisel now knew the horrible existence of the needy.

She took her part, moreover, all on a sudden, with heroism. That dreadful debt must be paid. She would pay it. They dismissed their servant; they changed their lodgings; they rented a garret under the roof.

She came to know what heavy housework meant and the odious cares of the kitchen. She washed the dishes, using her rosy nails on the greasy pots and pans. She washed the dirty linen, the shirts, and the dish-cloths, which she dried upon a line; she carried the slops down to the street every morning, and carried up the water, stopping for breath at every landing. And, dressed like a woman of the people, she went to the fruiterer, the grocer, the butcher, her basket on her arm, bargaining, insulted, defending her miserable money sou by sou.

Each month they had to meet some notes, renew others, obtain more time.

Her husband worked in the evening making a fair copy of some tradesman's accounts, and late at night he often copied manuscript for five sous a page.

And this life lasted ten years.

At the end of ten years they had paid everything, everything, with the rates of usury, and the accumulations of the compound interest.

Mme. Loisel looked old now. She had become the woman of impoverished households — strong and hard and rough. With frowsy hair, skirts askew, and red hands, she talked loud while washing the floor with great swishes of water. But sometimes, when her husband was at the office, she sat down near the window, and she thought of that gay evening of long ago, of that ball where she had been so beautiful and so fêted.

What would have happened if she had not lost that necklace? Who knows? who knows? How life is strange and changeful! How little a thing is needed for us to be lost or to be saved!

But, one Sunday, having gone to take a walk in the Champs Elysées to refresh herself from the labors of the week, she sud-

denly perceived a woman who was leading a child. It was Mme. Forestier, still young, still beautiful, still charming.

Mme. Loisel felt moved. Was she going to speak to her? Yes, certainly. And now that she had paid, she was going to tell her all about it. Why not?

She went up.

“Good-day, Jeanne.”

The other, astonished to be familiarly addressed by this plain good-wife, did not recognize her at all, and stammered:

“But — madame! — I do not know — You must have mistaken.”

“No. I am Mathilde Loisel.”

Her friend uttered a cry.

“Oh, my poor Mathilde! How you are changed!”

“Yes, I have had days hard enough, since I have seen you, days wretched enough — and that because of you!”

“Of me! How so?”

“Do you remember that diamond necklace which you lent me to wear at the ministerial ball?”

“Yes. Well?”

“Well, I lost it.”

“What do you mean? You brought it back.”

“I brought you back another just like it. And for this we have been ten years paying. You can understand that it was not easy for us, us who had nothing. At last it is ended, and I am very glad.”

Mme. Forestier had stopped.

“You say that you bought a necklace of diamonds to replace mine?”

“Yes. You never noticed it, then! They were very like.”

And she smiled with a joy which was proud and naïve at once.

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!”

X. "TO FOOL THE IGNORANT"

ERNEST L. MEYER

[University of Wisconsin]

[This story is derived from the preceding, but its plot covers a whole new area. The question of what was the initial suggestion from which this story was written, can here be definitely answered, and the development of the writer's imagination can be logically traced. (See the note on the preceding story, page 127.)]

IT was late at night when Mathieu Le Farge came in from the stables and entered his little home on the Rue St. Antoine. The lamp was burning on the kitchen table, and food was set out for him, but instead of sitting down to eat he flung his coachman's cloak and hat across a chair and paced to and fro in the narrow room. His eyes, deeply set beneath heavy brows, glistened with suppressed excitement as he chuckled to himself. Suddenly he stepped to a closed door at one side of the kitchen and flung it open.

"Marie!" he called loudly.

He stood in the doorway for a moment; then, hearing his wife stirring in the other room, he began to walk up and down again. In a few moments Madame Le Farge entered. She had flung a dark cloak over her nightdress, and this and the long black hair that streamed over her shoulders accented the unnatural pallor of her face. She was visibly agitated. Her eyes, when she raised them for a second to gaze into her husband's face, fluttered with apprehension. Her slight figure seemed to shrink under the folds of the cloak.

"You — you called me, Mathieu — so late?"

"Yes," replied Mathieu exultantly. "I called you. I have had rare good luck, Marie. Our bread and butter days are over. We are rich — rich. See what I found to-night."

He plucked from his coat pocket a glittering necklace of diamonds and held them in front of her eyes. The woman fell back with a sharp intaking of breath, and her hands went up to her heart. Her lips were closed in a thin, straight line.

"Why do you act like that?" exclaimed Mathieu. "I did not steal them. I came by them honestly. I found them, I tell you, and there is nothing wrong in that."

She began to sway, and would have fallen had she not placed her hand against the door to steady herself.

"To-night," went on Mathieu rapidly, "I had my hack near the great house where the ball of the Minister of Instruction was held. They came out rather early, a man and a woman, and even then I marked the necklace glitter on her neck, and I envied them their riches. I drove them to their home, and then I drove back here to my stable. I unharnessed the horse. Then I took the robes out of the hack, and was about to walk home when the light from my lantern glistened on the jewels lying on the ground. They must have fallen from the lady's neck and slid out of sight in the folds of the robe. Ah, they are beauties, Marie. Once I saw a necklace that cost five thousand francs and it was not half so fine."

He would have talked on, but he noticed that his wife was as pale as death and that her breath was coming and going in short, quick gasps.

"You are ill," he cried. "This good news has been too much for you. I myself can hardly believe that it is true. But to-morrow you shall see. I will come back from the jeweler, Descartes, with a roll of banknotes as round as my fist."

"Descartes!" she burst out.

"Ah," said Mathieu, "now I know. It is your silly scruples. Pooh! Why should I not sell the jewels? They were rich and can stand the loss, while we are poor and the money means happiness to us. You are far too honest, Marie. Come, now,

I will help you to your room and you shall rest, but I am too happy to sleep to-night. I will go out and celebrate our good fortune, and to-morrow when you are well again we will go together and buy many wonderful things."

He was so blinded by his own great joy that he failed to see the anguish in her face. He put his arm about her and helped her into the bedroom. A moment later he came back, put on his best cloak and hat, and left the house. Proceeding rapidly up the dark street, he soon emerged into the boulevard that glittered with life and light. Mathieu had with him twenty francs, taken from his slender hoard at home. In a snug café he found convivial companions, excellent wine, and good music. There he talked and sang in high good humor.

In the early morning he walked in the park for an hour to clear his head, and at the time when the shops were beginning to open he retraced his course. Soon he passed a window that fairly burned with magnificent jewels.

"Ah," thought Mathieu, "this man may give me a better price than my neighbor, Descartes."

He entered the shop after a moment's hesitation and walked boldly up to a little man with sharp eyes who was arranging things in one of the showcases.

"Good morning, monsieur," said Mathieu. "Could I trouble you to put a value upon something I have here?"

He took the necklace from his pocket and handed it to the jeweler. The latter glanced at him shrewdly.

"I have had good luck," said Mathieu easily. "A legacy left me by an uncle in Toulouse."

The little man took the necklace to his work table, clapped a glass to his right eye and peered intently. Then he came back and said shortly: "Paste."

"Paste!" echoed Mathieu, thunderstruck.

"Yes, monsieur. Worth, I should say, about twenty francs. It is a clever imitation, and good enough to fool the ignorant."

Mathieu took back the necklace and stumbled out of the shop, cursing to himself. The bottom had dropped out of plans which he had carefully made that morning in the café. But Mathieu was a man of elastic spirits, and it was not his nature to remain despondent. Ten minutes later he was back on the Rue St. Antoine with the old smile on his lips.

"This is a rare joke," thought he. "'Good enough to fool the ignorant,' the old curmudgeon said. Well, well, I had a fine night of it, at least. It is not so bad after all, for did he not say it was worth twenty francs — just the amount I drank up. Hm, I might as well sell it now and get rid of the cursed thing."

He walked briskly down the street and turned into the shop kept by M. Descartes. The jeweler was a short, stout man with red, puffy cheeks and shifting eyes. Some of the color seemed to leave his face when Mathieu entered, and the hand resting on the glass case trembled a little.

"Good morning, M. Le Farge," he croaked in his hoarse voice. "It has been long since I had the pleasure of seeing you."

"Ah, monsieur," replied Mathieu, "it is not every day that I can come to you on a matter of business."

"Business?" repeated Descartes, starting.

"In short," went on Mathieu, "what will you pay me for this?" He took the necklace from his pocket and tossed it on the counter. Descartes turned white and then red again, and his beady eyes seemed to look in every direction at once. "Devil take the man," thought Mathieu. "He, too, thinks I stole the baubles." He repeated the fib about the uncle in Toulouse. Descartes's eyes rested on his face for a moment; then he laughed nervously.

"A legacy, eh? Ha, ha. Excellent, M. Le Farge. I comprehend you now, yes, yes. Will you be satisfied with — let us say — a hundred francs? Come, now, that is quite reasonable for these glass beads, M. Le Farge."

"Hm," muttered Mathieu. "The man must be mad. But, surely, he ought to know his business — Yes, that is quite satisfactory," he said aloud, and added jestingly: "True, they are glass, but a clever imitation, I have been told. Good enough to fool the ignorant, eh, monsieur?"

"Quite right, quite right," croaked the jeweler. "You are a man after my own heart. Perhaps, who knows, you may have other things to sell soon? But remember, monsieur, that I am a poor man. I can pay well, but I will not be bled." He leered into Mathieu's face while he counted out the money and his eyes gleamed evilly.

Mathieu made haste to get out of the shop after pocketing the coins. "An odd fish," he ruminated. "Mad — or only drunk, perhaps. At any rate, he pays well."

He walked rapidly down the street and in a few moments was back in the little kitchen of his home. The lamp and the food were still on the table, but his wife was not in the room. He stepped quietly across the floor and listened at the door of her chamber.

"Still asleep," he muttered. "Poor Marie, how disappointed she will be. But still — a hundred francs is not to be sneezed at."

He sat down at the table, for he was half famished. He had scarcely picked up his knife when his eyes fell on a sheet of paper that was lying near the lamp. He picked it up and read, and as he read his eyes widened with horror.

"Mathieu," read the note, "it was cruel of you. I wish to God that you had killed me outright. I feared, the moment you called me, that you had found out my affair with Descartes; and when you showed me the necklace and mentioned his name, I knew that you lied and jested to torture me. That necklace — I lost the very day he gave it to me and have spent hours and hours searching for it. Ah, Mathieu, had I not been

such a vain woman, and you such a blind man, his bribes and promises would have meant nothing. Forgive me, if you can, and pray for my soul."

With a terrible cry of rage and grief, Mathieu rose from his chair and almost flung himself against the bedroom door. The room was darkened. He pushed wide open the shutters and turned quickly about. His wife was lying in bed; her sightless eyes turned to the ceiling. On a table near the bed lay a little heap of gaudy jewels and rings and bracelets. The air was heavy with the odor of prussic acid.

XI: WELLINGTON ¹

CHARLES MACOMB FLANDREAU

[Do you think that the initial suggestion, from which this story was developed, lay in the peculiar facts brought out at the end, or did it lie in the general idea of the death of a lonely student in a big university? The pathos of the situation of a lonely, friendless student in a big university is the commonplace idea which is rendered striking by the introduction of one peculiar circumstance. Notice that all that is most peculiar in this circumstance is imbedded in the closest observation of daily college life.]

“IF I’d only known sooner that you were coming, I could have asked some of the fellows round to meet you,” said Haydock, politely. No matter how well you may know a woman, you are always apprehensive when she comes to Cambridge that she has a thirst for tea.

“I think I like this better,” his mother answered, stopping to look back. She was a lady of excellent taste, yet almost anyone must have preferred the Yard that Sunday afternoon. The riotous new green of early spring had matured to an academic sombreness that made the elms, the stretches of sun-flecked grass, the tremulous ivy, and the simple brick buildings inseparable in one’s thoughts. The dignity of the great space between Grays and Holworthy had grown with the late afternoon shadows, and Haydock and his mother, who had sauntered from path to path, listening to the leaves, and the robins, and the quiet confidences of the wise bricks, talked of Harvard. Although the place was large and deserted at this hour, it was far from lonely.

“Oh, yes, I like this much better,” mused Mrs. Haydock again. Philip looked pleased.

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"It's always beautiful," he said; "and there's so much else," he added rather obscurely. But his mother seemed to know, for she looked at him after a moment and answered:

"I often wonder if all women can understand it, — the other things, not just the beauty, — or if it's only women with sons and brothers who come here."

"Especially sons," smiled Philip, taking her hand and swinging it to and fro, as they strolled back again toward Holworthy.

"But I never shall find out for sure," went on Mrs. Haydock; "because even the ones who do feel the place, just as if they had been here themselves, can't express it."

"It's so dreadful to try," said Philip. Then after a moment, "I was thinking of all the horrible Class Poems and Odes and Baccalaureate Sermons and ghastly Memorial Day orators that are allowed to go on."

"Oh, they probably don't do any harm," Mrs. Haydock interceded mildly.

"No, not positive harm," her son admitted; "but neither would a lot of hurdy-gurdies in Appleton Chapel." Once in a while Haydock was somewhat extreme. Just now his mother took occasion to remark on that fact.

"No, really, I don't think I am," Philip protested. "What can they add to our feeling for Harvard with their trite mouthings about *veritas* and Memorial Hall? Other places may need that sort of thing; this one doesn't. Most of us here recognise that fact, and conduct ourselves accordingly. And outsiders misunderstand the attitude; Eleanor, for example." Eleanor was a cousin with Yale affinities. "I had to snub Eleanor once for saying, before a lot of people, that whenever she wanted to flatter a Harvard man, she told him he was blasé, and, if that didn't work, she called him a cynic, and if even that wouldn't bring him round, she hinted that he didn't believe in God."

"Eleanor is a very clever, silly little girl," laughed Mrs. Haydock.

“Eleanor is excessively cheap at times,” corrected Philip. “We’re not ‘cynical,’ and we’re not ‘blasé,’ and whether or not we believe in God is nobody’s business. If we don’t drool about the things here we care for very much it’s because people who do are indecent; they bore us.”

“They do bore one,” assented Mrs. Haydock.

“Once in a while some one does tear out his heart and drips it around the stage in Sanders Theatre for the benefit of all the tiresome old women in Cambridge, and the Glee Club drones Latin hymns to a shiny upright piano hired for the occasion, while the orator calms himself with ice-water from the bedroom pitcher that is always prominent on those occasions. But such performances, thank God, are rare.”

“Why do you go to them?” asked Mrs. Haydock.

“I don’t,” said Philip. “That was when I was a freshman, and didn’t know any better. Since then I have acquired ‘Harvard indifference,’ ” he added, smiling to himself. They left the Yard, lingering a moment for another look down the leafy vista, and walked slowly across to Memorial.

The beautiful transept was dark at first, after the sunlight outside. Then it lifted straight and high from the cool dusk into the quiet light of the stained windows. Except for the faint echo of their footsteps along the marble floor, the two moved from tablet to tablet in silence. Somewhere near the south door they stopped, and Philip said simply:

“This one is Shaw’s.”

When they passed on and out, and sat in the shade on the steps, Haydock’s mother wiped her eyes. The long, silent roll-call always made her do that.

“It was a great, great price to pay,” she said at last.

“I never knew how great,” said Philip, “until I came here one day and tried to live it all over, as if it were happening now. Before then the war seemed fine, and historic, and all that, but ever so far away. It’s been real since then. I thought

of how all the little groups of fellows would talk about it in the Yard between lectures, and read the morning papers while the lectures were going on; and how the instructors would hate to have to tell them not to. And I thought what it would be like to have the men I know — Alfred and Peter Bradley, and Sears Wolcott and Douglas and Billy and Pat, and all of them, getting restless and excited, and sitting up all night at the club, and then throwing down their books and marching away to the front to be shot; and how I would have to go along too, because — well, you couldn't stay at home while they were being shot every day, and thrown into trenches. I don't think you ever realise it very much until you think about it that way."

"It seems, now, so terrible that they had to go," Philip's mother broke in earnestly; "such a cruel stamping out of youth and strength and happiness at the very beginning."

"But it isn't as if you felt it were all a hideous waste. It did something great; it's doing something now. It can never stop," Philip added, gently; "for every year the new ones come, — the ones who don't know yet. It's the fellows who die here at college who always seem to me so thrown away, so wasted," he went on. "They don't seem to get their show, somehow, — like Wellington, for instance."

"Did I meet Wellington?" asked Mrs. Haydock, trying to attach a personality to the name. She usually remembered Philip's friends.

"Heavens, no!" answered Philip. "Nobody knew Wellington, except a few of us, — after he got pneumonia and died, which he did last February. He was in our class, and he must have been a nice fellow; his mother was very nice. But I'd never heard of him. It had just happened that way, — the way it does here."

"Where did you know his mother?" asked Mrs. Haydock.

"Why, I thought I'd written you all that. It must have been too long, or too dreary, or something," said Philip.

"No, you never told me."

"Well, the first thing that I knew about Hugh Wellington was that he came from Chicago, or Cleveland, or some place; that 'his pleasant disposition was appreciated by all who knew him'; and that, incidentally, he was dead. I read that in the 'Crimson' one morning in bed, and I knew exactly what it meant; because when the 'Crimson' is reduced to the 'pleasant disposition' stage, there's a good reason why."

Mrs. Haydock looked up inquiringly.

"I mean, they can't find out anything; there's nothing to find out. He went his way quietly, — decently, I suppose, — without knowing any one in particular. No one seemed to know him, not even well enough to say that his disposition wasn't pleasant; so the 'Crimson' gave him the benefit of the doubt."

"It's the least it could do for any dead man," said Mrs. Haydock.

"And the most that could be done for poor Wellington, I suppose," added Philip, thoughtfully. "After that, I didn't think of him again — you don't, you know; among so many it's bound to happen pretty often — until somebody asked who he was, at luncheon. There were ten of us at the table, and Billy Fields was the only one who knew anything about him. He said that he sat next to a man named H. Wellington in some big history course, and liked the clothes he wore. I think he and Billy used to nod to each other in the Yard. Well, in the natural course of events, that would have been the end of him, as far as I was concerned, if Nate Lawrence — he's the president of the class — hadn't dashed round to my room that afternoon to ask me what he'd better do. Nate's a bully chap, — a great, big clean sort of a child who breathes hard whenever he has to think of anything. He always wants to do the proper thing by the class and the college, and we help him out a good deal with resolutions and committees and impromptu speeches for athlete dinners, and all that. He

wanted me to sit right down and help him draw up some resolutions of sympathy and 'get it over with,' he said. After that he could call a class meeting, to which no one would come of course, and send the thing home immediately. I couldn't see any particular necessity for rushing the matter, except that Nate had it very much on his mind. It wasn't as if the man were alive and might die at any moment. So I told him he'd better wait awhile, and asked him if he knew anything about Wellington in the first place. He said, why, yes, of course — he remembered the name quite distinctly; Wellington had come out for the football in October, but had hurt his knee — no, come to think of it, it might have been his collar-bone — and had dropped out pretty soon. He was either the tall lad with the shoulders, or that wiry little man who might have made a good quarter-back if he'd stayed on. You see, Wellington must have been a mighty quiet sort of fellow, because Nate is a tremendously conscientious president. He can tell almost everybody apart.

"I said, 'You simply have to get more details, if you want me to write the letter.' I'm pretty good at that kind of thing, but I like to have something to go by, naturally; it makes them easier — more spontaneous. Nate had been up to the Office; but I didn't find anything very available in what he's got there, so we looked up Wellington's address in the Index, and went round to his room that afternoon. He lived in a little house on Kirkland Street.

"It was a perfectly fiendish day; you've never been here in February, have you? Well, that's the time to see dear old Cambridge. It snows and rains most of the day, and then stops to rest and melt a little. There aren't any sidewalks to speak of — just dirt paths with curbstones that keep the mud and stuff from running off into the street, so you have to walk in it up to your neck, if you want to get anywhere. That's what did Wellington up, I guess.

“The front door of his house was latched, and I was fumbling round under the crape trying to get hold of the bell, when the landlady appeared; you know — it makes me shudder now sometimes, when I think of that gruesome old buzzard of a woman. She was a typical Cambridge landlady, — one of those uncorseted, iron grey slatterns who lives in a rancid atmosphere of hot soap-suds and never goes to bed; a room-renting old spider who manages to break everything you own, in a listless sort of way, and then writes home to your father that you haven't paid your bill. This one belonged to the class that looks on death as a social opportunity. She was dressed for the occasion, and greeted each of us with a kind of a soiled smile that made her old face look like a piece of dishrag.”

“Philip dear.”

“Well, it did. And then she said in a loud, important whisper:

“‘He isn't upstairs; he's in my parlor,’ and took us in where poor Wellington was. It was all so dreadful, that part of it, that it didn't seem sad. There were three other bleary old funeral coaches, — more landladies, I suppose, — on a sofa on one side, and a girl with fuzzy, yellow, hair, in a rocking-chair, on the other; she was Mrs. Finley's daughter, I think. I've seen her round the Square since. There didn't seem to be much of anything for us to do; and Nate was awfully embarrassed and uncomfortable, and seemed to fill up most of the space in the horrid plushy little room. But I didn't like to go away exactly, because it made our coming there at all seem so useless; so I said to Mrs. Finley, — I couldn't think of anything else, —

“‘Have many of the fellows been in?’

“‘No,’ she whispered; ‘nobody's been in but Mis' Taylor and Mis' Buckson and Mis' Myles. They come at two,’ — it was then after five, — ‘and the Regent. Mr. Wellington

was a real quiet young man. He didn't have much company. He stayed in his room nights — mostly.' She stuck on 'mostly' as a sort of afterthought, and repeated it; the old fool had a passion for accuracy of a vague, unimportant kind that almost drove me crazy. I asked her if anyone else roomed in the house. I knew he must have known them if there did; no matter how objectionable people are at college, if they room near you, you can't help borrowing matches from them — I've made lots of acquaintances borrowing matches. But no one lived there except two law students, 'real nice gentlemen, *real* nice,' they were, and they weren't there very much. Nate asked her when the funeral was to be, which was the most sensible thing he could have done; for she took a telegram from her pocket, and said:

“ ‘His mother's coming to-night. She was in New York State when he passed away. They wa'n't able to get her till this afternoon.' Then Nate and I left her, and I don't know why, — it wasn't idle curiosity, — but we went up to Wellington's rooms.

“They were bully rooms. You can tell a lot about a man from his room here. Wellington had no end of really good things: rugs and books, — the Edinburgh Stevenson, and that edition of Balzac we have at home, — and ever so many Braun photographs — not the everyday ones, but portraits and things that you felt he'd picked up abroad, because he happened to like them. And on the table — he had a corking big oak table that filled up one end of the room — his note-books and scratch block were lying open, just the way he'd left them when he stopped grinding for the exams. And there was a letter without a stamp, addressed to his mother, and a little picture of his mother, with 'For Hugo' written on the back. Then I got to thinking of his mother, and got her mixed up with you somehow or other. I don't know just how it was, but you seemed to change places; I couldn't see you apart for

any length of time, and I thought of you arriving at the Park Square station all alone, and trying to get a cab in the wet, and having to pay the man anything he asked you, until I was almost crying, and told Nate that some one ought to be there to meet you — Mrs. Wellington, I mean. Nate agreed with me, and began to look panicky, because he knew I meant him. He really ought to have gone — it was his place. But I knew how he felt. He kept insisting that I could do the thing much better than he could; and it ended by my getting a carriage at about eight or nine o'clock, and splashing into town.

“There was a possibility, of course, that she wouldn't come alone, although she had been away from home, in New York, when he heard. But it never occurred to me that I could miss her if she did come alone, although I'd never seen her, and felt sure she wouldn't have on black veils and things. You can't imagine all the different things I thought of to say to her while I was walking up and down the platform waiting for the train to come in. They all sounded so formal and sort of undertakery, that I knew I shouldn't say any of them when the time came. But I couldn't think of anything else — the one right one, I mean.

“Well, she came on the first train she possibly could have come on after sending the telegram, and I knew her at once. She was the very last person to get out of the car. It wasn't that, or because she looked different — anybody else would have said she was very, very tired; but I just knew her, and before I could think of any of those other things, I took her travelling-bag and said, —

“ ‘I'm one of Hugh's friends.’

“I didn't see her when I said it, — only her hands, — because I was looking down at the bag.” Haydock paused a moment.

“I think it was the right thing, dear — the only one,” said his mother, softly.

“It’s a long, long drive to Cambridge, even if you know where you are all the time. But with the windows all blurred, and nothing to mark the way except the rumble of the bridge or the car-tracks, or some bright light you know pretty well, that tells you you haven’t gone nearly so far as you thought you had, it’s terrible. We didn’t say anything on the way. She leaned back in the corner; I think she was crying. Mrs. Finley — the landlady — heard us coming, and had the door open when we got out; I made *her* go upstairs with me, and told her not to dare to go near that room and — and disturb them. She’s just the sort of a woman who would. It was almost midnight then, and I sat there until after two. I tried to grind for a Fine Arts’ examination out of one of Wellington’s books — he must have been taking the same course — until the door downstairs opened and closed, and I heard Mrs. Wellington come slowly up the steps. I put the book on the mantelpiece; it seemed heartless to be reading there by his fire when she came in.

“She was a very brave woman, I think — brave and civilised. She walked slowly round the room, sort of touching things here and there; and she stopped a long time at the table, and put her hand on the note-books gently, as if she were stroking them, and then closed them.”

“Did she find the letter?” asked Mrs. Haydock.

“No, I gave that to her later on — I had it in my pocket then. I didn’t want her to find it herself; it always makes you jump so to see your own name written out, when you’re not looking for it. Then she sat down in a chair near me and stared at the fire. I asked her if she wanted me to go away; and she said, no, she was glad I was there. We talked a little — I couldn’t say much; my position was queer you know — not what she thought it was. But it didn’t seem wrong as long as I stayed just because she wanted me to, and I hated to spoil it by saying things that couldn’t ring true. She talked about Hugh in

such a quiet, wonderful way that every now and then I found myself wondering if she really knew. Sometimes she doubted it herself, I think, for she left me twice and went slowly downstairs as if she wanted to make sure. When daylight came, she went in and lay down on his bed. I put out the lamps and wrote a note saying where my room was if she wanted to send for me.

“At breakfast I got hold of Bradley and Sears Wolcott and Billy and four or five other fellows, and told them they simply had to go round there at noon, and that some of them would have to go into the station with me. They didn’t see any particular reason for it at first; most of them were grinding for the exams, and Sears had an engagement to play court tennis and lunch at the B. A. A. He said he didn’t see why the man’s friends weren’t enough without dragging out a lot of heelers who’d never heard of him, let alone never having met him. He wasn’t ‘going to be any damned hired crocodile!’ he said. You see, they couldn’t understand that if they didn’t go, there probably wouldn’t be anybody there but the preacher and Mrs. Finley, and those horrible men with the black satin ties and cotton gloves who carry you in and out when there’s no one else round to do it. But they all came at last — even Sears, grumbling till he got inside the gate. Nate brought three or four fellows round from his club, and an armful of red and white roses ‘from the class,’ he told Mrs. Wellington. It was a nice little lie. I was surprised that Natey thought of it. The Regent came, and Mr. Barrows, the college secretary, and poor old Miss Shedd, Wellington’s washwoman. She was awfully cut up, poor old thing, and made it as bad as possible for everybody. That was about all, I think. Plummer, the college preacher, was simple and manly; Heaven knows he couldn’t very well have been anything else under the circumstances. And then we had that interminable drive again, back to Boston.

“I was in the carriage with Mrs. Wellington. Any of us could have gone with her just as well, I suppose, because we were all Hugh’s friends, although I was the only one who knew that we were. But I wanted to ride with her somehow, and I’m glad now that I did, for a very queer thing happened; I’ve never quite understood it. She didn’t say anything for ever so long, not until we got across the bridge and the carriage began to go slower. Then she put one of her hands on mine and said:

“‘I didn’t know at first that you were Haydock, not until I found your note. I’m very, very glad to know, because Hugh used to talk more about you in his letters and when he was at home than he did about any of the others. I think he looked up to you most of all,’ and she told me some of the things he had said and written.”

Haydock often wondered if repeating things to your mother that you wouldn’t repeat to anyone else, made up for the things you couldn’t tell her at all. This passed through his mind now.

“I’m afraid it’s just as well I never met Wellington,” he added. “Well, there wasn’t much else. When we got to the station, I left Nate and the others to attend to things, and went into the car with Mrs. Wellington. She had the stateroom, — I’d got that for her when I went in town in the morning, — and there wasn’t anything to do but give her her ticket, and say good-bye. I had a feeling as if I ought to go on with her and see the thing through; but I’d cut one examination already — I managed to flunk two more — and she probably wouldn’t have let me anyhow. I did hunt up the conductor and give him the other ticket, — you have to have two, you know, — and told him to take care of it, and not let her see it; it had a grisly word scribbled across it. She smiled when she said good-bye — oh, so sadly.”

Haydock stood up and stretched himself.

“Did you ever hear from her again?” asked Mrs. Haydock.

“Oh, yes, I had a letter very soon. I had all his books and

furniture and stuff packed up and sent home, you know. She told me to keep anything I wanted, because — oh, I'll show you the letter some day. I kept the picture with 'For Hugo' written on the back. It's over in my room." He went down the steps, Mrs. Haydock following. They walked along the Delta, past John Harvard, and across to one of the paths in the Yard once more, sprinkled now with men hurrying to Memorial.

"It was such a queer waste, his having lived and come here at all," mused Philip. "I suppose that sounds awfully kiddish and tiresome to you, doesn't it?" he asked more lightly, looking at his mother.

"No," she answered; "it sounded very old the way you said it."

XII. LEFT BEHIND ¹

ARTHUR RUHL

EVERYBODY in the house — in all the world it seemed — was sleeping, but the Vandalia Miler sat up in bed, staring with dry, wide-open eyes at the wall. The dormer room, tucked up under the roof, was stuffy and close and smelled of heat and wall-paper and rag-carpet. Through the little window, from the trees and grass outside, came the steady whirring of the tree-toads and crickets. Suddenly the stillness was broken and the campus clock tolled two. As the harsh note grated on his nerves his heart gave a thump and he threw himself back and buried his face in the hot pillow. It seemed as though he must shut out the world and forget. But he couldn't forget, and you can shut out the world with a pillow — only so long as you can hold your breath. He slipped over the edge of the bed — that ridiculous, high, hot feather-bed — and with his chin in his hands and his elbows on his knees, blinked at the little windows and the patch of moonlight on the floor where the Other Man lay sleeping. And as he watched him, snoring there comfortably in his sleep, his own secret returned again and bit into him, as it had returned so many times that day and night, and all the disappointment and bitterness and despair of it. And he felt that life had tricked him, cut him off in the flower of his youth and put him on the outside, and he was an outcast with his hand raised against the world.

When they had arrived that night, with a lot of the other teams that had come down for the interscholastics, and had been assigned to that one remaining vacant room, the Other

¹ Reprinted from *Break in Training and Other Athletic Stories*, with the kind permission of the author and of the Outing Publishing Company.

Man had told him to go ahead and take the bed, because, as he explained, a miler needed all the sleep he could get, whereas a bit of wakefulness the night before the games only served to put an edge on the sprinter's nerves. "It'll make me start quicker," said he, spreading a blanket on the floor. That was just like the luck of the Other Man — to give up something and after all to get it back again. And the Vandalia Miler blinked at him, and thought and thought, and wondered whether the Other Man would make the 'varsity in his freshman year. For the Other Man was going away to college and the Vandalia Miler couldn't go. That was his secret, which had been his for only a day, and which he was somehow too proud to tell. That was why he believed that he was an outcast, a pariah — why a shivery abyss yawned between these two old friends, though you might have thought that it was but a yard or two of rag carpet that separated him, sitting there on the edge of the bed, from the Other Man, sleeping in his blanket on the floor. They had grown up in Vandalia, in that little prairie town, from the beginning; gone swimming together and skated and rung door-bells, gone through the grammar-school and into the high-school, and then, when most of the town boys were dropping out to go to work and the ones who were going to college went away to prep. school they had decided to stick by the ship. They would stick by their town as long as they could, but when they had to leave they were going, not to one of the State universities, not to Chicago, but down into the distant and glittering East. One didn't go down East to college from the Vandalia High-School. They were about the only men left in the class after their sophomore year; the rest were girls — the girls they had grown up with and written notes to and divided their apples and candy with, back in the kid days. Once there had been a cane-rush — somebody had read about one in a book — and two legs and an arm were broken and one boy nearly killed. The girls were ordered to keep out. They

jumped in, carried water, bandaged black eyes with their handkerchiefs, freshman girls untied the freshmen as fast as the sophomores tied them up — that's the sort of girls they were. And he and the Other Man were the only men in the class and going down East to college afterward. Probably you do not understand just what that meant. You may know, perhaps, some little high church prep. school, built on the top of a hill like a robber baron's castle, where there are just about enough men to make up the teams if each man plays on all of them, and the man who is captain of the eleven is generally captain of the nine and the track team and leads the banjo club. If you were chosen captain of the eleven in your freshman year, you would, of course, be a much greater man than the President. But you wouldn't have a lot of good-fellow girls to tell you so. And the Vandalia Miler had both — he and the Other Man.

They turned out the only decent eleven the school had ever had and a nine and a paper, and all the rest of it, and divided everything — just as though it was a Trust. One of them would write the editorials calling down the faculty and the other would preside at the mass meetings; he would lead the mandolin club, with about six yards of satin ribbon which one of the girls had given him tied to his mandolin to show that he was leader, and the Other Man would lead the glee club and sing all the tenor solos. And at last, in their senior year, they got up a track team. It was the last chance they had — after June the deluge. They sent to Chicago for real running clothes and spiked shoes — it had been sneakers and trousers cut off at the knees before that in Vandalia — and taught the school a brand new cheer. The merchants put up the money to send the team down to Pardeeville, and the night before they left there was a mass meeting and a dance and speeches. The Vandalia Miler, blinking at the torn mosquito-bar that covered the little window, smiled grimly as he thought of that speech — of that droll school orator of theirs, older than the rest of them,

with his high forehead and Henry Clay scalp lock, and his arms outspread and his voice in his boots: "With every heart in Vandalia beating for you, every eye turned down the prairie toward the South, you go — to run for Vandalia, to win for Vandalia, and if not to win, to fight to the last ditch for the purple 'V' upon your breasts!" And he and the Other Man had gone home together on air, and told each other how they were going to make the team when they got down to college and show those effete Easterners what it meant to meet a real man and — and there was a light in the library window when he got home, past midnight though it was, and his father was in there locked up with his lawyer. Something had happened. It wouldn't be announced for a day or two, but everything had gone to smash, and it meant that the Vandalia Miler must stay behind and go to work in the hardware store. He didn't sleep much that night, and he went down to the train the next day as late as he could and slipped on when nobody would see him, while the girls were singing and waving flags from the station platform and the rest of the men were leaning out of the windows and laughing and waving their hats. And here he was — where he had longed to be — sent down on the team to run for his school and his town, and it all seemed like something in a pantomime, outside of him and far away, unreal and part of a horrid dream. But he *had* to run. It came back just as it did every minute or two, like a quick pain. He went hot all over. Those others, who were going to fight it out with him, were all sleeping now, just like the Other Man. He must hang on to himself — get some sleep. He gritted his teeth, squeezed his fists, and told himself that after all they were kids and he was now a real man. There are a number of things — he would begin very sternly — more important than going to college, and a 'varsity initial won't help you much before a judge and jury or patch up anybody's broken bones or tell how the market's going, but — and here he slipped and raced away again — but

no more will a Victoria Cross nor a rag from the captured colors. And just as long — just as long as there are men in the world with hearts under their coats and blood in their veins there'll be somebody to work the last gun and to head the forlorn hope and fling a life away for a smile or a cheer or a bit of ribbon. And it doesn't make any difference whether he's got on a cuirassier's breast-plate or football canvas, a running suit or khaki. And when the others are ready to go and the band begins to play, it isn't any fun to be left behind and — He got sorrier and sorrier for himself, which is a very, very bad thing for a very young man to do, until at last he flung himself back on the bed, and with his head full of charging cavalry, photographs of 'varsity teams, batteries galloping into action, and lonely outcasts left behind, he finally dropped asleep, just as the night was graying and the birds were beginning to chirp in the trees outside. For just a minute he forgot, and then somebody shook him and he saw the Other Man was standing over him, fresh as paint.

"Gee, man!" he laughed; "you look dead as a smelt! Don't mean you stayed awake with all that bed to range about in!"

"Oh, no," said the Vandalia Miler; "I slept all right."

He ran very well in spite of everything. Had he had a bit more experience in racing, he would have tried sooner to get within striking distance of the leaders. As it was, coming round the upper turn into the stretch, he sprinted past the fifth and fourth men and lost his feet and fell, completely run out, just as he was being beaten for third place about seven feet short of the tape. It was one of those races of which the spectator always may remark that if the man had had a bit more sand he would have won. The Other Man had already won his brilliant victory in the hundred when the Vandalia Miler was beaten. A lot of people were congratulating him and the trainer of one of the State universities had just promised him board and tuition if he would enter there that fall as the

Miler staggered over the line. The Other Man said things to the trainer and told him that he'd mistaken his man.

"Where we're going," and he smiled at the Vandalia Miler as he helped him to the dressing-room, "they don't have professionals on the team!" The Vandalia Miler didn't say anything — you can't say much just after you've run yourself out in a mile race — but just as soon as he could, he pulled on his clothes. He was special correspondent for the *Vandalia Blade*. They had made him feel very proud and important a couple of days before when they had asked him to "rush in a thousand words after the games, just as soon as he could jump on a wire." So he dragged himself over to the railroad station and jumped on the wire. It was not what you would call a creative mood. But he sent the story. By biting his lip and stopping every little while he told all about it, while little black spots chased each other up the paper, and the rest who had been beaten were coming to and the Other Man was making friends with the prep-school stars and promising to look them up when he got down East.

When the story was off the wire he went back to the boarding-house and lay down on the tall feather-bed. He was still there when the Other Man came up to dress for the dance that was to be given for the visiting teams that night in the college gym. The Other Man began early because, with only a little wavy mirror and a smelly kerosene lamp, a wet hair-brush, and a straight stand-up collar about as high as a cuff, it takes one quite a while to make one's self look like a Gibson man. The Other Man spat down his hair in the light of the little lamp and whistled between his teeth; the Vandalia Miler lay on the feather-bed staring at the whitewashed ceiling and thinking. *He* couldn't ask the belle of the ball down to the football game next autumn; he couldn't promise to send back a college pin for a red satin pillow with a white initial on it and bet boxes of Huyler's on sure things with all the girls who wanted to lose

and make tobacco-pouches for him. He couldn't put on any dog at all. It was back to the tall grass for him.

"Better hurry up and get ready," said the Other Man, puffing over his tie.

"Don't think I'll go," said the Vandalia Miler. He mumbled something about having a headache and feeling pretty dopy. "What's the sport, anyway," he added, "meeting a lot of girls you're never going to see again?" He was, you see, in a pretty bad way. The Other Man turned round and stared. Then he laughed. Such remarks were not worth a reply.

"See you there!" he chirped presently. Then, with his trousers turned up an extra reef and his straw hat stuck on one side — all very rakish and kinky — he blew out and down the stairs, three steps at a time. The Vandalia Miler thought some more. After a while he got up, stretched, and rubbed his eyes. Then he jammed his running clothes into his suit-case — they weren't going to be much use to him any more — and started for the station. Everybody in Pardeeville was going to the dance. On the front porches in the light of the hall lamps he could see the girls slipping their light scarfs over their shoulders, and now and then far down a cross street catch the glimmer of white through the trees. The sidewalk was narrow, with a picket-fence on one side and big elms on the other, and every little while he and his suit-case would have to flatten up against the fence while a couple passed him, with low words, perhaps, that he couldn't hear, and a ripple of laughter, white dresses — whiter in the dark — and a breath of perfume in the air after they had gone. The station was deserted and silent as the tomb. The only sign of life was the lamp shining through the window and the sleepy telegraph operator nodding over his key. The Vandalia Miler chucked his suit-case against the wall and began tramping up and down, counting the number of steps from one end of the platform to the other. After a long while, he went over to the little grocery across the street, bought

a box of "sweet caps" and smoked them relentlessly, one after another, inhaling the last two or three, to convince himself that he was hardened to all things and didn't care. Really, though, things were getting more and more on his nerves, and he did care. Hours, it seemed, dragged away. He sat on the baggage-truck, trying not to listen. It was clear moonlight, still, and clear as a bell. The gym where they were dancing was only a few blocks away, behind the trees, and on the other side of the track was open prairie. There wasn't a sound there on the station platform except the clicking of the telegraph key, and he could hear the faint music of the violins and the toot-toot of the cornet coming over the trees.

It was after midnight when the train thundered in. He was in his seat, with his hat pulled down over his eyes, when the rest came down the street on the run and the Other Man, panting and excited, bounced into the seat beside him. The Other Man had to tell about it, whether anyone listened or not — what *she* said and *he* said, and how she cut her dances right and left to sit 'em out with him and came down to within half a block of the station to see him off. And then there was a waltz that the Other Man wasn't ever going to forget — "the finest waltz I ever hope to hear, and that's a fact." The Vandalia Miler stood it for a long time. Once he sat up suddenly and jammed on his hat.

"For heaven's sake forget it!" he said. "Aren't you ever going to get over being a kid?" The Vandalia Miler, you see, had had to get over being a kid in twenty-four hours, and it didn't come so easy.

"Whatever's wrong with you?" laughed the Other Man. "Never saw anybody so peevish in my life!" And he began to whistle the tune harder than ever.

The train was a milk-train. It stopped at every cross-roads. It was stiflingly hot and smelly in the car, and the Other Man kept on humming, steadily as a pianola, and keeping time by

snapping his fingers, but for all that, the Vandalia Miler finally dropped asleep. He dreamed that he was down East, after all, and winning the mile, down a track about like a sublimated skating-rink, with an audience of a billion or two people, rising to him from a sort of stadium made of pure white marble and gold. He was just being heaved up in the air by the frantic populace when he woke up. And the Other Man was shaking him by the arm and telling him that they were back in Vandalia. He didn't need anyone to tell him that. It was growing light as they stepped off the train. He was just blinking his eyes open and seeing the old station and the lumber-yard and the Waldorf Café, and everything inside him seemed to be caving in, when the Other Man, still up in the air and keen as a mink, began to bray out his everlasting waltz. The Vandalia Miler jumped as though you had shot off a revolver just behind his ear. He whirled round and almost yelled:

"For heaven's sake, man, *shut up!*" The Other Man looked at him and laughed.

"I don't see what license you've got to be so all-fired grouchy," he said. "If you'd won—"

"Well?" cried the Vandalia Miler, stepping closer.

"It looked to me—"

"Looked to *you!* Are you calling me a quitter?"

You must remember that it had lasted two whole days and nights now and the ends of his nerves were all sticking out.

"Say it, will you?" He dropped his suit-case on the sidewalk and clenched his fists. "Just *say* it now — *how* did it look to you?" And then, before anyone guessed what was coming, he shot out with his fist. The Other Man's hands were down, helpless. He caught it fairly on the tip of the jaw and went down in a heap, and the Vandalia Miler stood over him, half waiting to swing again, half scared at what he had done. The others rushed in to pull them apart, but the Other Man just jumped up with a grim little laugh, as though it was all

a sort of joke and the Vandalia Miler a kind of wild man with bad manners. Then he walked ahead with the rest. All in all, it was about the completest thing he could have done. It left the Vandalia Miler, you see, quite on the outside. And that was the end of Damon and Pythias — and all their plans and dreams. The next day the Other Man went down East to tutor for his entrance exams. The Vandalia Miler went to work in the hardware store, selling frying-pans and shingle nails. . . .

The Vandalia Miler left the store in charge of the repair-shop man and started home for supper. He had just sold an improved gasoline stove to a farmer's wife from Vienna Centre who had never burned anything but wood, and he was considerably excited. He swung up State Street, whistling. There was a bulletin in the *Blade* window with letters in blue ink splashed on it a foot high. This is what he read — what stopped his whistling short:

TRIUMPH OF VANDALIA BOY

Underneath was a dispatch with a New York date-line, telling how the Other Man had won the intercollegiate mile at Mott Haven that afternoon. He felt his face getting hot. He put his hands in his pockets and squeezed his finger-nails into his palms so that folks wouldn't see. There was a beautiful picture framed up in his mind — a picture built up of Sunday supplements, stories in magazines, and the imagination of a young man who had never seen Mott Haven, and who stood on a wooden sidewalk on the main street of a fresh-water town a thousand miles away. It was a sort of composite of Henley and a Thanksgiving game, and the Other Man stood in the foreground in the afternoon sunshine, panting easily and smiling politely at the applause. In the two years that the Other Man had been away he hadn't come back even for his vacations, and he was getting to be a we-used-to-know-him-when-he-was-

young sort of a man. There had been many stories about him in the *Blade*. News was rather scarce out there, and they liked to hear about each other. And every time the Other Man did anything the town people felt somehow that Vandalia had done it and were glad. There was considerable local pride in Vandalia. They would do anything for anybody who did something for the town. But the Vandalia Miler hadn't learned this yet.

He got away without being obliged to talk to anybody, and hurried home. There, without knowing just why, he unearthed his old running clothes, and just as the sun was setting that evening the Vandalia Miler started jogging round the old dirt track at the fair grounds, training again for the mile.

They didn't go in very heavily for sport in those days in Vandalia, and everybody soon knew what he was doing and wondered why. The high-school boys came over late afternoons and watched him run. Then they got to pacing him, and finally they asked him to help them get up a team to lick Sugar River. Sugar River was a town about twenty miles north of Vandalia. The only difference between the two towns to an outsider was that the one had an opera-house and a six-story hotel, and the other had ten blocks of brick paving. A football game between Vandalia and Sugar River would have made the '94 Springfield game look like an international peace congress or a vegetarian breakfast. The Vandalia Miler helped them with the team. He didn't know, of course, that it was about the most important thing he'd ever done in his life and he was thinking too much of himself and the Other Man to be very much interested. But he did it as well as he knew how. Sugar River annihilated them. They lost every point. It didn't especially increase Vandalia's love for Sugar River.

The Vandalia Miler was embarrassed, but he kept up his own running, not training enough to get tired of it. Some days he took a lot of little sprints, some a jog of five miles or so, some a rest or a bit of tennis, but no smoking, and all the time plenty

of sleep. Sometimes he'd try it at sun-up, before the rest of the town was awake, just to test his steam and press himself a bit; and sometimes, on moonlight nights, when he could see the track plain as day, he'd go over after dark and whirl off his mile at top speed, stripped to the buff — racing through the moonlight with the cool night smell coming up from the grass and the cool wind blowing on him all over. Those were the times when he even forgot the Other Man. It seemed as though he was tireless, eating up the distance like a ghost with a feeling all the time of I've-done-this-before-in-the-dawn-of-things-a-million-years-ago. The next day, when he was back in the hardware store, he would smile inside at ordinary folks plodding about in their foolish store-clothes. The point is, you see, he began to run for the fun of running. It was the only thing he'd had for company since the Other Man went away. By the time summer was over he was brown as an Indian and hard as nails and he could run like a broncho.

In August, in Vandalia, came the Clearwater County fair. It was the biggest fair in the State — more people, bigger pumpkins, fatter hogs, taller corn, more balloons and bands and red lemonade and noise. The fair grounds began to fill up with red thrashing-machines and candy booths and side-show tents — not the place for a young man who preferred to be alone. On the afternoon of Wednesday, the third day of the fair, the Vandalia Miler stopped at the corner drug-store for a drink of soda-water, on his way home. He was just swallowing a glass of Arctic Mist and recalling that a preparation known as Lemo Kolo had tasted just like it a year ago, when out through the window, over the colored-water jars, he saw the Other Man, home again after his triumphs in the vast and glittering East, togged out in a set of very tricky flannels and blowing along State Street, bowing right and left, and beaming like a fresh-plucked rose for joy at getting home. You might just as well have flashed a search-light in his eyes at ten paces.

He was all in. The two years that had passed rolled up like a patent window-shade when the spring slips, and he was back at the railroad station, just home from Pardeeville, watching the Other Man walk away through the melancholy dawn. He saw him pushing open the screen, and he braced himself for an instant to face it out, cold and rather haughtily. Then he flung a dime on the counter and red as fire hurried out the side door.

That night the *Blade* published a long program for Thursday, the big day at the fair. There was to be a special excursion from Sugar River, a free-for-all trot and a two-fifteen pace, the McHenry Zouaves, the Diving Horse, a fat ladies' potato race, Pavella the King of Tight Wire, and — "an open mile foot-race for the championship of the world." That was the way the *Blade* put it. They could always be trusted in such cases to do the right thing. Of course it was the Other Man's crowd who had conceived the idea of the race. He had brought some of his friends home with him from the East to show them what the West was like, and they had thought it would be good sport to make him trot out and perform for the girls and the merry villagers. "For the championship of the world," said the *Blade*. "That this is no mere jest is evidenced by the fact that first among the list of entries appears the name of our famous young townsman, the present inter-collegiate champion. He informed a representative of the *Blade* this afternoon that he had kept up his training for just such a contingency as this, and that he never was in finer fettle. The scribe found him at his home, 'The Elms,' on the beautiful estate north of the city, where he is entertaining a number of wealthy young society men from Eastern *bon-ton* circles, and found him as modest as he was when he left his native town two years ago. He said that nothing would please him more than to run at the fair-grounds' track. 'For it was there,' said he, 'that I won my first race, you know!'"

"Oh, *hell!*" said the Vandalia Miler. And then he called up

the superintendent's office at the fair grounds and told them to enter him for the mile. . . .

There was, in the first place, a piping hot August afternoon, the kind that they have out in the corn belt, when not a drop of rain has fallen for a couple of months and the leaves are drying up on the trees and the grass is yellow and crackly under foot, and the dust follows after the farmer's wagons like smoke. Then, inside a high board fence, was the fair ground, with big wooden halls here and there, oak-trees with locusts singing away in the branches, and packed full of people and prize cattle and pumpkins and lunch-boxes and chewing candy and noise. There were farmers in their store-clothes just in from thrashing and farmers' girls in white dresses with pink and baby-blue ribbons, and in between children with sticky popcorn and red balloons and squawkers. There was a "natural amphitheatre" with benches running along the side hill, where the hushed crowd gaped at the spell-binder waving his arms beside the ice-water pitcher. There were prize pig pens and sheep pens, the art hall with its pictures of peaches tumbling out of baskets and watermelons just opened with the knife lying beside them, and the tents where Diavolo ate grass and blew fire out of his mouth and the beautiful young lady stood out on a platform by the ticket-box, in faded pink tights, with a big wet snake wound around her throat and her spangles blinking in the sunshine. There were sample windmills and cane-ringing games, and wherever there was room a man shaking popcorn or pulling candy over a hook, or a damp little shed smelling of vanilla, where people were eating ice cream and drinking red lemonade. You get all that and lots more going at once, with the barkers yelling and the merry-go-round organs squealing away, with the sun blazing at ninety-four in the shade and everywhere the smell of hot people and clothes and stale perfume, of lemonade and popcorn and peanuts and dust and trampled grass — you take all that, draw a third-

of-a-mile circle through the thick of it, push the crowd back a bit, and you have the Vandalia track that day as the engine bell in the judges' stand tolled out the warning signal and the old marshal on his white circus horse rode down the track sidewise, bellowing out the "mile foot race fer the champeen-ship of the world!"

As he caught the sharp command of the bell — the same bell that for years and years had called up the trotting horses from the stables — the Vandalia Miler jumped out of his blanket in the Tight-Wire Man's tent and pushed through the crowd to the mark. The farmer girls giggled as they saw his bare legs and a train of small boys followed him, gaping solemnly in the manner of those determined to see just how it was done. The Vandalia Miler was very pale. As he took his place on the starting line he was the only one there ready to run. He stared straight ahead at the people edging up closer to the little lane that was left for them to run through, licked his dry lips and rubbed nervously his bare left arm. There they were, the farmers and the townspeople, the men and the girls that he and the Other Man had grown up with and gone to school with. And he felt that if he could beat him — so slim and smiling and sure — beat him in Vandalia, there and then, with Vandalia and the county and the old crowd looking on — The engine-bell clanged again peremptorily.

"Coming! Coming!" Somebody was shouting uproariously over the heads of the crowd. A big tan buckboard drove in between the surreys and lumber-wagons, and out hopped the Other Man, all wrapped up in a great plaid ulster, his bare ankles showing underneath it. He threw off his coat and stood there laughing and shaking hands with his friends — in his 'varsity running clothes, the crimson ribbon across his chest. The Vandalia Miler saw him and gripped his fingers tight. It seemed to him that the crowd suddenly became still; the uproar of the squawkers and carousel-organ sounded vague and

far away. At the same moment there was a stir in the crowd just under the stand, and a big, tow-headed chap began to pull off his overalls and shirt. "Hey, there!" he called up to the starters; "I want to get in this!" The crowd began to laugh good-naturedly, but the Vandalia Miler didn't laugh at all. He was trying to remember where he had seen this farmer's face. On the sleeveless jersey which the tow-headed man wore underneath his flannel shirt was a spot cleaner than the rest. It was where an initial had been torn away. He turned to find the Other Man in front of him, smiling and holding out his hand. He took it, scarcely knowing what he did.

"So we're going to have it out, right here and now," laughed the Other Man, looking him straight in the eyes.

"Yes," said the Vandalia Miler. His mouth was all cotton, so it came in a quick sort of whisper. "Yes," he repeated.

"I hope," began the Other Man, and then he paused and grinned a little and blushed. "It's been quite a while — I hope —" All at once some one cried — "*Now, ready!*" The crowd that had apparently been pushing and shoving aimlessly about the judges' stand closed into a compact mass and out came a yell — one of those old-fashioned, wild-Indian, give-'em-the-axe, and all that sort of thing yells, with Sugar River at the end. "Sugar *River* — Sugar *River* — Sugar *River!*" three times, like that. It was like marching into the middle of an Irish picnic with a brass band playing "Boyne Water." A hoot and a howl came back from all along the track and the crowd — all Vandalia, it seemed — began to stampede in toward the judges' stand. The Vandalia Miler grabbed a couple of handfuls of long grass from the turf at the side of the track and wadded them up in his hands for "corks." His face wasn't as pale now and a new look jumped into his eyes. He turned to the Other Man, yelling above the uproar of the crowd.

"You want to look out for *him*: He's a ringer, and he's run-

ning for Sugar River!" And in the thick of the noise and the pushing and the dust, the starter swung his hat downward and with the single cry of "Go!" sent the three runners away.

The Other Man cut across from the outside like a flash and took the pole. The Vandalia Miler closed in behind, tight on his heels, eyes hooked to his back, just below the shoulders. The tow-headed man trailed the two, big-boned and heavy, but striding long and strong as a horse. Into the crowd they went — a sort of curving chute, walled in by faces and clothes smelling of popcorn and dust, and a baking sun beating down from overhead — like three machines, stride and stride alike, the Other Man leading the way like a race-horse, strong and confident, as if he were only playing with the game. Out into the open and the cooler air of the back-stretch they swung, past the red thrashers and pig pens, round the lower turn, and toward the judges' stand again. They were going like a three-horse tandem, the Vandalia Miler so close up that the dirt from the Other Man's spikes splashed his shins. He could see indistinctly the crowd still jostling and shouting under the wire, see the lobster-red face and white mustache of old Skerritt, the starter, leaning out on the rail of the judges' stand toward them and bellowing through his hands something about beating out Sugar River. He felt the mass open up and close in after them, the suffocating walled-in chute growing hotter and heavier, the pull of the second quarter beginning to drag hard on his legs and wind, and at the time he saw plainly that the Other Man was, if anything, increasing the pace — pushing ahead like a doped race-horse, at a half-mile gait, forgetting that there was anybody behind him. The pace held — screwed up tight — stride and stride alike, round the upper turn and into the open again. Out of the corner of his eye he saw a big mullin leaf — one of his old mile-stones — slip past their feet, the beginning of the third quarter. But the shade of a let-down in the pace which he expected there and which prepares for the last quarter

never came. As they struck the cooler air — it was like getting out of a cornfield into the road — the noise about the judges' stand — Sugar River and Vandalia all mixed together — came reaching across the field bigger than ever, and every time it puffed out louder the Other Man's back jumped ahead a bit. The Vandalia Miler stuck close — not pressing, not letting himself lose an inch. He was holding every ounce of steam, running every stride with his head. Round the lower turn they pounded, every dozen strides or so letting slip another link, and then, just as they were rounding into the straightaway, there suddenly puffed up from the judges' stand a great roar of "Sugar River!" At the same instant he heard a hoarse breath just behind his neck, an arm bumped his elbow, and the tow-headed man pushed by on the outside and went up after the leader. The crowd down the track was going wild. Old Skerritt was banging the engine-bell for the last lap like a fireman going to a fire. The Vandalia Miler didn't shift his eyes a hair's breadth from the Other Man's back. He was surprised at himself to see how cool he was; how he was calculating whether the Other Man was tireless or had merely lost his head, whether the Sugar River man could make good with his bluff or whether, as they heard the crowd, he was just playing to the gallery. In the next two-twenty he would know. There was more than a quarter yet to go, and he tried to feel it all as a unit and know just how much he had left. Past the stand and into the crowd again — the Sugar River man's chin slewed round a bit. He was lifting into the sprint! And a quarter yet to go! He saw the Other Man's back jump forward as he met the challenge, saw them fighting, shoulder to shoulder, knew the moment had come, that here and now the race was to be lost or won, and he squeezed his corks, shut his eyes, and bore on hard. For a dozen strides he fought, like a man under water trying to get to the surface, when suddenly, from the edge of the track ahead came a quick, triumphant

cheer. He opened his eyes. The Sugar River man was ahead! He had squeezed past and was on the pole, drawing away from the Other Man. But it was not the Sugar-River yell that was echoing across the track. It was a new and different cry — nervous, compact, fierce, relentless. It forced itself through the general hullabaloo and dominated it, and suddenly it came clear to the Vandalia Miler's ears — the old drum-beat cheer — *his* cheer — the one he and the Other Man had taught the school before the team went to Pardeeville. And his name was at the end. Down came a pair of arms a rod or two in front of him and out it smashed again — that wonderful yell with the sudden shift of the beat in the fifth line, like getting under a big weight, all together, and shoving after you've been pounding it. He fought on in a dizzy sort of trance, not knowing what was happening, but feeling suddenly light and confident and strong. He felt himself gaining — felt that somehow the backs of the other two men were drawing irresistibly nearer. Some one ran along beside him, waving a hat. "You've got him! You've got him! Keep it up! Keep it up!" the man cried. "Vandalia! Vandalia! Vandalia!" All at once it came to him that he *had* got him — got the Other Man — got the ringer — that Vandalia was going to beat Sugar River and they were calling on him to come. The cheer shot out again — a little farther ahead — as fast as the beat stopped it was caught up and carried on. Some one — it was the boys he'd trained who had done it — had strung relays all round the track. It became a regular bombardment. The crowd listened — wavered — and broke loose. They came swarming down from the seats on the side hill and over the rail. They followed along behind in a drove, yelling like Indians. It looked like a picture of the flight from Pompeii with everybody laughing — kids and men and girls stumbling along in the grass at the side of the track and scuffling up the dust behind. He could hear them laughing and screaming: "Keep it up! Keep it up!"

and "Beat him! Beat him! Vandalia! Vandalia!" and steadily all the time from behind and in front came that drum-beat cheer, ripping and pounding out above the rest. The relays crossed each other and overlapped, taking it up and beating it in — swinging it, jamming it at 'em. It seemed as though that whole fair ground had jumped together in a twinkling and was calling on him to come. It all hit him in a flash — shivered up his backbone. He had stayed behind, but he was somebody, after all, and he stood for somebody and they stood for him and expected things of him. He forgot the Other Man, forgot himself. *He* was Vandalia now, and Vandalia must smash Sugar River. It was more than getting even, more than winning; it was fighting for his friends, for his town, for his country. His feet seemed lifted from the ground.

Maybe Vandalia was a dull place to live in, but it was everlastingly healthy. All his running and going-to-bed-with-the-chickens came back to help him now. Rounding into the stretch, he took the bit in his teeth and turned everything loose. With every stride he seemed to pull the Sugar River man's back nearer, hand over hand. His elbow bumped an arm and he heard the Other Man gasping out, "*Beat him! Beat him!*" as he passed by. Nothing could have stopped him then. There were fifty yards left. He shut his eyes again; his elbow bumped an arm, then the engine-bell was clanging overhead, and the tape hit his chest. The crowd closed in, there was a great uproar all round him, and he turned just in time to see the Sugar River man go down and out about six feet short of the line, and to catch the Other Man in his arms as he dove forward and fainted clean away.

He picked him up like a child, and, spent as he was, carried him into the Tight-Wire Man's tent. Outside the crowd cheered and howled, and pushed up against the canvas walls, and from the distance came the boom of the band, marching toward them across the field. He swabbed on witch-hazel

desperately — panting, dizzy with excitement and happiness, and a queer happy-weepy remorse. The Other Man opened his eyes and blinked.

“Bill” — he grinned the best he could and held out his hand — “I guess we’ve been fools long enough.” Then he got tired again. “It was a great race,” he said, without opening his eyes. The Vandalia Miler swabbed on the witch-hazel the harder. “Yes!” he panted; “Yes!” He meant that he thought it had been long enough. Somehow he couldn’t remember any words. Then the crowd pushed in. The Other Man raised himself on his elbow.

“Go out to them, Bill,” he said; “I’m all right. You don’t want to forget — you’re champeen of the world!”

They grabbed him up, protesting, lifted him on their shoulders and carried him out of the tent. He felt the cooler air and he saw the faces turned toward him and heard the cheers and cries, and then they marched out to the people — his own people at last — with the band booming away at the head.

That, in a way, is about what they’ve been doing to him ever since, out there in Vandalia. At least that is what Starbuck said as he told us the story — we who had run together and played together and were back from East and West to see another class day, to tell the old stories, run the old races over again, swing home again with the pack through the frosty autumn, toward the lights of the Square. Starbuck, you see, was the Other Man.

“They’ve just nominated him for governor out in our State,” said he, “and they’re telling the story of that race all the way from South River Junction to the North State line. I’m one of Bill’s spell-binders; that’s why I tell it so well. He’s our Favorite Son now, and he’s only begun.” Starbuck took a couple of brisk pulls at his cigar and blew a big cloud of smoke toward the ceiling.

“Begins to look” said he, cheerfully, “as though I was the man who was left behind.”

XIII. THE CHAPERON ¹

ALTA BRUNT SEMBOWER

[This story is an example of how to weave the strands of a peculiar plot into the texture of common, homely life. Notice how easily the unusual and the commonplace join, each helping to bring out, rather than to subdue, the essential qualities of the other, and how they make a single pattern.]

SILAS RAND stood on the platform at Rand's Crossing — which, as the world's approach to a stretch of notable farming country, had long since ceased to have any pride merely in being his namesake — and watched the disappearing train. Something feminine in the cool swiftness with which it took the curves struck him as he gazed. It had the triumphant air that his wife sometimes wore when she was going out of the room after a verbal shot.

"She's gone!" announced Silas, with generous admiration.

He had thought himself alone — the morning train had left no passengers. The hack which had waited to carry passengers to the town of Millersville was going off with resignation. But Ezriah Meeks, the station-master, had lingered on the platform to prolong the excitement of "train-time," and he caught Silas's words.

"Is she gone for long?" he inquired, with respectful interest.

Silas enjoyed the full content of the mistake before correcting it. He was a farmer of the prosperous, comfortable class, but he had never acquired the roundness nor the restful stolidity which often result from prosperity.

"Who gone?" he began, with humorous deliberation, but ended by giving up the pretense of not understanding. "Lucy? Well, yes, she's gone too long to suit me and her mother. Did

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she mention" — an acquired caution, due to many reproofs at home for his loquacity, appeared in Silas's tone — "that she's goin' t' the city to hev her picture took?"

The station-master realized that if he wished to hear the news there was a need for diplomacy on his own part. He was not without a gift for it — bequeathed him perhaps by his mother, who had solved the problem of naming him for his two grandfathers, Ezra and Uriah, at a single stroke. "No," he said, cautiously. "I can't say that she did exactly" — he added, as a shade of reticence passed over the farmer's face. "I'm turrible busy around here," he hinted, "just before the train comes in."

The happy thought that lack of opportunity was the only thing that had prevented Lucy's confidence succeeded with her father. It fell in with his own desire to talk, and, as with many parents, his sense of humor weakened as the subject of discussion approached his child.

"She's gone to hev it did," he imparted, walking to a place on the platform from which he could keep an eye upon his horses. "Her and her mother has been plannin' it out," he went on, sitting down upon a baggage-truck, "down to the last *detail*. It'll take about a month, they reckon."

"I thought they struck 'em off in less time than that," said Ezriah. "Is it cabinet photographs?"

"No, it ain't cabinets," said Silas. "As far as I make out it's a painted photograph. There's only one of it. A porterate — that's the word." Ezriah gazed without blinking, but his face did not light up. "I hain't lent much time to it," Silas apologized, "but I hear 'em talking it over in the evenin's after the city paper's come. It was a kind of prize contest — a little kewpon in each day. I steer off from such things myself; they tantalize your wits only to disappoint you. But women will risk disappointment any day to be amused. I don't deny in this case that they got their reward."

“Was it something that you git with soap?” inquired Ezriah. His friend gazed at him in astonishment. “With soap? Soap!” He recovered himself with difficulty. “Well, I guess I’d hev set foot down myself on soap. But Mehala! And Lucy! Why, they ain’t a soap *artikle* made that Mehala ’d think was good enough to rest Lucy’s little slippers on. This was, as I make out, a high-class thing — kewpons and all. It wasn’t more than four lines in the paper every day, but four lines in a city paper, Mehala says, is better than a page. Only the right people see it then, she says.”

“*She* seen it,” agreed Ezriah, with the evident intention of flattery. He was a friend of Mehala Rand as well as of her husband, and he had had no intention of reflecting upon her taste.

Silas was mollified. “She’s seen every word in the paper,” he said, with affectionate pride, “since Brother Jed began to send it to us fifteen years ago. She’s a reader — Mehala is — and Lucy’s kind of inherited it. You and I’d ’a’ missed them kewpons, Ezriah. They was away down on the society page. ‘For the poor of St. Stephen’s parish,’ it said. A woman’s society had the runnin’ of the thing. You remember the bazaar that the ladies of Hope Church held over here, and raffled off a cake. That’s what this was, only there wasn’t any bazaar nor any cake. You puzzled out a kewpon every day and sent it in with a triflin’ sum, and the prize was your picture painted by a man whose business ginerally is to paint the rich, but who was willin’ to give this to St. Stephen’s poor. I reckon the women folks wheedled it out of him. They like to get their hands upon your pocketbook. They didn’t give this picture to the winner for nothing — they was a ten-dollar clause attached to it. That’s why I took it. You don’t git anything for nothing, I told the folks, but for ten —”

“Did Lucy git the prize?” asked Ezriah.

“‘Twas strange,” said Silas, “with half the city goin’ crazy

over this man's work — we read about that one day in another place in the paper — this prize come to a rooral district."

"Maybe the society folks didn't try for it," Ezriah suggested. "I've heard there's a lot of false pride amongst them."

"Maybe so," said Silas. "And maybe Lucy and her mother was too shrewd for them. *They* did it for the fun at first — puzzlin' it out. Then it seemed a pity not to send the kewpons in. Lucy thought it was amusin'; her mother took it a good deal more serious. But they both" — Silas chuckled at the memory — "looked scared when the prize letter come."

"And Lucy packed right up and went," said Ezriah, expressing what his own impulse would have been.

"Well, no!" Silas rose and began to move toward his horses. His friend followed him hungrily. "No; that was where the rub come in. When it come to the p'int o' that, it seemed that Lucy had been countin' on her mother's porterate. And Mehala had been cherishin' — like the strawberry jam she's got down-cellar — the idee of hevin' Lucy took. She'd planned it out — Mehala had. She wanted Lucy in her new lawn dress. It made her nearly sick when Lucy said she wouldn't go. They never would 'a' reached a p'int o' view, I guess, if I hadn't settled it." Silas untied the horses and climbed into the buggy. For a moment it seemed that Ezriah was to be left starving for the last details.

"Did you pick Lucy out?" he asked, invitingly.

Silas reproved so easy a solution. "I was settin' one night listenin' to 'em arguin'. Lucy ain't much to argue: she just gives a kind o' sad little 'no.' But she means it. And Mehala was nigh hysteriky. I remarked that I guessed that was about what the poor of St. Stephen's parish and those women had expected it to come to. They thought the offer might be turned back in on them — none to blame but them that refused it! — and they wouldn't be out nothin' at all. There's some money in them kewpons — the Lord knows how they calclate

it out! Mehala near collapsed to hear me talk so. But Lucy stiffened up a mite. I seen her mouth tighten like when on occasion she has to help me separate old Bossy and the calf. Lucy's a tender-hearted little thing, but she can *do* when she sets her mind to it. What does she say after a minute but thet she'll go! Mehala set there lookin' at her, like some one afraid to jiggle a piece o' chiny for fear that it might break. But Lucy kept her mind made up. She's goin' to visit Jed's folks while she's there. That was a part of Mehala's plan. I was glad it was settled so," said judicial Silas, "for Mehala's sake. Lucy looks right pretty in that new lawn dress. It's white and soft, with a sprig of blue in it —"

"She'll make a sightly picture," said Ezriah, drawing back from the muddy wheels and watching them begin to move. "Let me know when she comes back with it."

"I reckon you'd know when she was comin'," said Silas, "by the look o' Mehala's face and mine. We're lonesome as whippoorwills without her." He touched the horses reluctantly, as if he saw the lonely house ahead of him. "Mehala will be waitin'. She's had her way about the picture; I don't doubt she's kind o' regrettin' it now. Hevin' your own way ain't always the pleasantest thing in the world."

Ezriah was in no danger of mistaking the day that was bringing Lucy home. Silas arrived at the station an hour before the train, and, seated on the baggage-truck, added to his story of the portrait certain details furnished by Lucy's letters since the sittings had begun. The month allowed in Mehala's calculations had lengthened into six weeks, owing to the fact, as Silas put it, that "the settin's hadn't come regular, but only off and on."

"It's like the dentists, I presoom," said Ezriah. "Some days they hev you and some days they don't."

"A line o' miserable sufferers comin' in between," elaborated Silas, always pleased with a flight of the imagination. "'This

ain't, of course, a busy season for the artists," he went on, in a more practical vein. "Most of their subjects, it seems, are off to Europe. Some of the artists go along. But this one, Lucy says, is dreadful earnest in his work, and he's got some on hand, he told her, that he was goin' to finish if it took all summer. He must be an interestin' fellow, along with his paintin' work. Lucy says she enjoys just to set and watch."

"Did she say how many settin's it would take?" asked Ezriah, giving a critical turn to his inquiries. "It don't seem scarcely reasonable that he should expect Lucy to take all summer to it, too. Does Lucy" — Ezriah was emboldened to a still more scientific doubt — "admire of his work?"

Silas drew down his brows in an effort to remember. "She says — Shoo! I thought I had her letter here. Well, she says she can't tell exactly what it's like, because it's just her. I guess I can tell, if it *is* her. She says the colors, though, stand out soft like the mist over the marsh in the early mornings. An' she says her mother will like the face. If it satisfies Mehala" — Silas gave a comprehensive sigh — "I reckon they ain't no question of the picture. Anyway, it's done. I'm glad o' that. Times when it looked to me, ez you say, ez it would take all summer to the job. Lucy would write, 'I go to-morrow,' or, 'I went yesterday,' to the stodio, and there was no mention of any end to it. But it come apparently — like all things, except the judgment day."

"I hope Lucy didn't hurry the feller at the last," said Ezriah, treacherously turning upon his former attitude. "I've knowed good jobs spoiled by people gittin' nervous over 'em."

"I don't guess that Lucy'll hev made any mistake," said Silas, happily. "She may 've got a bit homesick. When she was at the 'cademy at Meedville, she used to fret for Mehala and me. I'm glad the picture's done. We may run on for several months now before the women gets another idee."

Ezriah busied himself actively with the mail-bags as the

train rushed in. He did not confess it to others, but he had a private superstition against expecting pleasure to arrive with any train; it was like waiting for your ship to come in.

But Silas was not disappointed; Lucy was the only passenger that did alight. Silas stood watching for her, only his eyes showing his pleasure when her small blue-gowned figure appeared. She looked for him eagerly as she came down the steps, and he claimed her with a humorous little gesture that made the women at the car windows stare with interest at the two.

She was a delicate-looking girl, in contrast with her father's sturdy vigor. But she had a vigor of her own — of the sort that makes for grace instead of strength or bulk. She looked like a healthy flower which has been sheltered in its growth. Silas and Mehala had evidently felt the responsibility of such a charge: they had been tender in their touch. The girl's face showed beneath a veil of shyness the fearlessness of innocent thought.

Outwardly she had, as much as anything else, a look which women would have united to call "nice." Her father — and perhaps men in general — would have thought the word too mild. Whatever she seemed to others, she was altogether pleasing to his eyes. He looked her up and down as he took her small travelling-bag.

"I come in the spring-wagon," he said, apologetically. "Your mother said 'twa'n't no way to bring you home. But the trunk was to be considered, and I had to make a trip to the mill."

Lucy put her hand lovingly into his arm. She looked tired and excited.

"As if I minded, father, how you've come! Only, do let's be quick. It is so good" — she spoke with faint but eager preoccupation — "to be at home."

Silas was gazing with head on one side, at the trunk. "Is the picture in that?" He was radiant with good feeling and

realized expectation. "I've been telling Ezriah about it. I reckon we couldn't take it out?"

"It isn't there," said Lucy. "It is —"

"Comin' by express," anticipated Silas, anxious to acknowledge that his hopes had been too high. "Well, I'd always ruther bring my parcels home under my arm. You do feel safer. But it ain't the way of this day and generation. Mehala won't expect it. She's more modern in her views."

"It'll be safe enough if it comes my way," said Ezriah, helping Silas put the trunk in the wagon. "I sha'n't lose no time in notifyin' you."

Lucy had climbed without assistance to the wagon seat. She sat lightly erect, looking across the sunny wheat-fields. Silas clambered over the wheel and settled himself beside her. He glanced back at Ezriah, and was evidently about to extend another cheerful invitation to a private view, when he felt Lucy's hand laid suddenly upon his.

"Don't say anything more about the picture, father — please! I haven't brought it home."

Silas turned a jovial face toward her as the horses swung into the road. "Bless your soul, child; I never thought you would. I was only talkin' to Ezriah. We chat each other a good deal that way. I'd just as soon — I'd ruther it 'd come later than you. It's like gittin' two prize packages 'stid o' one."

Lucy had a patient look. "But, father — I thought I should save it to tell mother, but I believe it is easier to tell you — it isn't coming at all — the picture. I didn't stay to let it be finished."

Silas puckered his mouth to whistle, but he made no sound. His face had grown attentive. Now that he had time to think of it, he realized that Lucy had what he would have called a "worry on her mind."

"Didn't you like the picture, dearie?" he asked, in his mildest tone. He gave a flick of the whip across the horses' backs, to imply that the question was a casual one.

Lucy hesitated. "Like it? Oh, father —" an eagerness began to tremble in her tone, but she held it back. "You see, father" — she tried to make her tone judicial — "Mr. Arkwright is a great painter — a well-known painter — though he is not old. You couldn't question his work. He has painted famous people —"

"Paints blue satin better — likely," said Silas, "than a clump o' johnny-jump-ups in the woods." He was stiffening a little at the hint of self-depreciation in Lucy's words.

A smile came into Lucy's eyes. "He painted some flowers in my hands — blue gentians — that even you, father, would have thought came from our woods."

Silas sighed as if at the picture. "Blue gentians." He had a moment's wonder. "They don't grow in towns."

"No; he got them somewhere," said Lucy, with a girl's simplicity. "He wanted them for the picture very much."

Silas looked up suddenly from his reflections. "Did you pay him the ten dollars, Lucy?"

Lucy grew pale, and then painfully crimson. "No, I didn't —" The pleasure had gone out of her face. "I didn't — I couldn't, father. That was one of the things I couldn't do."

"It didn't seem enough?" Silas nodded his head gently to indicate that he knew just what such scruples were. He kept on nodding it. "And yit — and yit — it seems as if he'd earned *it* — if 'twa'n't enough."

"Enough!" said Lucy. Her tone swelled with meaning, then fell as if before a task too great.

Silas was still shrewdly attentive. "Did you come away, honey, because you felt that way? As if you wasn't payin' for the picture right?"

His patience touched the girl's sense of duty. She answered simply: "No, I didn't, father. I did feel that at first, and it was hard. Mother hadn't imagined what it would be. She thought only about having the picture. But I tried to be

sensible. I was ashamed of being ashamed. The agreement was what it was, and I tried to be business-like about it. Mr. Arkwright didn't make it hard. He didn't seem to think anything about the terms of the picture, after it was begun. He — he seemed glad to work upon it. And I meant — I meant to give him the ten dollars. But at the last — when I came away so — so suddenly — ” Her voice began to falter.

Silas asserted a stronger claim. “What *made* you come away, honey?”

The girl's answer seemed irrelevant. “Some of his friends came one day — a girl and her mother — ” Lucy suddenly broke off, and addressed her father in an almost impersonal way. “Father, do *you* believe that a person can do a wrong thing — or a thing that has the appearance of being wrong — without having any idea at all that it is wrong?”

Silas was drawn beyond his resistance by discussion: it was the tree of temptation for him; and though he was still concentrated intensely upon finding out what was troubling Lucy, he saw no harm in stepping aside for a moment to follow out a “line o' thought.”

He seldom committed himself, however, early in an argument. “There's a heap o' crime committed in ignorance,” he said, wisely, and paused to catch up a doubtful thread. “But there is things that looks wrong — a plenty — that ain't wrong, neither.”

“There are things that are wrong because they look wrong,” said Lucy, with sudden intensity.

Her father bent a doubtful gaze upon her. “Not accordin' to regular law, honey.” He gave her a whimsical but tender smile. “That's some kind of a woman's law.”

“It's social law,” said Lucy.

“Well, we ain't socialists,” said Silas. He was uncertain himself whether he had made a joke or not.

The girl began again.

“Father, if a man should come along and pass through one of our gates, and leave it open; or let down the bars — ”

“Some city foo — fellow?” asked Silas, following intently.

“What would you think of him?” asked Lucy.

Silas considered. “Well, I should say — first — he didn’t know no better — ”

“You would despise him,” said the girl, with a cold kind of triumph.

“No — no — ” Silas rejected this as too harsh. “No, I shouldn’t despise him. I should just say he didn’t know no better, and — and — ”

“But if he left the way open,” cried the girl, unconsciously combining literal and figurative, “to misjudgment of not only himself, but of his — his people — ”

Silas was intent for once upon the literal. “Of course, if he let something loose — ” He paused, suspecting a pitfall. The girl’s face was so bitterly intent upon him. Silas suddenly struck for a harmless way out. “I should just say, honey, that he warn’t to blame to any *great* degree — though ignorance ain’t no excuse in the eyes o’ the law — exceptin’ just, in my opinion, so far ez he was to blame fer *goin’* into places he didn’t know about.”

Lucy sank back against the narrow bar of the wagon seat. She waited a moment before speaking. “That’s why I came home, father,” she said, in a quiet, restrained voice. “Because — because I never should have gone.”

The turn of conversation was too quick for Silas. “Never should ‘a’ gone?” he repeated, vaguely.

“Not in the way I did,” said Lucy; “to the studio, I mean. Alone.”

“Alone!” A sudden flash of trouble appeared in Silas’s face.

The girl caught the gleam of it without analyzing it. “Perhaps you would say there was no harm done, father. It’s just — just the way I feel about it. It’s not the way things

are done in the city, that's all. Girls don't go about so. It gives a wrong impression."

In his anxious bewilderment, Silas — for one of the few times in his life — spoke a word of blame to her. "What made ye go, then, Lucy?"

She saw no injustice in this. Her defence of herself was only half-hearted. "I didn't know about it. At least I had only read it — I remembered that afterward — in novels. I didn't think, somehow, of it as real, and as ever touching me."

Silas was recovering himself. "Well, I guess it ain't touched you yit" — his need of reassurance took the form of aggressive self-assertion — "to do ye any hurt."

"No," said Lucy. Her delicate face smoothed itself into a look of firm cheerfulness. She tried to speak with lightness. "No, it's only a matter of feeling better or worse over a blunder. It's making another to grieve about the first."

Seeing her so reasonable roused a thirst in Silas for some one to vent his wrath upon. "What made ye feel this, honey? Did that — I thought you said he — "

"It was the young lady that I spoke of," said Lucy, as if the detail were of no importance to her. "She came with her mother to see a picture. She found me resting — reading a book. She seemed" — Lucy flushed — "to like my portrait. I heard her say it was — lovely. Then she said something to her mother. She didn't mean me to hear. I couldn't help it. Mr. Arkwright heard it, too — he was coming from the other room."

"What *could* she say?" asked Silas. He glanced from the girl's face down at her dress, and at her face again, helpless to find anything to warrant a sneer.

Lucy was patient, like a tired child, with his wonder. "It was something about a chaperon."

"A shappy-roan!" said Silas. It seemed to him an irrelevant reference to horses.

"It's the person who goes along," said Lucy. "That young lady's mother was her chaperon."

"Oh!" said Silas. A sudden and most unusual sharpness cut into his drawling tone. "Well, I'm glad she had somebody to take care o' *her*." His anger increased at the sound of itself spoken. "What did *you* say back to her, honey?"

Lucy gazed, astonished. "Why, father!" But a slight flush burned in her own face at the memory. "I didn't say anything, of course. I — I went away very soon. Mr. Arkwright introduced me to them. And — I said I had to go. I forgot about staying for the sitting. I meant to go back — or to write a note to say I hadn't realized — I meant to send the money. But I couldn't — somehow I couldn't do any of those things. I wanted to come home. And I did. And I can't go back, father" — the girl's self-control suddenly broke with a trembling little cry — "ever. You mustn't ask me to."

"I sha'n't ask you to," said Silas. He was turning grimly over in his mind the new word he had learned. New words and new ideas made themselves quickly at home with him; he was so hospitable to them. "I reckon your mother could 'a' been one — one of those things," he ventured.

"Yes," Lucy agreed. "Mother, or Aunt Barbara — or you!"

"Me!" said Silas, overwhelmed.

Lucy showed a new dread as they drew near a curve in the hedge-bordered road which hid them from their house. "Mother will mind so much about the picture!"

Silas urged the horses on. "Mehala ain't no fool." He modified his statement unconsciously by adding, "We'll tell it to her gradual."

"I couldn't bear that she should be blamed," said Lucy, "that he — that they — should think she didn't know. It was my place to know. I am younger" — she was unconscious of expressing anything so broad as the social code of the new world — "and it was my place to know. She ought to

blame me — I don't mind her blaming me. But she believed so in me — it will hurt her." The girl struck her hands softly together as if over an intolerable regret. "I can't bear to hurt her. But" — a sudden suspicion of her father's meditative silence made her flash round upon him fervidly — "I want her to be told the truth."

"The truth!" Silas was growing calmer, like a sailor who, after a hard voyage, begins to draw into port. He indulged a tender chuckle. "You nee'n' to worry. You know yer mother's quiet in her way. But if we tried to keep her back from it with red-hot irons, I guess she would get at the truth."

The road to Rand's Crossing was not, in late August, the road that it had been in mid-April and May. Silas and his horses, usually a complacent trio, yielded to an air of boredom as they jogged home from the mill one afternoon, a month after Lucy's return. Yet Silas was not altogether without reason for self-content. He had resisted turning aside at the station for a chat with Ezriah, and his conscience was patting him on the back. It was like a reward of merit when, rounding a curve, he saw ahead of him an unfamiliar figure, hat in hand, walking in the grass beside the road.

He stared critically at the pedestrian.

"Ain't got sense enough to keep his hat on fer shade 'stid o' takin' it off fer air when they ain't none. And kicks that weed-dust up around his legs because he 'maginees that the road is worse." The farmer quickened the pace of his horses toward this misguided infant of the road.

"Hev a ride?" he called, as the man, without glancing round, stepped farther aside to let the wagon pass. "Used to gettin' out of the way of kerridges," reasoned Silas, continuing his favorite amusement of analyzing human beings as scientists analyze peculiar bugs. "Reckon he thinks this is an omynibus."

The man in the road lifted a preoccupied face, which lighted

up in a moment with pleasant gratitude. "Thanks. I should like it very much." He swung himself up over the wheel with a dexterity yet somewhat foreign to that form of exercise. "It was getting pretty stiff along here where there isn't any shade." His face betrayed beneath a superficial coat of crimson the dawning pallor due to unaccustomed exposure to the sun.

"It's the hottest road between Jerusalem and Jericho," said Silas. He busied himself with the buckle of the lines to allow the other a moment for recovery. "There's a breeze up here on the wagon seat, though. That's why I took pity on you down there on the level."

The stranger smiled. "I'm not such a bad walker when I'm in trim," he said, with the city's man fear of being considered unathletic. "But I've been sticking close to my work. It makes a man a little soft."

The farmer had none of this physical pride. "Don't reckon I've walked along this road for twenty years. Daisy and Nell are good enough for me." He slapped the horses.

"They are so much too good for me," said the young man — he was about thirty, Silas calculated from casual glances at his thoughtful, clean-shaven face — "that they might be drawing a chariot dropped from heaven. I wonder if you are going as far as to Mr. Silas Rand's?"

Silas had a moment of keen enjoyment.

"I'm going *jest* that far," he allowed, after a silence.

The stranger turned a quick, inquiring face. "Are you Mr. Rand himself?" There was a note of pleasure in his voice that conquered Silas. "I might have guessed it," the young man went on, with frank apology, "if I hadn't been so done up." He permitted himself an eager scrutiny of the farmer's face. "I was thinking — in fact, I was thinking up. I haven't thought up anything yet," he confessed, "to say. But I believed it would come to me on the road. And if the sun

hadn't burned all my senses —" He broke off again with a hopeless smile at his own floundering. "I want to see Miss Lucy Rand."

Silas looked up with deliberation. "Did you come to see about that picture?" He also indulged himself in a fuller gaze into the other's face. It was a pleasant-featured, earnest face, which returned his gaze without boldness yet with openness. Silas concluded that he liked it; he allowed his keen blue eyes to twinkle forth a gleam of sympathy.

The young man caught at it with vehemence. "You know who I am, then, Mr. Rand? I am, of course, the painter of Miss Rand's portrait. I've finished it without any more sittings. I've run down to — to see about it."

"She got the two letters that you wrote, askin' her to let you finish it," said Silas. He gazed off into a neighboring field. "I guess she answered ye."

"Yes, she did," said the painter. He gave a short, unquiet sigh, and spoke as if to himself. "She could scarcely have refused me that."

"She got quite an upset down there," said Silas, with a rather dry but not unkindly frankness. "It was somethin' that a lady said. Lucy ain't used to criticism. I reckon" — a note betraying a real concern sounded through the farmer's casual tone — "we've sort o' spoiled her for the world. We didn't know none of the fashions. We always let her think that she was all right so long as she was sweet and good."

"She is like a spirit," said the painter, from some impulse of his own.

Silas gave a quick glance of uneasiness. "Yes, and yit she ain't a spirit. That's the way with girls. Half is angel, and the other half is interested in the affairs of *this* world. Lucy's always seemed above the little fault-findin's of women — she ain't missed *all* o' them even in this country place — but I 'clare the child looks pret' near sick reflectin' on the words

o' that young lady down with you. I reckon she had a grand way. That goes right to a woman's heart."

"She has the way of thousands of people," said the painter, "who get their opinions ready-made; they haven't the power of individual judgment."

"I reckon the' was a *little* rancor in her speech," said Silas, wistful after the truth.

The painter was sternly frank. He gazed at the passing fields for a moment, then shifted his position abruptly. "I was to blame," he broke out, in a low tone. "Wretchedly to blame."

Silas was thoughtful. "You mean you ought to 'a' told us?"

The delicacy of the pronoun struck the young man to the heart. "Yes, I mean" — he lost some of the poise which he had been trying to maintain — "I should have protected her. I knew she didn't know. And yet I didn't know that, either — or care! I tell you the truth, Mr. Rand" — the young man's words became more resolute as they became more coherent — "I never thought of applying any such ideas to her. She stood alone from the moment she came to see about those odd arrangements for the picture. I'd forgotten all about St. Stephen's Guild. But she made the arrangements — she made everything — seem simple and plain, so long — as you said — as they were good. Women of that sort," the young man finished, with a young man's positiveness, "are not meant to follow rules. They are meant to make them."

"There ain't no rule too good for Lucy," said her father. "That's what she's bound to hev us grant. Her aunt Barbara — that's the aunt she visited in town — laughed when Lucy told her how she felt. Barbara said, 'Them is ways for society folk.' But Lucy wouldn't hev it. She talked to me about it."

"She sees beauty in convention," said the painter.

Silas was quiet for a moment. "You come to know Lucy," he said, with a note of wonder — and with something of the

right to question — in his level voice, “pretty well durin’ the makin’ o’ thet picture.”

“I came to — to — ” The young man leaned forward, his elbows on his knees and his palms pressed together, and stared at the green dashboard of the wagon. Then he faced the farmer. “It was more than that, Mr. Rand. That’s why I came down to see you — to ask you if you thought she — might — ! It will seem too short a time to you. But” — he paused to make himself convincing — “I haven’t cared much all my life for anything but my work; and I knew when she came! Perhaps it was because she was like a flower, or a spirit from the woods — I’ve lived a good deal out-of-doors. And if she — ” he recalled himself from his excited self-communion to his listener. “I should expect you to find out all about me, Mr. Rand. I’ll wait — if she — We *were* congenial; until that wretched happening, I believed — ” He drew himself together finally. “At least, I want to have my chance.”

Silas had stopped him with a motion of the hand. “We’re comin’ to the house — around this curve — right there. The folks ’ll come out as quick’s they hear the wagon wheels. I didn’t mean to shet you up, young man!” Between attention to the horses and to the strings of a patent gate which swung cleverly open ahead of them, Silas turned his head to give his companion a keen but kindly glance. “I won’t say I ain’t been infloenced by your p’int o’ view. I make up my mind quick — too quick, maybe, sometimes — about a man. But all I got to say is concerning what you’ve said to me — you save it to tell her!”

To which of the two figures on the farmhouse porch he referred it might not have been plain to an unbiased listener. Lucy and her mother had both appeared, the former coming ahead. At sight of the wagon she stood motionless upon the steps. Mehala moved ahead of her, gazing with an increase of interest. The men saw the girl put her hand upon her

mother's arm and draw Mehala back to her. Silas and his companion — the latter had become unconsciously in Silas's mind a charge — left the wagon in care of a farm-hand whom Silas hailed cheerfully as "Job," and came through an inner gate across a stretch of clipped grass to the porch.

Lucy grew white as they came. But her face betrayed a light which was infinitely softer and more penetrating than a smile. Arkwright himself was pale; he went directly to her and held out his hand. They met, as young people do under excitement, oblivious of lookers-on.

"The picture is done," said Arkwright, selecting, as it were, the detail from a multitude of things in his mind.

Lucy replied with the same concentration upon a safe topic. "It has been a ridiculous trouble to you."

"I picked him up out of a sun," said Silas, "that was tryin' to reduce him to a p'int where he couldn't paint a fly. Set and be comfortable, Mr. Arkwright." The farmer had renounced the necessity of being critical, the case being handed over to the womenfolk.

Arkwright stood looking at these two; Mehala had received him with a quietly scrutinizing eye. "There is a train back to town at eleven," began the painter, hurriedly. "I'm going to walk to it. I *can* walk like a man, under a moon. But — will you bear with me till then?"

Silas's lips had moved to frame the word "to-morrow," but Mehala anticipated him. "Silas would enjoy right well to take you over in the buggy." She made the visitor at home with a gesture which was gracious in spite of being rather dry. "You're not used to havin' supper in the city, Mr. Arkwright, before the sun goes down. But Lucy and I was just gittin' ours. We'll go in and lay another plate." She laid her hand on Lucy's arm; the two moved together easily, as women do who are used to working with each other.

Left alone with his guest after the simple meal, Silas smiled

at him with rather sheepish comradeship. "I guess she thinks ye've come to see me," he said, and again the authoritative pronoun was clear only to himself.

He raised his glance to his companion and found the younger man's eyes fixed upon him with a keen appeal. The farmer rose as a physician might respond to the call of pain.

"I guess I'll go and see about the pigs," he said, with resolution. Arkwright made no reply. Silas stopped in the doorway. "I'll send Lucy here," he said with elaborate casualness. "She's always keen to set and watch the stars come out."

But inside the house he became less certain of himself. He made his way rather waveringly to the kitchen, where he found Mehala straining the milk from the buckets into large shallow pans. Lucy stood by, watching her.

Silas paused, anxiously studying the two. "I'm goin' out to help Job with the feedin'," he said at last. He jerked his thumb over his shoulder. "He's out there by himself. Air ye goin' to git out pretty soon?"

Lucy gave her father a tremulous glance. "We're going as soon as mother strains the milk."

Mehala straightened from her task and took off her apron. "I'm ready when you are," she said, rather grimly, to the girl. Silas was puzzled by Mehala. He watched her for a glance that would betray her secret attitude. She gave him no satisfaction. At the same time her air toward Lucy was not exactly a confidential one. If they were in collusion — Silas decided — they were silently so. He had almost the feeling that they were in collusion against him. He went toward the barnyard in a dejected frame of mind.

Mehala led the way to the porch. Arkwright rose and offered her his chair, but she took another — a long-backed rocking-chair which caught her by the shoulders and held aloof at every other point. Mehala seemed to find it as comfortable as she had any right to expect. Lucy — evidently according to habit

— seated herself on the step at her mother's feet. Arkwright, after a hesitation, chose a place at the other end of the step, facing Lucy.

"It is scarcely safe to have thoughts in this silence," said the painter. "One feels as if they might be overheard. Is that the reason" — he addressed Mehala with a smile — "that people living in places like this are good?"

"They're not so good," said Mehala. She looked alert for conversation. Her eyes were watchful in the dusk, like a cat's eyes — with the quiet, too, of a cat. "There's a lot of ugliness, Mr. Arkwright," she fixed the young man keenly, "in places that look peaceful like this. People that come out for a while and ride along between the hedges only see the pretty side. They'd see the other soon enough. There's ignorance — and dulness —"

Lucy exclaimed with quick amazement: "Mother! You know there's no place that you love so well!"

"You can love better sometimes for not bein' 's blind as a mole," replied her mother. She was diverted slightly from her course by the girl's interruption, but she remained intense. "We *are* slow. We are backward in the ways of folks."

"You lose very little by that," said Arkwright. His face, too, had grown slightly vigilant in the twilight.

"We're not used to many kinds of vehicles," continued Mehala, her speech showing the influence of her husband's figurative mind. "We've only got one rule of the road — when we've got sense to have any at all — that's turn to the right."

"It's the only rule that is absolutely necessary," said Arkwright. "The others are outgrowths of it."

A crow flew across the fields in the silence and above the house with a raucous cry. "There was a wicked thought!" said Lucy, looking up. She was not tense like the others.

Her voice had a contented, relaxed note. For the first time her eyes and Arkwright's met in a smile, which seemed to make a bridge over which their spirits crossed.

Mehala's eyes were fixed upon them. She began to speak again with quiet vigor.

"I don't believe," she said, continuing her address to Arkwright, "that a person — brought up like me, for instance — could ever learn to follow all the little rules that have been added on. It's for them that have grown up in the country to live their lives there. It may be" — her voice showed a deep quiver — "that they ain't done wholly right by their children. Maybe they've kept them out of life. But, howsoever, it's for the children to abide by it. They couldn't learn the other way. They would *always* be transgressin'."

The painter was troubled and bewildered. But he kept to a simple path. "I don't believe there is any situation in the world, Mrs. Rand, in which *you* couldn't trust your instinct." He was beginning — he believed — to see the direction of her thought. But he drew her farther in it with a smile. "Could you hope the same of me?"

"I don't believe that any two people," said Mehala, ignoring the question in her emotion, "brought up in different ways could ever trust each other to know just the thing to do. To — to please each other. They'd see life — I read it in a book once! — from different angles. Little differences" — her voice became prophetic — "would rise up to trouble them. I — I should be afraid" — she became almost pleading in her sternness — "I should be terribly afraid to see it tried."

"It is not a new experiment," said Arkwright. His voice was strong, too, with appeal.

"It's a mighty dangerous one," said Mehala.

It had become a duel, at last, which was apparent. Lucy, with a sudden startled movement, like a bird's, became aware of it. She put out a quick hand toward her mother. Arkwright,

as if to seize the moment before she should give a deciding word, leaned forward, speaking rapidly and firmly.

“I should trust *my* happiness to it. And I should promise,” he went on, with a burst of daring, “all that was doubtful. It is determination that makes three-fourths of happiness, anyway — not circumstance. Determination and — what you feel. I know what I feel,” he suddenly threw out. “It is the surest feeling I have ever had. And I hope — I believe I may hope — ” he gave a fleeting glance through the dusk at the girl, who sat poised motionless. “What I do believe,” he went on to Mehala, “is that two persons who have seen each other across a difference of circumstances — who, through a cloud of apparent impossibility, have seen each other’s real selves — have a chance for happiness that few can hope for. They know each other as they are. And they — love — what they see.” He bent across to Lucy and broke the silence which practically had held them away from each other ever since he had come. “You — you believe it, too?”

It was an expression of faith almost as much as a question. But Lucy felt the obligation of truth that it put upon her. She had laid one hand upon her mother’s arm; she kept it there, and with the other found her mother’s hand. Across this little circlet of protection she gave her eyes to Arkwright’s gaze.

“Yes, I do.” Her voice was soft and tremulous, but it was not the voice of a child. Mehala heard the maturer note in it. She rose to her feet, loosing herself from the girl’s grasp rather uncertainly. Arkwright rose and faced her with eager concern.

“Can’t you take me on trust, Mrs. Rand?” His boyishness was in his favor after his burst of positive opinion. “There are different standards of conduct and propriety. But there is only one standard of sincerity.”

Mehala met him courageously. “I think — I believe — you’re a good man.” Her voice trembled, but she recovered some of her dryness of speech. “Anyway, there’s no more to

do. I've thought — I've feared — ever since Lucy come home. But I hoped it was a girl's fancy — to pass away. Then when you came — I've my fears — I determined to tell 'em to you — that such a thing can't turn out well. But" — she gave the young man a half-smile which betrayed that she had not opposed him altogether easily — "maybe it can!" She turned her glance toward Lucy as if the girl were far away. "I'll go and see what makes your father stay so long."

Lucy made a sudden movement to delay her, but Mehala ignored it and opened the screen-door. Inside the house she paused an instant. Her heart yearned toward the girl, as indeed it had yearned all the evening while she had withheld a word of sympathy. She felt now almost as if she had abandoned her child to a foe. The next moment she heard Arkwright's swift step across the porch. She waited breathless for a sound from Lucy; it came, a quick sob of happiness. Mehala moved farther out of hearing.

She heard Silas in the kitchen striking a match to light the lamp. He came slowly, carrying it into the parlor. Mehala met him in the door, took the lamp, and placed it on the table. Then she motioned Silas to a chair. He obeyed; he knew better than to precipitate the matter by questions when Mehala's face was tense like that. She did not keep him long in bewilderment; she forgot that she had snubbed him into silence toward her on the matter that had filled both their minds.

"They're out there," she said, in a whisper full of helplessness, "again, without" — she halted at the new word.

Silas's quickness of mind did not desert him in emotion. He saw the situation fully. A murmur of voices came softly from the porch. Silas turned his eyes toward the sound, and then back to Mehala's agitated face. When he spoke it was with unmodified cheerfulness.

"I reckon," he said, without subduing his voice to Mehala's careful note — "I reckon they've got to take life without a shappy-roan."

PART III

HOW TO SEE LIFE IMAGINATIVELY

PART III

INTRODUCTION

HOW TO SEE LIFE IMAGINATIVELY

THE unity of worldly affairs, discussed at some length in the last section, forms the basis on which imagination constructs a story in everyday life. The unity of human emotion, the idea that a touch of nature makes the whole world kin, is the more specific principle on which we would base a discussion of the art of seeing things vividly or imaginatively.

To see life vividly is to see it in its relation to human feeling. Unimaginative persons are either inattentive or see merely to recognize, to classify, and to know. Wordsworth's Peter Bell has become the type of the person who sees no more than meets the eye.

“A primrose by the river's brim,
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more.”

The imaginative attitude demands more than this simple observation. It demands an apprehension of things in at least some of their relations to the emotional life of men and women. The more profound and universal the relationship to this side of life, the higher is the form of imagination displayed. No writing can be considered vivid or artistic that fails to manifest something of this quality. A narrative is a bare chronicle without significance unless it is in some sense the product of the author's imaginative insight.

Poets, more than other men, see human situations charged with their emotional meaning. Indeed, they are poets by virtue

of the continued intensity and vividness with which they imagine life. Most of us on hearing a hurdy-gurdy or a barrel-organ always regard it as so much merely amusing or merely irritating sound. We are often scarcely conscious of any answer in us to the crude music, and we do not consider even remotely its possible effect on other persons. But the poet Alfred Noyes hears a barrel-organ¹ in the streets of London, and it opens to him the hearts of all men and women who trudge by in apparent insensibility. The thief, the portly man of business, the clerk, the butcher, the modish woman, the demi-rep are all carried on the wings of the banal music to "the land where the dead dreams go." Or Shelley hears of the death of John Keats, and the event arouses in the lyric poet a vast flood of personal feeling, which in turn gives him a vivid appreciation of what the earthly end of a poet means to the hearts of all men at all times. In *Adonais*, therefore, he is able to mount to perhaps the most exalted utterance in English literature of the emotions which the contemplation of Death and Eternity arouse in sensitive men.

One need not possess a poet's lofty vision, however, to see things imaginatively. Above all, one need not discover remote, strange, or even exalted suggestions in common things. Imagination is not, as many persons seem to think, an excursion into a world of phantasy. It can be exercised in the most humble situations. The student's theme, *In the Firelight*, in spite of some sentimentalism in tone, is proof of this fact. We all know a family in which strict religious parents refuse to let their sons and daughters learn to dance. This may be to us, however, a fact of no imaginative significance. If we begin to see this situation imaginatively, we shall doubtless see it at first only partially — with regard solely to the feelings of the children with whom we sympathize. Presented in dialogue without much further consideration, the case will appear far

¹"The Barrel Organ," *Poems*, Vol. I, by Alfred Noyes.

less complex than in the student's theme. The daughter will represent all that is true and natural in feeling and the mother — unnatural Puritanical repression and unjustified authority. Miss Thomson, however, is able to conceive the emotions of all the persons from their own point of view. We catch a glimpse, therefore, of an entire family bound together by very deep affection. The differences in opinion about dancing show the sympathetic and deeply emotional relation existing between daughter and mother, brother and sister, father and mother, and even between the daughter and her college friends. The imaginative intensity of this sketch has been produced because the author was able to see a simple human situation in terms of the feelings of many people.

The power of seeing things vividly is perhaps oftenest desired for descriptive writing. Here students' extravagant ideas of the true nature of imagination sometimes lead to forced fancies. To see gnomes in the flames of a log-fire, elves in the moonlight, prancing steeds or trailing garments in smoke hanging over a city or swirling from the stacks is a relatively low manifestation of the imaginative faculty. To see the same city smoke as Booth Tarkington does in the passage from *The Turmoil* is to regard it with a more vivid and with a profounder insight. He sees it as a phenomenon laden with the history of human feeling in a mid-western city. The smoke means that the inhabitants of the place have for years been driven to violent action by a half-mad desire for money, and for bigness and hasty growth as necessary preliminaries to this coveted wealth. The phenomenon has been able to evoke this vision from the mind of the author because it has been regarded not as an isolated fact for superficial record or description, but as the first of a train of logical emotional associations. The secondary facts are vitally concerned with human living and so freighted with emotion. The train of associations finally leads to the man Sheridan, who is a sort of twin brother to the smoke, born of

the rush for bigness. He is the crass, brutal emotion of the city incarnate. Introduced in this character, he arouses immediately an imaginative conception in the reader. He inherits at his first appearance much of the feeling which the antecedent description has aroused.

The emotional contagion in a description more often proceeds from persons to objects and events. To see through the eyes of a character whose feelings we understand is to share his emotional prejudices. This imaginative method is illustrated in a simple form in *The Glenmore Fire*. As compared with the fire reported on the first page of your morning's paper — there is a four million dollar fire in a munition plant in Pittsburgh reported on the first page of mine — the Glenmore fire is a record not of facts but of feelings. The cause of the fire, the loss of life, the terrible picturesqueness of the scene, are thrilling mainly because one of the helpless onlookers is the man who falsely built the Glenmore as a fire-proof hotel, knowing that he was cheating the world when he did it. The Glenmore fire is therefore humanly dramatic, humanly significant. It is not a mere spectacle. How to give the munition plant fire its true imaginative significance would be an interesting problem to work out in the light of this lesser conflagration.

The description of the factory from *The Long Day* derives its appeal through our comprehension of the characters there and of their feelings. The story of Little Rosebud as told by Mrs. Smith is not presented to the reader as the mere résumé of a plot. It is description of the woman's idea of romance. We see the events in that absurd tale entirely through the emotions of the narrator. After Mrs. Smith has established the character of the story through the contagion of her personality, it moves along almost independently of the narrator, so that when it is over, it illumines Mrs. Smith and the life of all the girls in the shop.

In the passage from *Far from the Madding Crowd* called

“Thunder and Lightning” the reader is made to apprehend in another way the emotional values of a scene. It is the unusual position of the characters that contributes the imaginative quality to the situation of which they are the animating center. A violent thunder-storm makes a series of unusually vivid experiences for a man on the top of a wheat stack who is working furiously to protect it from the impending rain. He is high in the air, alive to the danger of his position and the need for strenuous labor. The vividness of his emotion results from the storm and we see the storm through his intensity.

The emotions can never be aroused to swiftness and keenness by reality unless the senses are vividly awake. Thus we come to an important axiom. To see life imaginatively is to see the concrete, sensuous details of which it is composed. The imaginative person sees not to name reality but to “sense” it. He has a sense not for events but for being. The external world comes into his mind like sunshine, not to be converted into motor energy, but to be broken up into all its glorious prismatic colors.

Mr. Max Eastman in his *Enjoyment of Poetry* calls our attention to a memorandum in an early diary of Helen Keller. “Nancy was cross. Cross is cry and kick.” The imaginative person always sees cross as cry and kick. “Jones butts into every discussion and settles every question by pretending omniscience,” says the student who is interested in the meaning of events rather than in their aspect. The student who feels the nature of the objectionable comrade and is skillful enough to make that feeling articulate would be more apt to say, “I can’t stand Jones’s pointed chin, his superior shrug and grin, and his affectedly cautious, ‘As a matter of fact I suspect that none of you are right. The truth seems to be this.’”

Narrative poetry exists as a literary form precisely because in it plot and “things doing” are so far subordinated to the sense of *being* that they seem only a pulse of that more funda-

mental reality. In the following passage from *Lamia* Keats shows us Lycius, not seeing Lamia to recognize her, but filled with a sudden consciousness of Lamia's being:

"There she stood
About a young bird's flutter from the wood
While her robes flaunted with the daffodils.
Ah happy Lycius! for she was a maid
More beautiful than ever twisted braid,
Or sighed, or blush'd, or on a spring flower'd lea
Spread a green kirtle to the minstrelsy."

Thus sensed the girl speaks intimately to Lycius's inmost feelings and through his to our own. To behold a person thus is a unique and pristine experience. The senses called upon by every line bring to the mind at each instant a vivid image, which in turn starts a train of emotions upon its adventurous course. An appeal to the mind's inevitably close attention to fresh experience by way of the senses can be made as forcibly in pure narration as in descriptive forms of writing. Read *Gerard and the Bear* and see how much of the breathless intensity of that tale is caused by the uninterrupted succession of images.

Figures of speech arouse feeling immediately because they endow objects with a new sensuous interest. "Out leaped the fifth flash," writes Hardy, "with the spring of a serpent and the shout of a fiend." And it has ceased to be a thunder-clap like others we have known, because it makes a unique and utterly fresh appeal to the eye and ear.

The facts presented in the passage from *A Life for a Life* are given imaginative reach in this way. Through the influence of a fanciful resemblance, the familiar phenomena of a city seen by night come to the emotions with a fresh directness. The city is conceived as being a huge living creature with a vast purposeful life of its own. The various mani-

festations of activity in a city are presented in a fashion consistent with this initial conception. The men crossing the bridge are no longer human beings, but little atoms alternately disgorged and sucked up by the insatiate monster. Thus regarded, the struggling human creatures with their hard, set faces seem "as though leaning against the blast of destiny that threatened to sweep them forth into the void." Finally the word *Success*, gleaming on a great electric sign hung aloft in the night, is more than that. It is the text according to which the leviathan orders its life. All the details of the picture speak to the emotions strongly because they are charged with the energy of the initial conception.

There are thus two distant aspects of imaginative visions of life. The first demands sympathetic discovery of latent emotion in men and women. The imaginative observer of life will see the rich emotional texture of a situation in which more than one human being bears a part. He will see the feelings of the characters in which events are imbedded, and he will see the feelings of each figure in their complex entirety in spite of momentary partisanship for a hero or heroine. In purely descriptive writing he presents even landscape tinged by the carefully depicted emotions of some human being.

The second aspect of this imaginative vision concerns the channels through which the emotions reach their original discoverer and through which they pass from him to the readers. The author must speak the language of the emotions. He must employ the specific fact and sensuous image which enables a man not to name an object but to allow his mind to be directly conscious of its being. When a writer has performed both of these high duties, he has transformed a raw fact of life into a radiating center of art.

XIV. IN THE FIRELIGHT¹

MARGARET THOMSON

[University of Wisconsin]

“OH, it is so good to have you at home again, dear, even though I know that it is only for a few days. Almost every evening I sit here by the grate-fire waiting for your father, and shut my eyes, trying to pretend that my daughter is in the big chair opposite, bent over a book, and not away off at college. But it is hard even with my eyes closed, because, you see, I can never quite make myself forget that the chair *is* empty.”

Marjorie leaned over and took her mother's hand.

“I know, Mother mine, I have tried and tried to make you sit beside me at dinner time in the big dining-room with all its chatter; but you will never stay. You are always turning up, instead, in the little blue dining-room at home, with Grandma's white head on your right, and Bob's face alight with an impish grin as he remarks, ‘Gee! I wish you'd seen the substitute we had at school to-day, Dad;’ and then I swallow hard and plunge desperately into the funniest story I know till the table rocks with fun.”

Understandingly mother and daughter smiled at each other. Then both fell into a sweet, intimate silence as they gazed into the glowing coals. Marjorie broke the stillness.

“Speaking of Bob, Mother, how he is growing up! Why, he's two inches taller than I already and so important now that he is in High School. When I left home he wouldn't look at a girl either, and now —”

“Yes, now,” finished her mother, “it's ‘Jean’ this and ‘Bess’ that and ‘Dorothy’ something else! And he's reached

¹ This story is discussed in the introduction to Part III, pages 204-205.

the stage, too, where he wants to learn to dance," she added with a troubled frown.

Marjorie looked up quickly. "You are going to let him, Mother?"

Slowly the older woman shook her head. "No, dear, your father feels that it is not best, just as he always has."

"I don't see why, Mother; I don't see why! I have been dancing a little at school this year. You told me I might, you know, if I still wanted to, and I cannot see any harm in it; I cannot!"

Wearily the mother sighed. "Why go through the whole question again, dear? You know your father's views. And especially with his position in the church he feels that it would be ill-advised, that there would be a great deal of criticism."

"Bother the criticism!" came the impatient reply. Then after a pause in which both women stared motionless into the heart of the fire, the young voice rang out sharply: "Listen to me, Mother! Bob will do it anyway! I didn't. I am a girl; and I have done what you wished all this time until I left home and you told me I might dance if I cared to. But Bob is a boy. And if he wants to dance, he will dance! He'll do it anyway!"

Abruptly the voice ceased, and in a moment the mother's answer came firmly and a little coldly.

"No, Marjorie, I think you are mistaken. I do not believe that Robert will ever dance without our consent."

Again silence settled down upon them — a heavy, uncomfortable silence, this time, that was hard to break. Outside the windows the twilight deepened; inside, the gloom darkened to night except where the tiny, flickering flames threw dancing shadows across the polished floor. Over both faces hovered a hurt look of pain and misunderstanding. Slowly the moments passed. Then the mother spoke gently.

“You see, dear, your father wants Robert to wait awhile until he is sure of what he is doing. He is so young yet. How can he know what is right and wrong? But if, when the boy grows older, old enough to judge for himself, and still wants to dance, and feels that there is no harm in it,” she sighed, “why, then —”

“Yes, then,” broke in the girl’s voice passionately. “Then you will say, ‘Go ahead and dance’; and I know well enough what that means. You are a girl. You go away to college. You are out of things from the very beginning. Everybody dances; you don’t. Everyone stares in surprise at you and exclaims, ‘You have never danced? Why, how very odd!’ You make up your mind to learn. One of the girls takes you in hand. You go to your first dance, a mixer or something, where anybody is welcome. You are awkward and uncomfortable. Everybody seems to be looking straight at you, and everybody else ‘knows how.’ It is no wonder that your partner thinks you a ‘perfect stick’! And then,” she hurried on, utterly oblivious, in her earnestness, of the growing pain and sorrow on her mother’s face, “perhaps later, some one invites you to a dance — a real dance! You are too happy for words and then with a shock you remember the blundering steps and smile coldly, ‘I am very sorry, Mr. Williams, but I do not dance.’”

Hands clenched together in her lap, the mother sat and listened dully to the cruel young voice.

“Then you are determined that you *will* learn. But there is so much to do. You are overwhelmingly busy and the other girls are busy too. Gradually you stop going even to the mixers. You don’t meet any men outside the classroom. You stay in your room and study while the other girls have a gay time. And they call you a grind! Oh,” the voice rose shrilly, “it’s a mistake — it is not fair! I say let Bob dance. Let him!”

“My dear, my dear!” breathed the older woman, wincing.

With a startled glance the girl looked at her mother, and then with a cry was on her knees beside her.

“Oh, Mother, Mother, I didn’t mean to hurt you! I wouldn’t have said it for the world if I had thought.”

“Hush, dear, hush,” whispered her mother, gathering her close. “I am so glad you did tell me. I’ll talk the matter over with your father again. There, I hear his step on the porch now. Run and open the door.”

XV. CITY SMOKE¹

BOOTH TARKINGTON

THERE is a midland city in the heart of fair, open country, a dirty and wonderful city nesting dingily in the fog of its own smoke. The stranger must feel the dirt before he feels the wonder, for the dirt will be upon him instantly. It will be upon him and within him, since he must breathe it, and he may care for no further proof that wealth is here better loved than cleanliness; but whether he cares or not, the negligently tended streets incessantly press home the point, and so do the flecked and grimy citizens. At a breeze he must smother in whirlpools of dust, and if he should decline at any time to inhale the smoke he has the meager alternative of suicide.

The smoke is like the bad breath of a giant panting for more and more riches. He gets them and pants the fiercer, smelling and swelling prodigiously. He has a voice, a hoarse voice, hot and rapacious, trained to one tune: "Wealth! I will get Wealth! I will make Wealth! I will sell Wealth for more Wealth! My house shall be dirty, my garment shall be dirty, and I will foul my neighbor so that he cannot be clean — but I will get Wealth! There shall be no clean thing about me: my wife shall be dirty, and my child shall be dirty, but I will get Wealth!" And yet it is not wealth that he is so greedy for; what the giant really wants is hasty riches. To get these he squanders wealth upon the four winds, for wealth is in the smoke.

Not quite so long ago as a generation, there was no panting giant here, no heaving, grimy city; there was but a pleasant big town of neighborly people who had understanding of one

¹ Reprinted from *The Turmoil* with the kind permission of Harper and Brothers and of the author. This story is discussed in the introduction to Part III, pages 205-206.

another, being, on the whole, much of the same type. It was a leisurely and kindly place — “homelike,” it was called — and when the visitor had been taken through the State Asylum for the Insane and made to appreciate the view of the cemetery from a little hill, his host’s duty as Baedeker was done. The good burghers were given to jogging comfortably about in phaetons or in surreys for a family drive on Sunday. No one was very rich; few were very poor; the air was clean, and there was time to live.

But there was a spirit abroad in the land, and it was strong here as elsewhere — a spirit that had moved in the depths of the American soil and labored there, sweating, till it stirred the surface, roved the mountains, and emerged, tangible and monstrous, the god of all good American hearts — Bigness. And that god wrought the panting giant.

In the souls of the burghers there had always been the profound longing for size. Year by year the longing increased until it became an accumulated force: We must Grow! We must be Big! We must be Bigger! Bigness means Money! And the thing began to happen; their longing became a mighty Will. We must be Bigger! Bigger! Bigger! Get people here! Coax them here! Bribe them! Swindle them into coming, if you must, but get them! Shout them into coming! Deafen them into coming! Any kind of people; all kinds of people! We must be Bigger! Blow! Boost! Brag! Kill the fault-finder! Scream and bellow to the Most High: Bigness is patriotism and honor! Bigness is love and life and happiness! Bigness is Money! We want Bigness!

They got it. From all the states the people came; thinly at first, and slowly, but faster and faster in thicker and thicker swarms as the quick years went by. White people came, and black people and brown people and yellow people; the negroes came from the South by the thousands and thousands, multiplying by other thousands and thousands faster than they

could die. From the four quarters of the earth the people came, the broken and the unbroken, the tame and the wild — Germans, Irish, Italians, Hungarians, Scotch, Welsh, English, French, Swiss, Swedes, Norwegians, Greeks, Poles, Russian Jews, Dalmatians, Armenians, Rumanians, Bulgarians, Servians, Persians, Syrians, Japanese, Chinese, Turks, and every hybrid that these could propagate. And if there were no Eskimos nor Patagonians, what other human strain that earth might furnish failed to swim and bubble in this crucible?

With Bigness came the new machinery and the rush; the streets began to roar and rattle, the houses to tremble; the pavements were worn under the tread of hurrying multitudes. The old, leisurely, quizzical look of the faces was lost in something harder and warier; and a cockney type began to emerge discernibly — a cynical young mongrel, barbaric of feature, muscular and cunning; dressed in good fabrics fashioned apparently in imitation of the sketches drawn by newspaper comedians. The female of his kind came with him — a pale girl, shoddy and a little rouged; and they communicated in a nasal argot, mainly insolences and elisions. Nay, the common speech of the people showed change: in place of the old midland vernacular, irregular but clean, and not unwholesomely drawling, a jerky dialect of coined metaphors began to be heard, held together by *gunnas* and *gottas* and much fostered by the public journals.

The city piled itself high in the center, tower on tower for a nucleus, and spread itself out over the plain, mile after mile; and in its vitals, like benevolent bacilli contending with malevolent in the body of a man, missions and refuges offered what resistance they might to the saloons and all the hells that cities house and shelter. Temptation and ruin were ready commodities on the market for purchase by the venturesome; highwaymen walked the streets at night and sometimes killed; snatching thieves were busy everywhere in the dusk; while

house-breakers were a common apprehension and frequent reality. Life itself was somewhat safer from intentional destruction than it was in medieval Rome during a faction war — though the Roman murderer was more like to pay for his deed — but death or mutilation beneath the wheels lay in ambush at every crossing.

The politicians let the people make all the laws they liked; it did not matter much, and the taxes went up, which is good for politicians. Law-making was a pastime of the people; nothing pleased them more. Singular fermentation of their humor, they even had laws forbidding dangerous speed. More marvelous still, they had a law forbidding smoke! They forbade chimneys to smoke and they forbade cigarettes to smoke. They made laws for all things and forgot them immediately; though sometimes they would remember after a while, and hurry to make new laws that the old laws should be enforced — and then forget both new and old. Wherever enforcement threatened Money or Votes — or wherever it was too much bother — it became a joke. Influence was the law.

So the place grew. And it grew strong.

Straightway when he came, each man fell to the same worship:

Give me of thyself, O Bigness:

Power to get more power!

Riches to get more riches!

Give me of thy sweat that I may sweat more!

Give me Bigness to get more Bigness to myself,

O Bigness, for Thine is the Power and the Glory! And
there is no end but Bigness, ever and for ever!

The Sheridan Building was the biggest skyscraper; the Sheridan Trust Company was the biggest of its kind, and Sheridan himself had been the biggest builder and breaker and truster and buster under the smoke. He had come from a country cross-roads, at the beginning of the growth, and he had gone up and down in the booms and relapses of that period;

but each time he went down he rebounded a little higher, until finally, after a year of overwork and anxiety — the latter not decreased by a chance, remote but possible, of recuperation from the former in the penitentiary — he found himself on top, with solid substance under his feet; and thereafter “played it safe.” But his hunger to get was unabated, for it was in the very bones of him and grew fiercer.

He was the city incarnate. He loved it, calling it God’s country, as he called the smoke Prosperity, breathing the dingy cloud with relish. And when soot fell upon his cuff he chuckled; he could have kissed it. “It’s good! It’s good!” he said, and smacked his lips in gusto. “Good, clean soot; it’s our life-blood, God bless it!” The smoke was one of his great enthusiasms; he laughed at a committee of plaintive housewives who called to beg his aid against it. “Smoke’s what brings your husbands’ money home on Saturday night,” he told them, jovially. “Smoke may hurt your little shrubberies in the front yard some, but it’s the catarrhal climate and the adenoids that starts your chuldern coughing. Smoke makes the climate better. Smoke means good health: it makes the people wash more. They have to wash so much they wash off the microbes. You go home and ask your husbands what smoke puts in their pockets out o’ the pay-roll — and you’ll come around next time to get me to turn out more smoke instead o’ chokin’ it off!”

XVI. SCENES IN FACTORIES¹

MARGARET RICHARDSON

[A young woman from rural Pennsylvania comes to New York in search of a job — any one of the million jobs in the great city. Though she is a person of some education and much innate refinement, she is without any special training, and she is also without money or friends. She therefore looks for work, like anybody else, and takes what she can get. We see her starting in at a box factory. The reader should notice how *immediately* he finds himself in the factory with her, in the noise and whirl of it, and how the “pitch” of the whole scene is in factory key. The sense of noise and whirr never ceases, and yet there is no sense of strain or confusion. The next time the reader visits a factory it may interest him to test the realism of this composition.]

I

“MISS KINZER! Here’s a lady wants to learn,” shrilled the high nasal voice. “Miss Kinzer! Where’s Miss Kinzer? Oh, here you are!” as a young woman emerged from behind a pile of pasteboard boxes. “I’ve a learner for you, Miss Kinzer. She’s a green girl, but she looks likely, and I want you to give her a good chance. Better put her on table-work to begin with.” And with that injunction the little old maid hopped away, leaving me to the scrutiny and cross-questioning of a rather pretty woman of twenty-eight or thirty.

“Ever worked in a factory before?” she began, with lofty indifference, as if it didn’t matter whether I had or had not.

“No.”

“Where did you work?”

“I never worked any place before.”

“Oh-h!” There was a world of meaning, as I afterward discovered, in Miss Kinzer’s long-drawn-out “Oh-h!” In this instance she looked up quickly, with an obvious display of

¹ Reprinted from *The Long Day* with the kind permission of The Century Company and of the author.

interest, as if she had just unearthed a remarkable specimen in one who had never worked at anything before.

"You're not used to work, then?" she remarked insinuatingly, straightening up from the rude desk where she sat like the judge of a police-court. She was now all attention.

"Well, not exactly that," I replied, nettled by her manner and, above all, by her way of putting things. "I have worked before, but never at factory-work."

"Then why didn't you say so?"

She now opened her book and inscribed my name therein.

"Where do you live?"

"Over in East Fourteenth Street," I replied mechanically, forgetting for the moment the catastrophe that had rendered me more homeless than ever.

"Home?"

"No, I room." Then, reading only too quickly an unpleasant interpretation in the uplifted eyebrows, a disagreeable curiosity mirrored in the brown eyes beneath, I added hastily, "I have no home. My folks are all dead."

What impression this bit of information made I was unable to determine as I followed her slender, slightly bowed figure across the busy, roaring workroom.

"Be careful you don't get hurt," she cried, as we threaded a narrow passage in and out among the stamping, throbbing machinery, where, by the light that filtered through the grimy windows, I got vague, confused glimpses of girl-faces shining like stars out of this dark, fearful chaos of revolving belts and wheels, and above the bedlam noises came girlish laughter and song.

"Good morning, Carrie!" one quick-witted toiler sang out as she spied the new girl in tow of the forewoman, and suddenly the whole room had taken up the burden of the song.

"Don't mind them," my conductor remarked. "They don't mean nothing by it — watch out there for your head!"

Safe through the outlying ramparts of machinery, we entered the domain of the table-workers, and I was turned over to Phœbe, a tall girl in tortoise earrings and curl-papers. Phœbe was assigned to "learn" me in the trade of "finishing." Somewhat to my surprise, she assumed the task joyfully, and helped me off with my coat and hat. From the loud-mouthed tirades as to "Annie Kinzer's nerve," it became evident that the assignment of the job of "learner" is one to cause heartburning jealousies, and that Phœbe, either because of some special adaptability or through favoritism, got the lion's share of novices.

"That's right, Phœbe; hog every new girl that comes along!" amiably bawled a bright-faced, tidy young woman who answered to the name of Mrs. Smith. Mrs. Smith worked briskly as she talked, and the burden of her conversation appeared to be the heaping of this sort of good-natured invective upon the head of her chum — or, as she termed it, her "lady-friend," Phœbe. The amiability with which Mrs. Smith dealt out her epithets was only equaled by the perfect good nature of her victim, who replied to each and all of them with a musically intoned, "Hot air!"

"Hot a—i—r!" The clear tones of Phœbe's soprano set the echoes ringing all over the great work-room. In and out among the aisles and labyrinthine passages that wind through towering piles of boxes, from the thundering machinery far over on the other side of the "loft" to the dusky recess of the uttermost table, the musical cry reverberated.

"Hot a—i—r!" Every few minutes, all through the long, weary day, Phœbe found occasion for sounding that magic call.

"The rest of the ladies get up their backs something awful," Phœbe explained as she dragged a big green pasteboard box from beneath the work-table. "They say she gives me more'n my share of learners because I'm easy to get on with, I guess, and don't play no tricks on them. . . . You have a right to

put your things in here along with my lunch. Them girls is like to do 'most anything to a new girl's duds if you wuz to hang them in the coat-room. Them Ginneys'll do 'most anything. Wuz you downstairs when Celia Polatta got into the fight with Rosie?"

"I just missed it," she sighed in reply to my affirmative. "I was born unlucky."

"Hello, Phœbe! So you've hogged another!" a new voice called across the table, and I put a question.

"Why do they all want to teach the new girl? I should think they'd be glad to be rid of the trouble."

"You mean *learn* her? Why, because the girl that learns the green hand gets all her work checked on to her own card while she's learning how. Never worked in a box-factory before?" I shook my head.

"I guessed as much. Well, box-making's a good trade. Have you an apron?"

As I had not, I was then ordered to "turn my skirt," in order that I might receive the inevitable coat of glue and paste on its inner rather than on its outer surface. I gently demurred against this very slovenly expedient.

"All right; call it hot air if you want to. I s'pose you know it all," tossing her curl-papers with scorn. "You know better'n me, of course. Most learners do think they knows it all. Now looky here, I've been here six years, and I've learned lots of green girls, and I never had one as didn't think she hadn't ought to turn her skirt. The ladies I'm used to working with likes to walk home looking decent and respectable, no difference what they're like other times."

With the respectability of my ladyhood thus impeached, and lest I infringe upon the cast-iron code of box-factory etiquette, there was nothing to do but yield. I unhooked my skirt, dropped it to the floor, and stepped out of it in a trice, anxious to do anything to win back the good will of Phœbe.

Instantly she brightened, and good humor once more flashed over her grimy features.

"H-m! that's the stuff! There's one thing you hadn't ought to forget, and mind, I'm speaking as one lady-friend to another when I tell you these things — and that is, that you have a right to do as the other girls in the factory or you'll never get 'long with them. If you don't they'll get down on you, sure's pussy's a cat; and then they'll make it hot for you with complaining to the forelady. And then she'll get down on you after while too, and won't give you no good orders to work on; and — well, it's just this way: a girl mustn't be odd."

Continuing her philosophy of success, Phœbe proceeded to initiate me into the first process of my job, which consisted in pasting slippery, sticky strips of muslin over the corners of the rough brown boxes that were piled high about us in frail, tottering towers reaching to the ceiling, which was trellised over with a network of electric wires and steam-pipes. Two hundred and fifty of these boxes remained to be finished on the particular order upon which Phœbe was working. Each must be given eight muslin strips, four on the box and four on its cover; two tapes, inserted with a hair-pin through awl-holes; two tissue "flies," to tuck over the bonnet soon to nestle underneath; four pieces of gay paper lace to please madame's eye when the lid is lifted; and three labels, one on the bottom, one on the top, and one bearing the name of a Fifth Avenue modiste on an escutcheon of gold and purple.

The job, as it progressed, entailed ceaseless shoving and shifting and lifting. In order that we might not be walled in completely by our cumbersome materials, every few minutes we bore tottering piles across the floor to the "strippers."

These latter, who were small girls, covered the sides with glazed paper on machines; and as fast as each box was thus covered it was tossed to the "turner-in," a still smaller girl, who turned in the overlapping edge of the strip, after which

the box was ready to come back to the table for the next process at our hands.

By ten o'clock, with Mrs. Smith's gay violet-boxes and our own bonnet-boxes, we had built a snug bower all round our particular table. Through its paste-board walls the din and the songs came but faintly. My mates' tongues flew as fast as their fingers. The talk was chiefly devoted to clothes, Phœbe's social activities, and the evident prosperity of Mrs. Smith's husband's folks, among whom it appeared she had only recently appeared as "Jeff's" bride. Having exhausted the Smiths, she again gave Phœbe the floor by asking:

"Are you going to-night?"

"Well, I should say! Don't I look it?"

To determine by Phœbe's appearance where she might be going were an impossibility to the uninitiated, for her dress was an odd combination of the extremes of wretchedness and luxury. A woefully torn and much-soiled shirt-waist; a gorgeous gold watch worn on her breast like a medal; a black taffeta skirt, which, under the glue-smear'd apron, emitted an unmistakable frou-frou; three Nethersole bracelets on her wrist; and her feet incased in colossal shoes, broken and stringless. The latter she explained to Mrs. Smith.

"I just swiped a pair of paw's and brought them along this morning, or I'd be dished for getting into them high heels to-night. My corns and bunions 'most killed me yesterday — they always do break out bad about Easter. My pleasure club," she explained, turning to me — "my pleasure club, 'The Moonlight Maids,' give a ball to-night." Which fact likewise explained the curl-papers as well as the slattern shirt-waist, donned to save the evening bodice worn to the factory that morning and now tucked away in a big box under the table.

A whole side of our pretty violet-sprinkled bower caved in as a little "turner-in" lurched against it in passing with a top-heavy column of boxes. Through the opening daylight is visible

once more, and from the region of the machines is heard a chorus of voices singing "The Fatal Wedding."

"Hot a—i—r!" Phœbe intones derisively. "It's a wonder Angelina wouldn't get a new song. Them strippers sing that 'Fatal Wedding' week in and week out."

We worked steadily, and as the hours dragged on I began to grow dead tired. The awful noise and confusion, the terrific heat, the foul smell of the glue, and the agony of breaking ankles and blistered hands seemed almost unendurable.

At last the hour-hand stood at twelve, and suddenly, out of the turmoil, a strange quiet fell over the great mill. The vibrations that had shaken the whole structure to its very foundations now gradually subsided; the wheels stayed their endless revolutions; the flying belts now hung from the ceiling like long black ribbons. Out of the stillness girl-voices and girl-laughter echoed weirdly, like a horn blown in a dream, while sweeter and clearer than ever rang Phœbe's soprano "Hot air!"

The girls lunched in groups of ten and twelve. Each clique had its leader. By an unwritten law I was included among those who rallied around Phœbe, most of whom she had "learned" at some time or other, as she was now "learning" me. The luncheons were divested of their newspaper wrappings and spread over the ends of tables, on discarded box-lids held across the knees — in fact, any place convenience or sociability dictated. Then followed a friendly exchange of pickles and cake. A dark, swarthy girl, whom they called "Goldy" Courtleigh, was generous in the distribution of the lukewarm contents of a broken-nosed tea-pot, which was constantly replenished by application to the hot-water faucet.

Although we had a half-hour, luncheon was swallowed quickly by most of the girls, eager to steal away to a sequestered bower among the boxes, there to lose themselves in paper-backed romance. A few of less literary taste were content to nibble ice-cream sandwiches and gossip. Dress, the inevitable mas-

querade ball, murders and fires, were favorite topics of discussion, — the last always with lowered voices and deep-drawn breathing. For fire is the box-maker's terror, the grim specter that always haunts her, and with good reason does she always start at the word.

"I'm always afraid," declared Phœbe, "and I always run to the window and get ready to jump the minute I hear the alarm."

"I don't," mused Angelina; "I haven't sense enough to jump. I faint dead away. There'd be no chance for me if a fire ever broke out here."

Once or twice there was mention of beaux and "steady fellows," but the flesh-and-blood man of everyday life did not receive as much attention in this lunch chat as did the heroes of the story-books.

While it was evident, of course, from scattered comments, that box-makers are constantly marrying, it was likewise apparent that they have not sufficient imagination to invest their hard-working, sweat-grimed sweethearts with any halo of romance.

Promptly at half-past twelve the awakening machinery called us back to the workaday world. Story-books were tucked away, and their entranced readers dragged themselves back to the machines and steaming paste-pots, to dream and to talk as they worked, not of their own fellows of last night's masquerade, but of bankers and mill-owners who in fiction have wooed and won and honorably wedded just such poor toilers as they themselves.

II

"Don't you never read no story-books?" Mrs. Smith asked, stirring the paste-pot preparatory to the afternoon's work. She looked at me curiously out of her shrewd, snapping dark eyes as she awaited my answer. I was conscious that Mrs. Smith didn't like me for some reason or other, and I was anxious

to propitiate her. I was pretty certain she thought me a bore-some prig, and I determined I'd prove I wasn't. My confession of an omnivorous appetite for all sorts of story-books had the desired effect; and when I confessed further that I liked best of all a real, tender, sentimental love-story, she asked amiably:

"How do you like *Little Rosebud's Lovers*?"

"I've never read that," I replied. "Is it good?"

"It's fine," interposed Phœbe; "but I like *Woven on Fate's Loom* better — don't you?" The last addressed to Mrs. Smith.

"No, I can't say as that's my impinion," returned our vis-à-vis, with a judicious tipping of the head to one side as she soused her dripping paste-brush over the strips. "Not but what *Woven on Fate's Loom* is a good story in its way, either, for them that likes that sort of story. But I think *Little Rosebud's Lovers* is more int'resting, besides being better wrote."

"And that's just what I don't like about it," retorted Phœbe, her fingers traveling like lightning up and down the corners of the boxes. "You like this hot-air talk, and I don't; and the way them fellows and girls shoot hot-air at each other in that there *Little Rosebud's Lovers* is enough to beat the street-cars!"

"What is it about?" I asked with respectful interest, addressing the question to Mrs. Smith, who gave promise of being a more serious reviewer than the flippant Phœbe. Mrs. Smith took a bite of gingerbread and began:

"It's about a fair, beautiful young girl by the name of Rosebud Arden. Her pa was a judge, and they lived in a grand mansion in South Car'lina. Little Rosebud — that's what everybody called her — had a stepsister Maud. They was both beauties, only Maud didn't have a lovely disposition like Little Rosebud. A Harvard gradjate by the name of Percy Fielding got stuck on Little Rosebud for the wealth she was to get from her pa, and she was terrible stuck on him. She was stuck on

him for fair, though not knowing he was a villian of the deepest dye. That's what the book called him. He talked her into marrying him clandestinely. Maud and her mother put up a job to get rid of Little Rosebud, so Maud could get all the money. So they told lies to her pa, who loved her something awful; and one night, when she came in after walking in the grand garden with her husband, who nobody knew she was married to, she found herself locked out. Then she went to the hotel where he was staying, and told him what had happened; but he turned her down flat when he heard it, for he didn't want nothing to do with her when she wasn't to get her pa's money; and then — ”

She stopped her cornering to inspect my work, which had not flagged an instant. Mrs. Smith took another bite of ginger-bread, and continued with increasing animation:

“And then Little Rosebud turned away into the night with a low cry, just as if a dagger had been punched into her heart and turned around slow. She was only sixteen years old, and she had been brought up in luxury and idolized by her father; and all of a sudden she found herself homeless, with nowheres to sleep and no money to get a room at the hotel, and scorned by the man that had sworn to protect her. Her pa had cursed her, too, something awful, so that he burst a blood-vessel a little while afterwards and died before morning. Only Little Rosebud never found this out, for she took the midnight express and came up here to New York, where her aunt lived, only she didn't know the street-number.”

“Where did she get the money to come to New York with?” interrupted the practical Phœbe. “That's something I don't understand. If she didn't have no money to hire a room at a hotel down in South Carolina for overnight, I'd like to know where she got money for a railroad ticket.”

“Well, that's just all you know about them swells,” retorted Mrs. Smith. “I suppose a rich man's daughter like that can

travel around all over the country on a pass. And saying she didn't have a pass, it's only a story and not true anyway.

"She met a fellow on the train that night who was a villian for fair!" she went on. "His name was Mr. Paul Howard, and he was a corker. Little Rosebud, who was just as innocent as they make 'em, fell right into his clutches. He was a terrible man; he wouldn't stop at nothing, but he was a very elegant-looking gentleman that you'd take anywheres for a banker or 'Piscopalian preacher. He tipped his hat to Little Rosebud, and then she up and asked him if he knew where her aunt, Mrs. Waldron, lived. This was nuts for him, and he said yes, that Mrs. Waldron was a particular lady-friend of his. When they got to New York he offered to take Little Rosebud to her aunt's house. And as Little Rosebud hadn't no money, she said yes, and the villian called a cab and they started for Brooklyn, him laughing to himself all the time, thinking how easily she was going to tumble into the trap he was getting fixed for her."

"Hot air!" murmured Phoebe.

"But while they were rattling over the Brooklyn Bridge, another man was following them in another cab — a Wall-street broker with barrels of cash. He was Raymond Leslie, and a real good man. He'd seen Rosebud get into the cab with Paul Howard, who he knew for a villian for fair. They had a terrible rumpus, but Raymond Leslie rescued her and took her to her aunt's house. It turned out that he was the gentleman-friend of Little Rosebud's cousin Ida, the very place they were going to. But, riding along in the cab, he fell in love with Little Rosebud, and then he was in a terrible pickle because he was promised to Ida. Little Rosebud's relations lived real grand, and her aunt was real nice to her until she saw she had hooked on to Ida's gentleman-friend; then they put her to work in the kitchen and treated her terrible. Oh, I tell you she had a time of it, for fair. Her aunt was awful proud and wicked, and after

while, when she found that Raymond Leslie was going to marry Little Rosebud even if they did make a servant of her, she hired Paul Howard to drug her and carry her off to an insane asylum that he ran up in Westchester County. It was in a lonesome place, and was full of girls that he had loved only to grow tired of and cast off, and this was the easiest way to get rid of them and keep them from spoiling his sport. Once a girl was in love with Paul Howard, she loved him till death. He just fascinated women like a snake does a bird, and he was hot stuff as long as he lasted, but the minute he got tired of you he was a demon of cruelty.

“He did everything he could, when he got Little Rosebud here, to get her under his power. He tried his dirty best to poison her food, but Little Rosebud was foxy and wouldn’t touch a bite of anything, but just sat in her cell and watched the broiled chicken and fried oysters, and all the other good things they sent to tempt her, turn to a dark-purplish hue. One night she escaped disguised in the turnkey’s daughter’s dress. Her name was Dora Gray, and Paul Howard had blasted her life too, but she worshiped him something awful, all the same-ee. Dora Gray gave Little Rosebud a lovely dark-red rose that was soaked with deadly poison, so that if you touched it to the lips of a person, the person would drop dead. She told Little Rosebud to protect herself with it if they chased her. But she didn’t get a chance to see whether it would work or not, for when she heard them coming back of her after a while with the bloodhounds barking, she dropped with terror down flat on her stummick. She had suffered so much she couldn’t stand anything more. The doctors said she was dead when they picked her up, and they buried her and stuck a little white slab on her grave, with ‘Rosebud, aged sixteen’ on it.”

“Hot air!” from the irrepressible Phœbe.

I felt that courtesy required I should agree upon that point,

and I did so, conservatively, venturing to ask the name of the author.

Mrs. Smith mentioned the name of a well-known writer of trashy fiction and added, "Didn't you never read none of her books?"

My negative surprised her. Then Phœbe asked:

"Did you ever read *Daphne Vernon; or, A Coronet of Shame?*"

"No, I haven't read them, either," I replied.

"Oh, mama! Carry me out and let me die!" groaned Mrs. Smith, throwing down her paste-brush and falling forward in mock agony upon the smeared table.

"Water! Water!" gasped Phœbe, clutching wildly at her throat; "I'm going to faint!"

"What's the matter? What did I say that wasn't right?" I cried, the nature of their antics showing only too plainly that I had "put my foot in it" in some unaccountable manner. But they paid no attention. Mortified and utterly at sea, I watched their convulsed shoulders and heard their smothered giggles. Then in a few minutes they straightened up and resumed work with the utmost gravity of countenance and without a word of explanation.

"What was it you was asting?" Phœbe inquired presently, with the most innocent air possible.

"I said I hadn't read the books you mentioned," I replied, trying to hide the chagrin and mortification I felt at being so ignominiously laughed at.

"Eyether of them?" chirped Mrs. Smith, with a vicious wink.

"Eyether of them?" warbled Phœbe in her mocking-bird soprano.

It was my turn to drop the paste-brush now. Eye-ther! It must have slipped from my tongue unconsciously. I could not remember having ever pronounced the word like that before.

I didn't feel equal, then and there, to offering them any explanation or apologies for the offense. So I simply answered:

"No; are they very good? are they as good as *Little Rosebud's Lovers*?"

"No, it ain't," said Mrs. Smith, decisively and a little contemptuously; "and it ain't two books, eye-ther; it's all in one — *Daphne Vernon; or, A Coronet of Shame.*"

"Well, now I think it is," put in Phœbe. "Them stories with two-handled names is nearly always good. I'll buy a book with a two-handled name every time before I'll buy one that ain't. I was reading a good one last night that I borrowed from Gladys Carringford. It had three handles to its name, and they was all corkers."

"Why don't you spit 'em out?" suggested Mrs. Smith. "Tell us what it was."

"Well, it was *Doris; or, The Pride of Pemberton Mills; or, Lost in a Fearful Fate's Abyss.* What d'ye think of that?"

"It sounds very int'resting. Who wrote it?"

"Charles Garvice," replied Phœbe. "Didn't you ever read none of his, e—y—e—ther?"

"No, I must say I never did," I answered, ignoring their mischievous raillery with as much grace as I could summon, but taking care to choose my words as so to avoid further pitfalls.

"And did you never read none of Charlotte M. Braeme's?" drawled Mrs. Smith, with remorseless cruelty — "none of Charlotte M. Braeme's, eyether?"

"No."

"Nor none by Effie Adelaide Rowlands, e—y—e—ther?" still persisted Mrs. Smith.

"No; none by her."

"E—y—e—ther!" Both my tormentors now raised their singing-voices into a high, clear, full-blown note of derisive music, held it for a brief moment at a dizzy altitude, and

then in soft, long-drawn-out cadences returned to earth and speaking-voices again.

“What kind of story-books do you read, then?” they demanded. To which I replied with the names of a dozen or more of the simple, every-day classics that the school-boy and -girl are supposed to have read. They had never heard of *David Copperfield* or of Dickens. Nor had they ever heard of *Gulliver’s Travels*, nor of *The Vicar of Wakefield*. They had heard the name “Robinson Crusoe,” but they did not know it was the name of an entrancing romance. *Little Women*, *John Halifax*, *Gentleman*, *The Cloister and the Hearth*, *Les Misérables*, were also unknown, unheard-of literary treasures. They were equally ignorant of the existence of the conventional Sunday-school romance. They stared at me in amazement when I rattled off a heterogeneous assortment from the fecund pens of Mrs. A. D. T. Whitney, “Pansy,” Amanda M. Douglas, and similar good-goody writers for good-goody girls; their only remarks being that their titles didn’t sound interesting. I spoke enthusiastically of *Little Women*, telling them how I had read it four times, and that I meant to read it again some day. Their curiosity was aroused over the unheard-of thing of anybody ever wanting to read any book more than once, and they pressed me to reciprocate by repeating the story for them, which I did with great accuracy of statement, and with genuine pleasure to myself at being given an opportunity to introduce anybody to Meg and Jo and all the rest of that delightful March family. When I had finished, Phœbe stopped her cornering and Mrs. Smith looked up from her label-pasting.

“Why, that’s no story at all,” the latter declared.

“Why, no,” echoed Phœbe; “that’s no story — that’s just everyday happenings. I don’t see what’s the use putting things like that in books. I’ll bet any money that lady what wrote it knew all them boys and girls. They just sound like real, live people; and when you was telling about them I could

just see them as plain as plain could be — couldn't you, Gwendolyn?"

"Yep," yawned our vis-à-vis, undisguisedly bored.

"But I suppose farmer folks likes them kind of stories," Phœbe generously suggested. "They ain't used to the same styles of anything that us city folks are."

XVII. THE SPIRIT OF A GREAT CITY ¹

ROBERT HERRICK

[This sketch and that called *City Smoke* make a philosophical comment on the life pictured in the intervening selection, *Scenes in Factories*.]

HE came to the end of his journey as night was falling.

There it lay, the great City of men, beneath a soft canopy of diffused light upon the southern horizon. Long he watched the illumined heavens with greedy eyes, as the train, crying shrilly, rushed through the empty stillness of the summer night. That distant sky seemed radiant with earth-born fires, softly transfused in the upper ether to heavenly beauty. Beneath, the great City pulsed like a monstrous creature, breathing forth this phosphorescent glow upon the sky.

His heart beat quickly in unaccustomed tumult.

Nearer and nearer the creature came as the train penetrated the peopled fringe, where long lines of dotted light stretched forth to the silent country, until at last the radiance of the heavens melted into the glare of the City itself. The monster murmur of its voice filled his expectant ears. It was the City!

Time with its orderly hand touched that first blur of impressions and memories, erasing most, transforming, vivifying high points of experience, until a picture was left in large outlines, gleaming here and there with significant light, in which the trivial and the important were blended. Thus, first of all he found himself somehow upon a lofty bridge, swung by spidery threads of steel above an immense void. He was alone, yet one of a thronging multitude that tramped ceaselessly past him. Men and women in rough garments, with pale, set

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faces, with bent heads, — not in groups of ones and twos and threes, but in a solid mass, — flowing, flowing outwards from the City like the tide beneath the bridge, drawn outwards to the sea. There were no human voices, no friendly glances to the stranger stemming their tide. Beneath was a void, above where the shadowy strands faded into the dark, a void; beyond, the City and behind, the City. And steadily, incessantly, here on the great causeway, this tide of human atoms, — a black tide flowing outwards! It was the tide of labor. Ebbing now, the day's work done, seeking repose, to be sucked back on the morrow into the City. Thus the City, one vast labor house, charged itself daily with human energy, and at night discharged itself along a thousand channels like this bridge. Always and always it was thus, day after day, month by month, year upon year.

In the time to come of full man's experience, when he thought of the City he would see this human tide of labor flowing silently across the great bridge, hung aloft in the void, a dark tide of men and women with white, set faces and bent heads, as though leaning against the blast of destiny that threatened to sweep them forth into the void. Drawn by the magnet of Hunger, they flowed ever thus to and from the labor house, tramping silently, the multitude of human atoms, — the legs and the arms and the bodies, the heads and the hands and the minds, of men. A Symbol, a significant sign of that city of men! The youth caught there midway in the flood beheld his arena. . . .

In those days the towered city had not risen, and yet to the youth looking over the great plain of buildings the stores and warehouses beneath him seemed immense, twinkling there in a maze of gaslight. From that lower point of the City where the great bridge touched, he must have wandered far up the avenues, gay and peopled. He remembered the lighted windows of the shops, a petty enough show then compared with what they became, nevertheless rich in color and substance to the hungry

eyes of ignorant youth. In them were jewels and fine ornaments and clothes, rich foods and furniture and beautiful trinkets, — whatever the fancy and the appetite of man might desire. Sated with wonder, he turned from them to the people in the streets, — women handsomely dressed in rich carriages trotting forth for pleasure, the idling throng upon the pavement, the bustle about the doors of hotels, — always light and movement in the great city! And on and on in this maze of light and movement he wandered, past shops, and eating places, and theaters, enticed by the spell of the place, unmindful of time and self. Through the pageant of the city's summer night he passed, the solitary youth, with seeing eyes and open ears, until at last he had reached those quieter upper streets, about a large park where there were great dwelling-houses, removed by a space of proud reserve from the common ways, standing in dark isolation with shaded windows. Staring up at these great houses he wondered what manner of people lived behind the carefully shuttered windows.

As the night drew on and the city's voice sank to a lower key, he retraced his steps through street and avenue, emptier now, yet never wholly without life. On and on he went, and always there were buildings, always street and curb and solid wall, as if the city had spread itself over the entire earth, and peopled it with crowded beings.

Once, so the strange fancy came to him, this place of the city was silent earth, like the wind-swept fields beside the sea that he knew. Once there had been earth here, stone and soil and water, bearing green things. Now men had covered this earth with a sheet of metal and planted it with bricks and mortar, with steel and glass. They had carved it into a labyrinth of streets, and out of it great buildings shot upwards like beacons to the sky. Thus man had made his home of the silent place of God! It glittered and smoked and hissed in the night, calling loudly to the heavens, throbbing as men throb

with desires, made by men for men, — the image of their souls. The City was man! And already it was sowing its seed in the heart of the youth, this night. It was molding him as it molds the millions, after its fashion, warming his blood with desire, — the vast, resounding, gleaming City. . . .

It must have been well towards the dawn when his aimless wandering through the streets brought him into a quiet square. He had been drawn thither by the bright light of an immense sign, set upon the roof of a building. In mammoth letters that stretched across the breadth of the narrow roof, compact of soft fire, the message burned itself upon the night.

SUCCESS

The great sign shining in the dark night from the roof drew the youth as the candle draws the moth. He moved towards it until he stood beneath the tall thin shaft of building, ten stories high, upon which the glittering sign rested. And in the light that radiated from the illumination above he read the gilt board beneath:

THE SUCCESS CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL

Torch above and text beneath! Gapingly the youth looked up at the gleaming sign, and his lips parted in a little smile. In his heart he knew that this sign was meant for him. Fate had led his footsteps to his text. It burned far into the night, shooting its message into all quarters, printing itself in the radiance of the heavens. This was the text of the great City, its watchword day and night, set high above in blazing letters, burning steadily, a brand to sink into the souls of men. This was the cry that he heard in the streets, that he saw in the shop windows, in the carriages and silent houses, in the white, set faces of men and women. Success! He sat down upon the curb beneath the sign.

Some day his friend, — the bearded Anarch, — pointing derisively to the bright symbol, would say to him, "That is the one word in the language that needs no explanation. For its meaning is written in the heart of every human being, — 'life as I will it, — *my* life!'"

Now as the youth sits there on the curb he hears the hum of the presses in the basement of the new building. For unknowingly the blazing sign has led him to the door of Mr. Benjamin Gossom's flourishing establishment of popular education, and the swift presses are pouring forth thousands of his weekly leaflets, — "Gossom's Road to Success." On the morrow, still warm from the press and smelling of paper and ink, these Gossom words will be speeding to his countrymen by fast trains across the continent, up and down the states, climbing the hills, seeking tiny hamlets, dull country towns, busy little cities, spreading broadcast wherever they fall among the eighty millions their winged message. Beneath the eaves on the tenth floor, behind the broad gold sign, Gossom's clever young men and nimble stenographers have been feverishly preparing this winged message for the past week, working far into the nights to get the perfect mixture of fact and fiction, — fable, precept, and gossip. "And this," would say the great Benjamin, "is the people's education and I make it!" . . .

The youth sat there at the feet of the fiery symbol and mused, as if aware in his unsophisticated mind that he had reached the heart of the City, that his journey of wonder and question ended here.

XVIII. THUNDER AND LIGHTNING ¹

THOMAS HARDY

[Gabriel Oak, who had in the days of his prosperity courted Bathsheba Everdene, has now become her shepherd on a large farm which she has recently inherited. He has stood by and watched her marry a fascinating but dissolute soldier, Sergeant Troy. The sergeant is not much of a farmer. In spite of threatening weather, he has left some newly constructed wheat-stacks uncovered and given his men a hilarious harvest-supper and dance. While the farm-hands are lying in a drunken stupor, a violent thunder-storm comes up. Gabriel Oak, who has taken no part in the harvest-home, goes out alone to cover the stacks, if possible, before the rain comes. In contrast to the atmosphere of the last three selections, notice in this one and the next two the sense of country air, country sounds, and a more spacious stage for the action.]

A LIGHT flapped over the scene, as if reflected from phosphorescent wings crossing the sky, and a rumble filled the air. It was the first arrow from the approaching storm, and it fell wide.

The second peal was noisy, with comparatively little visible lightning. Gabriel saw a candle shining in Bathsheba's bedroom, and soon a shadow moved to and fro upon the blind.

Then there came a third flash. Maneuvers of a most extraordinary kind were going on in the vast firmamental hollows overhead. The lightning now was the color of silver, and gleamed in the heavens like a mailed army. Rumbles became rattles. Gabriel from his elevated position could see over the landscape for at least half a dozen miles in front. Every hedge, bush, and tree was distinct as in a line engraving. In a paddock in the same direction was a herd of heifers, and the forms of these were visible at this moment in the act of galloping about in the wildest and maddest confusion, flinging their heels and tails high into the air, their heads to earth. A poplar in

¹ Reprinted from *Far from the Madding Crowd*.

the immediate foreground was like an ink-stroke on burnished tin. Then the picture vanished, leaving a darkness so intense that Gabriel worked entirely by feeling with his hands.

He had struck his ricking-rod, groom, or poniard, as it was indifferently called — a long iron lance, sharp at the extremity and polished by handling — into the stack to support the sheaves. A blue light appeared in the zenith, and in some indescribable manner flickered down near the top of the rod. It was the fourth of the larger flashes. A moment later and there was a smack — smart, clear, and short. Gabriel felt his position to be anything but a safe one, and he resolved to descend.

Not a drop of rain had fallen as yet. He wiped his weary brow, and looked again at the black forms of the unprotected stacks. Was his life so valuable to him, after all? What were his prospects that he should be so chary of running risk, when important and urgent labor could not be carried on without such risk? He resolved to stick to the stack. However, he took a precaution. Under the staddles was a long tethering chain, used to prevent the escape of errant horses. This he carried up the ladder, and sticking his rod through the clog at one end, allowed the other end of the chain to trail upon the ground. The spike attached to it he drove in. Under the shadow of this extemporized lightning conductor he felt himself comparatively safe.

Before Oak had laid his hands upon his tools again, out leaped the fifth flash, with the spring of a serpent and the shout of a fiend. It was green as an emerald, and the reverberation was stunning. What was this the light revealed to him? In the open ground before him, as he looked over the ridge of the rick, was a dark and apparently female form. Could it be that of the only venturesome woman in the parish — Bathsheba? The form moved on a step; then he could see no more.

“Is that you, ma’am?” said Gabriel, to the darkness.

“Who is there?” said the voice of Bathsheba.

“Gabriel. I am on the rick, thatching.”

“Oh, Gabriel!—and are you? I have come about them. The weather woke me, and I thought of the corn. I am so distressed about it—can we save it, anyhow? I cannot find my husband. Is he with you?”

“He is not here.”

“Do you know where he is?”

“Asleep in the barn.”

“He promised that the stacks should be seen to, and now they are all neglected! Can I do anything to help? Liddy is afraid to come out. Fancy finding you here at such an hour! Surely I can do something?”

“You can bring up some reed-sheaves to me, one by one, ma’am, if you are not afraid to come up the ladder in the dark,” said Gabriel. “Every moment is precious now, and that would save a good deal of time. It is not very dark when the lightning has been gone a bit.”

“I’ll do anything,” she said resolutely. She instantly took a sheaf upon her shoulder, clambered up close to his heels, placed it behind the rod, and descended for another. At her third ascent the rick suddenly brightened with the brazen glare of shining majolica—every knot in every straw was visible. On the slope in front of him appeared two human shapes, black as jet. The rick lost its sheen—the shapes vanished. Gabriel turned his head. It had been the sixth flash which had come from the east behind him, and the two dark forms on the slope had been the shadows of himself and Bathsheba.

Then came the peal. It hardly was credible that such a heavenly light could be the parent of such a diabolical sound.

“How terrible!” she exclaimed, and clutched him by the sleeve. Gabriel turned, and steadied her on her aerial perch by holding her arm. At the same moment, while he was still reversed in his attitude, there was more light, and he saw as it

were a copy of the tall poplar tree on the hill drawn in black on the wall of the barn. It was the shadow of that tree thrown across by a secondary flash in the west.

The next flare came. Bathsheba was on the ground now, shouldering another sheaf, and she bore its dazzle without flinching — thunder and all — and again ascended with the load. There was then a silence everywhere for four or five minutes, and the crunch of the spars as Gabriel hastily drove them in, could again be distinctly heard. He thought the crisis of the storm had passed. But there came a burst of light.

“Hold on!” said Gabriel, taking the sheaf from her shoulder and grasping her arm again.

Heaven opened then, indeed. The flash was almost too novel for its inexpressibly dangerous nature to be at once realized, and Gabriel could only comprehend the magnificence of its beauty. It sprang from east, west, north, south. It was a perfect dance of death. The forms of skeletons appeared in the air, shaped with blue fire for bones — dancing, leaping, striding, racing around and mingling altogether in unparalleled confusion. With these were intertwined undulating snakes of green. Behind these was a broad mass of lesser light. Simultaneously came from every part of the tumbling sky what may be called a shout; since, though no shout ever came near it, it was more of the nature of a shout than of anything else earthly. In the meantime one of the grisly forms had alighted upon the point of Gabriel’s rod, to run invisibly down it, down the chain, and into the earth. Gabriel was almost blinded, and he could feel Bathsheba’s warm arm tremble in his hand — a sensation novel and thrilling enough: but love, life, everything human seemed small and trifling in such juxtaposition with an infuriated universe.

Oak had hardly time to gather up these impressions into a thought, and to see how strangely the red feather of her hat shone in this light, when the tall tree on the hill before

mentioned seemed on fire to a white heat, and a new one among these terrible voices mingled with the last crash of those preceding. It was a stupefying blast, harsh and pitiless, and it fell upon their ears in a dead, flat blow, without that reverberation which lends the tones of a drum to more distant thunder. By the luster reflected from every part of the earth and from the wide domical scoop above it, he saw the tree was sliced down the whole length of its tall, straight stem, a huge ribbon of bark being apparently flung off. The other portion remained erect, and revealed the bared surface as a strip of white down the front. The lightning had struck the tree. A sulphurous smell filled the air; then all was silent, and black as a cave in Hinnom.

“We had a narrow escape!” said Gabriel hurriedly. “You had better go down.”

Bathsheba said nothing; but he could distinctly hear her rhythmical pants, and the recurrent rustle of the sheaf beside her in response to her frightened pulsations. She descended the ladder, and, on second thoughts, he followed her. The darkness was now impenetrable by the sharpest vision. They both stood still at the bottom, side by side. Bathsheba appeared to think only of the weather — Oak thought only of her just then. At last he said:

“The storm seems to have passed now, at any rate.”

“I think so, too,” said Bathsheba; “though there are multitudes of gleams — look!”

The sky was now filled with an incessant light, frequent repetition melting into complete continuity, as an unbroken sound results from the successive strokes on a gong.

“Nothing serious,” said he. “I cannot understand no rain falling. But Heaven be praised, it is all the better for us. I am now going up again.”

“Gabriel, you are kinder than I deserve! I will stay and help you yet. Oh, why are not some of the others here!”

“They would have been here if they could,” said Oak, in a hesitating way.

“Oh, I know it all — all,” she said, adding slowly, “they are all asleep in the barn, in a drunken sleep, and my husband among them. That’s it, is it not? Don’t think I am a timid woman, and can’t endure things.”

“I am not certain,” said Gabriel. “I will go and see.”

He crossed to the barn, leaving her there alone. He looked through the chinks of the door. All was in total darkness, as he had left it, and there still arose, as at the former time, the steady buzz of many snores.

He felt a zephyr curling about his cheek, and turned. It was Bathsheba’s breath — she had followed him, and was looking into the same chink.

He endeavored to put off the immediate and painful subject of their thoughts by remarking gently: “If you’ll come back again, miss — ma’am, and hand up a few more; it would save much time.”

Then Oak went back again, ascended to the top, stepped off the ladder for greater expedition, and went on thatching.

XIX. GERARD AND THE BEAR ¹

CHARLES READE

[Gerard Eliason, forced to flee from medieval Holland, makes his way across Europe, largely on foot, toward Rome. In the Burgundian forests, he falls in with an older man, a guide and philosopher, who does much to cheer him on his way. Denys's philosophy is summed up in his oft repeated phrase — "*Courage, mon ami, le diable est mort!*" But there are other dangers to a young scholar in medieval forests besides the devil. The two companions have killed a bear cub and are carrying it along between them, while they discuss the power of Denys's crossbow, or arbalest, which Denys is maintaining will never be supplanted by the petrone and harquebuss with their "pinch of black dust and a leaden ball," so lately invented.]

GERARD did not answer, for his ear was attracted by a sound behind them. It was a peculiar sound, too, like something heavy, but not hard, rushing softly over the dead leaves. He turned round with some little curiosity. A colossal creature was coming down the road at about sixty paces' distance.

He looked at it in a sort of calm stupor at first, but the next moment he turned ashy pale.

"Denys!" he cried. "Oh, God! Denys!"

Denys whirled round.

It was a bear as big as a cart-horse.

It was tearing along with its huge head down, running on a hot scent.

The very moment he saw it Denys said in a sickening whisper, "*The Cub!*"

Oh! the concentrated horror of that one word, whispered hoarsely, with dilating eyes! For in that syllable it all flashed upon them both like a sudden stroke of lightning in the dark — the bloody trail, the murdered cub, the mother upon them, *and it. Death.*

¹ Reprinted from *The Cloister and the Hearth*.

All this in a moment of time. The next, she saw them. Huge as she was, she seemed to double herself (it was her long hair bristling with rage): she raised her head big as a bull's, her swine-shaped jaws opened wide at them, her eyes turned to blood and flame, and she rushed upon them, scattering the leaves about her like a whirlwind as she came.

"Shoot!" screamed Denys, but Gerard stood shaking from head to foot, useless.

"Shoot, man! ten thousand devils, shoot! too late! Tree! tree!" and he dropped the cub, pushed Gerard across the road, and flew to the first tree and climbed it, Gerard the same on his side; and as they fled, both men uttered inhuman howls like savage creatures grazed by death.

With all their speed one or other would have been torn to fragments at the foot of his tree; but the bear stopped a moment at the cub.

Without taking her bloodshot eyes off those she was hunting, she smelt it all round, and found, how, her Creator only knows, that it was dead, quite dead. She gave a yell such as neither of the hunted ones had ever heard, nor dreamed to be in nature, and flew after Denys. She reared and struck at him as he climbed. He was just out of reach.

Instantly she seized the tree, and with her huge teeth tore a great piece out of it with a crash. Then she reared again, dug her claws deep into the bark, and began to mount it slowly, but as surely as a monkey.

Denys's evil star had led him to a dead tree, a mere shaft, and of no very great height. He climbed faster than his pursuer, and was soon at the top. He looked this way and that for some bough of another tree to spring to. There was none; and if he jumped down, he knew the bear would be upon him ere he could recover the fall, and make short work of him. Moreover, Denys was little used to turning his back on danger, and his blood was rising at being hunted. He turned to bay.

“My hour is come,” thought he. “Let me meet death like a man.” He kneeled down and grasped a small shoot to steady himself, drew his long knife, and clenching his teeth, prepared to jab the huge brute as soon as it should mount within reach.

Of this combat the result was not doubtful.

The monster’s head and neck were scarce vulnerable for bone and masses of hair. The man was going to sting the bear, and the bear to crack the man like a nut.

Gerard’s heart was better than his nerves. He saw his friend’s mortal danger, and passed at once from fear to blindish rage. He slipped down his tree in a moment, caught up the crossbow, which he had dropped in the road, and running furiously up, sent a bolt into the bear’s body with a loud shout. The bear gave a snarl of rage and pain, and turned its head irresolutely.

“Keep aloof!” cried Denys, “or you are a dead man.”

“I care not;” and in a moment he had another bolt ready and shot it fiercely into the bear, screaming, “Take that! take that!”

Denys poured a volley of oaths down at him. “Get away, idiot!”

He was right: the bear finding so formidable and noisy a foe behind him, slipped growling down the tree, rending deep furrows in it as she slipped. Gerard ran back to his tree and climbed it swiftly. But while his legs were dangling some eight feet from the ground, the bear came rearing and struck with her fore paw, and out flew a piece of bloody cloth from Gerard’s hose. He climbed, and climbed; and presently he heard as it were in the air a voice say, “Go out on the bough!” He looked, and there was a long massive branch before him shooting upwards at a slight angle: he threw his body across it, and by a series of convulsive efforts worked up it to the end.

Then he looked round panting.

The bear was mounting the tree on the other side. He heard her claws scrape, and saw her bulge on both sides of the massive tree. Her eye not being very quick, she reached the fork and passed it, mounting the main stem. Gerard drew breath more freely. The bear either heard him, or found by scent she was wrong: she paused; presently she caught sight of him. She eyed him steadily, then quietly descended to the fork.

Slowly and cautiously she stretched out a paw and tried the bough. It was a stiff oak branch, sound as iron. Instinct taught the creature this: it crawled carefully out on the bough, growling savagely as it came.

Gerard looked wildly down. He was forty feet from the ground. Death below. Death moving slow but sure on him in a still more horrible form. His hair bristled. The sweat poured from him. He sat helpless, fascinated, tongue-tied.

As the fearful monster crawled growling towards him, incongruous thoughts coursed through his mind. Margaret: the Vulgate, where it speaks of the rage of a she-bear robbed of her whelps — Rome — Eternity.

The bear crawled on. And now the stupor of death fell on the doomed man; he saw the open jaws and bloodshot eyes coming, but in a mist.

As in a mist he heard a twang; he glanced down; Denys, white and silent as death, was shooting up at the bear. The bear snarled at the twang, but crawled on. Again the cross-bow twanged, and the bear snarled, and came nearer. Again the cross-bow twanged; and the next moment the bear was close upon Gerard, where he sat, with hair standing stiff on end and eyes starting from their sockets, palsied. The bear opened her jaws like a grave, and hot blood spouted from them upon Gerard as from a pump. The bough rocked. The wounded monster was reeling; it clung, it stuck its sickles of claws deep into the wood; it toppled, its claws held firm, but its body rolled off, and the sudden shock to the branch shook

Gerard forward on his stomach with his face upon one of the bear's straining paws. At this, by a convulsive effort, she raised her head up, up till he felt her hot, fetid breath. Then huge teeth snapped together loudly close below him in the air, with a last effort of baffled hate. The ponderous carcass rent the claws out of the bough, then pounded the earth with a tremendous thump. There was a shout of triumph below, and the very next instant a cry of dismay, for Gerard had swooned, and without an attempt to save himself, rolled head-long from the perilous height.

XX. TAD SHELDON, SECOND CLASS SCOUT ¹

JOHN FLEMING WILSON

“THERE is no har-r-m in the story, though it speaks ill for us big people with Mither to our names,” said Chief Engineer Mickey O'Rourke, balancing his coffee cup between his two scarred hands. “Ye remimber the lasht toime I was on leave — and I wint down to Yaquina Bay with Captain Tyler on his tin gas schooner, thinkin' to mesilf it was a holiday — and all the fun I had was instrhuctin' the gasoline engineer in the mysteries of how to express one's sintimints without injurin' the skipper's feelin's? Well, I landed in the bay and walked about in the woods, which is foine for the smell of thim which is like fresh tar; and one afternoon I finds two legs and small feet stickin' out of a hole under a stump. I pulled on the two feet and the legs came out and at the end of thim a bhoy, mad with rage and dirt in his eyes.

“‘Ye have spoiled me fun!’ says he, lookin' at me very fierce.

“‘Do yez dig yer fun out of the ground like coal?’ I demands.

“‘I'm investigatin' the habits of squirrels,' says he. ‘I must find out how a squirrel turns round in his hole. Does he turn a summersault or stick his tail between his ears and go over backward?’

“‘He turns inside out, like an ould sock,' I informs him, and he scorns me natural history. On the strength of mutual language we got acquainted. He is Tad Sheldon, the eldest son of Surfman No. 1, of the lifesaving crew. He is fourteen years ould. Me bould Tad has troubles of his own, consisting of five other youngsters who are his gang. ‘We are preparing to inter the ranks of the Bhoy Scouts,' he tells me, settin'

¹ Reprinted from *Across the Latitudes*, with the kind permission of the author.

be the side of the squirrel-hole. 'We are all tenderfeet and we can't get enlisted with the rest of the bhoys in the United States because each scout must have a dollar in the bank and between the six of us we have only one dollar and six bits and that's in me mother's apron pocket and in no bank at all.'

"'Explain,' says I.

"'Tis this way,' says me young sprig. 'All the bhoys in the country of America have joined the scouts, which is an army of felleys that know the woods and about animals and how to light a fire, and know the law.'

"'Stop!' I orders. 'No one knows the law without gold in one hand and a book in the other. If ye knew the law ye would have yer dollar.'

"'Tis the scouts' law,' says he. 'It tells ye to obey yer superiors and be fair to animals and kind to people ye care little for. Ye must know how to take care of yourself anywhere and be ready whin the counthry needs ye.'

"'And ye need a dollar?' I asks. 'Thin, why not work for it and stop pokin' yer nose down squirrel-holes, where there is neither profit nor wages?'

"'Because I'm to be the pathrol-leader and I must know more than me men,' he retorts.

"Now, ye remimber I had in me pocket three pay checks, besides the money of Mr. Lof, the second engineer, which I had got for him and was carryin' about to send to him by the first friend I saw. So I took off me cap and pulled out one of the checks and said: 'Me bould bhoy, go down to the town and get the cash for this. Bring it back to me and I'll give ye a dollar; and thin ye can become a scout.'

"The lad looked at me and then at the Governmint check. He shook his head till the dirt rolled into his ears, for he was still full of the clods he had rubbed into himsif in the hole. 'I can't take a dollar from a man in the service,' he says. 'I must earn it.'

“The Governmint’s money is clane,’ I rebukes him. ‘I’m ould and me legs ends just above me feet, so that I walk with difficulty. ’Tis worth a dollar to get the coin without trampin’.’

“‘I will earn it from somebody not in the service,’ says me bould bhoy, with great firmness.

“‘I’m no surfman, thank Hivin!’ I remarks. ‘I’m in the establishmint and look down on ye.’

“‘If I’d known ye were a lighthouse man I’d have taken all ye had at first,’ he retorts. ‘But ye have made me a fair offer and I forgive ye. My father works for his living.’

“Ye know how the life-savers and the lighthouse people pass language between thim whin they meet. The lad and I exchanged compliment, but he spared me because I had gray hairs. ‘In time ye will become a keeper of a station and perform for the idification of the summer gur-rl,’ I concludes. ‘But, if ye were more indushtrious and had more iducation, ye might in time get into the establishmint and tind a third-order light.’

“‘Why should I bury meself among ould min without arms and legs?’ he inquires haughtily. ‘Me youngest sister clanes the lamps in our house with a dirty rag and an ould toothbrush.’

“‘Well,’ says I, seein’ that it was poor fortune to be quar-relin’ with a slip of a kid, ‘do yes want the dollar or not?’

“And at that we got down to facts and he explained that this scout business was most important. It appeared that the other five bhoys depinded on him to extricate thim from their difficulties and set them all up as scouts, with uniforms and knives and a knowledge of wild animals and how to build a fire in a bucket of watter. We debated the thing back and forth till the sun dropped behind the trees and the could air came up from the ground and stuck me with needles of rheumatism.

“The lad was a good lad and he made plain to me why his dollar was har-rd to get. He had thought of savin’ the life of a summer visitor, but the law read that he must save life anyhow,

without lookin' for pay. 'And we can't all save lives,' he mourns; 'for some of the kids is too young.'

"'But ye must earn money, ye scut,' I says. 'Ye're fourteen and whin I was that age I was me mother's support and joy. I made four shilling's a wake mixin' plaster for a tile-layer.'

"'I work,' he responds dolefully. 'But it goes to me mother to put with the savings in the bank against the time me father will be drowned and leave us without support, for ye must know that we life-savers get no pensions.'

"'I niver hear-rd of a life-saver bein' drowned,' I remarks. 'But it may be, for I see ye are of an exthraordinary family and anything may come to such. How many are there of yez?'

"'There are six of us childher, all gur-rls but mesilf,' says he, with rage in his voice. 'And Carson — he was No. 4 — broke his hip in a wreck last week and died of the bruise and left five, which the crew is lookin' after. Young Carson is one of me gang and makes a dollar and four bits a week deliverin' clams to the summer folks. Ye see he can't save a dollar for the bank.'

"And we got up and discussed the matther going down the hill toward the town. Before we parted Tad tould me where he lived.

"'I'd call on yer father and mother,' says I, 'if I cud be sure they would appreciate the honor. 'Tis a comedown for an officer in the lighthouse establishmint to inter the door of a surfman.'

"'Me father has a kind heart and is good to the ould,' he answers me. 'We live beyond the station, on the bluff.'

"With that we went our ways and I ate an imminse meal in the hotel with the dishes all spread out before me — and a pretty gur-rl behind me shoulder to point out the best of thim. Thin I walked out and started for the house of me bould Tad.

"I found thim all seated in the parlor excipt the missus, who was mixin' bread in the kitchen. I inthroduced mesilf, and

Sheldon, who had No. 1 on his sleeve, offered me a pipe, which I took. I came down to business, houldin' me cap full of checks and money on me lap. 'Yer bould bhoy wants to be a scout and lacks a dollar,' I says. 'I like his looks, though I discovered him in a hole under a tree. He won't take me money and scorns me and the establishmint.'

"'He must earn it,' he answers, scowlin' over his pipe.

"'But I'll spind it,' I insists, peerin' at the bhoy out of the tail of me eye. 'If yer town weren't dhry I'd have given it to the saloon man for the good of the family he hasn't got. So why bilge at a single dollar?'

"' 'Tis the scout's law,' puts in me bould Tad. 'I must make it honestly.' And he settled his head between his hands and gazed reproachfully at the clane floor. So I saved me money and sat till eight o'clock exchangin' compliments with Mистер Sheldon. Thin the bell rang on the hill beyond the station and he pulled his cap off the dresser, kissed his wife and the five gur-rls and wint out to his watch and a good sleep. Whin he was gone I stood in the doorway and Missus Sheldon tould me of the little Carsons and how Missus Carson had sworn niver to marry again excipt in the life-saving service. 'She says the Governmint took away her husband and her support,' says the good lady,' and she'll touch no money excipt Governmint checks, bein' used to thim and Uncle Sam owin' her the livin' he took away.'

"'With five childher she shud look up and marry one of the men in the establishmint,' I informs her. 'They are good husbands and make money.'

"'Though a widow she has pride,' she responds sharply; and I left, with young Tad follerin' at me heels till I let him overtake me and whisper: 'If ye'd buy some clams of young Carson it wud help the widow.'

"'I am starved for clams,' I whispers back like a base conspirator for the hand of the lovely gur-rl in the castle. 'Show

me the house of me bould 'Carson.' He pointed to a light through the thin woods.

"They thought I was crazy whin I returned to the hotel with a hundred pounds of clams dripping down me back. 'I dug thim with me own hands this night,' I tould the man in the office. 'Cook thim all for me breakfast.'

"'Ye're a miracle of strength and endurance under watter,' says he; 'for 't is now high tide and the surf is heavy.'

"'I found their tracks in the road and followed thim to their lair,' I retorts. 'Do I get thim for breakfast?'

"'And in the mor-rnin', whin I was that full of clams that I needed a shell instead of a weskit, I walked on the beach with the admirin' crowds of summer tourists and lovely women. It was fine weather and the little ones were barefooted and the old ones bareheaded, and the wind was gentle, and the life-savers were polishin' their boat in full view of the wondherin' throng; and I thought of this ould tub out here on the ind of a chain and pitied yez all. Thin I sthrolled around the point to the bay and found me bould Tad dhrillin' his gang in an ould skiff, with home-made oars in their little fists and Tad sthandin' in the stern-sheets, with a huge steerin' sweep between his arms and much loud language in his mouth. Whin I appeared they looked at me and Tad swung his boat up to the beach and invited me in.

"'We will show you a dhrill ye will remimber,' says he, very polite. And with my steppin' in he thrust the skiff off and the bhoys rowed with tremenjous strength. We wint along a full three knots an hour, till he yelled another ordher and the bhoys dropped their oars and jumped over to one side; and I found mesilf undher the boat, with me mouth full of salt watter and ropes. Whin I saw the sun again me bould Tad says to me with disapprobation: 'Ye aren't experienced in capsizе dhrill.'

"'In the establishmint we use boats to keep us out of the

watther,' I responds, hunting for the papers out of me cap. 'The newspapers are full of rebukes for thim that rock boats to their own peril.' With that they all felt ashamed and picked up me papers and grunted at each other, tryin' to blame somebody else. And whin I had me checks and me papers all safe again I smiled on thim and me bould Tad took heart. ' 'Tis not to tip the boat over,' says he, 'but to get it back on an even keel after a sea's capsized her—that is the point of the dhrill.' And we pulled ashore to dhry.

"Whiles we were sittin' on the sand drainin' the watther out of our shoes, a small, brassy launch came down the bay, with manny men and women on her little decks. Me bould Tad looked at her with half-shut eyes and snorted. 'Some day it will be the life-saving crew that must bring those ninnies back to their homes,' he says. 'The Pacific is nothing to fool with in a gasoline launch. 'Tis better to be safe and buy your fish.' And we watched the launch chug by and out on the bar and to sea. I learned that she was the *Gladys* by name and fetched tourists to the fishing grounds, nine miles down the coast.

"All the bhoys were respectful to me excipt young Carson, who recognized in me bould Mickey the man who had asked for a hundred-weight of clams. He stared at me superciliously and refused to have speech with me, being ashamed, if I can judge of his youthful thoughts, of bein' in the same company with a fool.

"But I discovered that the gang was all bent on becomin' what they called second-class scouts, which they made plain to me was betther by one than a tenderfoot. But they niver mintioned the lackings of the dollar, bein' gentlemine. They wanted to know of me whether I thought that boatmanship and knowledge of sailing would be accpted be the powers instid of wisdom as to bird-tracks and intimacy with wild animals and bugs. And the heart of me opened, the youth of me came back; and I spoke to thim as one lad to another, with riferince

to me years in a steamer and the need of hard hands and a hard head.

“The ind of it was they rowled across the sand to me side and we all lay belly down over a chart, which me bould Tad had procured after the manner of bhoys, and they explained to me how they knew the coast for twelve miles each side of Yaquina Bay, with the tides and currents all plain in their heads. And I was surprised at what the young scuts knew — God save them!

“At noon the visitors suddenly stopped lookin’ at the scenery and hastened away with hunger in their eyes. The crew ran the surf-boat back into the station and the bhoys drew their skiff up out of har-rm’s way; and I wint back to me hotel and more clams. On the steps I found young Carson, grinnin’ like a cat.

“‘Ye don’t have to eat thim shell fish,’ says he, lookin’ away. ‘Gimme the sack of thim and I’ll peddle thim to the tourists and bring ye the money.’

“‘Whisht and away with ye!’ I commanded. ‘Who are you to be dictatin’ the diet of yer betthers?’ And he fled, without glancin’ behind him.

“There was some remar-rks passed upon me wet clothes, but I tould the clerk in the office that me duty called me to get drippin’ soaked and went into the dinin’ room with a stiff neck under me proud chin. There was but few in the place and the gur-rl who stood by me shoulder to pilot me through the various coorses informed me that the most of the guests were out on the *Gladys* fishin’. ‘And the most of thim will have little appetite for their dinners,’ she mused gently, thereby rebukin’ me for a second helpin’ of the fresh meat.

“In the afternoon I sthrolled out on the beach again, but saw little. A heavy fog was rowlin’ from the nor’ard and the breeze before it was chill and damp as a widow’s bed. I walked for me health for an hour and then ran to kape war-rm. At

the ind of my spurt I was amazed to find meself exactly at the hotel steps. I wint in and laid me down be the fire and slept. I woke to hear a woman wailin'.

“Whin me eyes were properly open, and both pointed in the same direction, I found meself in the midst of a crowd. The sittin' room was full of people, all with misery in their faces. The woman whose cries had woke me was standin' be the windey, with one hand around a handkerchief. ‘My God!’ she was sayin’ — ‘My God! And me bhoys is on that boat!’ And I knew that it was throuble and that many people would have their heads in their hands that night, with aches in their throats. I got up — shoes in me hand. At sight of me bright unifor-rm men flung themselves on me. ‘You will help save them?’ they cried at me.

“‘I will so soon as I get me shoes on,’ I remar-rked, pushing them off me toes. I put on me boots and stood up. ‘Now I’ll save thim,’ says I. ‘Where are they?’

“‘They’re on the *Gladys*,’ says three at once. ‘Thirty of our people — women and men and childher.’

“‘Why wake me?’ I demanded crosslike. ‘Aren’t the brave life-savers even now sitting be the fire waitin’ for people to come and be saved? I’m a chief engineer in the lighthouse establish-mint and we save no lives excipt whin we can’t help it. Get the life-saving crew.’

“And they explained to me bould Mickey that the crew was gone twenty miles up the coast to rescue the men on a steam schooner that was wrecked off the Siletz, word of it having come down but two hours since. They looked at me unifor-rm and demanded their relatives at me hands. I shoved thim away and wint out to think. In the prociss it ocured to me that the *Gladys* might not be lost. I wint back and asked thim how they knew it was time to mourn. ‘If that launch is ashore they are as close to the fire as they can get,’ I tould thim. ‘And if she has gone down ’t is too late to dhry their stockings.’

“‘She is lost in the fog,’ I was infor-rmed. She shud have been back at her wharf at four o’clock. ’Twas now turned six and the bar was rough and blanketed in mist. The captain of the harbor tug has stated, with wise shakes of the head, that the *Gladys* cud do no more than lay outside the night and wait for sunshine and a smooth crossing. I shoved them away from me again and wint out to think.

“It was a mur-rky fog, the sort that slathers over the watter like a thick oil. Beyond the hill I cud hear the surf pounding like a riveter in a boiler. Overhead was a sheet of gray cloud, flying in curds before the wind, and in me mouth was the taste of the deep sea, blown in upon me with the scent of the storm. Two words with the skipper of the tug tould me the rest. ‘It’s coming on to blow a little from the south’ard,’ said me bould mariner. ‘It’s so thick the *Gladys* can’t find her way back. Her passengers will be cold and hungry whin they retur-rn in the mor-rnin’.’

“‘And will ye not go after thim?’

“‘I can’t,’ says he. ‘Me steamer is built for the bay and one sea on the bar wud destroy the investmint. The life-saving crew is up north after a wreck.’

“‘Is there no seagoin’ craft in this harbor?’ I demands.

“‘There is not,’ says he. ‘Captain Tyler took his gas schooner down the coast yesterday.’

“So I sat down and thought, wonderin’ how I cud sneak off me unifor-rm and have peace. For I knew that me brass buttons wud keep me tongue busy all night explainin’ that I was not a special providence paid be the Governmint to save fools from purgat’ry. In me thoughts I heard a wor-rd in me ear. I looked up. ’Twas me bould Tad, with the gang clustherin’ at his heels.

“‘Ye have followed the sea for many years?’ says he.

“‘I have followed it whin it was fair weather,’ I responded, ‘but the most of the time the sea has chased me ahead of it.

Me coattail is still wet from the times it caught me. Speak up! What is it?’

“The bhoys pulled out of his jacket his ould chart and laid it before me. ‘The *Gladys* is at anchor off these rocks,’ says he, layin’ a small finger on a spot. ‘And in this weather she will have to lie there as long as she can. Whin it blows she must up anchor and get out or go ashore here.’ He moved his finger a mite and it rested on what meant rocks.

“‘Well?’ I remar-rks.

“‘Me father and all the bhoys’ fathers are gone up north to rescue the crew of a steam schooner that’s wrecked. Before they get back it will be too late. I thought’ —

“‘What were ye thinkin’, ye scut?’ says I fiercely.

“He dropped one foot on the other and looked me between the eyes. ‘I was thinkin’ we wud go afther her and save her,’ says he, very bould.

“I cast me eyes over the bunch of little fellows and laughed. But me bould Tad didn’t wink. ‘There’s people out there drownding,’ says he. ‘We’ve dhrilled and we know all the ropes; but we can’t pull our skiff across the bar and the big boat is not for us, bein’ the keeper’s orders. And we haven’t the weight to pull it anyhow.’ And he stared me out of me laugh.

“‘There is no seagoin’ craft in the harbor,’ I says, to stop his nonsense.

“‘There is another launch,’ he remar-rks casually.

“We looked at each other and he thin says: ‘Can ye run a gasoline engine?’

“‘I have had to,’ I infor-rms him, ‘but I dislike the smell.’

“‘The owner of this launch is not here,’ says me young sprig. ‘And he niver tould us not to take it. If you’ll run the engine we’ll be off and rescue the folks on the *Gladys*!’

“Be the saints! I laughed to kill mesilf, till the little brat up and remar-rks to the gang: ‘These lighthouse officers wear a

uniform and have no work-rkin' clothes at all, not needin' them in their business.'

"So I parleyed with thim a momint to save me face. 'And how will ye save thim that's dyin' in deep watters?'

"'By to-morrow nobody can cross the bar,' I'm infor-med. 'And the skipper of the *Gladys* don't know this coast. We'll just pick him up and pilot him in.'

"'But the bar!' I protests. 'It's too rough to cross a launch inward bound, even if ye can get out.'

"'I know the soft places,' says the little sprig of a bhoys, very proudly. 'Come on.'

"'And if I don't come?' I inquired.

"He leaned over and touched the brass buttons on me jacket. 'Ye have sworn to do your best,' says he. 'I've not had a chance to take me oath yet as a second-class scout, but between ourselves we have done so. I appeal to yez as one man to another.'

"I got up. 'I've niver expicted to serve undher so small a captain,' I remark-rks, 'but that is neither here nor there. Where is that gasoline engine?'

"We stepped proudly off in the dusk, me bould Tad houldin' himsilf very straight beside me and the gang marchin' at our heels shouldher to shouldher. Prisintly we came to a wharf and ridin' to the float below it was a big white launch, cabined and decked. Tad jumped down and the gang followed. Thin I lowered mesilf down with dignity and intered the miserable engine room.

"I have run every sort of engine and machine made by experts and other ignoramuses. I balk at nothing. The engine was new to me, but I lit a lantern and examined its inwards with anxiety and superciliousness. Prisintly, by the grace of God, it started off. A very small bhoys held the lantern for me while I adjusted the valves and the carbureter, and this bould lad infor-med me with pride that the 'leader' had assigned him to me as my engine-room crew. And whin the machine

was revolvin' with some speed that individual thrust his head in at the door to ask me if I was ready. 'If ye are,' says that limb of wickedness, 'we will start, chief.'

"'Ye may start any time,' I says, with great respect. 'But whin we'll stop is another matther.'

"'Ye must keep her goin' whiles we cross the bar,' he informs me, with a straight look.

"The little gong rang and I threw in the clutch and felt the launch slide away. The jingle came and I opened her up. 'Twas a powerful machine and whin I felt the jerk and pull of her four cylinders I sint me assistant to find the gasoline tank and see whether we had oil enough. Thinks I, if this machine eats up fuel like this we must e'en have enough and aplenty. The bhoys came back with smut on his nose and shtated that the tank was full.

"'How do ye know?' I demanded.

"'I've helped the owner fill her up several times,' says the brat. 'The leader insists that we know the insides of every boat on the bay. 'Tis part of our practice and whin we get to be scouts we will all learn to run gasoline engines.'

"So we went along and the engines war-rmed up; and I trimmed the lantern and sat me down comfortable as a cat on a pan of dough. Thin there was a horrible rumpus on deck and some watter splashed down the back of me neck. "'Tis the bar,' says me proud engine-room crew, balancin' himsilf on the plates.

"'They are shovin' dhrinks across it too fast for me,' I re-torts, as more watter simmers down.

"'Oh, the leader knows all the soft places,' returns proudly this bould sprig. And with a whoop we drove through a big felley that almost swamped us. Thin, so far as I cud judge, the worst was over.

"Prisintly we got into the trough of the sea and rowled along for an hour more. Then the jingle tinkled and I slowed down.

Me bould Tad stuck his head in at the little door. 'The *Gladys* is right in-shore from us,' he remark-rks, careless-like. 'We will signal her to up anchor and come with us.' He took me lantern and vanished.

"Whin I had waited long enough for all the oil to have burned out of three lanterns I turned the engines over to me crew and stepped out on deck. It was a weepin' fog, with more rowlin' in all the time, and the feel on me cheek was like that of a stor-rm. I saw me bould Tad on the little for'a'd deck, swingin' his little lamp.

"'What's the matther with that scut of a skipper?' I inquires.

"'The bhoys was fair cryin' with rage and shame. 'He can't understand the signal,' says he; 'and 'tis dangerous to run closer to him in this sea.'

"'If he don't understand yer signals,' says I, "'Tis useless to talk more to him with yer ar-rms. Use yer tongue.'

"And at that he raised a squeal that cud maybe be heard a hundred feet, the voice of him bein' but a bhoys without noise and power. 'Let be,' says I. 'I've talked me mind across the deep watters many times.' And I filled me lungs and let out a blast that fetched everybody on deck on the other launch. Thin I tould that skipper, with rage in me throat, that he must up anchor and folley us or be drownded with all his passengers dragging on his coattails through purgat'ry. And he listened, and prisintly we saw the *Gladys* creep through the darkness and fog up till us. Whin she crossed our stern me bould Tad tould me to command her to folley us into port.

"Ravin's and ragin's were nothin' to the language we traded across that watter for the five minutes necessary to knock loose the wits of that heathen mariner. In the end he saw the light, and the passengers that crowded his sloppy decks waved their arms and yelled with delight. Me bould Tad went into the little pilot-house and slammed the door. He

spoke to me sharply: "'Twill blow a gale before midnight.' He rang the bell for full speed ahead.

"An hour later I was signaled to stop me machines. I dropped the clutch and sint me assistant for news. He came back with big eyes. 'The leader says the other launch can't make it across the bar,' he reports.

"'Well?' I says.

"'We're goin' to take off her passengers and cross it ourselves,' says the brat. With that he vanishes. I followed him.

"We were stopped right in the fog, with roily waves towerin' past us and the dull noise of the bar ahead of us. The *Gladys* was right astern of us and even in the darkness I cud catch a glimpse of white faces and hear little screams of women. I went to leeward and there found me bould Tad launchin' the little dingey that was stowed on the roof of the cabin. Whin it was overside four of me bould gang drops into it and pulls away for the other launch. 'They'll be swamped and drownded,' I remar-rks.

"'They will not,' says Tad. 'I trained thim meself. 'Tis child's play.'

"'Childher play with queer toys in this country,' I continues to meself; and I had a pain in me pit to see thim careerin' on the big waves that looked nigh to breakin' any minute. But they came back with three women and a baby, with nothin' to say excipt: 'There's thirty-one of thim, leader!'

"'Leave the min,' says he, real sharp. 'Tell the captain we'll come back for thim after we've landed the women safe.'

"I tucked the women down in the afther cabin, snug and warm, and wint back on deck. The boat was away again, swingin' over the seas as easy as a bird. 'That's good boatmanship,' I remar-rks.

"'It's young Carson in command,' says me bould bhoy leader.

"'Twas fifteen minutes before the boat came back and thin

there was a man in it, with two women. Whin it swung alongside Tad helped out the ladies and thin pushed at the man with his foot. 'Back ye go!' he says. 'No room on this craft for min.'

"'But you're only a lot of bhoys!' says the man in a rage. 'Who are you to give orders? I'll come aboard.'

"'Ye will not,' says me bould Tad, and I reached into the engine room for a spanner whereby to back him up, for I admired the spunk of the young sprig. But the man stared into the lad's face and said nothin'. And the boat pulled away with him still starin' over his shouldher.

"The nixt boatload was all the rest of the womenfolks and childher and Tad ordered the dingey swung in and secured. Thin he tur-rned to me. 'We will go in.'

"'Which way?' I demands.

"He put his little hand to his ear. 'Hear it?' he asks calmly. I listened and by the great Hivins there was a whistlin' buoy off in the darkness. I wint down to me machines.

"I've run me engines many a long night whin the divil was bruising his knuckles agin the plates beneath me. But the nixt hour made me tin years ouldher. For we hadn't more'n got well started in before it was 'Stop her!' and 'Full speed ahead!' and 'Ease her!' Me assistant was excited, but kept on spillin' oil into the cups and feelin' the bearin's like an ould hand. Once, whin a sea walloped over our little craft, he grinned across at me. 'There ain't many soft places to-night!' says he.

"'Ye're a child of the Ould Nick,' says I, 'and eat fire out of an asbestos spoon. Ye wud be runnin' hell within an hour afther ye left yer little corpse!'

"' 'Tis the scout's law not to be afraid,' retor-rts me young demon. But me attintion was distracted be a tremenjous scamperin' over head. 'For the love of mercy, what is that?' I yelled.

"' 'Tis the leader puttin' out the drag,' says me crew. 'Whin

the breakers are high it's safer to ride in with a drag over the stern. It keeps the boat from broachin' to.' And to the dot of his last word I felt the sudden strong pull of something on the launch's tail. Thin something lifted us up and laid us down with a slap like a pan of dough on a mouldin' board. Me machines coughed and raced and thin almost stopped. Whin they were goin' again I saw me assistant houldin' to a stanchion. His face was pasty white and he gulped. 'Are ye scared at last?' I demanded of him.

"'I'm seasick,' he chokes back. And he was, be Hivins! So we joggled and bobbed about and I wondered how many times we had crossed the bar from ind to ind, whin suddenly it smoothed down and I saw a red light through the little windey. Me assistant saw it too, 'That's the range light, off the jetty,' says he. 'We're inside.'

"I shoved open the door to the deck and looked out. The fog lay about us thick and the wind was risin'; I cud barely make out the lights ahead. I stuck me head out and glanced astern. 'Way back of us, like a match behind a curtain, I saw a little light bobbing up and down in the fog. I took me crew be the ear and thrust his head out beside mine. 'What is that?' I demanded.

" "'Tis the other launch,' he says. 'I guess they followed us in.'

"We ran up to the wharf and the gang made everything fast; and then me bould Tad comes to me with a sheepish face. 'Wud ye mind tellin' the ladies and childher that they can go ashore and get to the hotel?' he says.

"So it was me that wint in and tould the ladies they were saved and helped thim to the wharf and saw thim started for the hotel. Thin I came back to the launch, but there was nobody there. Me bould gang had disappeared. Just thin the other launch came up, limpin' on one leg, covered with drippin' men and blasphemy. They didn't wait for the lines to be put out, but jumped for the hotel. Whiles I was watchin' thim the

skipper of the *Gladys* pulls himself out of his wrecked pilot-house and approaches me with heavy footfalls. 'I'm tould that 'twas bhoys that manned this launch,' he remar-rks. 'If it is so I wudn't have come in and nearly lost me ship.'

"'If it hadn't been for the bhoys ye'd now be driftin' into the breakers off yer favorite fishin' spot,' I retor-rts. 'I've seen many a man who'd found the door of hell locked against him swear because he hadn't the key in his pocket. Nixt time ye try suicide leave the women and childher ashore.' And with the words out of me mouth the gale broke upon us like the blow of a fist.

"We took shelter behind a warehouse and the skipper of the *Gladys* said in me ear: 'I suppose the owner of the launch had to get what crew he cud. Where is he? I'd like to thank him.'

"'If ye will come with me to the hotel ye shall see the man ye owe yer life to,' I infor-rmed him.

"As we intered the hotel a tall man, with the mar-rk of aut'ority on him, observed me unifor-rm and addressed me: 'What do you know about this?'

"Aut'ority is always aut'ority, and I tould him what I knew and had seen, not forbearin' to mintion the gang and their wild ambitions. And whin I had finished this man said: 'I shall muster thim in to-morrow. I happen to be in command of the scouts in this district.'

"'But they haven't their dollars to put in the little bank,' I remar-rked. 'And they tell me without their dollars they cannot be second-class scouts, whatever that is.'

"At this a fat man reached for a hat off the hook and put his hand in his pocket, drew it out and emptied it into the hat, and passed it.

"And while the money jingled into it my respect for the brave lads rose into me mouth. 'They won't take it,' I said. 'They have refused money before. 'Tis their oath.'

"The man with aut'ority looked over at me. 'The chief

is right,' he said. 'They have earned only a dollar apiece. Whose launch was that they took?'

"'Faith and I don't know,' I said. 'They remar-rked that the owner—Hivin bless him!—had niver forbidden thim to use it.'

"'Thin we must pay the rint of it for the night,' says he. 'But the bhoys will get only a dollar a piece. Where are they?'

"'They disappeared whin the boat was fast, sir,' says I. 'I think they wint home. 'Tis bedtime.'

"'D'ye know where the pathrol-leader lives?' he demands.

"So we walked up the hill in the darkness and wind till we reached the house of me bould Tad. A knock at the door brought out the missus, with a towel on her ar-rm. I pushed in. 'We've come to see yer son,' says I.

"We stepped in and saw the young sprig be the fire on a chair, with his feet in a bowl of watter and musthard. He was for runnin' whin he saw us, but didn't for the lack of clothes. So he scowled at us. 'This is the commander of the scouts,' I says, inthroducin' me tall companion. 'And her's yer five dollars to put with yer dollar and six bits into the little bank, so's yez can all of yez be second-class scouts.'

"'We can't take the money,' says he, with a terrible growl. 'The oath forbids us to take money for savin' life.'

"'Don't be a hero,' I rebukes him. 'Ye're only a small bhoy in his undherclothes with yer feet in hot watter and musthard. No hero was iver in such a predicament. This gintleman will infor-rm ye about the money.'

"Me bould companion looked at the slip of a lad and said sharply: 'Report to me to-morrow morning with yer pathrol at sivin o'clock to be musthered in.'

"With that we mar-rched out into the stor-rm and back to the hotel, where I wint to slape like a bhoy mesilf — that was sixty-four me last birthday and niver thought to make a fool of mesilf with a gang of bhoys and a gasoline engine — and that on a holiday!"

XXI. THE GLENMORE FIRE ¹

ROBERT HERRICK

[Hart, the principal figure of *The Common Lot*, is an architect who very early in his career finds himself in the power of an unscrupulous contractor and builder, Graves. The two men work together, the architect winking at the builder's habit of skimping the specifications — using I-beams, for instance, of much smaller size than those called for in the contracts, and, in general, missing no chance for graft. They build The Glenmore as a fireproof hotel. The steel construction is so skimped that the hotel is in reality a death-trap. The present selection, nominally a description of a big fire, is in reality an account of Hart's conscience. Hart has been going to the dogs in more ways than one. On the afternoon of the fire he is walking the streets at random in great discouragement of soul, wondering at his degeneration. The fire, in the end, proves to be the starting point of his regeneration.]

HE must have walked many blocks on this avenue between the monotonous small houses. In the distance beyond him, to the south, he saw a fiery glow on the soft heavens, which he took to be the nightly reflection from the great blast furnaces of the steel works in South Chicago. Presently as he emerged upon a populous cross street, the light seemed suddenly much nearer, and, unlike the soft effulgence from the blast furnaces, the red sky was streaked with black. On the corners of the street there was an unwonted excitement, — men gaping upward at the fiery cloud, then running eastward, in the direction of the lake. From the west there sounded the harsh gong of a fire-engine, which was pounding rapidly down the car tracks. It came, rocking in a whirlwind of galloping horses and swaying men. The crowd on the street broke into a run, streaming along the sidewalks in the wake of the engine.

The architect woke from his dead thoughts and ran with the crowd. Two, three, four blocks, they sped toward the lake, which curves eastward at this point, and as he ran the street

¹ Reprinted from *The Common Lot* with the kind permission of The Macmillan Company and of the author.

became strangely familiar to him. The crowd turned south along a broad avenue that led to the park. Some one cried: "There it is! It's the hotel!" A moment more, and the architect found himself at the corner of the park opposite the lofty building, out of whose upper stories broad billows of smoke, broken by tongues of flame, were pouring.

There, in the corner made by the boulevard and the park, where formerly was the weedy ruin, rose the great building, which Graves had finished late in the winter, and had turned over to the hotel company. Its eight stories towered loftily above the other houses and apartment buildings in the neighborhood. The countless windows along the broad front gleamed portentously with the reflection from the flames above. At the west corner, overlooking the park, above a steep ascent of jutting bay windows, there floated a light blue pennon, bearing a name in black letters — THE GLENMORE.

At first the architect scarcely realized that this building which was burning was Graves's hotel, his hotel. The excitement of the scene stupefied him. Already the police had roped off the streets beneath the fire, in which the crowd was thickening rapidly. From many points in the adjoining blocks came the shrill whistles of the throbbing engines, answering one another. The fire burned quietly aloft in the sky, while below there rose the clamor of excited men and screeching engines. The crowd grew denser every moment, and surged again and again nearer the building, packing solidly about the fire lines. Hart was borne along in the current.

"They've pulled the third alarm," one man said in his ear, chewing excitedly on a piece of gum. "There's more'n fifty in there yet!"

"They say the elevators are going still!" another one exclaimed.

"Where's the fire-escapes?"

"Must be on the rear or over by the alley. There ain't none this side, sure enough."

"Yes, they're in back," the architect said authoritatively.

He tried to think just where they were and where they opened in the building, but could not remember. A voice wailed dismally through a megaphone: —

"Look out, boys! Back!"

On the edge of the cornice appeared three little figures with a line of hose. At that height they looked like willing gnomes on the crust of a flaming world.

"Gee! Look at that roof! Look at it!"

The cry from the megaphone had come too late. Suddenly, without warning, the top of the hotel rose straight into the air, and from the sky above there sounded a great report, like the detonation of a cannon at close range. The roof had blown up. For an instant darkness followed, as if the flame had been smothered, snuffed out. Then with a mighty roar the pent-up gases that had caused the explosion ignited and burst forth in a broad sheet of beautiful blue flame, covering the doomed building with a crown of fire.

Hart looked for the men with the hose. One had caught on the sloping roof of a line of bay windows, and clung there desperately seven stories above the ground.

"He's a goner!" some one near him groaned.

Large strips of burning tar paper began to float above the heads of the crowd, causing a stampede. In the rush, Hart got nearer the fire lines, more immediately in front of the hotel, which irresistibly drew him closer. Now he could hear the roar of the flame as it swept through the upper stories and streamed out into the dark night. The fierce light illumined the silk streamer, which still waved from the pole at the corner of the building, untouched by the explosion. Across the east wall, under the cornice, was painted the sign: THE GLENMORE FAMILY HOTEL; and beneath, in letters of boastful size, FIREPROOF BUILDING. Tongues of flame danced over the words.

The policeman at the line pointed derisively to the legend with his billy.

“Now ain’t that fireproof!”

“Burns like rotten timber!” a man answered.

It was going frightfully fast! The flames were now galloping through the upper stories, sweeping the lofty structure from end to end, and smoke had begun to pour from many points in the lower stories, showing that the fount of flame had its roots far down in the heart of the building. Vague reports circulated through the crowd: A hundred people or more were still in the hotel. All were out. Thirty were penned in the rear rooms of the sixth floor. One elevator was still running. It had been caught at the time of the explosion, etc. . . . For the moment the firemen were making their fight in the rear, and the north front was left in a splendid peace of silent flame and smoke — a spectacle for the crowd in the street.

Within the lofty structure, the architect realized vaguely, there was being enacted one of those modern tragedies which mock the pride and vanity of man. In that furnace human beings were fighting for their lives, or penned in, cut off by the swift flames, were waiting in delirious fear for aid that was beyond the power of men to give them. A terrible horror clutched him. It was *his* building which was being eaten up like grass before the flame. He dodged beneath the fire line and began to run toward the east end, driven by a wild impulse that he could not control. He must do something, — must help! It was *his* building; he knew it from cornice to foundation; he might know how to get at those within! A policeman seized him roughly and thrust him back behind the line. He fought his way to the front again, while the dense crowd elbowed and cursed him. He lost his hat; his coat was half torn from his shoulders. But he struggled frantically forward.

“You here, Hart! What are you after?”

Some one stretched out a detaining hand and drew him out

of the press. It was Cook, his draughtsman. Cook was chewing gum, his jaws working nervously, grinding and biting viciously in his excitement. The fierce glare revealed the deep lines of the man's face.

"You can't get out that way. The street's packed solid!" Cook bellowed into his ear. "God alive, how fast it's going! That's your steel frame, tile partition, fireproof construction, is it? To hell with it!"

Suddenly he clutched the architect's arm again and shouted:—

"Where are the east-side fire-escapes? I can't see nothing up that wall, can you?"

The architect peered through the wreath of smoke. There should have been an iron ladder between every two tiers of bay windows on this side of the building.

"They are all in back," he answered, remembering now that the contractor had cut out those on the east wall as a "disfigurement."

"Let's get around to the rear," he shouted to the draughtsman, his anxiety whipping him once more.

After a time they managed to reach an alley at the southwest angle of the hotel, where two engines were pumping from a hydrant. Here they could see the reach of the south wall, up which stretched the spidery lines of a single fire-escape. Cook pointed to it in mute wonder and disgust.

"It's just a question if the beams will hold into the walls until they can get all the folks out," he shouted. "I heard that one elevator boy was still running his machine and taking 'em down. As long as the floors hold together, he can run his elevator. But don't talk to me about your fireproof hotels! Why, the bloody thing ain't been burning twenty minutes, and look at it!"

As he spoke there was a shrill whistle from the fire marshal, and then a wrenching, crashing, plunging noise, like the sound of an avalanche. The upper part of the east wall had gone,

toppling outward into the alley like the side of a fragile box. In another moment followed a lesser crash. The upper floors had collapsed, slipping down into the inner gulf of the building. There was a time of silence and awful quiet; but almost immediately the blue flames, shot with orange, leaped upward once more. From the precipitous wall above, along the line of the fire-escape, came horrid human cries, and in the blinding smoke and flame appeared a dozen figures clinging here and there to the window frames like insects, as if the heat had driven them outward.

Cook swayed against the architect like a man with nausea.

"They're done for now, sure, all that ain't out. And I guess there ain't many out. It just slumped, just slumped," he repeated with a nervous quiver of the mouth. Suddenly he turned his pale face to the architect and glared into his eyes.

"Damn you, you — — — ! Damn you — you —" he stammered, shaking his fist at him. "There wasn't any steel in the bloody box! It was rotten cheese. That's you, you, you!" He turned and ran toward the burning mass, distracted, shouting as he ran: "Rotten cheese! Just rotten cheese!"

But the architect still stood there in the alley, rooted in horror, stupefied. High above him, in a window of the south wall, which was still untouched by the fire, he saw a woman crouching on the narrow ledge of the brick sill. She clung with one hand to an awning rope and put the other before her eyes. He shouted something to her, but he could not hear the sound of his own voice. She swayed back and forth, and then as a swirl of flame shot up in the room behind her, she fell forward into the abyss of the night. . . . A boy's face appeared at one of the lower windows. He was trying to break the pane of heavy glass. Finally he smashed a hole with his fist and stood there, dazed, staring down into the alley; then he dropped backward into the room, and a jet of smoke poured from the vent he had made.

In front of the hotel there were fresh shouts; they were using the nets, now. The architect covered his face with his hands, and moaning to himself began to run, to flee from the horrible spot. But a cry arrested him, a wail of multitudinous voices, which rose above the throb of the engines, the crackle of the fire, all the tumult of the catastrophe. He looked up once more to the fire-eaten ruin. The lofty south wall, hitherto intact, had begun to waver along the east edge. It tottered, hung, then slid backward, shaking off the figures on the fire-escape as if they had been frozen flies. . . . He put his hands to his eyes and ran.

PART IV
HOW TO DESCRIBE CHARACTER .

PART IV

INTRODUCTION

HOW TO DESCRIBE CHARACTER

IN a world of men, men are our chief study.

Ability to understand the significance for strength or weakness of acts, emotions, manners, opinions, humors, and all marks of character is a broad object of education. Seeing life — the topic of this book — never means much else than knowing men. One does not need to be a psychologist or a novelist to have skill at this business. We may go about it as amateurs or as professionals, but of necessity we must all gain some skill in it. For again and again our ability to know men affects our careers and our happiness. We ourselves are judged by this ability. To fail to understand people — that is the social sin. To know a good man when you see him — that is social service.

This problem of knowing a man well, except the knowledge result from mere habit, is not simple. And the problem of imagining a man intimately on paper, so that he appears there as a concrete instance of human nature, and not just as a “type” with a gesture or two, is far from being simple. But the difference between this technical ability to make a character live on paper and the aptitude for knowing men in life is not so great as at first thought appears. Indeed, we are inclined to regard it as very largely a technical or nominal difference. The fundamental and the hard thing is to know men well in life. That is just as rare as leadership, which it goes so far to constitute. Is it not a noticeable trait of important men, leaders of society,

that their interest in character, their ability to describe it in conversation, and, more distinctly perhaps, their mastery of the life stories of famous men are points of pride with them?

Now the art of describing character in a narrative lies largely in making a technique of these human interests. Any man who will cultivate this technique consciously is giving his mind a most valuable exercise and criticism. The exercise, of course, demands a peculiar skill, only a small part of which we can hope to discuss. Let any one try, who thinks it easy, to introduce one of his friends into a story and have him recognized, or, better still, let him attempt to give a recognizable account of his own character. Surely you know yourself as intimately as you know the hero of your favorite novel. You have at your command a hundred times as many details of your life as of his. Yet when you try to give a stranger some notion of this intimate, vivid knowledge, how vague and piecemeal is the outline. The discrepancy is due, however, far more to your lack of skill in regard to what sort of details really count in such a picture than to any lack of general observation.

The technique of character analysis or portrayal is merely the study of what counts. And the first rule for testing what counts in a story on paper is to decide whether it would count in the actual career of the character. In making your character effective, a manner, an opinion, an act will have no more weight on paper than it would have in life. Therefore any sound advice which one may give about character description in a story should be based on the principles by which character is judged in the world.

For instance, the student of character knows that he judges men, and especially himself, not by abstractions but by concrete evidence. You have a reputation with yourself for frankness. You often tell yourself how frank you are. You try to regard it as an admirable trait. But somehow you can think of very few important incidents in your career that

admirably illustrate this chief trait of yours. Well, then, probably you are not frank. Probably you are a hypocrite — and I imagine that you will find it far easier to recall crucial instances of this other dominant trait.

A good rule for describing character — as also for judging men — is to fight shy of the blinding abstractions. There are a lot of words, acceptably vague, like *gentleman*, *sincere*, *honest*, *frank*, *democratic*, words which descend to us glibly from the general talk, and by which we cover our ignorance of the case in hand. In describing character do not use these words without defining or illustrating them.

Let us suppose that you have just read *Middlemarch*, one thousand pages, and feel that you know Dorothea Brooke pretty well. Dorothea, you say, is a proud girl, high minded, above the world, very beautiful, caring little for dress or ornament, ambitious to do good. She would like to sacrifice herself for some great purpose. All this about Dorothea is true and to one who has just read the book it may even appear specific. But is this a *picture* of Dorothea's character? The trouble with these data is that, while they are all true, they do not characterize. The word character means *to mark*, and that means to make specific and recognizable.

Let us take the general truth that *Dorothea is beautiful and does not care for ornaments* — how shall we make that specific? "Miss Brooke," says George Eliot, "had that kind of beauty which seems to be thrown into relief by poor dress. Her hand and wrist were so finely formed that she could wear sleeves not less bare of style than those in which the Blessed Virgin appeared to Italian painters; and her profile as well as her stature and bearing seemed to gain the more dignity from her plain garments, which by the side of provincial fashion gave her the impressiveness of a fine quotation from the Bible — or from one of our elder poets — in a paragraph of to-day's newspaper." Then, to make this still more marked, more characteristic,

we at once see Dorothea in contrast with her sister Celia. "She was usually spoken of as being remarkably clever, but with the addition that her sister Celia had more common sense. Nevertheless, Celia wore scarcely more trimmings; and it was only to close observers that her dress differed from her sister's, and had a shade of coquetry in its arrangements; for Miss Brooke's plain dressing was due to mixed conditions, in most of which her sister shared."

But no character will ever stand out sharply till she acts and speaks. In order to bring Dorothea's traits into full relief, George Eliot, therefore, hastens to introduce a characterizing situation. As the sisters divide their mother's jewels you see Dorothea unforgetably. After this little scene you will make a very fair guess at what she would do in any situation, for you have seen her once with great clarity. She has made a *characteristic* impression. You know far better than before what is meant by the statement that Dorothea is beautiful and that she does not care for ornaments.

There are a dozen varieties of method for describing character, but they are all related to one that is both the most direct and the commonest: Think in advance of a situation or incident, illustrating what you regard as most typical in the character, and first of all define and discuss this typical quality. Now make it specific by giving the situation which you had in mind. This situation may be called a characterizing situation. A series of such situations usually occupies the opening chapters of biographical novels. In *Vanity Fair* or *The Mill on the Floss* or *The Egoist*, for example, nothing of great importance for the plot happens until we are prepared through a gradual acquaintance with the characters to judge of its real significance. The next step is to test the judgment which characterizing situations make, by citing some important incident in your character's career. This incident may be called the first marking incident. If he acts in this issue as one would expect him to act from the

preliminary portrayal and from the characterizing situations which you have supplied, you have what can be well called a line on his character.

You will probably agree that this is the usual method of observing and judging character in life; it is the almost universal method in fiction. The constructive imagination of the writer of stories is formed on the habits of ordinary thinking. So this method can be almost perfectly illustrated from any well written novel, by choosing first some *characterizing situation* and by then taking, at a later moment in the plot, some *marking incident*.

This is the method of several of the following selections. The Brooke sisters and the Baines sisters are seen in characterizing situations at the very beginning of their stories. It would be easy to choose two other incidents toward the end of these novels where the prophetic marks of character are fulfilling their destiny. In the passages from *The Octopus*, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, and *Eugénie Grandet*, this test or *line* has been actually carried through. The first scene is a characterizing scene, the second a marking incident in which the characters act consistently with what one has first learned of them. This same scheme is observable in the two selections from Stevenson — the biographical essay on François Villon in which the poet's character is defined and the imagined typical incident in Villon's career which Stevenson makes into his famous yarn, *A Lodging for the Night*.

With this general method of study in mind, let us now ask if there is any way of determining what sort of situation and incident is most effective in bringing out salient features of character. The author of *Eugénie Grandet* knows that his heroine has fine daring and also great capacity for sacrifice. If we could think of her as a writer's puppet or stock figure, before entering the plot of her novel, she would appear to us as personifying those two qualities. After reading the book

we know that the incidents which count for most are those which heighten these qualities. Could we meet Buck Annixter outside the plot of *The Octopus*, at a summer hotel in the Adirondacks, for example, we should still expect to find a man who was not altogether satisfied with the board or the fishing, and who probably discovered that the hotel prices were evidence of a stupendous system of graft. Outside their novels, however, characters may be supposed to be very much more like the rest of us — that is, very variable. The difference between a story and the daily run of life lies almost entirely in this — a character in life may do, from one end of the week to the other, a hundred different things, hold a lot of miscellaneous opinions, and fall into a variety of moods, without in any way growing inconsistent or unlikelike; but the same character in a book is limited to a small variety of attitudes and actions, all of which must either forward the movement of the plot or illustrate aspects of character that affect the plot. The examination of a novel by the method previously described will therefore give us the key for answering the question about what sort of situation best brings out salient characteristics.

In *The Octopus*, a rather amateurish novel, but a document that offers singular opportunity for the study of this literary method in the making, we first see Buck Annixter in one of his typical sulky bilious fits eating dried prunes on his veranda and cursing at the world. Annixter is always at war with the world. He sees in it nothing friendly. He is nearly always bilious, suspicious, jealous. It is this temper that determines his career. To understand the succeeding incidents of the novel you have to see this biliousness, which is their physical or nervous cause. With the veranda scene in the background, the first crucial incident when Annixter orders his foreman off the ranch is a perfectly natural scene. It is exactly characteristic and also a most important turn in the plot. But with nothing concrete, like the veranda scene, in the background

of Annixter's temper — nothing but the statement, let us say, that he was of bilious disposition — you would find this marking incident forced and unnatural, and you would see in it only the author's arbitrary manipulation of his plot.

We may conclude, then, that an incident to bring out features of character effectively must be a crucial incident in the plot, in the career of the character. It must both illustrate a dominant trait and definitely forward or turn the action.

It may be noticed that it is precisely by this kind of incident that one prefers to judge a man in his actual career. If you have a reputation for being careless, inaccurate, absent-minded in small, everyday matters, doubtless your friends feel that the same traits will appear in some important connection. You think they are wrong. "As soon as I have some work to do that I really care about," you say, "I shall pay sharp attention to it." The question in one's mind is whether habit will not be too strong for you, and you are going to be judged by a crucial incident or two that tests how far your reputation (your everyday character) really defines your will. So common is this question to all our lives that many a novel has it for a fundamental thesis — *everyday character is destiny*. George Eliot's Maggie Tulliver and Joseph Conrad's Lord Jim are excellent examples of it.

Every man's character may be thus said to suggest a story, the plot of which we discover more clearly by defining his dominant traits, by adding typical situations and marking incidents in which such traits play the decisive part.

These are a few of the principles by which action is made *characteristic* and character is brought out in action. If these larger matters are understood, the details and "tricks" of characterization will usually take care of themselves. Especially will they be less apt to assume an isolated importance or to be introduced without sufficient reference to the *rôle* the character plays in the plot. For too frequently the amateur

gives his people an inventory of features merely for their own sake — a bright blue eye, or a mole on the chin, a little nervous habit of tightening the necktie, or a slight stammer in speech — without asking if these are in any way characteristic features. Undoubtedly we want to have some notion of what the people in a story look like, and often of what they wear. Even a momentary vividness has its value, but the details that finally count for us are those emphasizing the *rôle* the character plays. Other details can be filled in by our independent fancy.

In this respect Balzac's Old Grandet is a masterpiece. Everything about him — his stammer, his scowl, his watch chain, the jack-knife with which he whittles his piece of bread at breakfast — seems to count in the plot. The stammer, in fact, plays an important *rôle*, and all make a perfect stage-setting for his character. In the same way the characterizing details of young Charles Grandet's dress, the articles in his portmanteau, his fashionable toilet, make an ominous impression. Your fears for Eugénie are roused in advance. In Stevenson's picture of François Villon there are many strokes and not one wasted: "The poet was a rag of a man, dark, little, and lean, with hollow cheeks and thin black locks. He carried his four-and-twenty years with feverish animation. Greed had made folds about his eyes, evil smiles had puckered his mouth. The wolf and pig struggled together in his face. It was an eloquent, sharp, ugly, earthly countenance. His hands were small and prehensile, with fingers knotted like a cord; and they were continually flickering in front of him in violent and expressive pantomime." All these details explain the character who talks so astonishingly in the dialogue with the Bailly du Patatrac.

It is very frequent and very poor advice that much description of character is space wasted. But it is true that the short story with a compact plot has little time for it. The details must be the briefest and the most suggestive. Maupassant has but small space to devote to Monsieur Loisel.

We know nothing about his looks. They do not count in the plot. We really know next to nothing about the man, and yet he is real — simply because he had been saving up his money to buy a shot-gun, and because he used to sit down to the supper his wife prepared and exclaim, "Ah, the good old stew!" For some reason we recognize at once a homely, plodding, unimaginative man. He is a mere type, like so many mere individuals. He has been humanized for the moment, but not defined. It was not necessary.

For purposes of brief characterization a single obtrusive habit is often sufficient. The dramatists and actors have taught us this, and we can see the principle, if we look, in nearly everybody we know. The absurd skip in Lord Dunsreary's walk, my friend's habit of rolling his tongue across his mouth whenever he thinks he is talking unusually well, somehow denote temperament. The cartoonists have made these labels their life study. To describe a character by contrast is also an economical and a very true method. It is only by contrast with our fellows that most of us take on any character (any marks) at all. We see Celia and Dorothea, Constance and Sophia, each more sharply because of shades and distinctions which come out only when they are placed over against each other. Any true dramatic confrontation emphasises the dominant traits. Eugénie takes on a heightened beauty in the presence of her father; he, in turn, grows more dour. It would be hard to conceive anybody else in the city of Paris who could serve so well to emphasize Villon's humor as the eminently respectable Bailly du Patatrac, beneficent and philosophical, but to whose marvelously civilized urbanity Villon is utterly impervious.

Nearly the whole art of fiction lies in genius for reproducing, defining, and creating characters. To reproduce is to define, to define is to create. A sheerly fanciful character does not exist. But the imagination for making up, out of experience, a new man, different from any other in our acquaintance, is

the resource of the story teller. For since no two men are alike in life, so in a story, if a character is to be real to us, he must be slightly different from all others both in life and in fiction. The processes by which a character grows thus distinct, different, real, in the mind of a writer are, of course, much the same as those by which he would become so in the acquaintance of life. They are gradual processes. Every scene in which he is to play a part develops him. If the writer knows the whole plot, he has in mind a series of tests for him that do much to define him in advance. But a thoroughly preconceived character in fiction is probably as rare as a Minerva springing fully armed from the forehead of Jupiter.

The art of describing character is perhaps the only universal art. At all events everyone boasts some skill in it. And in a college course, if honestly followed, it can be one of the best exercises by which we prepare ourselves sympathetically for the world in which we live.

XXII. THE BROOKE SISTERS ¹

GEORGE ELIOT

[Throughout the long novel of *Middlemarch*, Dorothea and Celia Brooke take much the same attitude toward life and toward each other which they display in this first chapter. Celia is contented, interested in things close to her; Dorothea is romantic, longing for something else than what is at hand. The consequence is that Dorothea, who is the heroine of the main plot of the novel (there are three distinct plots woven together in *Middlemarch*), has a pretty hard time of it, compared with her sister. On moral and romantic grounds she first marries an elderly scholar, in order to be of use to him in his literary work. On moral and romantic grounds after his death, she refuses for a long time to marry his nephew for fear of embarrassing an ambitious career. Every act and every decision of her life is complicated by her "principles." Celia, on the other hand, accepts happily what fortune first throws in her way, and fits into life so neatly that she always appears as the saner and more useful woman of the two. This first characterizing scene forecasts their two fates as clearly as if it were writing on the wall. These two sisters should be compared with Sophia and Constance Baines in the next selection.]

MISS BROOKE had that kind of beauty which seems to be thrown into relief by poor dress. Her hand and wrist were so finely formed that she could wear sleeves not less bare of style than those in which the Blessed Virgin appeared to Italian painters; and her profile as well as her stature and bearing seemed to gain the more dignity from her plain garments, which by the side of provincial fashion gave her the impressiveness of a fine quotation from the Bible — or from one of our elder poets — in a paragraph of to-day's newspaper. She was usually spoken of as being remarkably clever, but with the addition that her sister Celia had more common sense. Nevertheless, Celia wore scarcely more trimmings; and it was only to close observers that her dress differed from her sister's, and had a shade of coquetry in its arrangements; for Miss Brooke's plain dressing was due to mixed conditions, in most of which

¹ Reprinted from *Middlemarch*.

her sister shared. The pride of being ladies had something to do with it: the Brooke connections, though not exactly aristocratic, were unquestionably "good": if you inquired backward for a generation or two, you would not find any yard-measuring or parcel-tying forefathers — anything lower than an admiral or a clergyman; and there was even an ancestor discernible as a Puritan gentleman who served under Cromwell, but afterwards conformed, and managed to come out of all political troubles as the proprietor of a respectable family estate. Young women of such birth, living in a quiet country house, and attending a village church hardly larger than a parlor, naturally regarded frippery as the ambition of a huckster's daughter. Then there was well-bred economy, which in those days made show in dress the first item to be deducted from, when any margin was required for expenses more distinctive of rank. Such reasons would have been enough to account for plain dress, quite apart from religious feeling; but in Miss Brooke's case religion alone would have determined it; and Celia mildly acquiesced in all her sister's sentiments, only infusing them with that common sense which is able to accept momentous doctrines without any eccentric agitation. Dorothea knew many passages of Pascal's *Pensées* and of Jeremy Taylor by heart; and to her the destinies of mankind, seen by the light of Christianity, made the solitudes of feminine fashion appear an occupation for Bedlam. She could not reconcile the anxieties of a spiritual life involving eternal consequences with a keen interest in gimp and artificial protrusions of drapery. Her mind was theoretic, and yearned by its nature after some lofty conception of the world which might frankly include the parish of Tipton and her own rule of conduct there; she was enamored of intensity and greatness, and rash in embracing whatever seemed to her to have those aspects; likely to seek martyrdom, to make retractions, and then to incur martyrdom, after all, in a quarter where she had not sought it. Certainly such

elements in the character of a marriageable girl tended to interfere with her lot, and hinder it from being decided, according to custom, by good looks, vanity, and merely canine affection. With all this, she, the elder of the sisters, was not yet twenty, and they had both been educated, since they were about twelve years old and had lost their parents, on plans at once narrow and promiscuous, first in an English family and afterward in a Swiss family at Lausanne, their bachelor uncle and guardian trying in this way to remedy the disadvantages of their orphaned condition. . . .

The rural opinion about the new young ladies, even among the cottagers, was generally in favor of Celia, as being so amiable and innocent-looking, while Miss Brooke's large eyes seemed, like her religion, too unusual and striking. Poor Dorothea! Compared with her, the innocent-looking Celia was knowing and worldly-wise; so much subtler is a human mind than the outside tissues which make a sort of blazonry or clock-face for it.

Yet those who approached Dorothea, though prejudiced against her by this alarming hearsay, found that she had a charm unaccountably reconcilable with it. Most men thought her bewitching when she was on horseback. She loved the fresh air and the various aspects of the country, and when her eyes and cheeks glowed with mingled pleasures she looked very little like a devotee. Riding was an indulgence which she allowed herself in spite of conscientious qualms; she felt that she enjoyed it in a pagan, sensuous way, and always looked forward to renouncing it.

She was open, ardent, and not in the least self-admiring; indeed, it was pretty to see how her imagination adorned her sister Celia with attractions altogether superior to her own, and if any gentleman appeared to come to the Grange from some other motive than that of seeing Mr. Brooke, she concluded that he must be in love with Celia. Sir James Chettam, for example, whom she constantly considered from Celia's point

of view, inwardly debating whether it would be good for Celia to accept him. That he should be regarded as a suitor to herself would have seemed to her a ridiculous irrelevance. Dorothea, with all her eagerness to know the truths of life, retained very child-like ideas about marriage. She felt sure that she would have accepted the judicious Hooker, if she had been born in time to save him from that wretched mistake he made in matrimony; or John Milton when his blindness had come on; or any of the other great men whose odd habits it would have been glorious piety to endure; but an amiable, handsome baronet, who said "exactly" to her remarks even when she expressed uncertainty — how could he affect her as a lover? The really delightful marriage must be that where your husband was a sort of father, and could teach you even Hebrew if you wished it.

These peculiarities of Dorothea's character caused Mr. Brooke to be all the more blamed in neighboring families for not securing some middle-aged lady as guide and companion to his nieces. But he himself dreaded so much the sort of superior woman likely to be available for such a position, that he allowed himself to be dissuaded by Dorothea's objections, and was in this case brave enough to defy the world — that is to say, Mrs. Cadwallader, the rector's wife, and the small group of gentry with whom he visited in the northeast corner of Loamshire. So Miss Brooke presided in her uncle's household, and did not at all dislike her new authority, with the homage that belonged to it.

Sir James Chettam was going to dine at the Grange to-day with another gentleman whom the girls had never seen, and about whom Dorothea felt some veneration and expectation. This was the Reverend Edward Casaubon, noted in the county as a man of profound learning, understood for many years to be engaged on a great work concerning religious history; also as a man of wealth enough to give luster to his piety, and having views of his own which were to be more clearly ascertained

on the publication of his book. His very name carried an impressiveness hardly to be measured without a precise chronology of scholarship.

Early in the day Dorothea had returned from the infant-school which she had set going in the village, and was taking her usual place in the pretty sitting-room which divided the bedrooms of the sisters, bent on finishing a plan for some buildings (a kind of work which she delighted in), when Celia, who had been watching her with a hesitating desire to propose something, said,

“Dorothea dear, if you don't mind — if you are not very busy — suppose we look at mamma's jewels to-day, and divide them? It is exactly six months to-day since uncle gave them to you, and you have not looked at them yet.”

Celia's face had the shadow of a pouting expression in it, the full presence of the pout being kept back by an habitual awe of Dorothea and principle; two associated facts which might show a mysterious electricity if you touched them incautiously. To her relief, Dorothea's eyes were full of laughter as she looked up.

“What a wonderful little almanac you are, Celia! Is it six calendar or six lunar months?”

“It is the last day of September now, and it was the first of April when uncle gave them to you. You know, he said that he had forgotten them till then. I believe you have never thought of them since you locked them up in the cabinet here.”

“Well, dear, we should never wear them, you know.” Dorothea spoke in a full cordial tone, half caressing, half explanatory. She had her pencil in her hand, and was making tiny side-plans on a margin.

Celia colored, and looked very grave. “I think, dear, we are wanting in respect to mamma's memory, to put them by and take no notice of them. And,” she added, after hesitating a little, with a rising sob of mortification, “necklaces are quite

usual now; and Madame Poinçon, who was stricter in some things even than you are, used to wear ornaments. And Christians generally — surely there are women in heaven now who wore jewels.” Celia was conscious of some mental strength when she really applied herself to argument.

“You would like to wear them?” exclaimed Dorothea, an air of astonished discovery animating her whole person with a dramatic action which she had caught from that very Madame Poinçon who wore the ornaments. “Of course, then, let us have them out. Why did you not tell me before? But the keys, the keys!” She pressed her hands against the sides of her head and seemed to despair of her memory.

“They are here,” said Celia, with whom this explanation had been long meditated and prearranged.

“Pray open the large drawer of the cabinet and get out the jewel-box.”

The casket was soon open before them, and the various jewels spread out, making a bright parterre on the table. It was no great collection, but a few of the ornaments were really of remarkable beauty, the finest that was obvious at first being a necklace of purple amethysts set in exquisite gold-work, and a pearl cross with five brilliants in it. Dorothea immediately took up the necklace and fastened it around her sister’s neck, where it fitted almost as closely as a bracelet; but the circle suited the Henrietta-Maria style of Celia’s head and neck, and she could see that it did, in the pier-glass opposite.

“There, Celia! you can wear that with your Indian muslin. But this cross you must wear with your dark dresses.”

Celia was trying not to smile with pleasure. “Oh, Dodo, you must keep the cross yourself.”

“No, no, dear — no,” said Dorothea, putting up her hand with careless deprecation.

“Yes, indeed you must; it would suit you — in your black dress now,” said Celia, insistingly. “You might wear that.”

"Not for the world, not for the world. A cross is the last thing I would wear as a trinket." Dorothea shuddered slightly.

"Then you will think it wicked in me to wear it," said Celia, uneasily.

"No, dear, no," said Dorothea, stroking her sister's cheek. "Souls have complexions too: what will suit one will not suit another."

"But you might like to keep it for mamma's sake."

"No, I have other things of mamma's — her sandal-wood box which I am so fond of — plenty of things. In fact, they are all yours, dear. We need discuss them no longer. There — take away your property."

Celia felt a little hurt. There was a strong assumption of superiority in this Puritanic toleration, hardly less trying to the blonde flesh of an unenthusiastic sister than a Puritanic persecution.

"But how can I wear ornaments, if you, who are the elder sister, will never wear them?"

"Nay, Celia, that is too much to ask, that I should wear trinkets to keep you in countenance. If I were to put on such a necklace as that, I should feel as if I had been pirouetting. The world would go round with me, and I should not know how to walk."

Celia had unclasped the necklace and drawn it off. "It would be a little tight for your neck; something to lie down and hang would suit you better," she said, with some satisfaction. The complete unfitness of the necklace from all points of view for Dorothea made Celia happier in taking it. She was opening some ring-boxes, which disclosed a fine emerald with diamonds, and just then the sun passing beyond a cloud sent a bright gleam over the table.

"How very beautiful these gems are!" said Dorothea, under a new current of feeling, as sudden as the gleam. "It is strange how deeply colors seem to penetrate one, like scent. I suppose

that is the reason why gems are used as spiritual emblems in the Revelation of St. John. They look like fragments of heaven. I think that emerald is more beautiful than any of them."

"And there is a bracelet to match it," said Celia. "We did not notice this at first."

"They are lovely," said Dorothea, slipping the ring and bracelet on her finely-turned finger and wrist, and holding them toward the window on a level with her eyes. All the while her thought was trying to justify her delight in the colors by merging them in her mystic religious joy.

"You would like those, Dorothea," said Celia, rather falteringly, beginning to think with wonder that her sister showed some weakness, and also that emeralds would suit her own complexion even better than purple amethysts. "You must keep that ring and bracelet — if nothing else. But see, these agates are very pretty — and quiet."

"Yes! I will keep these — this ring and bracelet," said Dorothea. Then, letting her hand fall on the table, she said in another tone — "Yet what miserable men find such things, and work at them, and sell them!" She paused again, and Celia thought that her sister was going to renounce the ornaments, as in consistency she ought to do.

"Yes, dear, I will keep these," said Dorothea, decidedly. "But take all the rest away, and the casket."

She took up her pencil without removing the jewels, and still looking at them. She thought of often having them by her, to feed her eye at these little fountains of pure color.

"Shall you wear them in company?" said Celia, who was watching her with real curiosity as to what she would do.

Dorothea glanced quickly at her sister. Across all her imaginative adornment of those whom she loved, there darted now and then a keen discernment, which was not without a scorching quality. If Miss Brooke ever attained perfect meekness, it would not be for lack of inward fire.

"Perhaps," she said, rather haughtily. "I can not tell to what level I may sink."

Celia blushed, and was unhappy; she saw that she had offended her sister, and dared not say even anything pretty about the gift of the ornaments which she put back into the box and carried away. Dorothea too was unhappy, as she went on with her plan-drawing, questioning the purity of her own feeling and speech in the scene which had ended with that little explosion.

Celia's consciousness told her that she had not been at all in the wrong: it was quite natural and justifiable that she should have asked that question, and she repeated to herself that Dorothea was inconsistent: either she should have taken her full share of the jewels, or, after what she had said, she should have renounced them altogether.

"I am sure — at least, I trust," thought Celia, "that the wearing of a necklace will not interfere with my prayers. And I do not see that I should be bound by Dorothea's opinions, now we are going into society, though of course she herself ought to be bound by them. But Dorothea is not always consistent."

Thus Celia, mutely bending over her tapestry, until she heard her sister calling her.

"Here, Kitty, come and look at my plan; I shall think I am a great architect, if I have not got incompatible stairs and fire-places."

As Celia bent over the paper, Dorothea put her cheek against her sister's arm caressingly. Celia understood the action. Dorothea saw that she had been in the wrong, and Celia pardoned her. Since they could remember, there had been a mixture of criticism and awe in the attitude of Celia's mind toward her elder sister. The younger had always worn a yoke; but is there any yoked creature without its private opinions?

XXIII. THE BAINES SISTERS ¹

ARNOLD BENNETT

[The future of Sophia Baines is relative to her whimsical darning; that of Constance, to her caution. Sophia marries an adventurer who deserts her in Paris, and she makes a living there during the Franco-Prussian war and for years afterward by her resourcefulness and energy. In the end she returns to Constance, who has been married and left a widow by the homely and fearsome clerk, Mr. Povey, whom we see in this first chapter. The novel is an extraordinary study of the development of the girls from this beginning down to the day of their death. It is one of the most *continuous* tracings of character in all fiction.]

“WHAT time did mother say she should be back?” Sophia asked.

“Not until supper.”

“Oh! Hallelujah!” Sophia burst out, clasping her hands in joy. And they both slid down from the counter of the shop where Sophia and Constance Baines live with their mother, their invalid father, and Mr. Povey, a clerk, just as if they had been little boys, and not, as their mother called them, “great girls.”

“Let’s go and play the Osborne quadrilles,” Sophia suggested (the Osborne quadrilles being a series of dances arranged to be performed on drawing-room pianos by four jewelled hands).

“I couldn’t think of it,” said Constance, with a precocious gesture of seriousness. In that gesture, and in her tone, was something which conveyed to Sophia: “Sophia, how can you be so utterly blind to the gravity of our fleeting existence as to ask me to go and strum the piano with you?” Yet a moment before she had been a little boy.

“Why not?” Sophia demanded.

¹ Reprinted from *The Old Wives’ Tale*, with the kind permission of George H Doran Company and of the author.

"I shall never have another chance like to-day for getting on with this," said Constance, picking up a bag from the counter.

She sat down and took from the bag a piece of loosely woven canvas, on which she was embroidering a bunch of roses in colored wools. . . . The canvas was destined to adorn a gilt firescreen in the drawing-room, and also to form a birthday gift to Mrs. Baines from her elder daughter.

"Con," murmured Sophia, "you're too sickening sometimes."

"Well," said Constance, blandly, "it's no use pretending that this hasn't got to be finished before we go back to school, because it has."

Sophia wandered about, a prey ripe for the Evil One. "Oh," she exclaimed joyously — even ecstatically — looking behind the cheval glass, "here's mother's new skirt! Miss Dunn's been putting the gimp on it! Oh, mother, what a proud thing you will be!"

Constance heard swishings behind the glass. "What are you doing, Sophia?"

"Nothing."

"You surely aren't putting that skirt on?"

"Why not?"

"You'll catch it finely, I can tell you!"

Without further defence, Sophia sprang out from behind the immense glass. She had already shed a notable part of her own costume, and the flush of mischief was in her face. She ran across to the other side of the room and examined carefully a large colored print that was affixed to the wall.

This print represented fifteen sisters, all of the same height and slimness of figure, all of the same age — about twenty-five or so, and all with exactly the same haughty and bored beauty. That they were in truth sisters was clear from the facial resemblance between them; their demeanour indicated that they were princesses, offspring of some impossibly prolific king and queen. Those hands had never toiled, nor had those

features ever relaxed from the smile of courts. The princesses moved in a landscape of marble steps and verandas, with a bandstand and strange trees in the distance. One was in a riding-habit, another in evening attire, another dressed for tea, another for the theatre, another seemed to be ready to go to bed. One held a little girl by the hand; it could not have been her own little girl, for these princesses were far beyond human passions. Where had she obtained the little girl? Why was one sister going to the theatre, another to tea, another to the stable, and another to bed? Why was one in a heavy mantle, and another sweltering from the sun's rays under a parasol? The picture was drenched in mystery, and the strangest thing about it was that all these highnesses were apparently content with the most ridiculous and out-moded fashions. Absurd hats, with veils flying behind; absurd bonnets, fitting close to the head, and spotted; absurd coiffures that nearly lay on the nape; absurd, clumsy sleeves; absurd waists, almost above the elbow's level; absurd scolloped jackets! And the skirts! What a sight were those skirts! They were nothing but vast decorated pyramids; on the summit of each was stuck the upper half of a princess. It was astounding that princesses should consent to be so preposterous and so uncomfortable. But Sophia perceived nothing uncanny in the picture, which bore the legend: "Newest summer fashions from Paris. Gratis supplement to *Myra's Journal*." Sophia had never imagined anything more stylish, lovely, and dashing than the raiment of the fifteen princesses. . . .

Sophia studied them as the fifteen apostles of the *ne plus ultra*: then, having taken some flowers and plumes out of a box, amid warnings from Constance, she retreated behind the glass, and presently emerged as a great lady in the style of the princesses. Her mother's tremendous new gown ballooned about her in all its fantastic richness and expensiveness. And with the gown she had put on her mother's importance — that mien of assured authority, of capacity tested in many a crisis, which character-

ized Mrs. Baines, and which Mrs. Baines seemed to impart to her dresses even before she had regularly worn them. For it was a fact that Mrs. Baines's empty garments inspired respect, as though some essence had escaped from her and remained in them.

"Sophia!"

Constance stayed her needle, and, without lifting her head, gazed, with eyes raised from her wool-work, motionless at the posturing figure of her sister. It was sacrilege that she was witnessing, a prodigious irreverence. She was conscious of an expectation that punishment would instantly fall on this daring, impious child. But she, who never felt these mad, amazing impulses, could nevertheless only smile fearfully.

"Sophia!" she breathed, with an intensity of alarm that merged into condoning admiration. "Whatever will you do next?"

Sophia's lovely flushed face crowned the extraordinary structure like a blossom, scarcely controlling its laughter. She was as tall as her mother, and as imperious, as crested, and proud; and in spite of the pigtail, the girlish semi-circular comb, and the loose foal-like limbs, she could support as well as her mother the majesty of the gimp-embroidered dress. Her eyes sparkled with all the challenges of the untried virgin as she minced about the showroom. Abounding life inspired her movements. The confident and fierce joy of youth shone on her brow. "What thing on earth equals me?" she seemed to demand with enchanting and yet ruthless arrogance. She was the daughter of a respected, bedridden draper in an insignificant town, lost in the central labyrinth of England, if you like; yet what manner of man, confronted with her, would or could have denied her naïve claim to dominion? She stood, in her mother's hoops, for the desire of the world. And in the innocence of her soul she knew it! The heart of a young girl mysteriously speaks and tells her of her power long ere she can use her power. If she can

find nothing else to subdue, you may catch her in the early years subduing a gate-post or drawing homage from an empty chair. Sophia's experimental victim was Constance, with suspended needle and soft glance that shot out from the lowered face.

Then Sophia fell, in stepping backwards; the pyramid was overbalanced; great distended rings of silk trembled and swayed gigantically on the floor, and Sophia's small feet lay like the feet of a doll on the rim of the largest circle, which curved and arched above them like a cavern's mouth. The abrupt transition of her features from assured pride to ludicrous astonishment and alarm was comical enough to have sent into wild uncharitable laughter any creature less humane than Constance. But Constance sprang to her, a single embodied instinct of benevolence, with her snub nose, and tried to raise her.

"Oh, Sophia!" she cried compassionately — that voice seemed not to know the tones of reproof — "I do hope you've not messed it, because mother would be so ——"

The words were interrupted by the sound of groans beyond the door leading to the bedrooms. The groans, indicating direst physical torment, grew louder. The two girls stared, wonder-struck and afraid, at the door, Sophia with her dark head raised, and Constance with her arms round Sophia's waist. The door opened, letting in a much-magnified sound of groans, and there entered a youngish, undersized man, who was frantically clutching his head in his hands and contorting all the muscles of his face. On perceiving the sculptural group of two prone, interlocked girls, one enveloped in a crinoline, and the other with a wool-work bunch of flowers pinned to her knee, he jumped back, ceased groaning, arranged his face, and seriously tried to pretend that it was not he who had been vocal in anguish, that, indeed, he was just passing as a casual, ordinary wayfarer through the showroom to the shop below. He blushed darkly; and the girls also blushed.

"Oh, I beg pardon, I'm sure!" said this youngish man suddenly; and with a swift turn he disappeared whence he had come.

He was Mr. Povey, a person universally esteemed, both within and without the shop, the surrogate of bedridden Mr. Baines, the unfailing comfort and stand-by of Mrs. Baines, the fount and radiating centre of order and discipline in the shop; a quiet, diffident, secretive, tedious, and obstinate youngish man, absolutely faithful, absolutely efficient in his sphere; without brilliance, without distinction; perhaps rather little-minded, certainly narrow-minded; but what a force in the shop! The shop was inconceivable without Mr. Povey. He was under twenty and not out of his apprenticeship when Mr. Baines had been struck down, and he had at once proved his worth. Of the assistants, he alone slept in the house. His bedroom was next to that of his employer; there was a door between the two chambers, and the two steps led down from the larger to the less.

The girls regained their feet, Sophia with Constance's help. It was not easy to right a capsized crinoline. They both began to laugh nervously, with a trace of hysteria.

"I thought he'd gone to the dentist's," whispered Constance.

Mr. Povey's toothache had been causing anxiety in the microcosm for two days, and it had been clearly understood at dinner that Thursday morning that Mr. Povey was to set forth to Oulsnam Bros., the dentists at Hillport, without any delay. Only on Thursdays and Sundays did Mr. Povey dine with the family. On other days he dined later, by himself, but at the family table, when Mrs. Baines or one of the assistants could "relieve" him in the shop. Before starting out to visit her elder sister at Axe, Mrs. Baines had insisted to Mr. Povey that he had eaten practically nothing but "slops" for twenty-four hours, and that if he was not careful she would have him on her hands. He had replied in his quietest, most sagacious, matter-of-fact tone — the tone that carried weight

with all who heard it — that he had only been waiting for Thursday afternoon, and should of course go instantly to Oulsnam's and have the thing attended to in a proper manner. He had even added that persons who put off going to the dentist's were simply sowing trouble for themselves.

None could possibly have guessed that Mr. Povey was afraid of going to the dentist's. But such was the case. He had not dared to set forth. The paragon of commonsense, pictured by most people as being somehow unliable to human frailties, could not yet screw himself up to the point of ringing a dentist's door-bell.

"He did look funny," said Sophia. "I wonder what he thought. I couldn't help laughing!"

Constance made no answer; but when Sophia had resumed her own clothes, and it was ascertained beyond doubt that the new dress had not suffered, and Constance herself was calmly stitching again, she said, poising her needle as she had poised it to watch Sophia:

"I was just wondering whether something oughtn't to be done for Mr. Povey."

"What?" Sophia demanded.

"Has he gone back to his bedroom?"

"Let's go and listen," said Sophia the adventuress.

They went, through the showroom door, past the foot of the stairs leading to the second story, down the long corridor broken in the middle by two steps and carpeted with a narrow bordered carpet whose parallel lines increased its apparent length. They went on tiptoe, sticking close to one another. Mr. Povey's door was slightly ajar. They listened; not a sound.

"Mr. Povey!" Constance coughed discreetly.

No reply. It was Sophia who pushed the door open. Constance made an elderly prim plucking gesture at Sophia's bare arm, but she followed Sophia gingerly into the forbidden room,

which was, however, empty. The bed had been ruffled, and on it lay a book, "The Harvest of a Quiet Eye."

"Harvest of a quiet tooth!" Sophia whispered, giggling very low.

"Hsh!" Constance put her lips forward.

From the next room came a regular, muffled, oratorical sound as though some one had begun many years ago to address a meeting and had forgotten to leave off and never would leave off. They were familiar with the sound, and they quitted Mr. Povey's chamber in fear of disturbing it. At the same moment Mr. Povey reappeared, this time in the drawing-room doorway at the other extremity of the long corridor. He seemed to be trying ineffectually to flee from his tooth as a murderer tries to flee from his conscience.

"Oh, Mr. Povey!" said Constance quickly — for he had surprised them coming out of his bedroom; "we were just looking for you."

"To see if we could do anything for you," Sophia added.

"Oh no, thanks!" said Mr. Povey.

Then he began to come down the corridor, slowly.

"You haven't been to the dentist's," said Constance sympathetically.

"No, I haven't," said Mr. Povey, as if Constance was indicating a fact which had escaped his attention. "The truth is, I thought it looked like rain, and if I'd got wet — you see —"

Miserable Mr. Povey!

"Yes," said Constance, "you certainly ought to keep out of draughts. Don't you think it would be a good thing if you went and sat in the parlour? There's a fire there."

"I shall be all right, thank you," said Mr. Povey. And after a pause: "Well, thanks, I will."

The girls made way for him to pass them at the head of the twisting stairs which led down to the parlour. Constance followed, and Sophia followed Constance.

"Have father's chair," said Constance.

There were two rocking-chairs with fluted backs covered by antimacassars, one on either side of the hearth. That to the left was still entitled "father's chair," though its owner had not sat in it since long before the Crimean war, and would never sit in it again.

"I think I'd sooner have the other one," said Mr. Povey, "because it's on the right side, you see." And he touched his right cheek.

Having taken Mrs. Baines's chair, he bent his face down to the fire, seeking comfort from its warmth. Sophia poked the fire, whereupon Mr. Povey abruptly withdrew his face. He then felt something light on his shoulders. Constance had taken the antimacassar from the back of the chair, and protected him with it from the draughts. He did not instantly rebel, and therefore was permanently barred from rebellion. He was entrapped by the antimacassar. It formally constituted him an invalid, and Constance and Sophia his nurses. Constance drew the curtain across the street door. No draught could come from the window, for the window was not "made to open." The age of ventilation had not arrived. Sophia shut the other two doors. And, each near a door, the girls gazed at Mr. Povey behind his back, irresolute, but filled with a delicious sense of responsibility.

The situation was on a different plane now. The seriousness of Mr. Povey's toothache, which became more and more manifest, had already wiped out the ludicrous memory of the encounter in the showroom. Looking at these two big girls, with their short-sleeved black frocks and black aprons, and their smooth hair, and their composed serious faces, one would have judged them incapable of the least lapse from an archangelic primness; Sophia especially presented a marvellous imitation of saintly innocence. As for the toothache, its action on Mr. Povey was apparently periodic; it gathered to a crisis like a

wave, gradually, the torture increasing till the wave broke and left Mr. Povey exhausted, but free for a moment from pain. These crises recurred about once a minute. And now, accustomed to the presence of the young virgins, and having tacitly acknowledged by his acceptance of the antimacassar that his state was abnormal, he gave himself up frankly to affliction. He concealed nothing of his agony, which was fully displayed by sudden contortions of his frame, and frantic oscillations of the rocking-chair. Presently, as he lay back enfeebled in the wash of a spent wave, he murmured with a sick man's voice:

"I suppose you haven't got any laudanum?"

The girls started into life. "Laudanum, Mr. Povey?"

"Yes, to hold in my mouth."

He sat up, tense; another wave was forming. The excellent fellow was lost to all self-respect, all decency.

"There's sure to be some in mother's cupboard," said Sophia.

Constance, who bore Mrs. Baines's bunch of keys at her girdle, a solemn trust, moved a little fearfully to a corner cupboard which was hung in the angle to the right of the projecting fireplace, over a shelf on which stood a large copper tea-urn. That corner cupboard, of oak inlaid with maple and ebony in a simple border pattern, was typical of the room. It was of a piece with the deep green "flock" wall paper, and the tea-urn, and the rocking-chairs with their antimacassars, and the harmonium in rosewood with a Chinese paper-maché tea-caddy on the top of it; even with the carpet, certainly the most curious parlour carpet that ever was, being made of lengths of the stair-carpet sewn together side by side. That corner cupboard was already old in service; it had held the medicines of generations. It gleamed darkly with the grave and genuine polish which comes from ancient use alone. The key which Constance chose from her bunch was like the cupboard, smooth and shining with years; it fitted and turned very easily, yet

with a firm snap. The single wide door opened sedately as a portal.

The girls examined the sacred interior, which had the air of being inhabited by an army of diminutive prisoners, each crying aloud with the full strength of its label to be set free on a mission.

“There it is!” said Sophia eagerly.

And there it was: a blue bottle, with a saffron label, “Caution. POISON. Laudanum. Charles Critchlow, M.P.S. Dispensing Chemist. St. Luke’s Square, Bursley.”

Those large capitals frightened the girls. Constance took the bottle as she might have taken a loaded revolver, and she glanced at Sophia. Their omnipotent, all-wise mother was not present to tell them what to do. They, who had never decided, had to decide now. And Constance was the elder. Must this fearsome stuff, whose very name was a name of fear, be introduced in spite of printed warnings into Mr. Povey’s mouth? The responsibility was terrifying.

“Perhaps I’d just better ask Mr. Critchlow,” Constance faltered.

The expectation of beneficent laudanum had enlivened Mr. Povey, had already, indeed, by a sort of suggestion, half cured his toothache.

“Oh no!” he said. “No need to ask Mr. Critchlow . . . Two or three drops in a little water.” He showed impatience to be at the laudanum.

The girls knew that an antipathy existed between the chemist and Mr. Povey.

“It’s sure to be all right,” said Sophia. “I’ll get the water.”

With youthful cries and alarms they succeeded in pouring four mortal dark drops (one more than Constance intended) into a cup containing a little water. And as they handed the cup to Mr. Povey their faces were the faces of affrighted comical conspirators. They felt so old and they looked so young.

Mr. Povey imbibed eagerly of the potion, put the cup on the mantlepice, and then tilted his head to the right so as to submerge the affected tooth. In this posture he remained, awaiting the sweet influence of the remedy. The girls, out of a nice modesty, turned away, for Mr. Povey must not swallow the medicine, and they preferred to leave him unhampered in the solution of a delicate problem. When next they examined him, he was leaning back in the rocking-chair with his mouth open and his eyes shut.

“Has it done you any good, Mr. Povey?”

“I think I’ll lie down on the sofa for a minute,” was Mr. Povey’s strange reply; and forthwith he sprang up and flung himself on to the horse-hair sofa between the fireplace and the window, where he lay stripped of all his dignity, a mere beaten animal in a grey suit with peculiar coat-tails, and a very creased waistcoat, and a lapel that was planted with pins, and a paper collar and close-fitting paper cuffs.

Constance ran after him with the antimacassar, which she spread softly on his shoulders; and Sophia put another one over his thin little legs, all drawn up.

They then gazed at their handiwork, with secret self-accusations and the most dreadful misgivings.

“He surely never swallowed it!” Constance whispered.

“He’s asleep, anyhow,” said Sophia, more loudly.

Mr. Povey was certainly asleep, and his mouth was very wide open — like a shop-door. The only question was whether his sleep was not an eternal sleep; the only question was whether he was not out of his pain for ever.

Then he snored — horribly; his snore seemed a portent of disaster.

Sophia approached him as though he were a bomb, and stared, growing bolder, into his mouth.

“Oh, Con,” she summoned her sister, “do come and look! It’s too droll!”

In an instant all their four eyes were exploring the singular landscape of Mr. Povey's mouth. In a corner, to the right of that interior, was one sizeable fragment of a tooth, that was attached to Mr. Povey by the slenderest tie, so that at each respiration of Mr. Povey, when his body slightly heaved and the gale moaned in the cavern, this tooth moved separately, showing that its long connection with Mr. Povey was drawing to a close.

"That's the one," said Sophia, pointing. "And it's as loose as anything. Did you ever see such a funny thing?"

The extreme funniness of the thing had lulled in Sophia the fear of Mr. Povey's sudden death.

"I'll see how much he's taken," said Constance, preoccupied, going to the mantelpiece.

"Why, I do believe —" Sophia began, and then stopped, glancing at the sewing-machine, which stood next to the sofa.

It was a Howe sewing-machine. It had a little tool-drawer, and in the tool-drawer was a small pair of pliers. Constance, engaged in sniffing at the lees of the potion in order to estimate its probable deadliness, heard the well-known click of the little tool-drawer, and then she saw Sophia nearing Mr. Povey's mouth with the pliers.

"Sophia!" she exclaimed, aghast. "What in the name of goodness are you doing?"

"Nothing," said Sophia.

The next instant Mr. Povey sprang up out of his laudanum dream.

"It jumps!" he muttered; and, after a reflective pause, "but it's much better." He had at any rate escaped death.

Sophia's right hand was behind her back.

Just then a hawker passed down King Street, crying mussels and cockles.

"Oh!" Sophia almost shrieked. "Do let's have mussels and cockles for tea!" And she rushed to the door, and unlocked

and opened it, regardless of the risk of draughts to Mr. Povey.

In those days people often depended upon the caprices of hawkers for the tastiness of their teas; but it was an adventurous age, when errant knights of commerce were numerous and enterprising. You went on to your doorstep, caught your meal as it passed, withdrew, cooked it and ate it, quite in the manner of the early Briton.

Constance was obliged to join her sister on the top step. Sophia descended to the second step.

"Fresh mussels and cockles all alive oh!" bawled the hawker, looking across the road in the April breeze. He was the celebrated Hollins, a professional Irish drunkard, aged in iniquity, who cheerfully saluted magistrates in the street, and referred to the workhouse, which he occasionally visited, as the Bastile.

Sophia was trembling from head to foot.

"What *are* you laughing at, you silly thing?" Constance demanded.

Sophia surreptitiously showed the pliers, which she had partly thrust into her pocket. Between their points was a most perceptible, and even recognizable, fragment of Mr. Povey.

This was the crown of Sophia's career as a perpetrator of the unutterable.

"What!" Constance's face showed the final contortions of that horrified incredulity which is forced to believe.

Sophia nudged her violently to remind her that they were in the street, and also quite close to Mr. Povey.

"Now, my little missies," said the vile Hollins. "Three pence a pint, and how's your honored mother to-day? Yes, fresh, so help me God!"

XXIV. ANNIXTER ¹

FRANK NORRIS

[This selection first gives a sketch of Buck Annixter, the chief person in Frank Norris's novel, and then proceeds to a point some fifty pages on in the story where Annixter acts in character. Presley, who plays the role of observer in the tale, is merely making a casual call on Annixter, but his presence on the stage during the character sketch somewhat relieves its formality. Annixter is a violently one-sided person. All his experience has served to warp rather than to develop him. He is indeed such an extreme "case," that without this detailed character sketch the crucial incident of the second part of our selection would hardly appear plausible.]

I

WHEN Presley reached Annixter's ranch house, he found young Annixter himself stretched in his hammock behind the mosquito-bar on the front porch, reading *David Copperfield* and gorging himself with dried prunes.

Annixter — after the two had exchanged greetings — complained of terrific colics all the preceding night. His stomach was out of whack, but you bet he knew how to take care of himself; the last spell, he had consulted a doctor at Bonneville, a gibbering busy-face who had filled him up to the neck with a dose of some hog-wash stuff that had made him worse — a healthy lot the doctors knew, anyhow. *His* case was peculiar. *He* knew; prunes were what he needed, and by the pound.

Annixter, who worked the Quien Sabe ranch — some four thousand acres of rich clay and heavy loams — was a very young man, younger even than Presley, like him a college graduate. He looked never a year older than he was. He was smooth-shaven and lean built. But his youthful appearance was offset by a certain male cast of countenance, the lower lip

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thrust out, the chin large and deeply cleft. His university course had hardened rather than polished him. He still remained one of the people, rough almost to insolence, direct in speech, intolerant in his opinions, relying upon absolutely no one but himself; yet, with all this, of an astonishing degree of intelligence, and possessed of an executive ability little short of positive genius. He was a ferocious worker, allowing himself no pleasures, and exacting the same degree of energy from all his subordinates. He was widely hated, and as widely trusted. Every one spoke of his crusty temper and bullying disposition, invariably qualifying the statement with a commendation of his resources and capabilities. The devil of a driver, a hard man to get along with, obstinate, contrary, cantankerous; but brains! No doubt of that; brains to his boots. One would like to see the man who could get ahead of him on a deal. Twice he had been shot at, once from ambush on Osterman's ranch, and once by one of his own men whom he had kicked from the sacking platform of his harvester for gross negligence. At college, he had specialized on finance, political economy, and scientific agriculture. After his graduation (he stood almost at the very top of his class) he had returned and obtained the degree of civil engineer. Then suddenly he had taken a notion that a practical knowledge of law was indispensable to a modern farmer. In eight months he did the work of three years, studying for his bar examinations. His method of study was characteristic. He reduced all the material of his text-books to notes. Tearing out the leaves of these note-books, he pasted them upon the walls of his room; then, in his shirt-sleeves, a cheap cigar in his teeth, his hands in his pockets, he walked around and around the room, scowling fiercely at his notes, memorizing, devouring, digesting. At intervals, he drank great cupfuls of unsweetened, black coffee. When the bar examinations were held, he was admitted at the very head of all the applicants, and was complimented by the judge. Im-

mediately afterwards he collapsed with nervous prostration; his stomach "got out of whack," and he all but died in a Sacramento boarding-house, obstinately refusing to have anything to do with doctors, whom he vituperated as a rabble of quacks, dosing himself with a patent medicine and stuffing himself almost to bursting with liver pills and dried prunes.

He had taken a trip to Europe after this sickness to put himself completely to rights. He intended to be gone a year, but returned at the end of six weeks, fulminating abuse of European cooking. Nearly his entire time had been spent in Paris; but of this sojourn he had brought back but two souvenirs, an electro-plated bill-hook and an empty bird cage which had tickled his fancy immensely.

He was wealthy. Only a year previous to this his father — a widower, who had amassed a fortune in land speculation — had died, and Annixter, the only son, had come into the inheritance.

For Presley, Annixter professed a great admiration, holding in deep respect the man who could rhyme words, deferring to him whenever there was question of literature or works of fiction. No doubt there was not much use in poetry, and as for novels, to his mind there were only Dickens's works. Everything else was a lot of lies. But just the same, it took brains to grind out a poem. It wasn't every one who could rhyme "brave" and "glaive," and make sense out of it. Sure not.

But Presley's case was a notable exception. On no occasion was Annixter prepared to accept another man's opinion without reserve. In conversation with him it was almost impossible to make any direct statement, however trivial, that he would accept without either modification or open contradiction. He had a passion for violent discussion. He would argue upon every subject in the range of human knowledge, from astronomy to the tariff, from the doctrine of predestination to the height of a horse. Never would he admit himself to be mistaken;

when cornered, he would intrench himself behind the remark, "Yes, that's all very well. In some ways, it is, and then, again, in some ways, it *isn't*."

Singularly enough, he and Presley were the best of friends. More than once, Presley marvelled at this state of affairs, telling himself that he and Annixter had nothing in common. In all his circle of acquaintances, Presley was the one man with whom Annixter had never quarrelled. The two men were diametrically opposed in temperament. Presley was easy-going; Annixter, alert. Presley was a confirmed dreamer, irresolute, inactive, with a strong tendency to melancholy; the young farmer was a man of affairs, decisive, combative, whose only reflection upon his interior economy was a morbid concern in the vagaries of his stomach. Yet the two never met without a mutual pleasure, taking a genuine interest in each other's affairs, and often putting themselves to great inconvenience to be of trifling service to help one another.

As a last characteristic, Annixter pretended to be a woman-hater, for no other reason than that he was a very bull-calf of awkwardness in feminine surroundings. Feemales! Rot! There was a fine way for a man to waste his time and his good money, lally gagging with a lot of feemales. No, thank you; none of it in *his*, if you please. Once only he had an affair — a timid, little creature in a glove-cleaning establishment in Sacramento, whom he had picked up, Heaven knew how. After his return to his ranch, a correspondence had been maintained between the two, Annixter taking the precaution to type-write his letters, and never affixing his signature, in an excess of prudence. He furthermore made carbon copies of all his letters, filing them away in a compartment of his safe. Ah, it would be a clever feemale who would get him into a mess. Then, suddenly smitten with a panic terror that he had committed himself, that he was involving himself too deeply, he had abruptly sent the little woman about her business. It was

his only love affair. After that, he kept himself free. No petticoats should ever have a hold on him. Sure not.

[Annixter has trouble on his ranch. Some of his sheep break through the wire fence at a point where the railroad passes in a cut. Scores of the sheep, crowding into this cut, are killed by an engine. It is typical of Annixter that this impersonal accident should anger him personally against the railroad. It is not his first grievance against the railroad, however. For like other California ranchmen, who find themselves at the mercy of the railroad (the "octopus") in the matter of getting their produce to market, he has already many grievances. But this accident plays as great a part in Annixter's imagination as other more personal affairs. A group of ranchmen agree to meet at Magnus Derrick's ranch, Los Muertos, and discuss the general situation. Annixter is invited to join them. But meanwhile other irritating incidents occur which put his presence there somewhat in doubt. The next passage begins after the accident to his sheep and on the day of the meeting at Magnus Derrick's. It involves the character of Hilma Tree, who later plays a most important part in Annixter's life.]

II

In connection with his ranch, Annixter ran a dairy farm on a very small scale, making just enough butter and cheese for the consumption of the ranch's *personnel*. Old man Tree, his wife, and his daughter Hilma looked after the dairy. But there was not always work enough to keep the three of them occupied and Hilma at times made herself useful in other ways. As often as not she lent a hand in the kitchen, and two or three times a week she took her mother's place in looking after Annixter's house, making the beds, putting his room to rights, bringing his meals up from the kitchen. For the last summer she had been away visiting with relatives in one of the towns on the coast. But the week previous to this she had returned and Annixter had come upon her suddenly one day in the dairy, making cheese, the sleeves of her crisp blue shirt waist rolled back to her very shoulders. Annixter had carried away with him a clear-cut recollection of these smooth white arms of hers, bare to the shoulder, very round and cool and fresh. He would not have believed that a girl so young should have had

arms so big and perfect. To his surprise he found himself thinking of her after he had gone to bed that night, and in the morning when he woke he was bothered to know whether he had dreamed about Hilma's fine white arms over night. Then abruptly he had lost patience with himself for being so occupied with the subject, raging and furious with all the breed of females — a fine way for a man to waste his time. He had had his experience with the timid little creature in the glove-cleaning establishment in Sacramento. That was enough. Feemales! Rot! None of them in *his*, thank you. *He* had seen Hilma Tree give him a look in the dairy. Aha, he saw through her! She was trying to get a hold on him, was she? He would show her. Wait till he saw her again. He would send her about her business in a hurry. He resolved upon a terrible demeanor in the presence of the dairy girl — a great show of indifference, a fierce masculine nonchalance; and when, the next morning, she brought him his breakfast, he had been smitten dumb as soon as she entered the room, glueing his eyes upon his plate, his elbows close to his side, awkward, clumsy, overwhelmed with constraint.

While true to his convictions as a woman-hater and genuinely despising Hilma both as a girl and as an inferior, the idea of her worried him. Most of all, he was angry with himself because of his inane sheepishness when she was about. He at first had told himself that he was a fool not to be able to ignore her existence as hitherto, and then that he was a greater fool not to take advantage of his position. Certainly he had not the remotest idea of any affection, but Hilma was a fine looking girl. He imagined an affair with her.

As he reflected upon the matter now, scowling abstractedly at the button of the electric bell, turning the whole business over in his mind, he remembered that to-day was butter-making day and that Mrs. Tree would be occupied in the dairy. That meant that Hilma would take her place. He turned to the mirror of

the sideboard, scrutinizing his reflection with grim disfavor. After a moment, rubbing the roughened surface of his chin the wrong way, he muttered to his image in the glass:

“What a mug! Good Lord! what a looking mug!” Then, after a moment’s silence, “Wonder if that fool feemale will be here to-day.”

He crossed over into his bedroom and peeped around the edge of the lowered curtain. The window looked out upon the skeleton-like tower of the artesian well and the cook-house and dairy-house close beside it. As he watched, he saw Hilma come out from the cook-house and hurry across toward the kitchen. Evidently, she was going to see about his dinner. But as she passed by the artesian well, she met young Delaney, one of Annixter’s hands, coming up the trail by the irrigating ditch, leading his horse toward the stables, a great coil of barbed wire in his gloved hands and a pair of nippers thrust into his belt. No doubt, he had been mending the break in the line fence by the Long Trestle. Annixter saw him take off his wide-brimmed hat as he met Hilma, and the two stood there for some moments talking together. Annixter even heard Hilma laughing very gayly at something Delaney was saying. She patted his horse’s neck affectionately, and Delaney, drawing the nippers from his belt, made as if to pinch her arm with them. She caught at his wrist and pushed him away, laughing again. To Annixter’s mind the pair seemed astonishingly intimate. Brusquely his anger flamed up.

Ah, that was it, was it? Delaney and Hilma had an understanding between themselves. They carried on their affairs right out there in the open, under his very eyes. It was absolutely disgusting. Had they no sense of decency, those two? Well, this ended it. He would stop that sort of thing short off; none of that on *his* ranch if he knew it. No, sir. He would pack that girl off before he was a day older. He wouldn’t have that kind about the place. Not much! She’d have to

get out. He would talk to old man Tree about it this afternoon. Whatever happened, *he* insisted upon morality.

"And my dinner!" he suddenly exclaimed. "I've got to wait and go hungry — and maybe get sick again — while they carry on their disgusting love-making."

He turned about on the instant, and striding over to the electric bell, rang it again with all his might.

"When that female gets up here," he declared, "I'll just find out why I've got to wait like this. I'll take her down, to the Queen's taste. I'm lenient enough, Lord knows, but I don't propose to be imposed upon *all* the time."

A few moments later, while Annixter was pretending to read the county newspaper by the window in the dining-room, Hilma came in to set the table. At the time Annixter had his feet cocked on the window ledge and was smoking a cigar, but as soon as she entered the room he — without premeditation — brought his feet down to the floor and crushed out the lighted tip of his cigar under the window ledge. Over the top of the paper he glanced at her covertly from time to time.

Though Hilma was only nineteen years old, she was a large girl with all the development of a much older woman. There was a certain generous amplitude to the full, round curves of her hips and shoulders that suggested the precocious maturity of a healthy, vigorous animal life passed under the hot southern sun of a half-tropical country. She was, one knew at a glance, warm-blooded, full-blooded, with an even, comfortable balance of temperament. Her neck was thick, and sloped to her shoulders, with full, beautiful curves, and under her chin and under her ears the flesh was as white and smooth as floss satin, shading exquisitely to a faint delicate brown on her nape at the roots of her hair. Her throat rounded to meet her chin and cheek, with a soft swell of the skin, tinted pale amber in the shadows, but blending by barely perceptible gradations to the sweet, warm flush of her cheek. This color on her temples was just touched

with a certain blueness where the flesh was thin over the fine veining underneath. Her eyes were light brown, and so wide open that on the slightest provocation the full disc of the pupil was disclosed; the lids — just a fraction of a shade darker than the hue of her face — were edged with lashes that were almost black. While these lashes were not long, they were thick and rimmed her eyes with a fine, thin line. Her mouth was rather large, the lips shut tight, and nothing could have been more graceful, more charming than the outline of these full lips of hers, and her round white chin, modulating downward with a certain delicious roundness to her neck, her throat and the sweet feminine amplitude of her breast. The slightest movement of her head and shoulders sent a gentle undulation through all this beauty of soft outlines and smooth surfaces, the delicate amber shadows deepening or fading or losing themselves imperceptibly in the pretty rose-color of her cheeks, or the dark, warm-tinted shadow of her thick brown hair.

Her hair seemed almost to have a life of its own, almost Medusa-like, thick, glossy and moist, lying in heavy, sweet-smelling masses over her forehead, over her small ears with their pink lobes, and far down upon her nape. Deep in between the coils and braids it was of a bitumen brownness, but in the sunlight it vibrated with a sheen like tarnished gold.

Like most large girls, her movements were not hurried, and this indefinite deliberateness of gesture, this slow grace, this certain ease of attitude, was a charm that was all her own.

But Hilma's greatest charm of all was her simplicity — a simplicity that was not only in the calm regularity of her face, with its statuesque evenness of contour, its broad surface of cheek and forehead and the masses of her straight smooth hair, but was apparent as well in the long line of her carriage, from her foot to her waist and the single deep swell from her waist to her shoulder. Almost unconsciously she dressed in harmony with this note of simplicity, and on this occasion wore a skirt

of plain dark blue calico and a white shirt waist crisp from the laundry.

And yet, for all the dignity of this rigorous simplicity, there were about Hilma small contradictory suggestions of feminine daintiness, charming beyond words. Even Annixter could not help noticing that her feet were narrow and slender, and that the little steel buckles of her low shoes were polished bright, and that her finger-tips and nails were of a fine rosy pink.

He found himself wondering how it was that a girl in Hilma's position should be able to keep herself so pretty, so trim, so clean and feminine, but he reflected that her work was chiefly in the dairy, and even there of the lightest order. She was on the ranch more for the sake of being with her parents than from any necessity of employment. Vaguely he seemed to understand that, in that great new land of the West, in the open-air, healthy life of the ranches, where the conditions of earning a livelihood were of the easiest, refinement among the younger women was easily to be found — not the refinement of education, nor culture, but the natural, intuitive refinement of the woman, not as yet defiled and crushed out by the sordid, strenuous life-struggle of over-populated districts. It was the original, intended, and natural delicacy of an elemental existence, close to nature, close to life, close to the great, kindly earth.

As Hilma laid the table-spread, her arms opened to their widest reach, the white cloth setting a little glisten of reflected light underneath the chin, Annixter stirred in his place uneasily.

"Oh, it's you, is it, Miss Hilma?" he remarked, for the sake of saying something. "Good-morning. How do you do?"

"*Good-morning, sir,*" she answered, looking up, resting for a moment on her outspread palms. "I hope you are better."

Her voice was low in pitch and of a velvety huskiness, seeming to come more from her chest than from her throat.

"Well, I'm some better," growled Annixter. Then suddenly he demanded, "Where's that dog?"

A decrepit Irish setter sometimes made his appearance in and about the ranch house, sleeping under the bed and eating when anyone about the place thought to give him a plate of bread.

Annixter had no particular interest in the dog. For weeks at a time he ignored its existence. It was not his dog. But to-day it seemed as if he could not let the subject rest. For no reason that he could explain even to himself, he recurred to it continually. He questioned Hilma minutely all about the dog. Who owned him? How old did she think he was? Did she imagine the dog was sick? Where had he got to? Maybe he had crawled off to die somewhere. He recurred to the subject all through the meal; apparently, he could talk of nothing else, and as she finally went away after clearing off the table, he went onto the porch and called after her:

“Say, Miss Hilma.”

“Yes, sir.”

“If that dog turns up again you let me know.”

“Very well, sir.”

Annixter returned to the dining-room and sat down in the chair he had just vacated.

“To hell with the dog!” he muttered, enraged, he could not tell why.

When at length he allowed his attention to wander from Hilma Tree, he found that he had been staring fixedly at a thermometer upon the wall opposite, and this made him think that it had long been his intention to buy a fine barometer, an instrument that could be accurately depended on. But the barometer suggested the present condition of the weather and the likelihood of rain. In such case, much was to be done in the way of getting the seed ready and overhauling his ploughs and drills. He had not been away from the house in two days. It was time to be up and doing. He determined to put in the afternoon “taking a look around,” and have a late supper. He would not go to Los Muertos; he would ignore Magnus

Derrick's invitation. Possibly, though, it might be well to run over and see what was up.

"If I do," he said to himself, "I'll ride the buckskin."

The buckskin was a half-broken broncho that fought like a fiend under the saddle until the quirt and spur brought her to her senses. But Annixter remembered that the Trees' cottage, next the dairy-house, looked out upon the stables, and perhaps Hilma would see him while he was mounting the horse and be impressed with his courage.

"Huh!" grunted Annixter under his breath, "I should like to see that fool Delaney try to bust that bronch. That's what *I'd* like to see."

However, as Annixter stepped from the porch of the ranch house, he was surprised to notice a grey haze over all the sky; the sunlight was gone; there was a sense of coolness in the air; the weather-vane on the barn — a fine golden trotting horse with flamboyant mane and tail — was veering in a southwest wind. Evidently the expected rain was close at hand.

Annixter crossed over to the stables reflecting that he could ride the buckskin to the Trees' cottage and tell Hilma that he would not be home to supper. The conference at Los Muertos would be an admirable excuse for this, and upon the spot he resolved to go over to the Derrick ranch house, after all.

As he passed the Trees' cottage, he observed with satisfaction that Hilma was going to and fro in the front room. If he busted the buckskin in the yard before the stable she could not help but see. Annixter found the stableman in the back of the barn greasing the axles of the buggy, and ordered him to put the saddle on the buckskin.

"Why, I don't think she's here, sir," answered the stableman, glancing into the stalls. "No, I remember now. Delaney took her out just after dinner. His other horse went lame and he wanted to go down by the Long Trestle to mend the fence. He started out, but had to come back."

"Oh, Delaney got her, did he?"

"Yes, sir. He had a circus with her, but he busted her right enough. When it comes to horse, Delaney can wipe the eye of any cow-puncher in the county, I guess."

"He can, can he?" observed Annixter. Then after a silence, "Well, all right, Billy; put my saddle on whatever you've got here. I'm going over to Los Muertos this afternoon."

"Want to look out for the rain, Mr. Annixter," remarked Billy. "Guess we'll have rain before night."

"I'll take a rubber coat," answered Annixter. "Bring the horse up to the ranch house when you're ready."

Annixter returned to the house to look for his rubber coat in deep disgust, not permitting himself to glance toward the dairy-house and the Trees' cottage. But as he reached the porch he heard the telephone ringing his call. It was Presley, who rang up from Los Muertos. He had heard from Harran that Annixter was, perhaps, coming over that evening. If he came, would he mind bringing over his — Presley's — bicycle. He had left it at the Quien Sabe ranch the day before and had forgotten to come back that way for it.

"Well," objected Annixter, a surly note in his voice, "' was going to *ride* over."

"Oh, never mind, then," returned Presley easily. "I was to blame for forgetting it. Don't bother about it. I'll come over some of these days and get it myself."

Annixter hung up the transmitter with a vehement wrench and stamped out of the room, banging the door. He found his rubber coat hanging in the hallway and swung into it with a fierce movement of the shoulders that all but started the seams. Everything seemed to conspire to thwart him. It was just like that absent-minded crazy poet, Presley, to forget his wheel. Well, he could come after it himself. He, Annixter, would ride *some* horse, anyhow. When he came out upon the porch he saw the wheel leaning against the fence where Presley had left

it. If it stayed much longer the rain would catch it. Annixter ripped out an oath. At every moment his ill-humor was increasing. Yet, for all that, he went back to the stable, pushing the bicycle before him, and countermanded his order, directing the stableman to get the buggy ready. He himself carefully stowed Presley's bicycle under the seat, covering it with a couple of empty sacks and a tarpaulin carriage cover.

While he was doing this, the stableman uttered an exclamation and paused in the act of backing the horse into the shafts, holding up a hand, listening.

From the hollow roof of the barn and from the thick velvet-like padding of dust over the ground outside, and from among the leaves of the few nearby trees and plants there came a vast monotonous murmur that seemed to issue from all quarters of the horizon at once, a prolonged and subdued rustling sound, steady, even, persistent.

"There's your rain," announced the stableman. "The first of the season."

"And I got to be out in it," fumed Annixter, "and I suppose those swine will quit work on the big barn now."

When the buggy was finally ready, he put on his rubber coat, climbed in, and without waiting for the stableman to raise the top, drove out into the rain, a new-lit cigar in his teeth. As he passed the dairy-house, he saw Hilma standing in the doorway, holding out her hand to the rain, her face turned upward toward the grey sky, amused and interested at this first shower of the wet season. She was so absorbed that she did not see Annixter, and his clumsy nod in her direction passed unnoticed.

"She did it on purpose," Annixter told himself, chewing fiercely on his cigar. "Cuts me now, hey? Well, this *does* settle it. She leaves this ranch before I'm a day older."

He decided that he would put off his tour of inspection till the next day. Travelling in the buggy as he did, he must

keep to the road which led to Derrick's, in very roundabout fashion, by way of Guadalajara. This rain would reduce the thick dust of the road to two feet of viscid mud. It would take him quite three hours to reach the ranch house on Los Muertos. He thought of Delaney and the buckskin and ground his teeth. And all this trouble, if you please, because of a fool feemale girl. A fine way for him to waste his time. Well, now he was done with it. His decision was taken now. She should pack.

Steadily the rain increased. There was no wind. The thick veil of wet descended straight from sky to earth, blurring distant outlines, spreading a vast sheen of grey over all the landscape. Its volume became greater, the prolonged murmuring note took on a deeper tone. At the gate to the road which led across Dyke's hop-fields toward Guadalajara, Annixter was obliged to descend and raise the top of the buggy. In doing so he caught the flesh of his hand in the joint of the iron elbow that supported the top and pinched it cruelly. It was the last misery, the culmination of a long train of wretchedness. On the instant he hated Hilma Tree so fiercely that his sharply set teeth all but bit this cigar in two.

While he was grabbing and wrenching at the buggytop, the water from his hat brim dripping down upon his nose, the horse, restive under the drench of the rain, moved uneasily.

"Yah-h-h you!" he shouted, inarticulate with exasperation. "You — you — Gor-r-r, wait till I get hold of you. *Whoa*, you!"

But there was an interruption. Delaney, riding the buckskin, came around a bend in the road at a slow trot and Annixter, getting into the buggy again, found himself face to face with him.

"Why, hello, Mr. Annixter," said he, pulling up. "Kind of sort of wet, isn't it?"

Annixter, his face suddenly scarlet, sat back in his place abruptly, exclaiming:

"Oh — oh, there you are, are you?"

"I've been down there," explained Delaney, with a motion of his head toward the railroad, "to mend that break in the fence by the Long Trestle and I thought while I was about it I'd follow down along the fence toward Guadalajara to see if there were any more breaks. But I guess it's all right."

"Oh, you guess it's all right, do you?" observed Annixter through his teeth.

"Why — why — yes," returned the other, bewildered at the truculent ring in Annixter's voice. "I mended that break by the Long Trestle just now and ——"

"Well, why didn't you mend it a week ago?" shouted Annixter wrathfully. "I've been looking for you all the morning, I have, and who told you you could take that buckskin? And the sheep were all over the right of way last night because of that break, and here that filthy pip, S. Behrman, comes down here this morning and wants to make trouble for me." Suddenly he cried out, "What do I *feed* you for? What do I keep you around here for? Think it's just to fatten up your carcass, hey?"

"Why, Mr. Annixter ——" began Delaney.

"And don't *talk* to me," vociferated the other, exciting himself with his own noise. "Don't you say a word to me even to apologize. If I've spoken to you once about that break, I've spoken fifty times."

"Why, sir," declared Delaney, beginning to get indignant, "the sheep did it themselves last night."

"I told you not to *talk* to me," clamored Annixter.

"But, say, look here ——"

"Get off the ranch. You get off the ranch. And taking that buckskin against my express orders. I won't have your kind about the place, not much. I'm easy-going enough, Lord knows, but I don't propose to be imposed on *all* the time. Pack off, you understand, and do it lively. Go to the foreman and tell him I told him to pay you off and then clear out. And,

you hear *me*," he concluded, with a menacing outthrust of his lower jaw, "you hear me, if I catch you hanging around the ranch house after this, or if I so much as see you on Quien Sabe, I'll show you the way off of it, my friend, at the toe of my boot. Now, then, get out of the way and let me pass."

Angry beyond the power of retort, Delaney drove the spurs into the buckskin and passed the buggy in a single bound. Annixter gathered up the reins and drove on, muttering to himself, and occasionally looking back to observe the buckskin flying toward the ranch house in a spattering shower of mud, Delaney urging her on, his head bent down against the falling rain.

"Huh," grunted Annixter with grim satisfaction, a certain sense of good humor at length returning to him, "that just about takes the saleratus out of *your* dough, my friend."

XXV. BATHSHEBA AND GABRIEL OAK¹

THOMAS HARDY

[This selection pictures Bathsheba Everdene and Gabriel Oak, first in a *characterizing situation* at the beginning of the novel, then in a *marking incident* a hundred pages later. In the characterizing situation, Bathsheba appears to have her share of feminine vanity and Gabriel his share of masculine stolidity. But before the marking incident occurs both characters have been through experiences which considerably modify them.]

I

WHEN Farmer Oak smiled, the corners of his mouth spread till they were within an unimportant distance of his ears, his eyes were reduced to mere chinks, and diverging wrinkles appeared round them, extending upon his countenance like the rays in a rudimentary sketch of the rising sun.

His Christian name was Gabriel, and on working-days he was a young man of sound judgment, easy motions, proper dress, and general good character.

On Sundays he was a man of misty views, rather given to a postponing treatment of things, whose best clothes and seven- and sixpenny umbrella were always hampering him; upon the whole, one who felt himself to occupy morally that vast middle space of Laodicean neutrality which lay between the sacrament people of the parish and the drunken division of its inhabitants — that is, he went to church, but yawned privately by the time the congregation reached the Nicene Creed, and thought of what there would be for dinner when he meant to be listening to the sermon. Or, to state his character as it stood in the scale of public opinion, when his friends and critics were in tantrums, he was considered rather a bad man; when they were pleased, he was rather a good man; when they were neither, he was a

¹ Reprinted from *Far from the Madding Crowd*.

man whose moral color was a kind of pepper-and-salt mixture. Since he lived six times as many working-days as Sundays, Oak's appearance in his old clothes was most peculiarly his own — the mental picture formed by his neighbors always presenting him as dressed in that way when their imaginations answered to the thought "Gabriel Oak." He wore a low-crowned felt hat spread out at the base by tight jamming upon the head for security in high winds, and a coat like Dr. Johnson's, his lower extremities being incased in ordinary leather leggings and boots emphatically large, affording to each foot a roomy apartment so constructed that any wearer might stand in a river all day long and know nothing about it — their maker being a conscientious man who always endeavored to compensate for any weakness in his cut by unstinted dimension and solidity.

Mr. Oak carried about him, by way of watch, what may be called a small silver clock; in other words, it was a watch as to shape and intention, and a small clock as to size. This instrument being several years older than Oak's grandfather, had the peculiarity of going either too fast or not at all. The smaller of the two hands, too, occasionally slipped round on the pivot, and thus, though the minutes were told with the greatest precision, nobody could be quite certain of the hour they belonged to. The stopping peculiarity of his watch Oak remedied by thumps and shakes, when it always went on again immediately, and he escaped any evil consequences from the other two defects by constant comparisons with and observations of the sun and stars, and by pressing his face close to the glass of his neighbors' windows when passing by their houses, till he could discern the hour marked by the green-faced time-keepers within. It may be mentioned that Oak's fob, being painfully difficult of access, by reason of its somewhat high situation in the waistband of his trousers (which also lay at a remote height under his waistcoat), the watch was as a necessity pulled out by throwing the body extremely to one side, compressing the mouth and

face to a mere mass of wrinkles on account of the exertion required, and drawing up the watch by its chain, like a bucket from a well.

But some thoughtful persons, who had seen him walking across one of his fields on a certain December morning — sunny and exceedingly mild — might have regarded Gabriel Oak in other aspects than these. In his face one might notice that many of the hues and curves of youth had tarried on to manhood; there even remained in his remoter crannies some relics of the boy. His height and breadth would have been sufficient to make his presence imposing had they been exhibited with due consideration. But there is a way some men have, rural and urban alike — for which the mind is more responsible than flesh and sinew — a way of curtailing their dimensions by their manner of showing them; and from a quiet modesty that would have become a vestal, which seemed continually to impress upon him that he had no great claim on the world's room, Oak walked unassumingly, and with a faintly perceptible bend, quite distinct from a bowing of the shoulders. This may be said to be a defect in an individual if he depends for his valuation as a total more upon his appearance than upon his capacity to wear well, which Oak did not. He had just reached the time of life at which "young" is ceasing to be the prefix of "man" in speaking of one. He was at the brightest period of masculine life, for his intellect and his emotions were clearly separated; he had passed the time during which the influence of youth indiscriminately mingles them in the character of impulse, and he had not yet arrived at the stage wherein they become united again, in the character of prejudice, by the influence of a wife and family. In short, he was twenty-eight, and a bachelor.

The field he was in sloped steeply to a ridge called Norcombe Hill. Through a spur of this hill ran the highway from Norcombe to Casterbridge, sunk in a deep cutting. Casually

glancing over the hedge, Oak saw coming down the incline before him an ornamental spring-wagon, painted yellow and gayly marked, drawn by two horses, a wagoner walking alongside bearing a whip perpendicularly. The wagon was laden with household goods and window-plants, and on the apex of the whole sat a woman, young and attractive.

Gabriel had not beheld the sight for more than half a minute, when the vehicle was brought to a standstill just beneath his eyes.

"The tail-board of the wagon is gone, miss," said the wagoner.

"Then I heard it fall," said the girl, in a soft though not particularly low voice. "I heard a noise I could not account for when we were coming up the hill."

"I'll run back."

"Do," she answered.

The sensible horses stood perfectly still, and the wagoner's steps sank fainter and fainter in the distance.

The girl on the summit of the load sat motionless, surrounded by tables and chairs with their legs upward, backed by an oak settle, and ornamented in front by pots of geraniums, myrtles, and cactuses, together with a caged canary — all probably from the windows of the house just vacated. There was also a cat in a willow basket, from the partly opened lid of which she gazed with half-closed eyes, and affectionately surveyed the small birds around.

The handsome girl waited for some time idly in her place, and the only sound heard in the stillness was the hopping of the canary up and down the perches of its prison. Then she looked attentively downward. It was not at the bird, nor at the cat; it was at an oblong package tied in paper, and lying between them. She turned her head to learn if the wagoner were coming. He was not yet in sight; and then her eyes crept back to the package, her thoughts seeming to run on what was inside of it. At length she drew the article into her lap, and untied the paper covering; a small swing looking-glass was

disclosed, in which she proceeded to survey herself attentively. Then she parted her lips and smiled.

It was a fine morning, and the sun lighted up to a scarlet glow the crimson jacket she wore, and painted a soft luster upon her bright face and black hair. The myrtles, geraniums, and cactuses packed around her were fresh and green, and at such a leafless season they invested the whole concern of horses, wagon, furniture, and girl with a peculiar charm of rarity. What possessed her to indulge in such a performance in the sight of the sparrows, blackbirds, and unperceived farmer, who were alone its spectators — whether the smile began as a factitious one, to test her capacity in that art, nobody knows; it ended certainly in a real smile. She blushed at herself, and seeing her reflection blush, blushed the more.

The change from the customary spot and necessary occasion of such an act — from the dressing hour in a bedroom to a time of traveling out-of-doors — lent to the idle deed a novelty it certainly did not intrinsically possess. The picture was a delicate one. Woman's prescriptive infirmity had stalked into the sunlight, which had invested it with the freshness of an originality. A cynical inference was irresistible by Gabriel Oak as he regarded the scene, generous though he fain would have been. There was no necessity whatever for her looking in the glass. She did not adjust her hat, or pat her hair, or press a dimple into shape, or do one thing to signify that any such intention had been her motive in taking up the glass. She simply observed herself as a fair product of nature in a feminine direction, her expression seeming to glide into far-off though likely dramas in which men would play a part — vistas of probable triumphs — the smiles being of a phase suggesting that hearts were imagined as lost and won. Still, this was but conjecture, and the whole series of actions were so idly put forth as to make it rash to assert that intention had any part in them at all.

The wagoner's steps were heard returning. She put the glass in the paper, and the whole again into its place.

When the wagon had passed on, Gabriel withdrew from his point of espial, and, descending into the road, followed the vehicle to the turnpike-gate at the bottom of the hill, where the object of his contemplation now halted for the payment of toll. About twenty steps still remained between him and the gate, when he heard a dispute. It was a difference concerning twopence between the persons with the wagon and the man at the toll-bar.

"Miss'ess' niece is upon the top of the things, and she says that's enough that I've offered ye, you great miser, and she won't pay any more." These were the wagoner's words.

"Very well; then mis'ess' niece can't pass," said the turnpike keeper, closing the gate.

Oak looked from one to the other of the disputants, and fell into a reverie. There was something in the tone of twopence remarkably insignificant. Threepence had a definite value as money; it was an appreciable infringement on a day's wages, and, as such, a higgling matter; but twopence — "Here," he said, stepping forward and handing twopence to the gate-keeper; "let the young woman pass." He looked up at her then; she heard his words, and looked down.

Gabriel's features adhered throughout their form so exactly to the middle line between the beauty of St. John and the ugliness of Judas Iscariot, as represented in a window of the church he attended, that not a single lineament could be selected and called worthy either of distinction or notoriety. The red-jacketed and dark-haired maiden seemed to think so too, for she carelessly glanced over him, and told her man to drive on. She might have looked her thanks to Gabriel on a minute scale, but she did not speak them; more probably she felt none, for in gaining her a passage he had lost her her point, and we know how women take a favor of that kind.

The gate-keeper surveyed the retreating vehicle.

"That's a handsome maid," he said to Oak.

"But she has her faults," said Gabriel.

"True, farmer."

"And the greatest of them is — well, what it is always."

"Beating people down; ay, 'tis so."

"Oh, no."

"What then?"

Gabriel, perhaps a little piqued by the comely traveler's indifference, glanced back to where he had witnessed her performance over the hedge, and said, "Vanity."

[Gabriel, in spite of his judgment on Bathsheba, falls very promptly in love with her, and after she saves his life from asphyxiation in a shepherd's hut, he proposes marriage to her. She is flattered, but she refuses him. In the next few weeks their stations in life change considerably. Bathsheba inherits from an uncle a large farm at Weatherbury and takes charge of it herself. Gabriel, through the chance of having a young inexperienced sheep-dog, loses his whole flock, and is reduced to the necessity of hiring out as a laborer. Accident takes him to Bathsheba's farm, and the undercurrent of romance in his nature induces him to accept the position there of head shepherd. It is part of Bathsheba's vanity that she should wish to have him as her dependent. It turns out again and again, however, that she is forced to rely on Gabriel's greater skill and sounder judgment in managing farm matters. She usually takes Gabriel's advice, except in regard to her private affairs.]

The following incidents occur as the sequel to Bathsheba's growing friendship with farmer Boldwood, the most important man of the neighborhood. Bathsheba has attracted his attention by a bit of innocent caprice, but she has not the slightest idea whether or not she wishes to regard him seriously as a suitor. She is perversely curious to know what Gabriel might think of the match. It is obviously a dangerous subject of conversation, and a good deal follows that neither she nor Gabriel intended should follow.]

II

"Will you turn, Gabriel, and let me hold the shears?" she said. "My head is in a whirl, and I can't talk."

Gabriel turned. Bathsheba then began, with some awkwardness, allowing her thoughts to stray occasionally from her story to attend to the shears, which required a little nicety in sharpening.

"I wanted to ask you if the men made any observations on my going behind the sedge with Mr. Boldwood, yesterday?"

"Yes, they did," said Gabriel. "You don't hold the shears right, miss — I knew you wouldn't know the way — hold like this."

He relinquished the winch, and inclosing her two hands completely in his own (taking each as we sometimes clasp a child's hand in teaching him to write), grasped the shears with her. "Incline the edge so," he said.

Hands and shears were inclined to suit the words, and held thus for a peculiarly long time by the instructor as he spoke.

"That will do," exclaimed Bathsheba. "Loose my hands. I won't have them held! Turn the winch."

Gabriel freed her hands quietly, retired to his handle, and the grinding went on.

"Did the men think it odd?" she said again.

"Odd was not the idea, miss."

"What did they say?"

"That Farmer Boldwood's name and your own were likely to be flung over pulpit together before the year was out."

"I thought so by the look of them! Why, there's nothing in it. A more foolish remark was never made, and I want you to contradict it; that's what I came for."

Gabriel looked incredulous and sad, but between his movements of incredulity, relieved.

"They must have heard our conversation," she continued.

"Well, then, Bathsheba!" said Oak, stopping the handle, and gazing into her face with astonishment.

"Miss Everdene, you mean," she said with dignity.

"I mean this: that if Mr. Boldwood really spoke of marriage, I am not going to tell a story and say he didn't, to please you. I have already tried to please you too much for my own good."

Bathsheba regarded him with round-eyed perplexity. She did not know whether to pity him for disappointed love of her,

or to be angry with him for having got over it — his tone being ambiguous.

“I said I wanted you just to mention that it was not true I was going to be married to him,” she murmured, with a slight decline in her assurance.

“I can say that to them if you wish, Miss Everdene. And I could likewise give an opinion to you on what you have done.”

“I dare say. But I don’t want your opinion.”

“I suppose not,” said Gabriel bitterly, and going on with his turning, his words rising and falling in a regular swell and cadence as he stooped or rose with the winch, which directed them, according to his position, perpendicularly into the earth, or horizontally along the garden, his eyes fixed on a leaf upon the ground.

With Bathsheba a hastened act was a rash act; but as does not always happen, time gained was prudence insured. It must be added, however, that time was very seldom gained.

At this period the single opinion in the parish on herself and her doings that she valued as sounder than her own was Gabriel Oak’s. And the outspoken honesty of his character was such that on any subject, even that of her love for, or marriage with, another man, the same disinterestedness of opinion might be calculated on, and be had for the asking.

Thoroughly convinced of the impossibility of his own suit, a high resolve constrained him not to injure that of another. This is a lover’s most stoical virtue, as the lack of it is a lover’s most venial sin.

Knowing he would reply truly, she asked the question, painful as she must have known the subject would be. Such is the selfishness of some charming women. Perhaps it was some excuse for her thus torturing honesty to her own advantage, that she had absolutely no other sound judgment within easy reach.

“Well, what is your opinion of my conduct?” she said quietly.

“That it is unworthy of any thoughtful, and meek, and comely woman.”

In an instant Bathsheba's face colored with the angry crimson of a Danby sunset. But she forbore to utter this feeling, and the reticence of her tongue only made the loquacity of her face the more noticeable.

The next thing Gabriel did was to make a mistake.

“Perhaps you don't like the rudeness of my reprimanding you, for I know it is rudeness; but I thought it would do good.”

She instantly replied sarcastically:

“On the contrary, my opinion of you is so low that I see in your abuse the praise of discerning people.”

“I am glad you don't mind it, for I said it honestly, and with very serious meaning.”

“I see. But unfortunately, when you try not to speak in jest you are amusing — just as when you wish to avoid seriousness you sometimes say a sensible word.”

It was a hard hit, but Bathsheba had unmistakably lost her temper, and on that account Gabriel had never in his life kept his own better. He said nothing. She then broke out:

“I may ask, I suppose, where in particular my unworthiness lies? In my not marrying you, perhaps!”

“Not by any means,” said Gabriel quietly. “I have long given up thinking of that matter.”

“Or wishing it, I suppose,” she said, and it was apparent that she expected an unhesitating denial of this supposition.

Whatever Gabriel felt, he coolly echoed her words:

“Or wishing it, either.”

A woman may be treated with a bitterness which is sweet to her, and with a rudeness which is not offensive. Bathsheba would have submitted to an indignant chastisement for her levity, had Gabriel protested that he was loving her at the same time; the impetuosity of passion unrequited is bearable, even if it stings and anathematizes — there is a triumph in the

humiliation, and a tenderness in the strife. This was what she had been expecting, and what she had not got. To be lectured because the lecturer saw her in the cold morning light of open-shuttered disillusion was exasperating. He had not finished, either. He continued in a more agitated voice:

“My opinion is (since you ask it) that you are greatly to blame for playing pranks upon a man like Mr. Boldwood, merely as a pastime. Leading on a man you don't care for is not a praiseworthy action. And even, Miss Everdene, if you seriously inclined toward him, you might have let him discover it in some way of true loving-kindness, and not by sending him a valentine's letter.”

Bathsheba laid down the shears.

“I cannot allow any man to — to criticize my private conduct!” she exclaimed. “Nor will I for a minute. So you'll please leave the farm at the end of the week!”

It may have been a peculiarity — at any rate it was a fact — that when Bathsheba was swayed by an emotion of an earthly sort her lower lip trembled; when by a refined emotion, her upper or heavenward one. Her nether lip quivered now.

“Very well, so I will,” said Gabriel calmly. He had been held to her by a beautiful thread which it pained him to spoil by breaking, rather than by a chain he could not break. “I should be even better pleased to go at once,” he added.

“Go at once then, in Heaven's name!” said she, her eyes flashing at his, though never meeting them. “Don't let me see your face any more.”

“Very well, Miss Everdene — so it shall be.”

And he took his shears and went away from her in placid dignity, as Moses left in the presence of Pharaoh.

Gabriel Oak had ceased to feed the Weatherbury flock for about twenty-four hours, when on Sunday afternoon the elderly gentlemen, Joseph Poorgrass, Matthew Moon, Fray, and half a

dozen others came running up to the house of the mistress of the Upper Farm.

"Whatever *is* the matter, men?" she said, meeting them at the door just as she was on the point of coming out on her way to church, and ceasing in a moment from the close compression of her two red lips, with which she had accompanied the exertion of pulling on a tight glove.

"Sixty!" said Joseph Poorgrass.

"Seventy!" said Moon.

"Fifty-nine!" said Susan Tall's husband.

"Sheep have broke fence," said Fray.

"And got into a field of young clover," said Tall.

"Young clover!" said Moon.

"Clover!" said Joseph Poorgrass.

"And they be getting blasted," said Henery Fray.

"That they be," said Joseph.

"And will all die as dead as nits, if they bain't got out and cured!" said Tall.

Joseph's countenance was drawn into lines and puckers by his concern. Fray's forehead was wrinkled both perpendicularly and crossways, after the pattern of a portcullis, expressive of a double despair. Laban Tall's lips were thin, and his face was rigid. Matthew's jaws sank, and his eyes turned whichever way the strongest muscle happened to pull them.

"Yes," said Joseph, "and I was sitting at home, looking for Ephesians, and says I to myself, 'Tis nothing but Corinthians and Thessalonians in this danged Testament,' when who should come in but Henery there: 'Joseph,' he said, 'the sheep have blasted themselves ——' "

With Bathsheba it was a moment when thought was speech and speech exclamation. Moreover, she had hardly recovered her equanimity since the disturbance which she had suffered from Oak's remarks.

"That's enough — that's enough — oh, you fools!" she cried, throwing the parasol and prayer-book into the passage, and running out of doors in the direction signified. "To come to me, and not go and get them out directly! Oh, the stupid numskulls!"

Her eyes were at their darkest and brightest now. Bathsheba's beauty belonging rather to the redeemed-demonian than to the blemished-angelic school, she never looked so well as when she was angry — and particularly when the effect was heightened by a rather dashing velvet dress, carefully put on before a glass.

All the ancient men ran in a jumbled throng after her to the clover field, Joseph sinking down in the midst when about half-way, like an individual withering in a world which got more and more unstable. Having once received the stimulus that her presence always gave them, they went round among the sheep with a will. The majority of the afflicted animals were lying down, and could not be stirred. These were bodily lifted out, and the others driven into the adjoining field. Here, after the lapse of a few minutes several more fell down, and lay helpless and livid as the rest.

Bathsheba, with a sad, bursting heart, looked at these primest specimens of her prime flock as they rolled there,

"Swol'n with wind and the rank mist they drew."

Many of them foamed at the mouth, their breathing being quick and short, while the bodies of all were fearfully distended.

"Oh, what can I do, what can I do!" said Bathsheba helplessly. "Sheep are such unfortunate animals! there's always something happening to them! I never knew a flock pass a year without getting into some scrape or other."

"There's only one way of saving them," said Tall.

"What way? Tell me quick!"

"They must be pierced in the side with a thing made on purpose."

"Can you do it? Can I!"

"No, ma'am. We can't, nor you neither. It must be done in a particular spot. If ye go to the right or left but an inch, you stab the ewe and kill her. Not even a shepherd can do it, as a rule."

"Then they must die," she said, in a resigned tone.

"Only one man in the neighborhood knows the way," said Joseph, now just come up. "He could cure 'em all if he were here."

"Who is he? Let's get him!"

"Shepherd Oak," said Matthew. "Ah, he's a clever man in talents!"

"Ah, that he is so!" said Joseph Poorgrass

"True — he's the man," said Laban Tall.

"How dare you name that man in my presence!" she said excitedly. "I've told you never to allude to him, nor shall you, if you stay with me. Ah," she added, brightening, "Farmer Boldwood knows!"

"Oh, no, ma'am," said Matthew. "Two of his store ewes got into some vetches t'other day, and were just like these. He sent a man on horseback here post haste for Gable, and Gable went and saved 'em. Farmer Boldwood hev got the thing they do it with. 'Tis a holler pipe, with a sharp pricker inside. Isn't it, Joseph?"

"Ay, a holler pipe," echoed Joseph. "That's what 'tis."

"Ay, sure — that's the machine," chimed in Henery Fray reflectively, with an Oriental indifference to the flight of time.

"Well," burst out Bathsheba, "don't stand there with your ayes and your sures, talking at me. Get somebody to cure the sheep, instantly."

All then stalked off in consternation, to get somebody as directed, without any idea of who it was to be. In a minute they had vanished through the gate, and she stood alone with the dying flock.

"Never will I send for him — never!" she faced firmly.

One of the ewes here contracted its muscles horribly, extended itself, and jumped high into the air. The leap was an astonishing one. The ewe fell heavily and lay still.

Bathsheba went up to it. The sheep was dead.

"Oh, what shall I do — what shall I do!" she again exclaimed, wringing her hands. "I won't send for him. No, I won't!"

The most vigorous expression of a resolution does not always coincide with the greatest vigor of the resolution itself. It is often flung out as a sort of prop to support a decaying conviction which, while strong, required no enunciation to prove it so. The "no, I won't," of Bathsheba, meant virtually "I think I must."

She followed her assistants through the gate, and lifted her hand to one of them. Laban answered to her signal.

"Where is Oak staying?"

"Across the valley at Nest Cottage."

"Jump on the bay mare, and ride across, and say he must return instantly — that I say so."

Tall scrambled off to the field and in two minutes was on Poll, the bay, bare-backed, and with only a halter by way of rein. He diminished down the hill.

Bathsheba watched. So did all the rest. Tall cantered along the bridle-path through Sixteen Acres, Sheeplands, Middle Fields, the Flats, Cappel's Piece, shrank almost to a point, crossed the bridge, and ascended from the valley through Springmead and Whitepits on the other side. The cottage to which Gabriel had retired before taking his final departure from the locality was visible as a white spot on the opposite hill, backed by blue firs. Bathsheba walked up and down. The men entered the field and endeavored to ease the anguish of the dumb creatures by rubbing them. Nothing availed.

Bathsheba continued walking. The horse was seen descend-

ing the hill, and the wearisome series had to be repeated in reverse order: Whitepits, Springmead, Cappel's Piece, the Flats, Middle Field, Sheeplands, Sixteen Acres.

She hoped Tall had had presence of mind enough to give the mare up to Gabriel and return himself on foot. The rider neared them. It was Tall.

"Oh, what folly!" said Bathsheba.

Gabriel was not visible anywhere.

"Perhaps he is already gone," she said.

Tall came into the inclosure, and leaped off, his face tragic as Morton's after the battle of Shrewsbury.

"Well?" said Bathsheba, unwilling to believe that her verbal *lettre-de-cachet* could possibly have miscarried.

"He says *beggars must not be choosers*," replied Laban.

"What!" said the young farmer, opening her eyes and drawing in her breath for an outburst. Joseph Poorgrass retired a few steps behind a hurdle.

"He says he shall not come unless you request him to come civilly and in a proper manner, as becomes any person begging a favor."

"Oh, ho, that's his answer! Where does he get his airs? Who am I, then, to be treated like that? Shall I beg to a man who has begged to me?"

Another of the flock sprang into the air, and fell dead.

The men looked grave, as if they suppressed opinion.

Bathsheba turned aside, her eyes full of tears. The strait she was in through pride and shrewishness could not be disguised longer: she burst out crying bitterly; they all saw it, and she attempted no further concealment.

"I wouldn't cry about it, miss," said William Smallbury compassionately. "Why not ask him softer like? I'm sure he'd come then. Gable is a true man in that way."

Bathsheba checked her grief and wiped her eyes. "Oh it is a wicked cruelty to me — it — is — it is!" she murmured.

“And he drives me to do what I wouldn’t; yes, he does! Tall, come indoors.”

After this collapse, not very dignified for the head of an establishment, she went into the house, Tall at her heels. Here she sat down and hastily scribbled a note between the small convulsive sobs of convalescence which follow a fit of crying, as a ground-swell follows a storm. The note was none the less polite for being written in a hurry. She held it at a distance, was about to fold it, then added these words at the bottom:

“Do not desert me, Gabriel!”

She looked a little redder in refolding it, and closed her lips as if thereby to suspend till too late the action of conscience in examining whether such strategy was justifiable. The note was dispatched as the message had been, and Bathsheba waited indoors for the result.

It was an anxious quarter of an hour that intervened between the messenger’s departure and the sound of the horse’s tramp again outside. She could not watch this time, but, leaning over the old bureau at which she had written the letter, closed her eyes, as if to keep out both hope and fear.

The case, however, was a promising one. Gabriel was not angry, he was simply neutral, although her first command had been so haughty. Such imperiousness would have damned a little less beauty; and, on the other hand, such beauty would have redeemed a little less imperiousness.

She went out when the horse was heard, and looked up. A mounted figure passed between her and the sky, and went on toward the field of sheep, the rider turning his face in receding. Gabriel looked at her. It was a moment when a woman’s eyes and tongue tell distinctly opposite tales. Bathsheba looked full of gratitude, and she said:

“Oh, Gabriel, how could you serve me so unkindly?”

Such a tenderly shaped reproach for his previous delay was

the one speech in the language that he could pardon for not being commendation of his readiness now.

Gabriel murmured a confused reply, and hastened on. She knew from the look which sentence in her note had brought him. Bathsheba followed to the field.

Gabriel was already among the turgid prostrate forms. He had flung off his coat, rolled up his shirt-sleeves, and taken from his pocket the instrument of salvation. It was a small tube or trochar with a lance passing down the inside; and Gabriel began to use it with a dexterity that would have graced a hospital surgeon. Passing his hand over the sheep's left flank, and selecting the proper point, he punctured the skin and rumen with the lance, as it stood in the tube; then he suddenly withdrew the lance, retaining the tube in its place. A current of air rushed up the tube forcibly enough to have extinguished a candle held at the orifice.

It has been said that mere ease after torment is delight for a time; and the countenance of these poor creatures expressed it now. Forty-nine operations were successfully performed. Owing to the great hurry necessitated by the far-gone state of some of the flock, Gabriel missed his aim in one case, and in one only — striking wide of the mark, and inflicting a mortal blow at once upon the suffering ewe. Four had died; three recovered without an operation. The total number of sheep which had thus strayed and injured themselves so dangerously was fifty-seven.

When the love-led man had ceased from his labors, Bathsheba came and looked him in the face.

“Gabriel, will you stay on with me?” she said, smiling winningly, and not troubling to bring her lips quite together again at the end, because there was going to be another smile soon.

“I will,” said Gabriel.

And she smiled on him again.

XXVI. EUGÉNIE AND OLD GRANDET¹

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

[Eugénie's cousin, Charles Grandet, has arrived from Paris the evening before this scene opens. He has come under unusual circumstances, though he knows it not, and he has come to a most unusual house. Charles's father, having failed in business, has killed himself and has sent his son to his brother's care. Père Grandet, Eugénie's father, is a wealthy provincial wine dealer and speculator, who thinks only of money. He is a miser, with the miser's genuine love of gold for gold's sake. He has arranged the family housekeeping on the strictest basis, counts the lumps of sugar, weighs out every supply, and holds his pathetic wife, his beautiful daughter, and his servant Nanon (who alone knows how to manage him) to sharp account. Into this extraordinary family, Charles, a graceful young sprig of fashion, is suddenly precipitated. Charles has been enjoying the favors of a wealthy woman of the Parisian smart set, and regards himself as a thorough man of the world. On his arrival he knows nothing of the tragedy — his father's failure and death — which hangs over his head. The burden of telling him rests on his uncle. The affectionate duty of giving him courage and comfort rests on his cousin Eugénie and her mother. Eugénie, who has never talked to a young man before in her life, has promptly fallen in love with him, and on the morning after his arrival is to be seen most solicitously preparing his breakfast — a feat requiring more courage, in the face of her father's certain disapproval, than anything she has ever done in her life.]

I.

AFTER two hours' thought and care, during which Eugénie jumped up twenty times from her work to see if the coffee were boiling, or to go and listen to the noise her cousin made in dressing, she succeeded in preparing a simple little breakfast, very inexpensive, but which, nevertheless, departed alarmingly from the inveterate customs of the house. The midday breakfast was always taken standing. Each took a slice of bread, a little fruit or some butter, and a glass of wine. As Eugénie looked at the table drawn up near the fire with an arm-chair

¹ Reprinted from *Eugénie Grandet* (translated by Katharine Prescott Wormeley) with the kind permission of Little, Brown and Company.

placed before her cousin's plate, at the two dishes of fruit, the egg-cup, the bottle of white wine, the bread, and the sugar heaped up in a saucer, she trembled in all her limbs at the mere thought of the look her father would give her if he should come in at that moment. She glanced often at the clock to see if her cousin could breakfast before the master's return.

"Don't be troubled, Eugénie; if your father comes in, I will take it all upon myself," said Madame Grandet.

Eugénie could not repress a tear.

"Oh, my good mother!" she cried, "I have never loved you enough."

Charles, who had been tramping about his room for some time, singing to himself, now came down. Happily, it was only eleven o'clock. The true Parisian! he had put as much dandyism into his dress as if he were in the château of the noble lady then travelling in Scotland. He came into the room with the smiling, courteous manner so becoming to youth, which made Eugénie's heart beat with mournful joy. He had taken the destruction of his castles in Anjou as a joke, and came up to his aunt gayly.

"Have you slept well, dear aunt? and you, too, my cousin?"

"Very well, monsieur; did you?" said Madame Grandet.

"I? perfectly."

"You must be hungry, cousin," said Eugénie; "will you take your seat?"

"I never breakfast before midday; I never get up till then. However, I fared so badly on the journey that I am glad to eat something at once. Besides —" here he pulled out the prettiest watch Breguet ever made. "Dear me! I am early, it is only eleven o'clock!"

"Early?" said Madame Grandet.

"Yes; but I wanted to put my things in order. Well, I shall be glad to have something to eat, — anything, it doesn't matter what, a chicken, a partridge."

"Holy Virgin!" exclaimed Nanon, overhearing the words.

“A partridge!” whispered Eugénie to herself; she would gladly have given the whole of her little hoard for a partridge.

“Come and sit down,” said his aunt.

The young dandy let himself drop into an easy-chair, just as a pretty woman falls gracefully upon a sofa. Eugénie and her mother took ordinary chairs and sat beside him, near the fire.

“Do you always live here?” said Charles, thinking the room uglier by daylight than it had seemed the night before.

“Always,” answered Eugénie, looking at him, “except during the vintage. Then we go and help Nanon, and live at the Abbaye des Noyers.”

“Don’t you ever take walks?”

“Sometimes on Sunday after vespers, when the weather is fine,” said Madame Grandet, “we walk on the bridge, or we go and watch the haymakers.”

“Have you a theatre?”

“Go to the theatre!” exclaimed Madame Grandet, “see a play! Why, monsieur, don’t you know it is a mortal sin?”

“See here, monsieur,” said Nanon, bringing in the eggs, “here are your chickens, — in the shell.”

“Oh! fresh eggs,” said Charles, who, like all people accustomed to luxury, had already forgotten about his partridge, “that is delicious; now, if you will give me the butter, my good girl.”

“Butter! then you can’t have the *galette*.”

“Nanon, bring the butter,” cried Eugénie.

The young girl watched her cousin as he cut his sippets, with as much pleasure as a grisette takes in a melodrama where innocence and virtue triumph. Charles, brought up by a charming mother, improved and trained by a woman of fashion, had the elegant, dainty, foppish movements of a coxcomb. The compassionate sympathy and tenderness of a young girl possess a power that is actually magnetic; so that Charles, finding himself the object of the attentions of his aunt and cousin, could not escape the influence of feelings which flowed towards

him, as it were, and inundated him. He gave Eugénie a bright, caressing look full of kindness, — a look which seemed itself a smile. He perceived, as his eyes lingered upon her, the exquisite harmony of features in the pure face, the grace of her innocent attitude, the magic clearness of the eyes, where young love sparkled and desire shone unconsciously.

“Ah! my dear cousin, if you were in full dress at the Opera, I assure you my aunt’s words would come true, — you would make the men commit the mortal sin of envy, and the women the sin of jealousy.”

The compliment went to Eugénie’s heart and set it beating, though she did not understand its meaning.

“Oh! cousin,” she said, “you are laughing at a poor little country girl.”

“If you knew me, my cousin, you would know that I abhor ridicule; it withers the heart and jars upon all my feelings.” Here he swallowed his buttered sippet very gracefully. “No, I really have not enough mind to make fun of others; and doubtless it is a great defect. In Paris, when they want to disparage a man, they say: ‘He has a good heart.’ The phrase means: ‘The poor fellow is as stupid as a rhinoceros.’ But as I am rich, and known to hit the bull’s-eye at thirty paces with any kind of pistol, and even in the fields, ridicule respects me.”

“My dear nephew, that bespeaks a good heart.”

“You have a very pretty ring,” said Eugénie; “is there any harm in asking to see it?”

Charles held out his hand after loosening the ring, and Eugénie blushed as she touched the pink nails of her cousin with the tips of her fingers.

“See, mamma, what beautiful workmanship.”

“My! there’s a lot of gold!” said Nanon, bringing in the coffee.

“What is that?” exclaimed Charles, laughing, as he pointed to an oblong pot of brown earthenware, glazed on the inside, and edged with a fringe of ashes, from the bottom of which the

coffee-grounds were bubbling up and falling in the boiling liquid.

"It is boiled coffee," said Nanon.

"Ah! my dear aunt, I shall at least leave one beneficent trace of my visit here. You are indeed behind the age! I must teach you to make good coffee in a Chaptal coffee-pot."

He tried to explain the process of a Chaptal coffee-pot.

"Gracious! if there are so many things as all that to do," said Nanon, "we may as well give up our lives to it. I shall never make coffee that way; I know that! Pray, who is to get the fodder for the cow while I make the coffee?"

"I will make it," said Eugénie.

"Child!" said Madame Grandet, looking at her daughter.

The word recalled to their minds the sorrow that was about to fall upon the unfortunate young man; the three women were silent, and looked at him with an air of commiseration that caught his attention.

"Is anything the matter, my cousin?" he said.

"Hush!" said Madame Grandet to Eugénie, who was about to answer; "you know, my daughter, that your father charged us not to speak to monsieur —"

"Say Charles," said young Grandet.

"Ah! you are called Charles? What a beautiful name!" cried Eugénie.

Presentiments of evil are almost always justified. At this moment Nanon, Madame Grandet, and Eugénie, who had all three been thinking with a shudder of the old man's return, heard the knock whose echoes they knew but too well.

"There's papa!" said Eugénie.

She removed the saucer filled with sugar, leaving a few pieces on the table-cloth; Nanon carried off the egg-cup; Madame Grandet sat up like a frightened hare. It was evidently a panic, which amazed Charles, who was wholly unable to understand it.

"Why! what is the matter?" he asked.

"My father has come," answered Eugénie.

"Well, what of that?"

Monsieur Grandet entered the room, threw his keen eye upon the table, upon Charles, and saw the whole thing.

"Ha! ha! so you have been making a feast for your nephew; very good, very good, very good indeed!" he said, without stuttering. "When the cat's away, the mice will play."

"Feast!" thought Charles, incapable of suspecting or imagining the rules and customs of the household.

"Give me my glass, Nanon," said the master.

Eugénie brought the glass. Grandet drew a horn-handled knife with a big blade from his breeches' pocket, cut a slice of bread, took a small bit of butter, spread it carefully on the bread, and ate it standing. At this moment Charles was sweetening his coffee. Père Grandet saw the bits of sugar, looked at his wife, who turned pale, and made three steps forward; he leaned down to the poor woman's ear and said,

"Where did you get all that sugar?"

"Nanon fetched it from Fessard's; there was none."

It is impossible to picture the profound interest the three women took in this mute scene. Nanon had left her kitchen and stood looking into the room to see what would happen. Charles, having tasted his coffee, found it bitter and glanced about for the sugar, which Grandet had already put away.

"What do you want?" said his uncle.

"The sugar."

"Put in more milk," answered the master of the house; "your coffee will taste sweeter."

Eugénie took the saucer which Grandet had put away and placed it on the table, looking calmly at her father as she did so. Most assuredly, the Parisian woman who held a silken ladder with her feeble arms to facilitate the flight of her lover, showed no greater courage than Eugénie displayed when she replaced

the sugar upon the table. The lover rewarded his mistress when she proudly showed him her beautiful bruised arm, and bathed every swollen vein with tears and kisses till it was cured with happiness. Charles, on the other hand, never so much as knew the secret of the cruel agitation that shook and bruised the heart of his cousin, crushed as it was by the look of the old miser.

“You are not eating your breakfast, wife.”

The poor helot came forward with a piteous look, cut herself a piece of bread, and took a pear. Eugénie boldly offered her father some grapes, saying,

“Taste my preserves, papa. My cousin, you will eat some, will you not? I went to get these pretty grapes expressly for you.”

“If no one stops them, they will pillage Saumur for you, nephew. When you have finished, we will go into the garden; I have something to tell you which can't be sweetened.”

Eugénie and her mother cast a look on Charles whose meaning the young man could not mistake.

“What is it you mean, uncle? Since the death of my poor mother” — at these words his voice softened — “no other sorrow can touch me.”

“My nephew, who knows by what afflictions God is pleased to try us?” said his aunt.

“Ta, ta, ta, ta,” said Grandet, “there's your nonsense beginning. I am sorry to see those white hands of yours, nephew;” and he showed the shoulder-of-mutton fists which Nature had put at the end of his own arms. “There's a pair of hands made to pick up silver pieces. You've been brought up to put your feet in the kid out of which we make the purses we keep our money in. A bad look-out! Very bad!”

“What do you mean, uncle? I'll be hanged if I understand a single word of what you are saying.”

“Come!” said Grandet.

The miser closed the blade of his knife with a snap, drank the last of his wine, and opened the door.

[After the blow has fallen and Charles has somewhat recovered from his first shock of grief, he and Eugénie are drawn together by the inevitable bonds of youth and sympathy. With Eugénie it is the one love of a life. She would give anything to Charles that he might ask. But Charles, though he loves her as much as he could love anybody, is of a shallow, worldly nature, incapable of appreciating her. In reality Charles is something like his uncle, the miser. It is Eugénie's fate to give her happiness, without return, to these two men.

Eugénie's father has bestowed upon her every year, for his own pleasure, rare gold pieces, Lisbonnines and Génovines, altogether a considerable pile by now, worth five thousand nine hundred and fifty-nine francs in actual value, and even more to collectors. This yellow hoard Père Grandet is in the habit of demanding a sight of on Eugénie's birthday or on New Year's day. Therefore, for Eugénie to give it to Charles requires courage.

But Eugénie sees a letter, in which Charles, who thinks himself badly in debt, tells a friend in Paris to sell all his belongings. She at once offers her purse of gold pieces. In return for it Charles gives her a richly jewelled picture of his mother, which she treasures in the drawer where she had kept the gold. For several weeks now, while Charles remains, he is romantically in love with Eugénie. But it is shortly arranged that he shall go away to make his fortune out of France where his father's story will not embarrass him. Eugénie is left to fight with her father her battle for independence. Her character, given its tonic by past events and emancipated by her complete devotion to Charles, is equal to the struggle.]

II

Two months went by. This domestic life, once so monotonous, was now quickened with the intense interest of a secret that bound these women intimately together. For them Charles lived and moved beneath the grim gray rafters of the hall. Night and morning Eugénie opened the dressing-case and gazed at the portrait of her aunt. One Sunday morning her mother surprised her as she stood absorbed in finding her cousin's features in his mother's face. Madame Grandet was then for the first time admitted into the terrible secret of the exchange made by Charles against her daughter's treasure.

"You gave him all!" cried the poor mother, terrified. "What will you say to your father on New Year's Day when he asks to see your gold?"

Eugénie's eyes grew fixed, and the two women lived through mortal terror for more than half the morning. They were so troubled in mind that they missed high Mass, and only went to the military service. In three days the year 1819 would come to an end. In three days a terrible drama would begin, a bourgeois tragedy, without poison, or dagger, or the spilling of blood; but — as regards the actors in it — more cruel than all the fabled horrors in the family of the Atrides.

"What will become of us?" said Madame Grandet to her daughter, letting her knitting fall upon her knees.

The poor mother had gone through such anxiety for the past two months that the woollen sleeves which she needed for the coming winter were not yet finished. This domestic fact, insignificant as it seems, bore sad results. For want of those sleeves, a chill seized her in the midst of a sweat caused by a terrible explosion of anger on the part of her husband.

"I have been thinking, my poor child, that if you had confided your secret to me we should have had time to write to Monsieur des Grassins in Paris. He might have sent us gold pieces like yours; though Grandet knows them all, perhaps —"

"Where could we have got the money?"

"I would have pledged my own property. Besides, Monsieur des Grassins would have —"

"It is too late," said Eugénie in a broken, hollow voice. "To-morrow morning we must go and wish him a happy New Year in his chamber."

"But, my daughter, why should I not consult the Cruchots?"

"No, no; it would be delivering me up to them, and putting ourselves in their power. Besides, I have chosen my course. I have done right. I repent of nothing. God will protect me. His will be done! Ah! mother, if you had read his letter, you, too, would have thought only of him."

The next morning, January 1, 1820, the horrible fear to which mother and daughter were a prey suggested to their minds a

natural excuse by which to escape the solemn entrance into Grandet's chamber. The winter of 1819-1820 was one of the coldest of that epoch. The snow encumbered the roofs.

Madame Grandet called to her husband as soon as she heard him stirring in his chamber, and said,

"Grandet, will you let Nanon light a fire here for me? The cold is so sharp that I am freezing under the bedclothes. At my age I need some comforts. Besides," she added, after a slight pause, "Eugénie shall come and dress here; the poor child might get an illness from dressing in her cold room in such weather. Then we will go and wish you a happy New Year beside the fire in the hall."

"Ta, ta, ta, ta, what a tongue! a pretty way to begin the new year, Ma'ame Grandet! You never talked so much before; but you haven't been sopping your bread in wine, I know that."

There was a moment's silence.

"Well," resumed the goodman, who no doubt had some reason of his own for agreeing to his wife's request, "I'll do what you ask, Madame Grandet. You are a good woman, and I don't want any harm to happen to you at your time of life, — though as a general thing the Bertellières are as sound as a roach. Hein! isn't that so?" he added after a pause. "Well, I forgive them; we got their property in the end." And he coughed.

"You are very gay this morning, monsieur," said the poor woman gravely.

"I'm always gay, —

"Gai, gai, gai, le tonnelier,
Raccommodez votre cuvier!"

he answered, entering his wife's room fully dressed. "Yes, on my word, it is cold enough to freeze you solid. We shall have a fine breakfast, wife. Des Grassins has sent me a pâté-de-foie-gras truffled! I am going now to get it at the coach-office.

There'll be a double napoleon for Eugénie in the package," he whispered in Madame Grandet's ear. "I have no gold left, wife. I had a few stray pieces — I don't mind telling you that — but I had to let them go in business."

Then, by way of celebrating the new year, he kissed her on the forehead.

"Eugénie," cried the mother, when Grandet was fairly gone, "I don't know which side of the bed your father got out of, but he is good-tempered this morning. Perhaps we shall come out safe after all."

"What's happened to the master?" said Nanon, entering her mistress's room to light the fire. "First place, he said, 'Good-morning; happy New Year, you big fool! Go and light my wife's fire, she's cold;' and then, didn't I feel silly when he held out his hand and gave me a six-franc piece, which isn't worn one bit? Just look at it, madame! Oh, the kind man! He is a good man, that's a fact. There are some people who the older they get the harder they grow; but he, — why he's getting soft and improving with time, like your ratafia! He is a good, good man —"

The secret of Grandet's joy lay in the complete success of his speculation. [One of his speculations in government securities.]

The family did not breakfast that day until ten o'clock.

"Your father will not ask to see your gold downstairs," said Madame Grandet as they got back from Mass. "You must pretend to be very chilly. We may have time to replace the treasure before your fête-day."

Grandet came down the staircase thinking of his splendid speculation in government securities, and wondering how he could metamorphose his Parisian silver into solid gold; he was making up his mind to invest in this way everything he could lay hands on until the Funds should reach a par value. Fatal revery for Eugénie! As soon as he came in, the two women wished him a happy New Year, — his daughter by putting her

arms round his neck and caressing him; Madame Grandet gravely and with dignity.

“Ha! ha! my child,” he said, kissing his daughter on both cheeks. “I work for you, don’t you see? I think of your happiness. Must have money to be happy. Without money there’s not a particle of happiness. Here! there’s a new napoleon for you. I sent to Paris for it. On my word of honor, it’s all the gold I have; you are the only one that has got any gold. I want to see your gold, little one.”

“Oh! it is too cold; let us have breakfast,” answered Eugénie.

“Well, after breakfast, then; it will help the digestion. That fat des Grassins sent me the pâté. Eat as much as you like, my children, it cost nothing. Des Grassins is getting along very well. I am satisfied with him. The old fish is doing Charles a good service, and gratis too. He is making a very good settlement of that poor deceased Grandet’s business. Hoo! hoo!” he muttered, with his mouth full, after a pause, “how good it is! Eat some, wife; that will feed you for at least two days.”

“I am not hungry. I am very, poorly; you know that.”

“Ah, bah! you can stuff yourself as full as you please without danger, you’re a Bertellière; they are all hearty. You are a bit yellow, that’s true; but I like yellow, myself.”

The expectation of ignominious and public death is perhaps less horrible to a condemned criminal than the anticipation of what was coming after breakfast to Madame Grandet and Eugénie. The more gleefully the old man talked and ate, the more their hearts shrank within them. The daughter, however, had an inward prop at this crisis,—she gathered strength through love.

“For him! for him!” she cried within her, “I would die a thousand deaths.”

At the thought, she shot a glance at her mother which flamed with courage.

“Clear away,” said Grandet to Nanon when, about eleven

o'clock, breakfast was over, "but leave the table. We can spread your little treasure upon it," he said, looking at Eugénie. "Little? Faith! no; it isn't little. You possess, in actual value, five thousand nine hundred and fifty-nine francs and the forty I gave you just now. That makes six thousand francs, less one. Well, now see here, little one! I'll give you that one franc to make up the round number. Hey! what are you listening for, Nanon? Mind your own business; go and do your work."

Nanon disappeared.

"Now listen, Eugénie: you must give me back your gold. You won't refuse your father, my little girl, hein?"

The two women were dumb.

"I have no gold myself. I had some, but it is all gone. I'll give you in return six thousand francs in *livres*, and you are to put them just where I tell you. You mustn't think anything more about your 'dozen.' When I marry you (which will be soon) I shall get you a husband who can give you the finest 'dozen' ever seen in the provinces. Now attend to me, little girl. There's a fine chance for you; you can put your six thousand francs into government funds, and you will receive every six months nearly two hundred francs interest, without taxes, or repairs, or frost, or hail, or floods, or anything else to swallow up the money. Perhaps you don't like to part with your gold, hey, my girl? Never mind, bring it to me all the same. I'll get you some more like it, — like those Dutch coins and the *portugaises*, the rupees of Mogul, and the *genovines*, — I'll give you some more on your fête-days, and in three years you'll have got back half your little treasure. What's that you say? Look up, now. Come, go and get it, the precious metal. You ought to kiss me on the eyelids for telling you the secrets and the mysteries of the life and death of money. Yes, silver and gold live and swarm like men; they come, and go, and sweat, and multiply — "

Eugénie rose; but after making a few steps towards the door she turned abruptly, looked her father in the face, and said,

“I have not got *my* gold.”

“You have not got your gold!” cried Grandet, starting up erect, like a horse that hears a cannon fired beside him.

“No, I have not got it.”

“You are mistaken, Eugénie.”

“No.”

“By the shears of my father!”

Whenever the old man swore that oath the rafters trembled.

“Holy Virgin! Madame is turning pale,” cried Nanon.

“Grandet, your anger will kill me,” said the poor mother.

“Ta, ta, ta, ta! nonsense; you never die in your family! Eugénie, what have you done with your gold?” he cried, rushing upon her.

“Monsieur,” said the daughter, falling at Madame Grandet’s knees, “my mother is ill. Look at her; do not kill her.”

Grandet was frightened by the pallor which overspread his wife’s face, usually so yellow.

“Nanon, help me to bed,” said the poor woman in a feeble voice; “I am dying — ”

Nanon gave her mistress an arm, Eugénie gave her another; but it was only with infinite difficulty that they could get her upstairs, she fell with exhaustion at every step. Grandet remained alone. However, in a few moments he went up six or eight stairs and called out, —

“Eugénie, when your mother is in bed, come down.”

“Yes, father.”

She soon came, after reassuring her mother.

“My daughter,” said Grandet, “you will now tell me what you have done with your gold.”

“My father, if you make me presents of which I am not the sole mistress, take them back,” she answered coldly, picking up the napoleon from the chimney-piece and offering it to him.

Grandet seized the coin and slipped it into his breeches pocket.

"I shall certainly never give you anything again. Not so much as that!" he said, clicking his thumb-nail against a front tooth. "Do you dare to despise your father? Have you no confidence in him? Don't you know what a father is? If he is nothing for you, he is nothing at all. Where is your gold?"

"Father, I love and respect you, in spite of your anger; but I humbly ask you to remember that I am twenty-three years old. You have told me often that I have attained my majority, and I do not forget it. I have used my money as I chose to use it, and you may be sure that it was put to a good use —"

"What use?"

"That is an inviolable secret," she answered. "Have you no secrets?"

"I am the head of the family; I have my own affairs."

"And this is mine."

"It must be something bad if you can't tell it to your father, Mademoiselle Grandet."

"It is good, and I cannot tell it to my father."

"At least you can tell me when you parted with your gold?"

Eugénie made a negative motion with her head.

"You had it on your birthday, hein?"

She grew as crafty through love as her father was through avarice, and reiterated the negative sign.

"Was there ever such obstinacy! It's a theft," cried Grandet, his voice going up in a crescendo which gradually echoed through the house. "What! here, in my own home, under my very eyes, somebody has taken your gold! — the only gold we have! — and I'm not to know who has got it! Gold is a precious thing. Virtuous girls go wrong sometimes, and give — I don't know what; they do it among the great people, and even among the bourgeoisie. But give their gold! — for you have given it to some one, hein? —"

Eugénie was silent and impassive.

“Was there ever such a daughter? Is it possible that I am your father? If you have invested it anywhere, you must have a receipt — ”

“Was I free — yes or no — to do what I would with my own? Was it not mine?”

“You are a child.”

“Of age.”

Dumbfounded by his daughter's logic, Grandet turned pale and stamped and swore. When at last he found words, he cried: “Serpent! Cursed girl! Ah, deceitful creature! You know I love you, and you take advantage of it. She'd cut her father's throat! Good God! you've given our fortune to that ne'er-do-well, — that dandy with morocco boots! By the shears of my father! I can't disinherit you, but I curse you, — you and your cousin and your children! Nothing good will come of it! Do you hear! If it was to Charles — but, no; it's impossible. What! has that wretched fellow robbed me? —”

He looked at his daughter, who continued cold and silent.

“She won't stir; she won't flinch! She's more Grandet than I'm Grandet! Ha! you have not given your gold for nothing? Come, speak the truth!”

Eugénie looked at her father with a sarcastic expression that stung him.

“Eugénie, you are here, in my house, — in your father's house. If you wish to stay here, you must submit yourself to me. The priests tell you to obey me.” Eugénie bowed her head. “You affront me in all I hold most dear. I will not see you again till you submit. Go to your chamber. You will stay there till I give you permission to leave it. Nanon will bring you bread and water. You hear me — go!”

XXVII. FRANÇOIS VILLON ¹

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

[The first story of importance which Stevenson wrote was *A Lodging for the Night*, a tale about the poet and house-breaker, François Villon. Just before he wrote this story — perhaps his best — he had been studying the life and writings of Villon and had written an essay on the poet's character. We therefore print here enough of the essay to show how Stevenson's serious treatment of an idea in biography is the basis for his still more thorough and serious treatment of an idea in fiction. The essay is composed of a number of *characterizing situations*. The story is a logically imagined *marking incident*.]

PERHAPS one of the most curious revolutions in literary history is the sudden bull's-eye light cast by M. Longnon on the obscure existence of François Villon. His book is not remarkable merely as a chapter of biography exhumed after four centuries. To readers of the poet it will recall, with a flavor of satire, that characteristic passage in which he bequeaths his spectacles — with a humorous reservation of the case — to the hospital for blind paupers known as the Fifteen-Score. Thus equipped, let the blind paupers go and separate the good from the bad in the cemetery of the Innocents! For his own part the poet can see no distinction. Much have the dead people made of their advantages. What does it matter now that they have lain in state beds and nourished portly bodies upon cakes and cream! Here they all lie, to be trodden in the mud; the large estate and the small, sounding virtue and adroit or powerful vice, in very much the same condition; and a bishop not to be distinguished from a lamplighter with even the strongest spectacles.

["Such," says Stevenson, "was Villon's cynical philosophy." He shows how Villon, poor, dependent, well enough educated, yet lacking any sense of obligation to

¹ Reprinted from *Studies of Men and Books*.

his benefactors, was early initiated into the ways of the crooks of the student quarter in Paris. So the poet begins to lead that life of thievery that he celebrates in the ballads.]¹

And yet it is not as a thief, but as a homicide, that he makes his first appearance before angry justice. One June 5, 1455, when he was about twenty-four, and had been Master of Arts for a matter of three years, we behold him for the first time quite definitely. Angry justice had, as it were, photographed him in the act of his homicide; and M. Longnon, rummaging among old deeds, has turned up the negative and printed it off for our instruction. Villon had been supping — copiously we may believe — and sat on a stone bench in front of the Church of St. Benoit, in company with a priest called Gilles and a woman of the name of Isabeau. It was nine o'clock, a mighty late hour for the period, and evidently a fine summer's night. Master François carried a mantle, like a prudent man, to keep him from the dews (*serain*), and had a sword below it dangling from his girdle. So these three dallied in front of St. Benoit, taking their pleasure (*pour soy esbatre*). Suddenly there arrived upon the scene a priest, Philippe Chermoye or Sermaise, also with a sword and cloak, and accompanied by one Master Jehan le Mardi. Sermaise, according to Villon's account, which is all we have to go upon, came up blustering and denying God; as Villon rose to make room for him upon the bench, thrust him rudely back into his place; and finally drew his sword and cut open his lower lip, by what I should imagine was a very clumsy stroke. Up to this point, Villon professes to have been a model of courtesy, even of febleness; and the brawl, in his version, reads like the fable of the wolf and the lamb. But now the lamb was roused; he drew his sword, stabbed Sermaise in the groin, knocked him on the head with a big stone and then, leaving him to his fate, went away to have his own lip doctored

¹ These passages from Stevenson exist in much the same form in *Robert Louis Stevenson: How to Know Him*, by Richard Ashley Rice. Bobbs-Merrill Co.

by a barber of the name of Fouquet. In one version, he says that Gilles, Isabeau, and Le Mardi ran away at the first high words, and that he and Sermaise had it out alone; in another, Le Mardi is represented as returning and wresting Villon's sword from him: the reader may please himself. Sermaise was picked up, lay all that night in the prison of St. Benoit, where he was examined by an official of the Châtelet and expressly pardoned Villon, and died on the following Saturday in the Hotel Dieu.

This, as I have said, was in June. Not before January of the next year could Villon extract a pardon from the king; but while his hand was in, he got two. One is for "François des Loges, alias (*autrement dit*) de Villon;" and the other runs in the name of François de Montcorvier. Nay, it appears there was a further complication; for in the narrative of the first of these documents, it is mentioned that he passed himself off upon Fouquet, the barber-surgeon, as one Michel Mouton. M. Longnon has a theory that this unhappy accident with Sermaise was the cause of Villon's subsequent irregularities; and that up to that moment he had been the pink of good behavior. But the matter has to my eyes a more dubious air. A pardon necessary for Des Loges and another for Montcorbier? and these two the same person? and one or both of them known by the *alias* of Villon, however honestly come by? and lastly, in the heat of the moment, a fourth name thrown out with an assured countenance? A ship is not to be trusted that sails under so many colors. This is not the simple bearing of innocence. No — the young master was already treading crooked paths; already, he would start and blench at a hand upon his shoulder, with the look we know so well in the face of Hogarth's Idle Apprentice; already in the blue devils, he would see Henry Cousin, the executor of high justice, going in dolorous procession toward Montfaucon, and hear the wind and the birds crying around Paris gibbet.

[This is a sample exploit; and here is another which began at a memorable supper at the Mule Tavern, in front of the Church of St. Mathurin. One of Villon's crew, Tabary, had ordered the supper. Others joined them at the feast.]

This supper party was to be his first introduction to De Cayeux and Petit-Jehan, which was probably a matter of some concern to the poor man's muddy wits; in the sequel, at least, he speaks of both with an undisguised respect, based on professional inferiority in the matter of picklocks. Dom Nicolas, a Picardy monk, was the fifth and last at table. When supper had been despatched and fairly washed down, we may suppose, with white Baigneux or red Beaune, which were favorite wines among the fellowship, Tabary was solemnly sworn over to secrecy on the night's performances; and the party left the Mule and proceeded to an unoccupied house belonging to Robert de Saint-Simon. This, over a low wall, they entered without difficulty. All but Tabary took off their upper garments; a ladder was found and applied to the high wall which separated Saint-Simon's house from the court of the College of Navarre; the four fellows in their shirt-sleeves (as we might say) clambered over in a twinkling: and Master Guy Tabary remained alone beside the overcoats. From the court the burglars made their way into the vestry of the chapel, where they found a large chest, strengthened with iron bands and closed with four locks. One of these locks they picked, and then, by levering up the corner, forced the other three. Inside was a small coffer, of walnut wood, also barred with iron, but fastened with only three locks, which were all comfortably picked by the way of the keyhole. In the walnut coffer — a joyous sight by our thieves' lantern — were five hundred crowns of gold. There was some talk of opening the aumries, where, if they had only known, a booty eight or nine times greater lay ready to their hand, but one of the party (I have a humorous suspicion it was Dom Nicolas, the Picardy monk) hurried them away. It was ten o'clock when they mounted the ladder; it was about midnight before

Tabary beheld them coming back. To him they gave ten crowns and promised a share of a two-crown dinner on the morrow; whereat we may suppose his mouth watered. In the course of time, he got wind of the real amount of their booty and understood how scurvily he had been used; but he seems to have borne no malice. How could he, against such superb operators as Petit-Jehan and De Cayeux; or a person like Villon, who could have made a new improper romance out of his own head, instead of merely copying an old one with mechanical right hand.

[Such affairs are all one knows of Villon's history. His temperament is illustrated by them and his poems, especially by the *Large Testament*, "that admirable and despicable performance." The date of this work "is the last date in the poet's biography," Stevenson remarks. "How or when he died, whether decently in bed or trussed up to a gallows, remains a riddle for foolhardy commentators."]

XXVIII. A LODGING FOR THE NIGHT¹

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

[“Any one who may have tried it will tell us that to make a successful short story out of the same materials with which he has constructed a critical essay, to turn suddenly from appreciator into creator, is a very rare gift. Certainly it implies an intimacy with the subject, a rapid and thorough absorption of detail, that most students of literature and biography never even dream of striving for. Yet all that this comes to, if viewed from a slightly different angle, is a really sympathetic comprehension of a man. It would be a thesis which I should like to defend that anybody who could write an essay as thorough as Stevenson’s, could also write a story as vivid as *A Lodging for the Night*. My ground of argument would be that the story and the essay have their essential points in common; a personal realization of Villon’s humor, a perfectly suggested local background, and the taste for the sort of moral frame which best suits the portrait. The essay begins with a whimsical illustration of Villon’s philosophy of life and death. The story begins with an illustration of the actual effect of death on Villon’s imagination while he struggles to let his whimsical philosophy reassert itself. The essay proceeds to detail a set of his escapades and to draw the moral. The story selects one typical escapade, embellishes it with moralized dialogue to suit, and then, like the essay, thrusts the hero forth into the uncertainty of his vagabond future.” —Quoted from *Robert Louis Stevenson: How to Know Him*, by Richard Ashley Rice.]

It was late in November, 1456. The snow fell over Paris with rigorous, relentless persistence; sometimes the wind made a sally and scattered it in flying vortices; sometimes there was a lull, and flake after flake descended out of the black night air, silent, circuitous, interminable. To poor people, looking up under moist eyebrows, it seemed a wonder where it all came from. Master Francis Villon had propounded an alternative that afternoon at a tavern window: was it only Pagan Jupiter plucking geese upon Olympus? or were the holy angels moulting? He was only a poor Master of Arts, he went on; and as the question somewhat touched upon divinity, he durst not venture to conclude. A silly old priest from Montargis,

¹ Reprinted from *New Arabian Nights*.

who was among the company, treated the young rascal to a bottle of wine in honor of the jest and grimaces with which it was accompanied, and swore on his own white beard that he had been just such another irreverent dog when he was Villon's age.

The air was raw and pointed, but not far below freezing; and the flakes were large, damp, and adhesive. The whole city was sheeted up. An army might have marched from end to end and not a footfall given the alarm. If there were any belated birds in heaven, they saw the island like a large white patch, and the bridges like slim white spars, on the black ground of the river. High up overhead the snow settled among the tracery of the cathedral towers. Many a niche was drifted full; many a statue wore a long white bonnet on its grotesque or sainted head. The gargoyles had been transformed into great false noses, drooping towards the point. The crockets were like upright pillows, swollen on one side. In the intervals of the wind, there was a dull sound of dripping about the precincts of the church.

The cemetery of St. John had taken its own share of the snow. All the graves were decently covered; tall white house-tops stood around in grave array; worthy burghers were long ago in bed, be-night-capped like their domiciles; there was no light in all the neighborhood but a little peep from a lamp that hung swinging in the church choir, and tossed the shadows to and fro in time to its oscillations. The clock was hard on ten when the patrol went by with halberds and a lantern, beating their hands; and they saw nothing suspicious about the cemetery of St. John.

Yet there was a small house, backed up against the cemetery wall, which was still awake, and awake to evil purpose, in that snoring district. There was not much to betray it from without; only a stream of warm vapor from the chimney-top, a patch where the snow melted on the roof, and a few half-obliterated footprints at the door. But within, behind the shuttered

windows, Master Francis Villon the poet, and some of the thievish crew with whom he consorted were keeping the night alive and passing round the bottle.

A great pile of living embers diffused a strong and ruddy glow from the arched chimney. Before this straddled Dom Nicolas, the Picardy monk, with his skirts picked up and his fat legs bared to the comfortable warmth. His dilated shadow cut the room in half; and the firelight only escaped on either side of his broad person, and in a little pool between his outspread feet. His face had the beery, bruised appearance of the continual drinker's; it was covered with a network of congested veins, purple in ordinary circumstances, but now pale violet, for even with his back to the fire the cold pinched him on the other side. His cowl had half fallen back, and made a strange excrescence on either side of his bull neck. So he straddled, grumbling, and cut the room in half with the shadow of his portly frame.

On the right, Villon and Guy Tabary were huddled together over a scrap of parchment; Villon making a ballade which he was to call the *Ballade of Roast Fish*, and Tabary spluttering admiration at his shoulder. The poet was a rag of a man, dark, little, and lean, with hollow cheeks and thin black locks. He carried his four-and-twenty years with feverish animation. Greed had made folds about his eyes, evil smiles had puckered his mouth. The wolf and pig struggled together in his face. It was an eloquent, sharp, ugly, earthly countenance. His hands were small and prehensile, with fingers knotted like a cord; and they were continually flickering in front of him in violent and expressive pantomime. As for Tabary, a broad, complacent, admiring imbecility breathed from his squash nose and slobbering lips: he had become a thief, just as he might have become the most decent of burgesses, by the imperious chance that rules the lives of human geese and human donkeys.

At the monk's other hand, Montigny and Thevenin Pensete

played a game of chance. About the first there clung some flavor of good birth and training, as about a fallen angel; something long, lithe, and courtly in the person; something aquiline and darkling in the face. Thevenin, poor soul, was in great feather: he had done a good stroke of knavery that afternoon in the Faubourg St. Jacques, and all night he had been gaining from Montigny. A flat smile illuminated his face; his bald head shone rosily in a garland of red curls; his little protuberant stomach shook with silent chucklings as he swept in his gains.

"Doubles or quits?" said Thevenin.

Montigny nodded grimly.

"*Some may prefer to dine in state,*" wrote Villon, "*On bread and cheese on silver plate. Or, or — help me out, Guido!*"

Tabary giggled.

"*Or parsley on a golden dish,*" scribbled the poet.

The wind was freshening without; it drove the snow before it, and sometimes raised its voice in a victorious whoop, and made sepulchral grumblings in the chimney. The cold was growing sharper as the night went on. Villon, protruding his lips, imitated the gust with something between a whistle and a groan. It was an eerie, uncomfortable talent of the poet's, much detested by the Picardy monk.

"Can't you hear it rattle in the gibbet?" said Villon. "They are all dancing the devil's jig on nothing, up there. You may dance, my gallants, you'll be none the warmer! Whew! what a gust! Down went somebody just now! A medlar the fewer on the three-legged medlar-tree! — I say, Dom Nicolas, it'll be cold to-night on the St. Denis Road?" he asked.

Dom Nicolas winked both his big eyes, and seemed to choke upon his Adam's apple. Montfaucon, the great grisly Paris gibbet, stood hard by the St. Denis Road, and the pleasantry touched him on the raw. As for Tabary, he laughed immoderately over the medlars; he had never heard anything more light-hearted; and he held his sides and crowed. Villon fetched

him a flip on the nose, which turned his mirth into an attack of coughing.

"Oh, stop that row," said Villon, "and think of rhymes to 'fish.'"

"Doubles or quits," said Montigny doggedly.

"With all my heart," quoth Thevenin.

"Is there any more in that bottle?" asked the monk.

"Open another," said Villon. "How do you ever hope to fill that big hogshead, your body, with little things like bottles? And how do you expect to get to heaven? How many angels, do you fancy, can be spared to carry up a single monk from Picardy? Or do you think yourself another Elias — and they'll send the coach for you?"

"*Hominibus impossibile*," replied the monk as he filled his glass.

Tabary was in ecstasies.

Villon filliped his nose again.

"Laugh at my jokes, if you like," he said.

"It was very good," objected Tabary.

Villon made a face at him. "Think of rhymes to 'fish,'" he said. "What have you to do with Latin? You'll wish you knew none of it at the great assizes, when the devil calls for Guido Tabary, clericus — the devil with the hump-back and red-hot finger-nails. Talking of the devil," he added in a whisper, "look at Montigny!"

All three peered covertly at the gamester. He did not seem to be enjoying his luck. His mouth was a little to a side; one nostril nearly shut, and the other much inflated. The black dog was on his back, as people say, in terrifying nursery metaphor; and he breathed hard under the gruesome burden.

"He looks as if he could knife him," whispered Tabary, with round eyes.

The monk shuddered, and turned his face and spread his open

hands to the red embers. It was the cold that thus affected Dom Nicolas, and not any excess of moral sensibility.

"Come, now," said Villon — "about this ballade. How does it run so far?" And beating time with his hand, he read it aloud to Tabary.

They were interrupted at the fourth rhyme by a brief and fatal movement among the gamesters. The round was completed, and Thevenin was just opening his mouth to claim another victory, when Montigny leaped up, swift as an adder, and stabbed him to the heart. The blow took effect before he had time to utter a cry, before he had time to move. A tremor or two convulsed his frame; his hands opened and shut, his heels rattled on the floor; then his head rolled backward over one shoulder with the eyes wide open, and Thevenin Pensete's spirit had returned to Him who made it.

Every one sprang to his feet; but the business was over in two twos. The four living fellows looked at each other in rather a ghastly fashion; the dead man contemplating a corner of the roof with a singular and ugly leer.

"My God!" said Tabary; and he began to pray in Latin.

Villon broke out into hysterical laughter. He came a step forward and ducked a ridiculous bow at Thevenin, and laughed still louder. Then he sat down suddenly, all of a heap, upon a stool, and continued laughing bitterly as though he would shake himself to pieces.

Montigny recovered his composure first.

"Let's see what he has about him," he remarked, and he picked the dead man's pockets with a practiced hand, and divided the money into four equal portions on the table. "There's for you," he said.

The monk received his share with a deep sigh and a single stealthy glance at the dead Thevenin, who was beginning to sink into himself and topple sideways off the chair.

"We're all in for it," cried Villon, swallowing his mirth.

“It’s a hanging job for every man jack of us that’s here — not to speak of those who aren’t.” He made a shocking gesture in the air with his raised right hand, and put out his tongue and threw his head on one side, so as to counterfeit the appearance of one who has been hanged. Then he pocketed his share of the spoil, and executed a shuffle with his feet as if to restore the circulation. .

Tabary was the last to help himself; he made a dash at the money and retired to the other end of the apartment.

Montigny stuck Thevenin upright in the chair, and drew out the dagger, which was followed by a jet of blood.

“You fellows had better be moving,” he said, as he wiped the blade on his victim’s doublet.

“I think we had,” returned Villon, with a gulp. “Damn his fat head!” he broke out. “It sticks in my throat like phlegm. What right has a man to have red hair when he is dead?” And he fell all of a heap again upon the stool, and fairly covered his face with his hands.

Montigny and Dom Nicolas laughed aloud, even Tabary feebly chiming in.

“Cry baby,” said the monk.

“I always said he was a woman,” added Montigny, with a sneer. “Sit up, can’t you?” he went on, giving another shake to the murdered body. “Tread out that fire, Nick!”

But Nick was better employed; he was quietly taking Villon’s purse, as the poet sat, limp and trembling, on the stool where he had been making a ballade not three minutes before. Montigny and Tabary dumbly demanded a share of the booty, which the monk silently promised as he passed the little bag into the bosom of his gown. In many ways an artistic nature unfits a man for practical existence.

No sooner had the theft been accomplished than Villon shook himself, jumped to his feet, and began helping to scatter and extinguish the embers. Meanwhile Montigny opened the door

and cautiously peered into the street. The coast was clear; there was no meddlesome patrol in sight. Still it was judged wiser to slip out severally; and as Villon was himself in a hurry to escape from the neighborhood of the dead Thevenin, and the rest were in a still greater hurry to get rid of him before he should discover the loss of his money, he was the first by general consent to issue forth into the street.

The wind had triumphed and swept all the clouds from heaven. Only a few vapors, as thin as moonlight, fledged rapidly across the stars. It was bitter cold; and by a common optical effect, things seemed almost more definite than in the broadest daylight. The sleeping city was absolutely still; a company of white hoods, a field full of little alps, below the twinkling stars. Villon cursed his fortune. Would it were still snowing! Now, wherever he went, he left an indelible trail behind him on the glittering streets; wherever he went he was still tethered to the house by the cemetery of St. John; wherever he went he must weave, with his own plodding feet, the rope that bound him to the crime and would bind him to the gallows. The leer of the dead man came back to him with a new significance. He snapped his fingers as if to pluck up his own spirits and choosing a street at random, stepped boldly forward in the snow.

Two things preoccupied him as he went: the aspect of the gallows at Montfaucon in this bright, windy phase of the night's existence, for one; and for another, the look of the dead man with his bald head and garland of red curls. Both struck cold upon his heart, and he kept quickening his pace as if he could escape from unpleasant thoughts by mere fleetness of foot. Sometimes he looked back over his shoulder with a sudden nervous jerk; but he was the only moving thing in the white streets, except when the wind swooped round a corner and threw up the snow, which was beginning to freeze, in spouts of glittering dust.

Suddenly he saw, a long way before him, a black clump and a couple of lanterns. The clump was in motion, and the lanterns

swung as though carried by men walking. It was a patrol. And though it was merely crossing his line of march he judged it wiser to get out of eyeshot as speedily as he could. He was not in the humor to be challenged, and he was conscious of making a very conspicuous mark upon the snow. Just on his left hand there stood a great hotel, with some turrets and a large porch before the door; it was half-ruinous, he remembered, and had long stood empty; and so he made three steps of it, and jumped into the shelter of the porch. It was pretty dark inside, after the glimmer of the snowy streets, and he was groping forward with outspread hands, when he stumbled over some substance which offered an indescribable mixture of resistances, hard and soft, firm and loose. His heart gave a leap, and he sprang two steps back and stared dreadfully at the obstacle. Then he gave a little laugh of relief. It was only a woman, and she dead. He knelt beside her to make sure upon this latter point. She was freezing cold, and rigid like a stick. A little ragged finery fluttered in the wind about her hair, and her cheeks had been heavily rouged that same afternoon. Her pockets were quite empty; but in her stocking, underneath the garter, Villon found two of the small coins that went by the name of whites. It was little enough; but it was always something; and the poet was moved with a deep sense of pathos that she should have died before she had spent her money. That seemed to him a dark and pitiable mystery; and he looked from the coins in his hand to the dead woman, and back again to the coins, shaking his head over the riddle of man's life. Henry V of England, dying at Vincennes just after he had conquered France, and this poor jade cut off by a cold draught in a great man's doorway, before she had time to spend her couple of whites — it seemed a cruel way to carry on the world. Two whites would have taken such a little while to squander; and yet it would have been one more good taste in the mouth, one more smack of the lips, before the devil got the soul, and the body

was left to birds and vermin. He would like to use all his tallow before the light was blown out and the lantern broken.

While these thoughts were passing through his mind, he was feeling, half mechanically, for his purse. Suddenly his heart stopped beating; a feeling of cold scales passed up the back of his legs, and a cold blow seemed to fall upon his scalp. He stood petrified for a moment; then he felt again with one feverish movement; and then his loss burst upon him, and he was covered at once with perspiration. To spendthrifts money is so living and actual—it is such a thin veil between them and their pleasures! There is only one limit to their fortune—that of time; and a spendthrift with only a few crowns is the Emperor of Rome until they are spent. For such a person to lose his money is to suffer the most shocking reverse, and fall from heaven to hell, from all to nothing, in a breath. And all the more if he has put his head in the halter for it; if he may be hanged to-morrow for that same purse, so dearly earned, so foolishly departed! Villon stood and cursed; he threw the two whites into the street; he shook his fist at heaven; he stamped, and was not horrified to find himself trampling the poor corpse. Then he began rapidly to retrace his steps towards the house beside the cemetery. He had forgotten all fear of the patrol, which was long gone by at any rate, and had no idea but that of his lost purse. It was in vain that he looked right and left upon the snow: nothing was to be seen. He had not dropped it in the streets. Had it fallen in the house? He would have liked dearly to go in and see; but the idea of the grisly occupant unmanned him. And he saw besides, as he drew near, that their efforts to put out the fire had been unsuccessful; on the contrary, it had broken into a blaze, and a changeful light played in the chinks of door and window, and revived his terror for the authorities and Paris gibbet.

He returned to the hotel with the porch, and groped about upon the snow for the money he had thrown away in his childish

passion. But he could only find one white; the other had probably struck sideways and sunk deeply in. With a single white in his pocket, all his projects for a rousing night in some wild tavern vanished utterly away. And it was not only pleasure that fled laughing from his grasp; positive discomfort, positive pain, attacked him as he stood ruefully before the porch. His perspiration had dried upon him; and although the wind had now fallen, a binding frost was setting in stronger with every hour, and he felt benumbed and sick at heart. What was to be done? Late as was the hour, improbable as was success, he would try the house of his adopted father, the chaplain of St. Benoit.

He ran there all the way, and knocked timidly. There was no answer. He knocked again and again, taking heart with every stroke; and at last steps were heard approaching from within. A barred wicket fell open in the iron-studded door, and emitted a gush of yellow light.

"Hold up your face to the wicket," said the chaplain from within.

"It is only me," whimpered Villon.

"Oh, it's only you, is it?" returned the chaplain; and he cursed him with foul unpriestly oaths for disturbing him at such an hour, and bade him be off to hell, where he came from.

"My hands are blue to the wrist," pleaded Villon; "my feet are dead and full of twinges; my nose aches with the sharp air; the cold lies at my heart. I may be dead before morning. Only this once, father, and before God, I will never ask again!"

"You should have come earlier," said the ecclesiastic coolly. "Young men require a lesson now and then." He shut the wicket and retired deliberately into the interior of the house.

Villon was beside himself; he beat upon the door with his hands and feet, and shouted hoarsely after the chaplain.

"Wormy old fox!" he cried. "If I had my hand under your twist, I would send you flying headlong into the bottomless pit."

A door shut in the interior, faintly audible to the poet down long passages. He passed his hand over his mouth with an oath. And then the humor of the situation struck him, and he laughed and looked lightly up to heaven, where the stars seemed to be winking over his discomfiture.

What was to be done? It looked very like a night in the frosty streets. The idea of the dead woman popped into his imagination, and gave him a hearty fright; what had happened to her in the early night might very well happen to him before morning. And he so young! and with such immense possibilities of disorderly amusement before him! He felt quite pathetic over the notion of his own fate, as if it had been some one else's, and made a little imaginative vignette of the scene in the morning when they should find his body.

He passed all his chances under review, turning the white between his thumb and forefinger. Unfortunately he was on bad terms with some old friends who would once have taken pity on him in such a plight. He had lampooned them in verses; he had beaten and cheated them; and yet now, when he was in so close a pinch, he thought there was at least one who might perhaps relent. It was a chance. It was worth trying at least, and he would go and see.

On the way, two little accidents happened to him which colored his musings in a very different manner. For, first, he fell in with the track of a patrol, and walked in it for some hundred yards, although it lay out of his direction. And this spirited him up; at least he had confused his trail; for he was still possessed with the idea of people tracking him all about Paris over the snow, and collaring him next morning before he was awake. The other matter affected him quite differently. He passed a street corner, where, not so long before, a woman and her child had been devoured by wolves. This was just the kind of weather, he reflected, when wolves might take it into their heads to enter Paris again; and a lone man in these

deserted streets would run the chance of something worse than a mere scare. He stopped and looked upon the place with an unpleasant interest — it was a centre where several lanes intersected each other; and he looked down them all, one after another, and held his breath to listen, lest he should detect some galloping black things on the snow or hear the sound of howling between him and the river. He remembered his mother telling him the story and pointing out the spot, while he was yet a child. His mother! If he only knew where she lived, he might make sure at least of shelter. He determined he would inquire upon the morrow; nay, he would go and see her too, poor old girl! So thinking, he arrived at his destination — his last hope for the night.

The house was quite dark, like its neighbors; and yet after a few taps, he heard a movement overhead, a door opening, and a cautious voice asking who was there. The poet named himself in a loud whisper, and waited, not without some trepidation, the result. Nor had he to wait long. A window was suddenly opened, and a pailful of slops splashed down upon the doorstep. Villon had not been unprepared for something of the sort, and had put himself as much in shelter as the nature of the porch admitted; but for all that, he was deplorably drenched below the waist. His hose began to freeze almost at once. Death from cold and exposure stared him in the face; he remembered he was of phthisical tendency, and began coughing tentatively. But the gravity of the danger steadied his nerves. He stopped a few hundred yards from the door where he had been so rudely used, and reflected with his finger to his nose. He could only see one way of getting a lodging, and that was to take it. He had noticed a house nor far away, which looked as if it might be easily broken into, and thither he betook himself promptly, entertaining himself on the way with the idea of a room still hot, with a table still loaded with the remains of supper, where he might pass the rest of the black hours and

whence he should issue, on the morrow, with an armful of valuable plate. He even considered what viands and what wines he should prefer; and as he was calling the roll of his favorite dainties, roast fish presented itself to his mind with an odd mixture of amusement and horror.

"I shall never finish that ballade," he thought to himself; and then, with another shudder at the recollection, "Oh, damn his fat head!" he repeated fervently, and spat upon the snow.

The house in question looked dark at first sight; but as Villon made a preliminary inspection in search of the handiest point of attack, a little twinkle of light caught his eye from behind a curtained window.

"The devil!" he thought. "People awake! Some student or some saint, confound the crew! Can't they get drunk and lie in bed snoring like their neighbors! What's the good of curfew, and poor devils of bell-ringers jumping at a rope's end in bell-towers? What's the use of day, if people sit up all night? The gripes to them!" He grinned as he saw where his logic was leading him. "Every man to his business, after all," added he, "and if they're awake, by the Lord, I may come by a supper honestly for once, and cheat the devil."

He went boldly to the door and knocked with an assured hand. On both previous occasions, he had knocked timidly and with some dread of attracting notice; but now when he had just discarded the thought of a burglarious entry, knocking at a door seemed a mighty simple and innocent proceeding. The sound of his blows echoed through the house with thin, phantasmal reverberations, as though it were quite empty; but these had scarcely died away before a measured tread drew near, a couple of bolts were withdrawn, and one wing was opened broadly, as though no guile or fear of guile were known to those within. A tall figure of a man, muscular and spare, but a little bent, confronted Villon. The head was massive in bulk, but finely sculptured; the nose blunt at the bottom, but refining

upward to where it joined a pair of strong and honest eyebrows; the mouth and eyes surrounded with delicate markings, and the whole face based upon a thick white beard, boldly and squarely trimmed. Seen as it was by the light of a flickering hand-lamp, it looked perhaps nobler than it had a right to do; but it was a fine face, honorable rather than intelligent, strong, simple, and righteous.

"You knock late, sir," said the old man in resonant courteous tones.

Villon cringed and brought up many servile words of apology; at a crisis of this sort, the beggar was uppermost in him, and the man of genius hid his head with confusion.

"You are cold," repeated the old man, "and hungry? Well, step in." And he ordered him into the house with a noble enough gesture.

"Some great seigneur," thought Villon, as his host, setting down the lamp on the flagged pavement of the entry, shot the bolts once more into their places.

"You will pardon me if I go in front," he said, when this was done; and he preceded the poet upstairs into a large apartment, warmed with a pan of charcoal and lit by a great lamp hanging from the roof. It was very bare of furniture: only some gold plate on a sideboard; some folios; and a stand of armor between the windows. Some smart tapestry hung upon the walls, representing the crucifixion of our Lord in one piece, and in another a scene of shepherds and shepherdesses by a running stream. Over the chimney was a shield of arms.

"Will you seat yourself," said the old man, "and forgive me if I leave you? I am alone in my house to-night, and if you are to eat I must forage for you myself."

No sooner was his host gone than Villon leaped from the chair on which he had just seated himself, and began examining the room, with the stealth and passion of a cat. He weighed the gold flagons in his hand, opened all the folios, and investi-

gated the arms upon the shield, and the stuff with which the seats were lined. He raised the window curtains, and saw that the windows were set with rich stained glass in figures, so far as he could see, of martial import. Then he stood in the middle of the room, drew a long breath, and retaining it with puffed cheeks, looked round and round him, turning on his heels, as if to impress every feature of the apartment on his memory.

"Seven pieces of plate," he said. "If there had been ten, I would have risked it. A fine house, and a fine old master, so help me all the saints!"

And just then, hearing the old man's tread returning along the corridor, he stole back to his chair, and began humbly toasting his wet legs before the charcoal pan.

His entertainer had a plate of meat in one hand and a jug of wine in the other. He set down the plate upon the table, motioning Villon to draw in his chair, and going to the side-board, brought back two goblets, which he filled.

"I drink your better fortune," he said, gravely touching Villon's cup with his own.

"To our better acquaintance," said the poet, growing bold. A mere man of the people would have been awed by the courtesy of the old seigneur, but Villon was hardened in that matter; he had made mirth for great lords before now, and found them as black rascals as himself. And so he devoted himself to the viands with a ravenous gusto, while the old man, leaning backward, watched him with steady, curious eyes.

"You have blood on your shoulder, my man," he said.

Montigny must have laid his wet right hand upon him as he left the house. He cursed Montigny in his heart.

"It was none of my shedding," he stammered.

"I had not supposed so," returned his host quietly. "A brawl?"

"Well, something of that sort," Villon admitted with a quaver.

“Perhaps a fellow murdered?”

“Oh no, not murdered,” said the poet, more and more confused. “It was all fair play — murdered by accident. I had no hand in it, God strike me dead!” he added fervently.

“One rogue the fewer, I dare say,” observed the master of the house.

“You may dare to say that,” agreed Villon, infinitely relieved. “As big a rogue as there is between here and Jerusalem. He turned up his toes like a lamb. But it was a nasty thing to look at. I dare say you’ve seen dead men in your time, my lord?” he added, glancing at the armor.

“Many,” said the old man. “I have followed the wars, as you imagine.”

Villon laid down his knife and fork, which he had just taken up again.

“Were any of them bald?” he asked.

“Oh yes, and with hair as white as mine.”

“I don’t think I should mind the white so much,” said Villon. “His was red.” And he had a return of his shuddering and tendency to laughter, which he drowned with a great draught of wine. “I’m a little put out when I think of it,” he went on. “I knew him — damn him! And then the cold gives a man fancies — or the fancies give a man cold, I don’t know which.”

“Have you any money?” asked the old man.

“I have one white,” returned the poet, laughing. “I got it out of a dead jade’s stocking in a porch. She was as dead as Cæsar, poor wench, and as cold as a church, with bits of ribbon sticking in her hair. This is a hard world in winter for wolves and wenches and poor rogues like me.”

“I,” said the old man, “am Enguerrand de la Feuillée, seigneur de Brisetout, bailly du Patatrac. Who and what may you be?”

Villon rose and made a suitable reverence. “I am called

Francis Villon," he said, "a poor Master of Arts of this university. I know some Latin, and a deal of vice. I can make chansons, ballades, lais, virelais, and roundels, and I am very fond of wine. I was born in a garret, and I shall not improbably die upon the gallows. I may add, my lord, that from this night forward I am your lordship's very obsequious servant to command."

"No servant of mine," said the knight; "my guest for this evening, and no more."

"A very grateful guest," said Villon, politely, and he drank in dumb show to his entertainer.

"You are shrewd," began the old man, tapping his forehead, "very shrewd; you have learning; you are a clerk; and yet you take a small piece of money off a dead woman in the street. Is it not a kind of theft?"

"It is a kind of theft much practiced in the wars, my lord."

"The wars are the field of honor," returned the old man proudly. "There a man plays his life upon the cast; he fights in the name of his lord the king, his Lord God, and all their lordships the holy saints and angels."

"Put it," said Villon, "that I were really a thief, should I not play my life also, and against heavier odds?"

"For gain but not for honor."

"Gain?" repeated Villon with a shrug. "Gain! The poor fellow wants supper and takes it. So does the soldier in a campaign. Why, what are all these requisitions we hear so much about? If they are not gain to those who take them, they are loss enough to the others. The men-at-arms drink by a good fire, while the burgher bites his nails to buy them wine and wood. I have seen a good many ploughmen swinging on trees about the country; ay, I have seen thirty on one elm, and a very poor figure they made; and when I asked some one how all these came to be hanged, I was told it was because they could not scrape together enough crowns to satisfy the men-at-arms."

“These things are a necessity of war, which the lowborn must endure with constancy. It is true that some captains drive overhard; there are spirits in every rank not easily moved by pity; and indeed many follow arms who are no better than brigands.”

“You see,” said the poet, “you can not separate the soldier from the brigand; and what is a thief but an isolated brigand with circumspect manners? I steal a couple of mutton chops, without so much as disturbing people’s sleep; the farmer grumbles a bit, but sups none the less wholesomely on what remains. You come up blowing gloriously on a trumpet, take away the whole sheep, and beat the farmer pitifully into the bargain. I have no trumpet; I am only Tom, Dick, or Harry; I am a rogue and a dog, and hanging’s too good for me — with all my heart; but just ask the farmer which of us he prefers, just find out which of us he lies awake to curse on cold nights.”

“Look at us two,” said his lordship. “I am old, strong, and honored. If I were turned from my house to-morrow, hundreds would be proud to shelter me. Poor people would go out and pass the night in the streets with their children, if I merely hinted that I wished to be alone. And I find you up, wandering homeless, and picking farthings off dead women by the wayside! I fear no man and nothing; I have seen you tremble and lose countenance at a word. I wait God’s summons contentedly in my own house, or, if it please the king to call me again, upon the field of battle. You look for the gallows; a rough, swift death, without hope or honor. Is there no difference between these two?”

“As far as to the moon,” Villon acquiesced. “But if I had been born lord of Brisetout, and you had been the poor scholar Francis, would the difference have been any the less? Should not I have been warming my knees at this charcoal pan, and would not you have been groping for farthings in the snow? Should not I have been the soldier, and you the thief?”

"A thief?" cried the old man. "I a thief! If you understood your words, you would repent them."

Villon turned out his hands with a gesture of inimitable impudence. "If your lordship had done me the honor to follow my argument!" he said.

"I do you too much honor in submitting to your presence," said the knight. "Learn to curb your tongue when you speak with old and honorable men, or some one hastier than I may reprove you in a sharper fashion." And he rose and paced the lower end of the apartment, struggling with anger and antipathy. Villon surreptitiously refilled his cup, and settled himself more comfortably in the chair, crossing his knees and leaning his head upon one hand and the elbow against the back of the chair. He was now replete and warm; and he was in nowise frightened for his host, having gauged him as justly as was possible between two such different characters. The night was far spent, and in a very comfortable fashion after all; and he felt morally certain of a safe departure on the morrow.

"Tell me one thing," said the old man, pausing in his walk. "Are you really a thief?"

"I claim the sacred rights of hospitality," returned the poet. "My lord, I am."

"You are very young," the knight continued.

"I should never have been so old," replied Villon, showing his fingers, "if I had not helped myself with these ten talents. They have been my nursing mothers and my nursing fathers."

"You may still repent and change."

"I repent daily," said the poet. "There are few people more given to repentance than poor Francis. As for change, let somebody change my circumstances. A man must continue to eat, if it were only that he may continue to repent."

"The change must begin in the heart," returned the old man solemnly.

"My dear lord," answered Villon, "do you really fancy that

I steal for pleasure? I hate stealing, like any other piece of work or of danger. My teeth chatter when I see a gallows. But I must eat, I must drink, I must mix in society of some sort. What the devil! Man is not a solitary animal — *cui Deus fæminam tradit*. Make me king's pantler — make me abbot of St. Denis; make me bailly of the Patatrac; and then I shall be changed indeed. But as long as you leave me the poor scholar Francis Villon, without a farthing, why, of course, I remain the same."

"The grace of God is all-powerful."

"I should be a heretic to question it," said Francis. "It has made you lord of Brisetout and bailly of the Patatrac; it has given me nothing but the quick wits under my hat and these ten toes upon my hands. May I help myself to wine? I thank you respectfully. By God's grace, you have a very superior vintage."

The lord of Brisetout walked to and fro with his hands behind his back. Perhaps he was not yet quite settled in his mind about the parallel between thieves and soldiers; perhaps Villon had interested him by some cross-thread of sympathy; perhaps his wits were simply muddled by so much unfamiliar reasoning; but whatever the cause, he somehow yearned to convert the young man to a better way of thinking, and could not make up his mind to drive him forth again into the street.

"There is something more than I can understand in this," he said at length. "Your mouth is full of subtleties, and the devil has led you very far astray; but the devil is only a very weak spirit before God's truth, and all his subtleties vanish at a word of true honor, like darkness at morning. Listen to me once more. I learned long ago that a gentleman should live chivalrously and lovingly to God, and the king, and his lady; and though I have seen many strange things done, I have still striven to command my ways upon that rule. It is not only written in all noble histories, but in every man's heart, if he will

take care to read. * You speak of food and wine, and I know very well that hunger is a difficult trial to endure; but you do not speak of other wants; you say nothing of honor, of faith to God and other men, of courtesy, of love without reproach. It may be that I am not very wise — and yet I think I am — but you seem to me like one who has lost his way and made a great error in life. You are attending to the little wants, and you have totally forgotten the great and only real ones, like a man who should be doctoring toothache on the Judgment Day. For such things as honor and love and faith are not only nobler than food and drink, but indeed I think we desire them more, and suffer more sharply for their absence. I speak to you as I think you will most easily understand me. Are you not, while careful to fill your belly, disregarding another appetite in your heart which spoils the pleasure of your life and keeps you continually wretched?”

Villon was sensibly nettled under all this sermonizing. “You think I have no sense of honor!” he cried. “I’m poor enough, God knows! It’s hard to see rich people with their gloves, and you blowing in your hands. An empty belly is a bitter thing, although you speak so lightly of it. If you had had as many as I, perhaps you would change your tune. Anyway I’m a thief — make the most of that — but I’m not a devil from hell, God strike me dead. I would have you to know I’ve an honor of my own, as good as yours, though I don’t prate about it all day long, as if it was a God’s miracle to have any. It seems quite natural to me; I keep it in its box till it’s wanted. Why now, look you here, how long have I been in this room with you? Did you not tell me you were alone in the house! Look at your gold plate! You’re strong, if you like, but you’re old and unarmed, and I have my knife. What did I want but a jerk of the elbow and here would have been you with the cold steel in your bowels, and there would have been me, linking in the streets, with an armful of golden cups! Did

you suppose I hadn't wit enough to see that? And I scorned the action. There are your damned goblets, as safe as in a church; there are you, with your heart ticking as good as new; and here am I, ready to go out again as poor as I came in, with my one white that you threw in my teeth! And you think I have no sense of honor — God strike me dead!"

The old man stretched out his right arm. "I will tell you what you are," he said. "You are a rogue, my man, an impudent and black-hearted rogue and vagabond. I have passed an hour with you. Oh! believe me, I feel myself disgraced! And you have eaten and drunk at my table. But now I am sick at your presence; the day has come, and the night-bird should be off to his roost. Will you go before, or after?"

"Which you please," returned the poet, rising, "I believe you to be strictly honorable." He thoughtfully emptied his cup. "I wish I could add you were intelligent," he went on, knocking on his head with his knuckles. "Age! age! the brains stiff and rheumatic."

The old man preceded him from a point of self-respect; Villon followed, whistling, with his thumbs in his girdle.

"God pity you," said the lord of Brisetout at the door.

"Good-bye, papa," returned Villon with a yawn. "Many thanks for the cold mutton."

The door closed behind him. The dawn was breaking over the white roofs. A chill, uncomfortable morning ushered in the day. Villon stood and heartily stretched himself in the middle of the road.

"A very dull old gentleman," he thought. "I wonder what his goblets may be worth."

PART V

HOW TO PRESENT A MORAL ISSUE

PART V

INTRODUCTION

HOW TO PRESENT A MORAL ISSUE

A MORAL issue is but a particular form of the marking incident explained in the last section. A man often brings the elements of his character most definitely to a focus when facing a problem of conduct. A conscious effort to decide between right and wrong precipitates a struggle in which his salient qualities, both of strength and of weakness, take part.

Not all marking incidents, it is true, point to moral issues. Some of them are mere adventures which display a character's faculties freely in action. The headlong courses of François Villon are never restrained by ethical considerations. *A Lodging for the Night*, therefore, proves his character of complete scapegrace effectively, because it pictures events so largely as mere physical emergencies unrelated to any problem of right or wrong. Similarly Bathsheba Everdene is not of a nature to face moral issues. She habitually lets her blood speak and decide for her. Her capricious dismissal of Oak, therefore, and her speedy recalling of him, when she realizes that only he can help her, are not expressions of a moral purpose. Certain types of character, however, are understood only when seen in an ethical crisis, and they are usually the men and women most sure to arouse literary interest.

The power demanded in a writer for the presentation of crucial moral instances is to be gained only by a thorough analysis of real life. To the thoughtful man alone will life appear as a series of questions of conduct. Yet that is what life is in its

most interesting and by no means its least cheerful aspect, and the thoughtful man realizes that only by facing these questions in his own career and by solving the problems that they suggest can he become in some measure the man that he wishes to be.

To the thoughtless observer of life moral issues, even when clearly recognized, are rarely charged with their full significance. Events come and go, and we fail to distinguish the unimportant from those which are real turning points. Seldom, for instance, would a young girl in placing a saucer of sugar upon the table, even against her father's will, realize that she was at that moment passing through a crisis of profound significance. Yet Eugénie Grandet knows that this trivial act is the crucial test of her character, and that if she fails to do this slight service for Charles, she will remain the slave of her father's avarice. The importance which Balzac attaches to this act is made perfectly clear in the phrase in which he exalts Eugénie's courage over that of the fair Parisian "who exerts all the strength of her weak arms to help her lover to escape by a ladder of silken cords." Eugénie's recognition of the crisis in this simple incident makes it a marking incident. Her willingness to meet the crisis gives her power over her own destiny.

The refusal to face or to settle a moral question, which is clearly enough recognized, is usually most dangerous to personal mastery. Let us take a too common instance. You have good reason to believe, perhaps, that one of your friends is regularly copying your college exercises. Yet rather than precipitate a number of difficult ethical problems for yourself, you ignore the fact. You thereby refuse to hold the situation steadily before your judgment until you feel in it the urge of a moral crisis. Carelessness of this sort is as fatal to your character as stupidity in understanding problems of conduct is to clear writing. Stupid writers and men afflicted with moral indifference are usually in the same category. They are thoughtless observers of life.

Many students will feel that their ethical life is beset by none of the difficulties here described. "I have no trouble in recognizing a moral issue," they will say. "The difference between right and wrong has always been perfectly clear to me. Above all, I know perfectly well when I am making a choice between the two." Most children find their moral life thus simple. They live according to laws laid down by their parents or their schoolmasters. These they either reject or accept without criticism. If they do transgress this simple moral code of theirs, they do so consciously. Some sheltered persons continue to live for a large part of their lives according to the ethical precepts of others. Their morality is mechanical. Such persons are scarcely conscious of questions of conduct; at least they are never perplexed by them. Consequently they are unable to recognize the moral struggles of other people or to present them in fiction.

Some time before one goes to college, however, he is apt to find himself in a thrilling position of moral independence. He may, for example, be suddenly brought to doubt whether the familiar ideal of self-sacrifice is, after all, always to be followed. Should a boy allow his father to incur debt in order to send him to college? Should a girl stay at home and give her mother needed help with a large family or accept the offer of a rich relative to put her through college? The answer to these questions cannot be found mechanically. The rules of conduct learned from others seem inapplicable to such crises as these. Now, as a person begins to consider a problem of this sort seriously, he becomes aware, perhaps for the first time, of the widely different results of two possible courses of action. His decision then appears to him as more and more momentous. He realizes that he is at a turning point in his life.

After a single searching experience of this sort, a man is awake to similar crises in the history of other men. He sees the problems which test their moral nature. He may appreciate, let us

say, the struggle of a married man in England during the first months of the war when facing the question of enlistment in the army. How much does such a man owe to the safety or comfort of his immediate family as compared to that remote or intangible thing, the future safety of his country. The student, given insight through his own experience, will be able to create imaginatively many of the conditions of this quite unfamiliar situation. In so doing he will be choosing from the welter of life the essentials of a moral issue and presenting them, perhaps only to his own mind; but in this form of meditation he has presented a moral issue in the form of fiction. This power, it can readily be seen, cannot be greater than the individual's ability to recognize the crucial points in his own ethical life. For this ability depends on his imagination. Without it a man can scarcely recognize the moral occasions in his own life, to say nothing of foreseeing the results. Thus, they will not appear as crises. The modern soldier is given such explicit and careful direction both in the training camp and before the battle that during the actual charge he simply obeys orders. Often he has no chance for imagination or individual initiative left him. Even his courage, therefore, tends to be automatic. He passes through a great ordeal without having it consciously search his spirit.

Crisis in the life of any man may be similarly settled through evocation of dead phrases or traditional wisdom. Almost every one has wondered what he would do if he awoke to find a burglar in his house. He has heard over and over again that the wise thing to do is to offer no resistance. The chances are, then, that if he meets the real situation, he will follow the advice that he has often heard with approval. If the man is imaginative and far-seeing, however, he may come to believe that if burglars always met with stout resistance they might cease to exist. If he came to this conclusion, he might feel that it would be his duty to fight burglars, whatever the cost to him. If the

occasion ever arose in this man's life, it would present a moral issue, apprehended as such because he is a man of imagination.

So in fiction, a character without imagination cannot be conceived as solving a problem of conduct. If the hero in *The Greater Love* had been a mere dare-devil, the story would have presented no moral issue. The instinctive plunge overboard of such a man would have been little more than an act of physical elation. Shortie is of a different sort. He is a quiet, meditative fellow, full of thoughts of the girl he is to marry at the end of the voyage. These pleasant anticipations, we realize, were in his mind the moment he decided to plunge overboard after the seaman. For him, therefore, the act was the result of a deliberate decision, however swift. Similarly, in *A Dead Issue*, the tragi-comedy of Thorn's dishonesty depends entirely on his brooding, imaginative temperament.

In fiction, the presentation of a moral issue is demanded of almost every sort of writer. A problem, in the wide sense in which the word has here been used, is the center of almost every modern play of note. In Ibsen's social dramas, the crisis almost surely involves a fundamental moral decision. Nora's determination to leave her husband's Doll House in order to win her own soul, is typical of the problem in most of Ibsen's plays and the vast number of social dramas written under their influence. Most of the stories in this volume present a moral issue, and those in this section have been chosen because, by approaching life from this angle, they make the problems involved especially pointed.

A Dead Issue deals with a situation which any college student will recognize as typical of college life, and yet in which few would see an important moral crisis. Some instructor in every college is believed to show favoritism in giving marks. This fact is admitted and resented, but rarely thought to be of much vital importance to anyone. It comes to almost no one charged with deep ethical significance. "Of course, Prescott has a pull with

Mr. Thorn," argues the careless student. "The instructor will pass him whether he deserves to get through or not. But what is the difference? It can't have any particular effect on either Prescott or Mr. Thorn. The one undeserved mark won't get Prescott his degree, and Mr. Thorn will forget the one mark in the hundreds he gives each semester. There is no use in getting excited about this fact." Such an undergraduate has been too shallow or too thoughtless to see anything but neutral, insignificant facts in this part of his college life.

A man with a trained moral sense, however, is able to see the instructor's deliberate dishonesty in its true proportion. Thus seen it marks a turning point in the career of both Mr. Thorn and young Prescott. The instructor loses his self-respect and with it all hope of establishing the free and intimate relations which he was eager to maintain with a small group of undergraduates. All the plans for a delightful existence with these fellows are shattered. Prescott, for his part, gains a deep contempt for Thorn and an attitude of cynicism toward the justice of his teachers in general that may ultimately warp his character. A man who sees the dishonest favoritism of an instructor, as does the author of this story, can never regard it as a matter of indifference. He is a profound and steady enough observer to see in it important moral issues.

An Unfinished Story presents an ethical problem and artfully leaves it unsolved. In this particular sketch, however, the method serves only to emphasize the primary importance of the moral issue. Kitchener's stern face gives the girl strength enough to conquer a natural temptation when conditions are comparatively favorable to her. The real crisis the author does not describe. He merely indicates what it will be. It will come, he tells us, when the same temptation overtakes the girl in an inevitable moment of fatigue and discouragement. This story may be thus regarded as a successful exercise in finding the great moral issue in the drab life of a shop-girl. The

account of this circumstance is the story in her life. Often, to apprehend the chief moral issue in the career of a man is to find the only story that his life holds.

Further insight, however, than the power to recognize in the hurry of events those moments which are crucial for character is demanded of the author who would present moral issues. He must also see them strictly in relation to character. Otherwise he will be but a preacher with an *exemplum*. He must appreciate the essentially slow and gradual effect even of vital decisions upon the daily walk and conversation of his men and women. In observing and describing circumstantially this essential process of growth, he will avoid his greatest danger — moral melodrama.

In *The Captain's Vices* the moral problem is obvious. Coppée's skill is shown not so much in discovering the significant issue as in reducing its naked ethical appeal to a history of human growth. The story of a *roué* recalled from his wild courses by his love for a poor child might easily have become matter for a sermon. The author of the trite moral fable is almost sure to over-emphasize the lesson to be learned. In this fashion he inevitably relates the facts in the case but imperfectly to the temperament of the chief character in his story. But Coppée's tale in this respect is perfectly composed. The normal crisis not only grows out of Captain Mercadier's temperament, but it also proceeds to remould his character. The real liberation of the Captain's finer nature comes at the moment when he decides to take poor little Pierette into his service; and all the subsequent self-denials which he makes in her interest are the results of this first benevolent act. The author's insight into life in this case, then, lies only partially in his recognition of the moral significance of a seemingly insignificant event. It lies more often in his appreciation of the cumulative effects of one moral decision and of the essentially gradual revelation of its full meaning. It depends on the power to see how one

crisis develops and modifies character through long periods of time.

In this analysis of stories the kind of imagination required to present a moral issue in fiction has been suggested. Some of the problems of actual composition can be indicated by showing how far the moral issue is but a particular form of the marking incident. It may be argued that the moral issue is different from the marking or characteristic incident in that it seems to exist independent of character. For it may appear to some persons as a settled principle of human conduct rather than an illustration of some individual phase of it. If this were true, the writer of a problem story would invariably receive his initial impulse from the problem. The story would be his effort to give moral law concrete expression in the life of a man. The man would be chosen solely because he was just the sort to whom the problem could come. The author of *A Dead Issue* might be thought of as having created Marcus Thorn in this way. Yet Marcus Thorn could not have been conceived until the moral question of favoritism in giving marks had assumed some plot form. If the writer had decided to have the student a flirtatious girl, Marcus Thorn would have been an entirely different sort of man; and a different sort still if the student had been the son of the college president with whom the instructor wished to curry favor.

In this sense, a moral issue in fiction cannot exist as a sheer principle, independent of the characters and circumstances, and we may now affirm that characters can hardly exist independent of moral issues.

If the moral issue in *The Coward* were of a slightly different sort, the nature of the central character would have to be correspondingly different. The Viscount de Signoles finds himself in the midst of a crisis because he fears that he will show the white feather in a duel. He values himself only for his gallant bearing and his reputation for swash-buckling bravado. To

such a man an exhibition of cowardice is the final dishonor. Death is infinitely to be preferred to that. Suppose, however, that the Viscount has been very active in a movement to suppress duelling. He has considered the custom thoroughly foolish and demoralizing. When challenged by a member of his set, however, he has not the moral courage to brave social odium by refusing to accept. As he considers his course of action before the duel, he feels that by fighting he will imperil the whole social reform which is so dear to him and, more than that, appear ridiculously inconsistent and shallow in the eyes of the world. Rather than face this public scorn of his character, he commits suicide. The struggles of the two characters are much alike. Their outcome is identical. However, the moral issue in each case is essentially different; hence the characters would necessarily be quite unlike.

These divergent facts tend to show that a story in which a moral issue is skillfully presented is one of the most highly composed forms of narrative. It accomplishes most surely an organic union of two of its formative elements — character and problem. Largely for this reason the presentation of a case of conduct in a narrative makes the strongest appeal to a thoughtful reader eager to increase his critical knowledge of life through fiction. The composition of such a story is perhaps the most valuable exercise for a student intent upon seeing life through the steady vision of the understanding.

XXIX. THE GREATER LOVE ¹

BARTIMEUS

[This story gives enough of the mental surroundings of an act of physical courage to relate it to everyday life and to let it symbolize a great problem of duty. It is interesting to examine one's own life for a corresponding opportunity to act — not for a similar rare and heroic opportunity, perhaps, but for the everyday opportunity to symbolize "the greater love."]

THE sun was setting behind a lurid bank of cloud above the hills of Spain, and, as is usual at Gibraltar about that hour, a light breeze sprang up. It eddied round the Rock and scurried across the harbor, leaving dark cat's-paws in its trail; finally it reached the inner mole, alongside which a cruiser was lying.

A long pendant of white bunting, that all day had hung listlessly from the main topmast, stirred, wavered, and finally bellied out astern, the gilded bladder at the tail bobbing uneasily over the surface of the water.

The Officer of the Watch leaned over the rail and watched the antics of the bladder, round which a flock of querulous gulls circled and screeched. "The paying-off pendant² looks as if it were impatient," he said laughingly to an Engineer Lieutenant standing at his side.

The other smiled in his slow way and turned seaward, nodding across the bay towards Algeciras. "Not much longer to wait — there's the steamer with the mail coming across now." He took a couple of steps across the deck and turned. "Only another 1200 miles. Isn't it ripping to think of, after three years . . . ?" He rubbed his hands with boyish satisfaction.

¹ Reprinted from *Naval Occasions* with the kind permission of Houghton Mifflin Company and of the author.

² A pendant, one-and-a-quarter times the length of the ship, flown by ships homeward bound under orders to pay off.

“All the coal in and stowed — boats turned in, funnels smoking — that’s what I like to see! Only the mail to wait for now; and the gauges down below” — he wagged his forefinger in the air, laughing, — “like that . . . !”

The Lieutenant nodded and hitched his glass under his arm. “Your middle watch, Shortie? Mine too; we start working up for our passage trial then, don’t we? Whack her up, lad — for England, Home, and Beauty!”

The Engineer Lieutenant walked towards the hatchway. “What do *you* think!” and went below humming —

“From Ushant to Scilly . . . ”

The Lieutenant on watch turned and looked up at the Rock, towering over the harbor. Above the green-shuttered, pink and yellow houses, and dusty, sun-dried vegetation, the grim pile was flushing rose-color against the pure sky. How familiar it was, he thought, this great milestone on the road to the East, and mused awhile, wondering how many dawns he had lain under its shadow; how many more sunsets he would watch and marvel at across the purple Bay.

“British as Brixton!” He had read the phrase in a book once, describing Gibraltar. So it was, when you were homeward bound. He resumed his measured pacing to and fro. The ferry steamer had finished her short voyage and had gone alongside the wharf, out of sight behind an arm of the mole. Not much longer to wait now. He glanced at his wrist-watch. “Postie” wouldn’t waste much time getting back. Not all the beer in Waterport Street nor all the glamor of the “Ramps” would lure him astray to-night. The Lieutenant paused in his measured stride and beckoned a side-boy. “Tell the signalman to let me know directly the postman is sighted coming along the mole.”

He resumed his leisurely promenade, wondering how many letters there would be for him, and who would write. His

mother, of course, . . . and Ted at Charterhouse. His speculations roamed afield. Any one else? Then he suddenly remembered the Engineer Lieutenant imitating the twitching gauge-needle with his forefinger. Lucky beggar he was. There was some one waiting for him who mattered more than all the Teds in the world. More even than a Mother — at least, he supposed. . . . His thoughts became abruptly sentimental and tender.

A signalman, coming helter-skelter down the ladder, interrupted them, as the Commander stepped out of his cabin on to the quarter-deck.

“Postman comin’ with the mail, sir.”

A few minutes later a hoist of flags whirled hurriedly to the masthead, asking permission to proceed “in execution of previous orders.” What those orders were, even the paying-off pendant knew, trailing aft over the stern-walk in the light wind.

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The Rock lay far astern like a tinted shadow, an opal set in a blue-grey sea. Once beyond the Straits the wind freshened, and the cruiser began to lift her lean bows to the swell, flinging the spray aft along the forecastle in silver rain. The Marine bugler steered an unsteady course to the quarterdeck hatchway and sounded the Officers’ Dinner Call.

“Officers wives eat puddings and pies,
But sailors’ wives eat skilly . . .”

chanted the Lieutenant of the impending first watch, swaying to the roll of the ship as he adjusted his tie before the mirror. He thumped the bulkhead between his cabin and the adjoining one.

“Buck up, Shortie!” he shouted; “it’s Saturday Night at Sea! Your night for a glass of port.”

“Sweethearts and wives!” called another voice across the flat.

"You'll get drunk to-night, Snatcher, if you try to drink to all ——" the voice died away and rose again in expostulation with a Marine servant. ". . . Well, does it *look* like a clean shirt . . . !"

"Give it a shake, Pay, and put it on like a man!" Some one else had joined in from across the flat. The Engineer Lieutenant pushed his head inside his neighbor's cabin: "Come along — come along! You'll be late for dinner. Fresh grub to-night: no more 'Russian Kromeskis' and 'Fanny Adams'!"

"One second. . . . Right!" They linked arms and entered the Wardroom as the President tapped the table for grace. The Surgeon scanned the menu with interest. "Jasus! Phwat diet!" he ejaculated, quoting from an old Service story. "Listen!" and read out —

"Soup: Clear."

"That's boiled swabs," interposed the Junior Watch-keeper.

"Mr. President, sir, I object — this Officer's unladylike conversation."

"Round of port — fine him!" interrupted several laughing voices.

"Go on, Doc.; what next?"

"Fish: 'Millets.'"

"Main drain loungers," from the Junior Watch-keeper. "Isn't he a little Lord Fauntleroy — two rounds of port!"

"*Entrée*: Russian Kromeskis ——" A roar of protest.

"And ——?"

"Mutton cutlets."

"Goat, he means. What an orgie! Go on; fain would we hear the worst, fair chirurgeon," blathered the Paymaster. "Joint?"

"Joint; mutton or ——"

"Princely munificence," murmured the First Lieutenant. "He's not a messman: he's a — a — what's the word?"

“Philanthropist. What’s the awful alternative?”

“There isn’t any; it’s scratched out.” The A.P. and the Junior Watch-keeper clung to each other. “The originality of the creature! And the duff?”

“Rice-pudding.”

“Ah me! alack-a-day!” The Paymaster tore his hair. “I must prophesy. I *must* prophesy, — shut up, every one! *Shut up!*” He closed his eyes and pawed the air feebly. “I’m a medium. I’m going to prophesy. I feel it coming. . . . The savory is . . . the savory is” — there was a moment’s tense silence — “sardines on toast.” He opened his eyes. “Am I right, sir? Thank you.”

The Surgeon leaned forward, and picking up the massive silver shooting trophy that occupied the centre of the table, handed it to a waiter.

“Take that to the Paymaster, please. First prize for divination and second sight. And you, Snatcher — you’ll go down for another round of port if you keep on laughing with your mouth full.”

So the meal progressed. The “mullets” were disentangled from their paper jackets amid a rustling silence of interrogation. The Worcester sauce aided and abetted the disappearance of the Russian Kromeskis, as it had so often done before. The mutton was voted the limit, and the rice-pudding held evidences that the cook’s hair wanted cutting. The Junior Watch-keeper — proud officer of that functionary’s division — vowed he’s have it cut in a manner which calls for no description in these pages. There weren’t any sardines on toast. The Philanthropist appeared in person, with dusky, upturned palms, to deplore the omission.

“Ow! signor — olla fineesh! I make mistake! No have got sardines, signor . . . !”

“Dear old Ah Ying!” sighed the Engineer Lieutenant, “I never really loved him till this minute. Why did we leave him

at Hong-Kong and embark this snake-in-the-grass. . . . No sardines . . . !”

But for all that every one seemed to have made an admirable meal, and the Chaplain's "For what we have received, thank God!" brought it to a close. The table was cleared, the wine decanters passed round, and once again the President tapped with his ivory mallet. There was a little silence —

"Mr Vice — the King!"

The First Lieutenant raised his glass. "Gentlemen — the King!"

"The King!" murmured the Mess, with faces grown suddenly decorous and grave. At that moment the Corporal of the Watch entered; he glanced down the table, and approaching the Junior Watch-keeper's chair saluted and said something in an undertone. The Junior Watch-keeper nodded, finished his port, and rose, folding his napkin. His neighbor, the Engineer Lieutenant, leaned back in his chair, speaking over his shoulder —

"You'r First Watch, James?"

The other nodded.

"Then," with mock solemnity, "may I remind you that our lives are in your hands till twelve o'clock? Don't forget that, will you?"

The Junior Watch-keeper laughed. "I'll bear it in mind." At the doorway he turned with a smile: "It won't be the first time your valuable life has been there."

"Or the last, we'll hope."

"We'll hope not, Shortie."

The buzz of talk and chaff had again begun to ebb and flow round the long table. The First Lieutenant lit a cigarette and began collecting napkin-rings, placing them eventually in a row, after the manner of horses at the starting-post. "Seven to one on the field, bar one — Chief, your ring's disqualified. It would go through the ship's side. Now, wait for the next roll — stand by! Clear that flower-pot ——"

“Disqualified be blowed! Why, I turned it myself when I was a student, out of a bit of brass I stole ——”

“Can’t help that; it weighs a ton — scratched at the post!”

The Commander tapped the table with his little hammer —

“May I remind you all that it’s Saturday Night at Sea?” and gave the decanters a little push towards his left-hand neighbor. The First Lieutenant brushed the starters into a heap at his side; the faintest shadow passed across his brow.

“So it is!” echoed several voices.

“Now, Shortie, fill up! Snatcher, you’d better have a bucket. . . . ‘There’s a Burmah girl a-settin’ an’ I know she thinks, port, Number One?’” The First Lieutenant signed an imperceptible negation and pushed the decanter round, murmuring something about hereditary gout.

It was ten years since he had drunk that toast: since a certain tragic dawn, stealing into the bedroom of a Southsea lodging, found him on his knees at a bedside. . . . They all knew the story, as men in Naval Messes afloat generally do know each other’s tragedies and joys. And yet his right-hand neighbor invariably murmured the same formula as he passed the wine on Saturday nights at sea. In its way it was considered a rather subtle intimation that no one wanted to pry into his sorrow — even to the extent of presuming that he would never drink that health again.

In the same way they all knew that it was the one occasion on which the little Engineer Lieutenant permitted himself the extravagance of wine. He was saving up to get married; and perhaps for the reason that he had never mentioned the fact, every one not only knew it, but loved and chaffed him for it.

The decanters traveled round, and the First Lieutenant leaned across to the Engineer Lieutenant, who was contemplatively watching the smoke of his cigarette. There was a whimsical smile in the grave, level eyes.

"I suppose we shall have to think about rigging a garland¹ before long, eh?"

The other laughed half-shyly. "Yes, before long, I hope, Number One."

Down came the ivory hammer —

"Gentlemen — Sweethearts and Wives!"

"And may they never meet!" added the Engineer Commander. In reality the most domesticated and blameless of husbands, it was the ambition of his life to be esteemed a sad dog, and that men should shake their heads over him crying "Fie!"

The First Lieutenant gathered together his silver rings. "Now then, clear the table. She's rolling like a good 'un. Seven to one on the field, bar ——"

"Speech!" broke in the Paymaster. "Speech, Shortie! Few words by a young officer about to embark on the troubled sea of matrimony. Hints on the Home ——"

The prospective bridegroom shook his head, laughing, and colored in a way rather pleasant to see. He rose, pushing in his chair. In the inside pocket of his mess-jacket was an unopened letter, saved up to read over a pipe in peace.

"My advice to you all is ——"

"Don't," from the Engineer Commander.

"Mind your own business," and the Engineer Lieutenant fled from the Mess amid derisive shouts of "Coward!" The voice of the First Lieutenant rose above the hubbub —

"Seven to one on the field — and what about a jump or two? Chuck up the menu-card, Pay. Now, boys, roll, bowl, or pitch . . . 'Every time a blood-orange or a good see-gar' . . .!"

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The Officer of the First Watch leaned out over the bridge rails, peering into the darkness that enveloped the fore-castle,

¹ A garland of evergreens is triced up to the triatic stay between the masts on the occasion of an officer's marriage.

and listening intently. The breeze had freshened, and the cruiser slammed her way into a rising sea, laboring with the peculiar motion known as a "cork-screw roll"; the night was very dark. Presently he turned and walked to the chart-house door; inside, the Navigation Officer was leaning over the chart, wrinkling his brows as he pencilled a faint line.

"Pilot," said the other, "just step out here a second."

The Navigator looked up, pushing his cap from his forehead. "What's up?"

"I think the starboard anchor is 'talking.' I wish you'd come and listen a moment." The Navigator stepped out on to the bridge, closing the chart-house door after him, and paused a moment to accustom his eyes to the darkness. "Dark night, isn't it? Wind's getting up, too. . . ." He walked to the end of the bridge and leaned out. The ship plunged into a hollow with a little shudder and then flung her bows upwards into a cascade of spray. A dull metallic sound detached itself from the sibilant rushing of water and the beat of waves against the ship's side, repeating faintly with each roll of the ship from the neighborhood of the anchor-bed. The Navigator nodded: "Yes, . . . one of the securing chains wants tautening, I should say. 'Saltash Luck'¹ for some one!" He moved back into the chart-house and picked up the parallel-rulers again.

The Lieutenant of the Watch went to the head of the ladder and called the Boatswain's Mate, who was standing in the lee of the conning-tower yarning with the Corporal of the Watch —

"Pipe the duty sub. of the watch to fall in with oilskins on; when they're present, take them on to the forecastle and set up the securing chain of the starboard bower-anchor. Something's worked loose. See that any one who goes outside the rail has a bowline on."

"Aye, aye, sir." The Boatswain's Mate descended the ladder, giving a few preliminary "cheeps" with his pipe before

¹ A thorough wetting.

delivering himself of his tidings of "Saltash Luck" to the duty sub. of the port watch.

The Officer of the Watch gave an order to the telegraph-man on the bridge, and far below in the engine-room they heard the clang of the telegraph gongs. He turned into the chart-house and opened the ship's log, glancing at the clock as he did so. Then he wrote with a stumpy bit of pencil —

"9.18. Decreased speed to 6 knots. Duty sub. secured starboard bower-anchor."

He returned to the bridge and leaned over the rail, straining his eyes into the darkness and driving spray towards the indistinct group of men working on the streaming fore-castle. In the light of a swaying lantern he could make out a figure getting out on to the anchor-bed; another was turning up with a rope's end; he heard the faint click of a hammer on metal. The ship lurched and plunged abruptly into the trough of a sea. An oath, clear-cut and distinct, tossed aft on the wind, and a quick shout.

He turned aft and rushed to the top of the ladder, bawling down between curved palms with all the strength of his lungs.

The Engineer Lieutenant who left the wardroom after dinner did not immediately go on deck. He went first to his cabin, where he filled and lit a pipe, and changed his mess-jacket for a comfortable, loose-fitting monkey-jacket. Then he settled down in his armchair, wedged his feet against the bunk to steady himself against the roll of the ship, and read his letter. Often as he read he smiled, and once he blinked a little, misty-eyed. The last sheet he re-read several times.

". . . Oh, isn't it good to think of! It was almost worth the pain of separation to have this happiness now — to know that every minute is bringing you nearer. I wake up in the morning with that happy sort of feeling that something nice

is going to happen soon — and then I realize: you are coming Home! I jump out of bed and tear another leaf off the calendar, — there are only nine left now, and then comes one marked with a big cross. . . . Do you know the kind of happiness that hurts? Or is it only a girl who can feel it? . . . I pray every night that the days may pass quickly, and that you may come safely.”

It was a very ordinary little love-letter, with its shy admixture of love and faith and piety: the sort so few men ever earn, and so many (in Heaven’s mercy) are suffered to receive. The recipient folded it carefully, replaced it in its envelope, and put it in his pocket. Then he lifted his head suddenly, listening. . . .

Down below, the engine-room telegraph gong had clanged, and the steady beat of the engines slowed. With an eye on his wrist-watch he counted the muffled strokes of the piston. . . . Decreased to 6 knots. What was the matter? Fog? He rose and leaned over his bunk, peering through the scuttle. Quite clear. He decided to light a pipe and go on deck for a “breather” before turning in, and glanced at the little clock ticking on the bulkhead. Twenty past nine; ten minutes walk on the quarter-deck and then to bed. It was his middle watch.

As he left his cabin some one in the wardroom began softly playing the piano, and the Paymaster’s clear baritone joined in, singing a song about somebody’s grey eyes watching for somebody else. The Mess was soaking in sentiment to-night: must be the effect of Saturday Night at Sea, he reflected.

He reached the quarter-deck and stood looking round, swaying easily with the motion of the ship. The sea was getting up, and the wind blew a stream of tiny sparks from his pipe. Farther aft the sentry on the life-buoys was mechanically walking his beat, now toiling laboriously up a steep incline, now trying to check a too precipitous descent. The Engineer Lieutenant watched him for a moment, listening to the notes of the piano tinkling up through the open skylight from the wardroom.

“I know of two white arms
Waiting for me . . .”

The singer had started another verse; the Engineer Lieutenant smiled faintly, and walked to the ship's side to stare out into the darkness. Why on earth had they slowed down? A sudden impatience filled him. Every minute was precious now. Why —

“*Man Overboard. Away Lifeboat's Crew!*” Not for nothing had the Officer of the Watch received a “Masts and Yards” upbringing; the wind forward caught the stentorian shout and hurled it along the booms and battery, aft to the quarter-deck where the little Engineer Lieutenant was standing, one hand closed over the glowing bowl of his pipe, the other thrust into his trousers pocket.

The engine-room telegraph began clanging furiously, the sound passing up the casings and ventilators into the night; then the Boatswain's Mate sent his ear-piercing pipe along the decks, calling away the lifeboat's crew. The sentry on the life-buoys wrenched at the releasing knob of one of his charges and ran across to the other.

The leaden seconds passed, and the Engineer still stood beside the rail, mechanically knocking the ashes from his pipe. . . . Then something went past on the crest of a wave: something white that might have been a man's face, or broken water showing up in the glare of a scuttle. . . . A sound out of the darkness that might have been the cry of a low-flying gull.

Now it may be argued that the Engineer Lieutenant ought to have stayed where he was. Going overboard on such a night was too risky for a man whose one idea was to get home as quickly as possible — who, a moment before, had chafed at the delay of reduced speed. Furthermore, he had in his pocket a letter bidding him come home safely; and for three years he had denied himself his little luxuries for love of her who wrote it. . . .

All the same — would she have him stand and wonder if that was a gull he had heard . . . ?

Love of women, Love of life. . . ! Mighty factors — almost supreme. Yet a mortal has stayed in a wrecked stokehold, amid the scalding steam, to find and shut a valve; Leper Settlements have their doctors and pastor; and “A very gallant Gentleman” walks unhesitatingly into an Antarctic blizzard, to show there is a love stronger and higher even than these.

The Engineer Lieutenant was concerned with none of these fine thoughts. For one second he did pause, looking about as if for somewhere to put his pipe. Then he tossed it on to the deck, scrambled over the rail, took a deep breath, and dived.

The Marine Sentry ran to the side of the ship.

“*Christ!*” he gasped, and forsook his post, to cry the tale aloud along the seething battery.

The ship shuddered as the engines were reversed, and the water under the stern began to seethe and churn. The Commander had left his cabin and was racing up to the bridge as the Captain reached the quarter-deck. A knot of officers gathered on the after-bridge.

“Pin’s out, sir!” shouted the Coxswain of the sea-boat, and added under his breath, “Oars all ready, lads! Stan’ by to pull like bloody ’ell — there’s two of ’em in the ditch. . . .”

The boat was hanging a few feet above the tumbling water.

“Slip!” shouted a voice from the invisible fore-bridge. An instant’s pause, and the boat dropped with a crash on to a rising wave. There was a clatter and thud of oars in rowlocks; the clanking of the chain-slings, and the boat, with her motley-clad¹ life-belted crew, slid off down the slant of a wave. For a moment the glare of an electric light lit the faces of the men, tugging and straining grimly at their oars; then she vanished, to reappear a moment later on the crest of a sea, and disappeared again into the darkness.

¹ Every one near the boat responds to the call “Away Lifeboat’s Crew!”

The Commander on the fore-bridge snatched up a megaphone, shouting down-wind —

“Pull to starboard, cutter! Make for the life-buoy light!”

The watchers on the after-bridge were peering into the night with binoculars and glasses. The A.P. extended an arm and forefinger: “There’s the life-buoy — there! . . . Now — there! D’you see it? You can just see the flare when it lifts on a wave . . . Ah! That’s better!”

The dazzling white beam from a search-light on the fore-bridge leaped suddenly into the night. “Now we can see the cutter —” the beam wavered a moment and finally steadied. “Yes, there they are. . . . I say, there’s a devil of a sea running.”

“Ripping sea-boats our Service cutters are,” said another, staring through his glasses. “They’ll live in almost anything; but this isn’t a dangerous sea. The skipper’ll turn in a minute and make a lee for them.”

“Think old Shortie reached the buoy?”

“Probably swimming about looking for the other fellow, if I know anything of him; who did he go in after?”

“One of the duty sub. — they were securing the anchor or something forward, and the bowline slipped —”

“By gad! He’s got him! There’s the buoy — yes, two of them. *Good* old Shortie. . . . My God! *Good* old Shortie!” The speaker executed a sort of war-dance and trod on the Paymaster’s toes.

“When you’ve quite finished, Snatcher. . . . By the way, what about hot-water bottles — blankets — stimulants. . . . First aid: come along! ‘Assure the patient in a loud voice that he is safe.’ . . . ‘Aspect cheerful but subdued.’ . . . I learned the whole rigmarole once!”

From the fore upper bridge the Captain was handling his ship like a packet-boat.

“ ‘Midships — steady! Stop both!’” He raised his mouth from the voice-pipe to the helmsman, and nodded to the Officer

of the Watch. "She'll do now. . . . The wind'll take her down."

The Commander leaned over the rail and called the Boatswain's Mate —

"Clear lower deck! Man the falls!"

The ranks of men along the ship's side turned inboard, and passed the ropes aft, in readiness to hoist the boat. There were three hundred men on the falls, standing by to whisk the cutter to the davit-heads like a cockle-shell.

"They've got 'em — got 'em both!" murmured the deep voices; they spat impatiently. "What say, lads? Stamp an' go with 'er?"

"Silence in the battery! *Marry!*"

The Commander was leaning over the bridge rails; the Surgeon and two Sick-berth Stewards were waiting by the davits. Alongside the cutter was rising and falling on the waves. . .

"—All right, sir!" The voice of the Coxswain came up as if from the deep. They had hooked the plunging boat on somehow, and his thumb-nail was a pulp. . . .

Three hundred pairs of eyes turned towards the fore-bridge.

"*Hoist away!*"

No need for the Boatswain's Mate to echo the order; no need for the Petty Officers "With a will, then, lads!" They rushed aft in a wild stampede, hauling with every ounce of beef and strength in their bodies. The cutter, dripping and swaying, her crew fending her off the rolling ship with their stretchers, shot up to the davits.

"High 'nough!"

The rush stopped like one man. Another pull on the after-fall — enough. She was hoisted. "*Walk back! . . . Lie to!*"

A tense silence fell upon the crowded battery: the only sound that of men breathing hard. A limp figure was seen descending the Jacob's ladder out of the boat, assisted by two of the crew. Ready hands were outstretched to help, and the next moment

Willie Sparling, Ordinary Seaman, Official Number 13728, was once more on the deck of a man-of-war — a place he never expected to see again.

“Ow!” He winced, “Min’ my shoulder — it’s ’urted. . . .” He looked round at the familiar faces lit by the electric lights, and jerked his head back at the boat hanging from her davits. “’E saved my life — look after ’im. ’E’s a . . . e’s a — bleedin’ ’ero, . . .” and Willie Sparling, with a broken collar-bone, collapsed dramatically enough.

The Engineer Lieutenant swung himself down on to the upper deck and stooped to wring the water from his trousers. The Surgeon seized him by the arm —

“Come along, Shortie — in between the blankets with you!”

The hero of the moment disengaged his arm and shook himself like a terrier. “Blankets be blowed — it’s my Middle Watch.”

The Surgeon laughed. “Plenty of time for that: it’s only just after half-past nine. What about a hot toddy?”

“Lord! I thought I’d been in the water for hours. . . . Yes, by Jove! a hot toddy —” He paused and looked round, his face suddenly anxious. “By the way, . . . any one seen a pipe sculling about . . .?”

Down below the telegraph gongs clanged, and the ship’s bows swung round on to her course, heading once more for England, Home, and Beauty.

XXX. VIS ET VIR ¹

VICTOR HUGO

[It is the spring of 1793. The *Claymore*, an English corvette manned by French Royalists has left the Channel Island of Jersey for the coast of Brittany. She is evidently bound on some mission of vast importance. On board is a mysterious old man, disguised as a peasant. He is said to be the leader of the royalist's faction of La Vendée. As the vessel makes toward the coast of France, the Count de Boisberthelot and the Chevalier de la Vieuville discuss the qualifications of the peasant, who seems to be a Breton prince, to wage a cruel and relentless war against the regicides. They are in the midst of an argument when interrupted by the present train of incidents, the end of which conclusively settles the issue for them.]

I

BOISBERTHELOT had no time to reply to la Vieuville. La Vieuville was suddenly cut short by a cry of despair, and at the same time a noise was heard wholly unlike any other sound. This cry and the noise came from within the vessel.

The captain and lieutenant rushed towards the gun-deck, but could not get down. All the gunners were pouring up in dismay. Something terrible had just happened.

One of the carronades of the battery, a twenty-four pounder, had broken loose.

This is the most dangerous accident that can possibly take place on shipboard. Nothing more terrible can happen to a sloop of war in open sea and under full sail.

A cannon that breaks its moorings suddenly becomes some strange, supernatural beast. It is a machine transformed into a monster. That short mass on wheels moves like a billiard-ball, rolls with the rolling of the ship, plunges with the pitching, goes, comes, stops, seems to meditate, starts on its course again, shoots like an arrow, from one end of the vessel to the other, whirls around, slips away, dodges, rears, bangs, crashes, kills,

¹ Reprinted from *Ninety-three*.

exterminates. It is a battering ram capriciously assaulting a wall. Add to this, the fact that the ram is of metal, the wall of wood.

It is matter set free; one might say that this eternal slave was avenging itself; it seems as if the total depravity concealed in what we call inanimate things had escaped, and burst forth all of a sudden; it appears to lose patience, and to take a strange mysterious revenge; nothing is more relentless than this wrath of the inanimate. This enraged lump leaps like a panther, it has the clumsiness of an elephant, the nimbleness of a mouse, the obstinacy of an ox, the uncertainty of the billows, the zigzag of the lightning, the deafness of the grave. It weighs ten thousand pounds, and it rebounds like a child's ball. It spins and then abruptly darts off at right angles.

And what is to be done? How put an end to it? A tempest ceases, a cyclone passes over, a wind dies down, a broken mast can be replaced, a leak can be stopped, a fire extinguished, but what will become of this enormous brute of bronze? How can it be captured? You can reason with a bull-dog, astonish a bull, fascinate a boa, frighten a tiger, tame a lion; but you have no resource against this monster, a loose cannon. You cannot kill it, it is dead; and at the same time it lives. It lives with a sinister life which comes to it from the infinite. The deck beneath it gives it full swing. It is moved by the ship, which is moved by the sea, which is moved by the wind. This destroyer is a toy. The ship, the waves, the winds, all play with it, hence its frightful animation. What is to be done with this apparatus? How fetter this stupendous engine of destruction? How anticipate its comings and goings, its returns, its stops, its shocks? Any one of its blows on the side of the ship may stave it in. How foretell its frightful meanderings? It is dealing with a projectile, which alters its mind, which seems to have ideas, and changes its direction every instant. How

check the course of what must be avoided? The horrible cannon struggles, advances, backs, strikes right, strikes left, retreats, passes by, disconcerts expectation, grinds up obstacles, crushes men like flies. All the terror of the situation is in the fluctuations of the flooring. How fight an inclined plane subject to caprices? The ship has, so to speak, in its belly, an imprisoned thunderstorm, striving to escape; something like a thunderbolt rumbling above an earthquake.

In an instant the whole crew was on foot. It was the fault of the gun captain, who had neglected to fasten the screw-nut of the mooring-chain, and had insecurely clogged the four wheels of the gun carriage; this gave play to the sole and the framework, separated the two platforms, and finally the breeching. The tackle had given way, so that the cannon was no longer firm on its carriage. The stationary breeching, which prevents recoil, was not in use at this time. A heavy sea struck the port, the carronade insecurely fastened, had recoiled and broken its chain, and began its terrible course over the deck.

To form an idea of this strange sliding, let one imagine a drop of water running over glass.

At the moment when the fastenings gave way, the gunners were in the battery. Some in groups, others scattered about, busied with the customary work among sailors getting ready for a signal for action. The carronade, hurled forward by the pitching of the vessel, made a gap in this crowd of men and crushed four at the first blow; then sliding back, and shot out again as the ship rolled, it cut in two a fifth unfortunate, and knocked a piece of the battery against the larboard side with such force as to unship it. This caused the cry of distress just heard. All the men rushed to the companion-way. The gun deck was vacated in a twinkling.

The enormous gun was left alone. It was given up to itself. It was its own master, and master of the ship. It could do what it pleased. The whole crew, accustomed to laugh in

time of battle, now trembled. To describe the terror is impossible.

Captain Boisberthelot and Lieutenant la Vieuville, although both dauntless men, stopped at the head of the companion-way, and dumb, pale, and hesitating, looked down on the deck below. Some one elbowed past and went down.

It was their passenger, the peasant, the man of whom they had been speaking a moment before.

Reaching the foot of the companion-way, he stopped.

II

THE cannon was rushing back and forth on the deck. One might have supposed it to be the living chariot of the Apocalypse. The marine lantern swinging overhead added a dizzy shifting of light and shade to the picture. The form of the cannon disappeared in the violence of its course, and it looked now black in the light, now mysteriously white in the darkness.

It went on in its destructive work. It had already shattered four other guns and made two gaps in the side of the ship, fortunately above the water-line, but where the water would come in, in case of heavy weather. It rushed frantically against the framework; the strong timbers withstood the shock; the curved shape of the wood gave them great power of resistance; but they creaked beneath the blows of this huge club, beating on all sides at once, with a strange sort of ubiquity. The percussions of a grain of shot shaken in a bottle are not swifter or more senseless. The four wheels passed back and forth over the dead men, cutting them, carving them, slashing them, till the five corpses were a score of stumps rolling across the deck; the heads of the dead men seemed to cry out; streams of blood curled over the deck with the rolling of the vessel; the planks, damaged in several places, began to gape open. The whole ship was filled with the horrid noise and confusion.

The captain promptly recovered his presence of mind and ordered everything that could check and impede the cannon's mad course to be thrown through the hatchway down on the gun deck — mattresses, hammocks, spare sails, rolls of cordage, bags belonging to the crew, and bales of counterfeit assignats, of which the corvette carried a large quantity — a characteristic piece of English villainy regarded as legitimate warfare.

But what could these rags do? As nobody dared to go below to dispose of them properly, they were reduced to lint in a few minutes.

There was just sea enough to make the accident as bad as possible. A tempest would have been desirable, for it might have upset the cannon, and with four wheels once in the air there would be some hope of getting it under control. Meanwhile, the havoc increased.

There were splits and fractures in the masts, which are set into the framework of the keel and rise above the decks of ships like great, round pillars. The convulsive blows of the cannon had cracked the mizzen-mast, and had cut into the main-mast.

The battery was being ruined. Ten pieces out of thirty were disabled; the breeches in the side of the vessel were increasing, and the corvette was beginning to leak.

The old passenger, having gone down to the gun deck, stood like a man of stone at the foot of the steps. He cast a stern glance over this scene of devastation. He did not move. It seemed impossible to take a step forward. Every movement of the loose carronade threatened the ship's destruction. A few moments more and shipwreck would be inevitable.

They must perish or put a speedy end to the disaster; some course must be decided on; but what? What an opponent was this carronade! Something must be done to stop this terrible madness — to capture this lightning — to overthrow this thunderbolt.

Boisberthelot said to la Vieuville:

“Do you believe in God, chevalier?”

La Vieuville replied: “Yes — no. Sometimes.”

“During a tempest?”

“Yes, and in moments like this.”

“God alone can save us from this,” said Boisberthelot.

Everybody was silent, letting the carronade continue its horrible din.

Outside, the waves beating against the ship responded with their blows to the shocks of the cannon. It was like two hammers alternating.

Suddenly, in the midst of this inaccessible ring, where the escaped cannon was leaping, a man was seen to appear, with an iron bar in his hand. He was the author of the catastrophe, the captain of the gun, guilty of criminal carelessness, and the cause of the accident, the master of the carronade. Having done the mischief, he was anxious to repair it. He had seized the iron bar in one hand, a tiller-rope with a slip noose in the other, and jumped down the hatchway to the gun deck.

Then began an awful sight; a Titanic scene; the contest between gun and gunner; the battle of matter and intelligence, the duel between man and the inanimate.

The man stationed himself in a corner, and with bar and rope in his two hands, he leaned against one of the riders, braced himself on his legs, which seemed two steel posts, and livid, calm, tragic, as if rooted to the deck, he waited.

He waited for the cannon to pass by him.

The gunner knew his gun, and it seemed to him as if the gun ought to know him. He had lived long with it. How many times he had thrust his hand into its mouth! It was his own familiar monster. He began to speak to it as if it were his dog.

“Come!” he said. Perhaps he loved it.

He seemed to wish it to come to him.

But to come to him was to come upon him. And then he would be lost. How could he avoid being crushed? That was the question. All looked on in terror.

Not a breast breathed freely, unless perhaps that of the old man, who was alone in the battery with the two contestants, a stern witness.

He might be crushed himself by the cannon. He did not stir. Beneath them the sea blindly directed the contest.

At the moment when the gunner, accepting this frightful hand-to-hand conflict, challenged the cannon, some chance rocking of the sea caused the carronade to remain for an instant motionless and as if stupefied.

“Come, now!” said the man. It seemed to listen.

Suddenly it leaped towards him. The man dodged the blow.

The battle began. Battle unprecedented. Frailty struggling against the invulnerable. The gladiator of flesh attacking the beast of brass. On one side, brute force; on the other, a human soul.

All this was taking place in semi-darkness. It was like the shadowy vision of a miracle.

A soul — strange to say, one would have thought the cannon also had a soul; but a soul full of hatred and rage. This sightless thing seemed to have eyes. The monster appeared to lie in wait for the man. One would have at least believed that there was craft in this mass. It also chose its time. It was a strange, gigantic insect of metal, having or seeming to have the will of a demon. For a moment this colossal locust would beat against the low ceiling overhead, then it would come down on its four wheels like a tiger on its four paws, and begin to run at the man. He, supple, nimble, expert, writhed away like an adder from all these lightning movements. He avoided a collision, but the blows which he parried fell against the vessel, and continued their work of destruction.

An end of broken chain was left hanging to the carronade.

This chain had in some strange way become twisted about the screw of the cascabel. One end of the chain was fastened to the gun-carriage. The other, left loose, whirled desperately about the cannon, making all its blows more dangerous.

The screw held it in a firm grip, adding a thong to a battering-ram, making a terrible whirlwind around the cannon, an iron lash in a brazen hand. This chain complicated the contest.

However, the man went on fighting. Occasionally, it was the man who attacked the cannon; he would creep along the side of the vessel, bar and rope in hand; and the cannon, as if it understood, and as though suspecting some snare, would flee away. The man, bent on victory, pursued it.

Such things cannot long continue. The cannon seemed to say to itself, all of a sudden, "Come, now! Make an end of it!" and it stopped. One felt that the crisis was at hand. The cannon, as if in suspense, seemed to have, or really had — for to all it was a living being — a ferocious malice prepense. It made a sudden, quick dash at the gunner. The gunner sprang out of the way, let it pass by, and cried out to it with a laugh, "Try it again!" The cannon, as if enraged, smashed a carronade on the port side; then, again seized by the invisible sling which controlled it, it was hurled to the starboard side at the man, who made his escape. Three carronades gave way under the blows of the cannon; then, as if blind and not knowing what more to do, it turned its back on the man, rolled from stern to bow, injured the stern and made a breach in the planking of the prow. The man took refuge at the foot of the steps, not far from the old man who was looking on. The gunner held his iron bar in rest. The cannon seemed to notice it, and without taking the trouble to turn around, slid back on the man, swift as the blow of an axe. The man, driven against the side of the ship, was lost. The whole crew cried out with horror.

But the old passenger, till this moment motionless, darted

forth more quickly than any of this wildly swift rapidity. He seized a package of counterfeit assignats, and, at the risk of being crushed, succeeded in throwing it between the wheels of the carronade. This decisive and perilous movement could not have been made with more exactness and precision by a man trained in all the exercises described in Durosel's "Manual of Gun Practice at Sea."

The package had the effect of a clog. A pebble may stop a log, the branch of a tree turn aside an avalanche. The carronade stumbled. The gunner, taking advantage of this critical opportunity, plunged his iron bar between the spokes of one of the hind wheels. The cannon stopped. It leaned forward. The man, using the bar as a lever, held it in equilibrium. The heavy mass was overthrown, with the crash of a falling bell, and the man, rushing with all his might, dripping with perspiration, passed the slipnoose around the bronze neck of the subdued monster.

It was ended. The man had conquered. The ant had control over the mastodon; the pigmy had taken the thunderbolt prisoner.

The mariners and sailors clapped their hands.

The whole crew rushed forward with cables and chains, and in an instant the cannon was secured.

The gunner saluted the passenger.

"Sir," he said, "you have saved my life."

The old man had resumed his impassive attitude, and made no reply.

III

THE man had conquered, but the cannon might be said to have conquered as well. Immediate shipwreck had been avoided, but the corvette was not saved. The damage to the vessel seemed beyond repair. There were five breaches in her sides, one, very large, in the bow; twenty of the thirty carronades lay useless in their frames. The one which had just

been captured and chained again was disabled; the screw of the *casabel* was sprung, and consequently levelling the gun made impossible. The battery was reduced to nine pieces. The ship was leaking. It was necessary to repair the damages at once, and to work the pumps.

The gun deck, now that one could look over it, was frightful to behold. The inside of an infuriated elephant's cage would not be more completely demolished.

However great might be the necessity of escaping observation, the necessity of immediate safety was still more imperative to the *corvette*. They had been obliged to light up the deck with lanterns hung here and there on the sides.

However, all the while this tragic play was going on, the crew were absorbed by a question of life and death, and they were wholly ignorant of what was taking place outside the vessel. The fog had grown thicker; the weather had changed; the wind had worked its pleasure with the ship; they were out of their course, with Jersey and Guernsey close at hand, farther to the south than they ought to have been, and in the midst of a heavy sea. Great billows kissed the gaping wounds of the vessel — kisses full of danger. The rocking of the sea threatened destruction. The breeze had become a gale. A squall, a tempest, perhaps, was brewing. It was impossible to see four waves ahead.

While the crew were hastily repairing the damages to the gun deck, stopping the leaks, and putting in place the guns which had been uninjured in the disaster, the old passenger had gone on deck again.

He stood with his back against the main-mast.

He had not noticed a proceeding which had taken place on the vessel. The *Chevalier de la Vieuville* had drawn up the marines in line on both sides of the main-mast, and at the sound of the boatswain's whistle the sailors formed in line, standing on the yards.

The Count de Boisberthelot approached the passenger.

Behind the captain walked a man, haggard, out of breath, his dress disordered, but still with a look of satisfaction on his face.

It was the gunner who had just shown himself so skillful in subduing monsters, and who had gained the mastery over the cannon.

The count gave the military salute to the old man in peasant's dress, and said to him:

"General, there is the man."

The gunner remained standing, with downcast eyes, in military attitude.

The Count de Boisberthelot continued:

"General, in consideration of what this man has done, do you not think there is something due him from his commander?"

"I think so," said the old man.

"Please give your orders," replied Boisberthelot.

"It is for you to give them, you are the captain."

"But you are the general," replied Boisberthelot.

The old man looked at the gunner.

"Come forward," he said.

The gunner approached.

The old man turned towards the Count de Boisberthelot, took off the cross of Saint-Louis from the captain's coat and fastened it on the gunner's jacket.

"Hurrah!" cried the sailors.

The marines presented arms.

And the old passenger pointing to the dazzled gunner, added:

"Now, have this man shot."

Dismay succeeded the cheering.

Then in the midst of the death-like stillness, the old man raised his voice and said:

"Carelessness has compromised this vessel. At this very hour, it is perhaps lost. To be at sea is to be in front of the

enemy. A ship making a voyage is an army waging war. The tempest is concealed, but it is at hand. The whole sea is an ambuscade. Death is the penalty of any misdemeanor committed in the face of the enemy. No fault is reparable. Courage should be rewarded, and negligence punished."

These words fell one after another, slowly, solemnly, in a sort of inexorable metre, like the blows of an axe upon an oak.

And the man, looking at the soldiers, added:

"Let it be done."

The man on whose jacket hung the shining cross of Saint-Louis, bowed his head.

At a signal from Count de Boisberthelot, two sailors went below and came back bringing the hammock-shroud; the chaplain, who since they sailed had been at prayer in the officers' quarters, accompanied the two sailors; a sergeant detached twelve marines from the line and arranged them in two files, six by six; the gunner, without uttering a word, placed himself between the two files. The chaplain, crucifix in hand, advanced and stood beside him. "March," said the sergeant, — the platoon marched with slow steps to the bow of the vessel. The two sailors, carrying the shroud, followed. A gloomy silence fell over the vessel. A hurricane howled in the distance.

A few moments later, a light flashed, a report sounded through the darkness, then all was still, and the sound of a body falling into the sea was heard.

The old passenger, still leaning against the mainmast, had crossed his arms, and was buried in thought.

Boisberthelot pointed to him with the forefinger of his left hand, and said to la Vieuville in a low voice:

"La Vendée has a head."

XXXI. A DEAD ISSUE ¹

CHARLES MACOMB FLANDREAU

[Mr. Flandreau, all of whose writings are full of a detailed and amusing observation, is one of the very few authors who have been able to put the endlessly recurrent scenes and ideas of undergraduate life into durable form. This story and *Wellington*, in Part II, were written while he was still close to undergraduate affairs and were published within two years after he left college. The problem which *A Dead Issue* presents is a singular one, but it is so embedded in the common routine of college life that it has a wide significance. It is discussed in the introduction to Part V, pages 397-398.]

MARCUS THORN, instructor in Harvard University, was thirty-two years old on the twentieth of June. He looked thirty-five, and felt about a hundred. When he got out of bed on his birthday morning, and pattered into the vestibule for his mail, the date at the top of the *Crimson* recalled the first of these unpleasant truths to him. His mirror — it was one of those detestable folding mirrors in three sections — enabled him to examine his bald spot with pitiless ease, reproduced his profile some forty-five times in quick succession, and made it possible for him to see all the way round himself several times at once. It was this devilish invention that revealed fact number two to Mr. Thorn, while he was brushing his hair and tying his necktie. One plus two equalled three, as usual, and Thorn felt old and unhappy. But he didn't linger over his dressing to philosophise on the evanescence of youth; he didn't even murmur, —

“Alas for hourly change! Alas for all
The loves that from his hand proud youth lets fall,
Even as the beads of a told rosary.”

He could do that sort of thing very well; he had been doing it steadily for five months. But this morning, the reality of the

¹ Reprinted from *Harvard Episodes* with the kind permission of Small, Maynard and Company, and of the author.

situation — impressed upon him by the date of his birth — led him to adopt more practical measures. What he actually did, was to disarrange his hair a little on top, — fluff it up to make it look more, — and press it down toward his temples to remove the appearance of having too much complexion for the size of his head. Then he went out to breakfast.

Thorn's birthday had fallen, ironically, on one of those rain-washed, blue-and-gold days when "all nature rejoices." The whitest of clouds were drifting across the bluest of skies when the instructor walked out into the Yard; the elms rustled gently in the delicate June haze, and the robins hopped across the yellow paths, freshly sanded, and screamed in the sparkling grass. All nature rejoiced, and in so doing got very much on Thorn's nerves. When he reached his club, he was a most excellent person not to breakfast with.

It was early — half-past eight — and no one except Prescott, a sophomore, and Wynne, a junior, had dropped in as yet. Wynne, with his spectacles on, was sitting in the chair he always sat in at that hour, reading the morning paper. Thorn knew that he would read it through from beginning to end, carefully put his spectacles back in their case, and then go to the piano and play the "Blue Danube." By that time his eggs and coffee would be served. Wynne did this every morning, and the instructor, who at the beginning of the year had regarded the boy's methodical habits at the club as "quaint," — suggestive, somehow, of the first chapter of "Pendennis," — felt this morning that the "Blue Danube" before breakfast would be in the nature of a last straw. Prescott, looking as fresh and clean as the morning, was laughing over an illustrated funny paper. He merely nodded to Thorn, although the instructor hadn't breakfasted there for many months, and called him across to enjoy something. Thorn glanced at the paper and smiled feebly.

"I don't see how you can do it at this hour," he said; "I

would as soon drink flat champagne." Prescott understood but vaguely what the man was talking about, yet he didn't appear disturbed or anxious for enlightenment.

"I'll have my breakfast on the piazza," Thorn said to the steward who answered his ring. Then he walked nervously out of the room.

From the piazza he could look over a tangled barrier of lilac bushes and trellised grapevines into an old-fashioned garden. A slim lady in a white dress and a broad-brimmed hat that hid her face was cutting nasturtiums and humming placidly to herself. Thorn thought she was a young girl, until she turned and revealed the fact that she was not a young girl — that she was about his own age. This seemed to annoy him in much the same way that the robins and Wynne and the funny paper had, for he threw himself into a low steamer-chair where he wouldn't have to look at the woman, and gave himself up to a sort of luxurious melancholy.

In October, nine months before, Thorn had appeared one evening in the doorway of the club dining-room after a more or less continuous absence of eight years from Cambridge. It was the night before college opened, and the dining-room was crowded. For an instant there was an uproar of confused greetings; then Haydock and Ellis and Sears Wolcott and Wynne — the only ones Thorn knew — pushed back from the table and went forward to shake hands with him. Of the nine or ten boys still left at the table by this proceeding, those whose backs were turned to the new arrival stopped eating and waited without looking around, to be introduced to the owner of the unfamiliar voice. Their companions opposite paused too, some of them laid their napkins on the table. They, however, could glance up and see that the newcomer was a dark man of thirty years or more. They supposed, correctly, that he was an "old graduate" and a member of the club.

"You don't know any of these people, do you?" said Haydock,

taking him by the arm; "what a devil of a time you've been away from this place."

"I know that that's a Prescott," laughed the graduate. In his quick survey of the table, while the others had been welcoming him back, his eyes had rested a moment on a big fellow with light hair. Everybody laughed, because it really was a Prescott and all Prescotts were simply more or less happy replica of all other Prescotts. "I know your brothers," said the graduate, shaking hands with the boy, who had risen.

"It's Mr. Thorn." Haydock made this announcement loud enough to be heard by the crowd. He introduced every one, prefixing "Mr." to the names of the first few, but changing to given and even nicknames before completing the circuit of the table. The humor of some of these last, — "Dink," "Pink," and "Mary," for instance, — lost sight of in long established usage, suggested itself anew; and the fellows laughed again as they made a place for Thorn at the crowded table.

"It's six years, isn't it?" Haydock asked politely. The others had begun to babble cheerfully again of their own affairs.

"Six! I wish it were; it's eight," answered Thorn. "Eight since I left college. But of course I've been here two or three times since, — just long enough to make me unhappy at having to go back to Europe again."

"And now you're a great, haughty Ph.D. person, an 'Officer of Instruction and Government,' announced in the prospectus to teach in two courses," mused Ellis, admiringly. "How do you like the idea?"

"It's very good to be back," said Thorn. He looked about the familiar room with a contented smile, while the steward bustled in and out to supply him with the apparatus of dining.

It was, indeed, good to be back. The satisfaction deepened and broadened with every moment. It was good to be again in the town, the house, the room that, during his life abroad, he had grown to look upon more as "home" than any place in

the world; good to come back and find that the place had changed so little; good, for instance, when he ordered a bottle of beer, to have it brought to him in his own mug, with his name and class cut in the pewter, — just as if he had never been away at all. This was but one of innumerable little things that made Thorn feel that at last he was where he belonged; that he had stepped into his old background; that it still fitted. The fellows, of course, were recent acquisitions — all of them. Even his four acquaintances had entered college long since his own time. But the crowd, except that it seemed to him a gathering decidedly younger than his contemporaries had been at the same age, was in no way strange to him. There were the same general types of young men up and down the table, and at both ends, that he had known in his day. They were discussing the same topics, in the same tones and inflections, that had made the dinner-table lively in the eighties, — which was not surprising when he considered that certain families belong to certain clubs at Harvard almost as a matter of course, and that some of the boys at the table were the brothers and cousins of his own classmates. He realized with a glow of sentiment, that he had returned to his own people after years of absence in foreign lands; a performance whose emotional value was not decreased for Thorn by the conviction, just then, that his own people were better bred, and better looking, and better dressed than any he had met elsewhere. As he looked about at his civilized surroundings, and took in, from the general chatter, fragments of talk, — breezy and cosmopolitan with incidents of the vacation just ended, — he considered his gratification worth the time he had been spending among the fuzzy young gentlemen of a German university.

Thorn, like many another college antiquity, might have been the occasion of a mutual feeling of constraint had he descended upon this undergraduate meal in the indefinite capacity of “an old graduate.” The ease with which he filled his place at

the table, and the effortless civility that acknowledged his presence there, were largely due to his never having allowed his interest in the life of the club to wane during his years away from it. He knew the sort of men the place had gone in for, and, in many instances, their names as well. Some of his own classmates — glad, no doubt, of so congenial an item for their occasional European letters — had never failed to write him, in diverting detail, of the great Christmas and spring dinners. And they, in turn, had often read extracts from Thorn's letters to them, when called on to speak at these festivities. More than once the graduate had sent, from the other side of the world, some doggerel verses, a sketch to be used as a dinner-card, or a trifling addition to the club's library or dining-room. Haydock and Ellis and Wolcott and Wynne he had met at various times abroad. He had made a point of hunting them up and getting to know them, with the result that his interest had succeeded in preserving his identity; he was not unknown to the youngest member of the club. If they didn't actually know him, they at least knew of him. Even this crust is sweet to the returned graduate whose age is just far enough removed from either end of life's measure to make it intrinsically unimportant.

"What courses do you give?" It was the big Prescott, sitting opposite, who asked this. The effort involved a change of color.

"You'd better look out, or you'll have Pink in your class the first thing you know," some one called, in a voice of warning, from the other end of the table.

"Yes; he's on the lookout for snaps," said some one else.

"Then he'd better stay away from my lectures," answered Thorn, smiling across at Prescott, who blushed some more at this sudden convergence of attention on himself. "They say that new instructors always mark hard — just to show off."

"I had you on my list before I knew who you were," announced another. "I thought the course looked interesting; you'll have to let me through."

"Swipe! swipe!" came in a chorus from around the table. This bantering attitude toward his official position pleased Thorn, perhaps, more than anything else. It flattered and reassured him as to the impression his personality made on younger — much younger — men. He almost saw in himself the solution of the perennial problem of "How to bring about a closer sympathy between instructor and student."

After dinner Haydock and Ellis took him from room to room, and showed him the new table, the new rugs, the new books, *ex dono* this, that, and the other member. In the library he came across one of his own sketches, prettily framed. Some of his verses had been carefully pasted into the club scrapbook. Ellis and Haydock turned to his class photograph in the album, and laughed. It was not until long afterwards that he wondered if they had done so because the picture had not yet begun to lose its hair. When they had seen everything from the kitchen to the attic, they went back to the big room where the fellows were drinking their coffee and smoking. Others had come in in the interval; they were condoling gayly with those already arrived, on the hard luck of having to be in Cambridge once more. Thorn stood with his back to the fireplace, and observed them.

It was anything but a representative collection of college men. There were athletes, it was true, — Prescott was one, — and men who helped edit the college papers, and men who stood high in their studies, and others who didn't stand anywhere, talking and chaffing in that room. But it was characteristic of the life of the college that these varied distinctions had in no way served to bring the fellows together there. That Ellis would, without doubt, graduate with a *magna*, perhaps a *summa cum laude*, was a matter of interest to no one but Ellis. That

Prescott had played admirable foot-ball on Soldiers' Field the year before, and would shortly do it again, made Prescott indispensable to the Eleven, perhaps, but it didn't in the least enhance his value to the club. In fact, it kept him away so much, and sent him to bed so early, that his skill at the game was, at times, almost deplored. That Haydock once in a while contributed verses of more than ordinary merit to the *Monthly* and *Advocate* had nearly kept him out of the club altogether. It was the one thing against him, — he had to live it down. On the whole, the club, like all of the five small clubs at Harvard whose influence is the most powerful, the farthest reaching influence in the undergraduate life of the place, rather prided itself in not being a reward for either the meritorious or the energetic. It was composed of young men drawn from the same station in life, the similarity of whose past associations and experience, in addition to whatever natural attractions they possessed, rendered them mutually agreeable. The system was scarcely broadening, but it was very delightful. And as the graduate stood there watching the fellows — brown and exuberant after the long vacation — come and go, discussing, comparing, or simply fooling, but always frankly absorbed in themselves and one another, he could not help thinking that however much such institutions had helped to enfeeble the class spirit of days gone by, they had a rather exquisite, if less diffusive spirit of their own. He liked the liveliness of the place, the broad, simple terms of intimacy on which every one seemed to be with every one else, the freedom of speech and action. Not that he had any desire to bombard people with sofa-cushions, as Sears Wolcott happened to be doing at that instant, or even to lie on his back in the middle of the centre-table with his head under the lamp, and read the *Transcript*, as some one else had done most of the evening; but he enjoyed the environment that made such things possible and unobjectionable.

"I must make a point of coming here a great deal," reflected Thorn.

The next day college opened. More men enrolled in Thorn's class that afternoon than he thought would be attracted by the subject he was announced to lecture in on that day of the week. Among all the students who straggled, during the hour, into the bare recitation-room at the top of Sever, the only ones whose individualities were distinct enough to impress themselves on Thorn's unpracticed memory were a negro, a stained ivory statuette of a creature from Japan, a middle-aged gentleman with a misplaced trust in the efficacy of a flowing sandy beard for concealing an absence of collar and necktie, Prescott, and Haydock. Prescott surprised him. There was a crowd around the desk when he appeared, and Thorn didn't get a chance to speak to him; but he was pleased to have the boy enrol in his course, — more pleased somehow than if there had been any known intellectual reason for his having done such a thing; more pleased, for instance, than he was when Haydock strolled in a moment or two later, although he knew that the senior would get from his teachings whatever there was in them. Haydock was the last to arrive before the hour ended. Thorn gathered up his pack of enrolment cards, and the two left the noisy building together.

"Prescott enrolled just a minute or two before you did," said Thorn, as they walked across the Yard. He was a vain man in a quiet way.

"Yes," answered Haydock drily, "he said your course came at a convenient hour," he didn't add that, from what he knew of Prescott, complications might, under the circumstances, be looked for.

"Shall I see you at dinner?" Thorn asked before they separated.

"Oh, are you going to eat at the club?" Haydock had wondered the night before how much the man would frequent the place.

“Why, yes, I thought I would — for a time at least.” No other arrangement had ever occurred to Thorn.

“That’s good — I’m glad,” said the senior; he asked himself, as he walked away, why truthful people managed to lie so easily and so often in the course of a day. As a matter of fact, he was vaguely sorry for what Thorn had just told him. Haydock didn’t object to the instructor. Had his opinion been asked, he would have said, with truth, that he liked the man. For Thorn was intelligent, and what Haydock called “house broken,” and the two had once spent a pleasant week together in Germany. It was not inhospitality, but a disturbed sense of the fitness of things that made Haydock regret Thorn’s apparent intention of becoming so intimate with his juniors. The instructor’s place, Haydock told himself, was with his academic colleagues, at the Colonial Club — or wherever it was that they ate.

Thorn did dine with the undergraduates that night, and on many nights following. It was a privilege he enjoyed for a time exceedingly. It amused him, and, after the first few weeks of his new life in Cambridge, he craved amusement. For in spite of the work he did for the college — the preparing and delivering of lectures, the reading and marking of various written tasks, and the enlightening, during consultation hours, of long haired, long winded seekers after truth, whose cold, insistent passion for the literal almost crazed him — he was often profoundly bored. He had not been away from Cambridge long enough to outlive the conviction, acquired in his Freshman year, that the residents of that suburb would prove unexhilarating if in a moment of inadvertence he should ever chance to meet any of them. But he had been too long an exile to retain a very satisfactory grasp on contemporary Boston. Of course he hunted up some of his classmates he had known well. Most of them were men of affairs in a way that was as yet small enough to make them seem to Thorn aggressively full of purpose. They were all glad to see him. Some of them asked him to luncheon

in town at hours that proved inconvenient to one living in Cambridge; some of them had wives, and asked him to call on them. He did so, and found them to be nice women. But this he had suspected before. Two of his classmates were rich beyond the dreams of industry. They toiled not, and might have been diverting if they hadn't — both of them — happened to be unspeakably dull men. For one reason or another, he found it impossible to see his friends often enough to get into any but a very lame sort of step with their lives. Thorn's occasional meetings with them left him melancholy, sceptical as to the depth of their natures and his own, cynical as to the worth of college friendships — friendships that had depended, for their warmth, so entirely on propinquity — on the occasion. His most absorbing topics of conversation with the men he had once known — his closest ties — were after all issues very trivial and very dead. Dinner with a classmate he grew to look on as either suicide, or a post mortem.

It was the club with its fifteen or twenty undergraduate members that went far at first toward satisfying his idle moments. Dead issues, other than the personal traditions that added color and atmosphere to the everyday life of the place, were given no welcome there. The thrill of the fleeting present was enough. The life Thorn saw there was, as far as he could tell, more than complete with the healthy joy of eating and drinking, of going to the play, of getting hot and dirty and tired over athletics, and cool and clean and hungry again afterwards. The instructor was entranced by its innocence — its unconscious contentment. It was so unlike his own life of recent years, he told himself; it was so "physical." He liked to stop at the club late in the winter afternoons, after a brisk walk on Brattle Street. There was always a crowd around the fire at that hour, and no room that he could remember had ever seemed so full of warmth and sympathy as the big room where the fellows sat, at five o'clock on a winter's day, with the curtains drawn and

the light of the fire flickering up the dark walls and across the ceiling. He often dropped in at midnight, or even later. The place was rarely quite deserted. Returned "theatre bees" came there to scramble eggs and drink beer, instead of tarrying with the mob at the Victoria or the Adams House. In the chill of the small hours, a herdic load of boys from some dance in town would often stream in to gossip and get warm, or to give the driver a drink after the long cold drive across the bridge. And Thorn, who had not been disposed to gather up and cling to the dropped threads of his old interests, who was not wedded to his work, who was not sufficient unto himself, enjoyed it all thoroughly, unreservedly — for a time.

For a time only. For as the winter wore on, the inevitable happened — or rather the expected didn't happen, which is pretty much the same thing after all. Thorn, observant, analytical, and — where he himself was not concerned — clever, grew to know the fellows better than they knew themselves. Before he had lived among them three months, he had appreciated their respective temperaments, he had taken the measure of their ambitions and limitations, he had catalogued their likes and dislikes, he had pigeon-holed their weaknesses and illuminated their virtues. Day after day, night after night, consciously and unconsciously, he had observed them in what was probably the frankest, simplest intercourse of their lives. And he knew them.

But they didn't know him. Nor did it ever occur to them that they wanted to or could. They were not seeking the maturer companionship Thorn had to give; they were not seeking much of anything. They took life as they found it near at hand, and Thorn was far, very far away. For them, the niche he occupied could have been filled by any gentleman of thirty-two with a kind interest in them and an affection for the club. To him, they were anything that made the world, as he knew it just then, interesting and beautiful. Youth, energy, cleanli-

ness were the trinity Thorn worshipped. And they were young, strong, and undefiled. Yet, after the first pleasure at being back had left him, Thorn was not a happy man, although he had not then begun to tell himself so.

The seemingly unimportant question presented by his own name began to worry him a little as the weeks passed into months. First names and the absurd sounds men had answered to from babyhood were naturally in common use at the club. Thorn dropped into the way of them easily, as a matter of course. Not to have done so would, in time, have become impossible. The fellows would have thought it strange — formal. Yet the name of "Marcus" was rarely heard there. Haydock, once in a while, called him that, after due premeditation. Sears Wolcott occasionally used it by way of a joke — as if he were taking an impertinent liberty, and rather enjoyed doing it. But none of the other men ever did. On no occasion had any one said "Marcus" absentmindedly, and then looked embarrassed, as Thorn had hoped might happen. It hurt him a little always to be called "Thorn"; to be appealed to in the capacity of "Mr. Thorn," as he sometimes was by the younger members, positively annoyed him. Prescott was the most incorrigible in this respect. He had come from one of those fitting schools where all speech between master and pupil is carried on to a monotonous chant of "Yes, sir," "No, sir," and "I think so, sir." He had ideas, or rather habits, — for Prescott's ideas were few, — of deference to those whose mission it was to assist in his education that Thorn found almost impossible to displace. For a long time until the graduate laughed and asked him not to — he prefixed the distasteful "Mr." to Thorn's name. Then, for as long again, he refrained markedly from calling him anything. One afternoon he came into the club where the instructor was alone, writing a letter, and after fussing for a time among the magazines on the table, he managed to say, —

“Thorn, do you know whether Sears has been here since luncheon?”

Thorn didn't know and he didn't care, but had Prescott handed him an appointment to an assistant professor's chair, instead of having robbed him a little of what dignity he possessed, he would not have been so elated by half. Prescott continued to call him “Thorn” after that, but always with apparent effort, — as if aware that in doing it he was not living quite up to his principles. This trouble with his name might have served Thorn as an indication of what his position actually was in the tiny world he longed so much to be part of once more. But he was not a clever man where he himself was concerned.

Little things hurt him constantly without opening his eyes. For instance, it rarely occurred to the fellows that the instructor might care to join them in any of their hastily planned expeditions to town after dinner. Not that he was ostracised; he was simply overlooked. When he did go to the theatre, he bought the tickets himself, and asked Prescott or Sears, or some of them, to go with him. The occasion invariably lacked charm of spontaneity. When he invited any of them to dine with him in town, as he often did, they went, if they hadn't anything else to do, and seemed to enjoy their dinner. But to Thorn these feasts were a series of disappointments. He always got up from the table with a sense of having failed in something. What? He didn't know — he couldn't have told. He was like a man who shoots carefully at nothing, and then feels badly because he hits it. He persisted in loitering along sunny lanes, and growing melancholy because they led nowhere. It was Sears Wolcott who took even the zest of anticipation out of Thorn's little dinners in town, by saying to the graduate one evening, —

“What's the point of going to the Victoria for dinner? It's less trouble, and a damned sight livelier, to eat out here.” Sears had what Haydock called, “that disagreeable habit of

hitting promiscuously from the shoulder." The reaction on Thorn of all this was at last a dawning suspicion of his own unimportance. By the time the midyear examinations came, he felt somehow as if he were "losing ground"; he hadn't reached the point yet of realizing that he never had had any. He used to throw down his work in a fit of depression and consult his three-sided mirror apprehensively.

The big Prescott, however, became the real problem, around which the others were as mere corollaries. It was he who managed, in his "artless Japanese way," as the fellows used to call it, to crystallise the situation, to bring it to a pass where Thorn's rather unmanly sentimentality found itself confronted by something more definite and disturbing than merely the vanishing point of youth. Prescott accomplished this very simply, by doing the poorest kind of work — no work at all, in fact — in the course he was taking from Thorn. Barely, and by the grace of the instructor, had he scraped through the first examination in November. Since then he had rested calmly, like a great monolith, on his laurels. He went to Thorn's lectures only after intervals of absence that made his going at all a farce. He ignored the written work of the course, and the reports on outside reading, with magnificent completeness. Altogether, he behaved as he wouldn't have behaved had he ever for a moment considered Thorn in any light other than that of an instructor, an officer of the college, a creature to whom deference — servility, almost — was due when he was compelled to talk to him, but to whom all obligation ended there. His attitude was not an unusual one among college "men" who have not outgrown the school idea, but the attendant circumstances were. For Thorn's concern over Prescott's indifference to the course was aroused by a strong personal attachment, one in which an ordinary professorial interest had nothing to do. He smarted at his failure to attract the boy sufficiently to draw him to his lectures; yet he looked with a sort of panic

toward the approaching day when he should be obliged, in all conscience, to flunk him in the midyear examination. He admired Prescott, as little, intelligent men sometimes do admire big, stupid ones. He idealised him, and even went the length, one afternoon when taking a walk with Haydock, of telling the senior that under Prescott's restful, olympic exterior he thought there lurked a soul. To which Haydock had answered with asperity, "Well, I hope so, I'm sure," and let the subject drop. Later in the walk, Haydock announced, irrelevantly, and with a good deal of vigour, that if he ever made or inherited millions, he would establish a chair in the university, call it the "Haydock Professorship of Common Sense," and respectfully suggest to the President and Faculty that the course be made compulsory.

Thorn would have spoken to the soulful Prescott, — told him gently that he didn't seem to be quite in sympathy with the work of the course, — if Prescott had condescended to go to his lectures in the six or seven weeks between the end of the Christmas recess and the examination period. But Prescott cut Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, at half-past two o'clock, with a regularity that, considered as regularity, was admirable. Toward the last, he did drop in every now and then, sit near the door, and slip out again before the hour was ended. This was just after he had been summoned by the Recorder to the Office for "cutting." Thorn never got a chance to speak to him. He might have approached the boy at the club; but the instructor shrank from taking advantage of his connection with that place to make a delicate official duty possible. He had all along avoided "shop" there so elaborately, — had made so light of it when the subject had come up, — that he couldn't bring himself at that late day to arise, viper like, from the hearthstone and smite. A note of warning would have had to be light, facetious, and consequently without value, in order not to prove a very false and uncalled-for note indeed. The ready coöper-

ation of the Dean, Thorn refrained from calling on; he was far from wishing to get Prescott into difficulties.

By the time the examination day arrived, the instructor was in a state of turmoil that in ordinary circumstances would have been excessive and absurd. In the case of Thorn, it was half pathetic, half contemptible. He knew that in spite of Prescott's soul (a superabundance of soul is, as a matter of fact, a positive hindrance in passing examinations), the boy would do wretchedly. To give him an E — the lowest possible mark, always excepting, of course, the jocosé and sarcastic F — would be to bring upon himself Prescott's everlasting anger and "despision." Of this Thorn was sure. Furthermore, the mark would not tend to make the instructor wildly popular at the club; for although everybody was willing to concede that Prescott was not a person of brilliant mental attainments, he was very much beloved. One hears a good deal about the "rough justice of boys." Thorn knew that such a thing existed, and did not doubt but that, in theory, he would be upheld by the members of the club if he gave Prescott an E, and brought the heavy hand of the Office down on him. But the justice of boys, he reflected, was, after all, rough; it would acknowledge his right to flunk Prescott, perhaps, and, without doubt, hate him cordially for doing it. Thorn's aversion to being hated was almost morbid.

If, on the other hand, he let the boy through, — gave him, say the undeserved and highly respectable mark of C, — well, that would be tampering dishonestly with the standards of the college, gross injustice to the rest of the students, injurious to the self-respect of the instructor, and a great many other objectionable things, too numerous to mention. Altogether, Thorn was in a "state of mind." He began to understand something of the fine line that separates instructor from instructed, on whose other side neither may trespass.

When at length the morning of the examination had come and

gone, and Thorn was in his own room at his desk with the neat bundle of blue-covered books before him, in which the examinations are written, it was easy enough to make up his mind. 'He knew that the question of flunking or passing Prescott admitted of no arguments whatever. The boy's work in the course failed to present the tiniest loophole in the way of "extenuating circumstances," and Prescott had capped the climax of his past record that morning by staying in the examination-room just an hour and a quarter of the three hours he was supposed to be there. That alone was equivalent to failure in a man of Prescott's denseness. Not to give Prescott a simple and unadorned E would be holding the pettiest of personal interests higher than one's duty to the college. There was no other way of looking at it. And Thorn, whose mind was perfectly clear on this point, deliberately extricated Prescott's book from the blue pile on his desk, dropped it carelessly — without opening it — into the glowing coals of his fireplace, and entered the boy's midyear mark in the records as C.

No lectures are given in the college during the midyears. Men who are fortunate enough to finish their examinations early in the period can run away to New York, to the country, to Old Point Comfort, to almost anywhere that isn't Cambridge, and recuperate. Haydock went South. Ellis and Wynne tried a walking trip in the Berkshire Hills, and, after two days' floundering in the mud, waded to the nearest train for a city. Boston men went to Boston — except Sears Wolcott and Prescott, who disappeared to some wild and inaccessible New England hamlet to snow-shoe or spear fish or shoot rabbits; no one could with authority say which, as the two had veiled their preparations in mystery. So it happened that Thorn didn't see Prescott for more than a week after he had marked his book. In the meantime he had become used to the idea of having done it according to a somewhat unconventional system — to put it charitably. He passed much of the time in which the fellows

were away, alone; for the few who went to the club, went there with note-books under their arms and preoccupied expressions in their eyes. They kept a sharp look-out for unexpected manœuvres on the part of the clock, and had a general air of having to be in some place else very soon. Thorn, thrown on his own resources, had a mild experience of what Cambridge can be without a crowd to play with, and came to the conclusion that, for his own interest and pleasure in life, he had done wisely in not incurring Prescott's ill-will and startling the club in the new rôle of hardhearted, uncompromising pedagogue. The insignificant part he played in the lives of the undergraduates was far from satisfying; but it was the sort of half a loaf one doesn't willingly throw away. By the time Prescott came back, Thorn had so wholly accepted his own view of the case that he was totally unprepared for the way in which the boy took the news of his mark. He met Prescott in the Yard the morning college opened again, and stopped to speak to him. He wouldn't have referred to the examination — it was enough to know that the little crisis had passed — had not Prescott, blushing uneasily, and looking over Thorn's shoulder at something across the Yard, said, —

“I don't suppose you were very much surprised at the way I did in the exam, were you?”

“It might have been better,” answered Thorn, seriously. “I hope you will do better the second half year. But then, it might have been worse; your mark was C.”

Prescott looked at him, a quizzical, startled look; and then realizing that Thorn was serious, that there had been nothing of the sarcastic in his tone or manner, he laughed rudely in the instructor's face.

“I beg your pardon,” he said, as politely as he could, with his eyes still full of wonder and laughter; “I had no idea I did so well.” He turned abruptly and walked away. Thorn would have felt offended, if he hadn't all at once been exceed-

ingly scared. Prescott's manner was extraordinary for one who, as a rule, took everything as it came, calmly, unquestioningly. His face and his laugh had expressed anything but ordinary satisfaction at not having failed. There was something behind that unwonted astonishment, something more than mere surprise at having received what was, after all, a mediocre mark. Thorn had mixed enough with human kind to be aware that no man living is ever very much surprised in his heart of hearts to have his humble efforts in any direction given grade C. Men like Prescott, who know but little of the subjects they are examined in, usually try to compose vague answers that may, like the oracles, be interpreted according to the mood of him who reads them. No matter how general or how few Prescott's answers had been — Thorn stopped suddenly in the middle of the path. The explanation that had come to him took hold of him, and like a tightened rein drew him up short. Prescott had written nothing. The pages of his blue book had left the examination-room as virgin white as when they had been brought in and placed on the desk by the proctor. There was no other explanation possible, and the instructor tingled all over with the horrid sensation of being an unspeakable fool. He turned quickly to go to University Hall; he meant to have Prescott's mark changed at once. But Prescott, at that moment, was bounding up the steps of University, two at a time. He was undoubtedly on his way to the Office to verify what Thorn had just told him. Thorn walked rapidly to his entry in Holworthy, although he had just come from there. Then, with short, nervous steps, he turned back again, left the Yard, and hurried in aimless haste up North Avenue. He had been an ass, — a bungling, awful ass, — he told himself over and over again. And that was about as coherent a meditation as Mr. Thorn was able to indulge in for some time. Once the idea of pretending that he had made a mistake did suggest itself for a moment; but that struck him as wild, impossible. It would

have merely resulted in forcing the Office to regard him stupid and careless, and, should embarrassing questions arise, he no longer had Prescott's book with which to clear himself. More than that, it would give Prescott reason to believe him an underhand trickster. The boy now knew him to be an example of brazen partiality; there was no point in incurring even harsher criticism. Thorn tried to convince himself, as he hurried along the straight, hideous highway, that perhaps he was wrong — that Prescott hadn't handed in a perfectly blank book. If only he could have been sure of that, he would have risked the bland assertion that the boy had stumbled on more or less intelligent answers to the examination questions, without perhaps knowing it himself. This, practically, was the tone he had meant to adopt all along. But he couldn't be sure, and, unfortunately, the only person who could give information as to what was or wasn't in the book, was Prescott. But Prescott had given information of the most direct and convincing kind. That astounded look and impertinent laugh had as much as said: —

“Well, old swipe, what's your little game? What do you expect to get by giving a good mark to a man who wasn't able to answer a single question?” And Thorn knew it. At first he was alarmed at what he had done. He could easily see how such a performance, if known, might stand in the light of his reappointment to teach in the college, even if it didn't eject him at once. But before he returned to his room, after walking miles, he scarcely knew where, fear had entirely given way to shame, — an over-powering shame that actually made the man sick at his stomach. It wasn't as if he had committed a man's fault in a world of men where he would be comfortably judged and damned by a tribunal he respected about as much as he respected himself. He had turned himself inside out before the clear eyes of a lot of boys, whose dealings with themselves and one another were like so many shafts of white light in an

unrefracting medium. He had let them know what a weak, characterless, poor thing he was, by holding himself open to a bribe, showing himself willing to exchange, for the leavings of their friendships, something he was bound in honor to give only when earned, prostituting his profession that they might continue to like him a little, tolerate his presence among them. And he was one whom the college had honored by judging worthy to stand up before young men and teach them. It was really very sickening.

Thorn couldn't bring himself to go near the club for some days. He knew, however, as well as if he had been present, what had probably happened there in the meanwhile. Prescott had told Haydock and Wolcott, and very likely some of the others, the story of his examination. They had laughed at first, as if it had been a good joke in which Prescott had come out decidedly ahead; then Haydock had said something — Thorn could hear him saying it — that put the matter in a pitilessly true light, and the others had agreed with him. They usually did in the end. It took all the "nerve" Thorn had to show himself again.

But when he had summoned up enough courage to drop in at the club late one evening, he found every one's manner toward him pretty much as it always had been; yet he could tell instinctively, as he sat there, who had and who hadn't heard Prescott's little anecdote. Wolcott knew; he called Thorn, "Marcus," with unnecessary gusto, and once or twice laughed his peculiarly irritating laugh when there was nothing, as far as Thorn could see, to laugh at. Haydock knew; Thorn winced under the cool speculative stare of the senior's grey eyes. Wynne knew; although Thorn had no more specific reason for believing so, than that the boy seemed rather more formidably bespectacled than usual. Several of the younger fellows also knew; Thorn knew that they knew; he couldn't stand it. When the front door slammed after him on his way back to his room, he

told himself that, as far as he was concerned, it had slammed for the last time.

He was very nearly right. He would have had to be a pachyderm compared to which the "blood-sweating behemoth of Holy Writ" is a mere satin-skinned invalid, in order to have brazened out the rest of the year on the old basis. He couldn't go to the club and converse on base-ball and the "musical glasses," knowing that the fellows with whom he was talking were probably weighing the pros and cons of taking his courses next year, and getting creditable marks in them, without doing a stroke of work. He couldn't face that "rough justice of boys" that would sanction the fellows making use of him, and considering him a pretty poor thing, at the same time. So he stayed away; he didn't go near the place through March and April and May. When his work didn't call him elsewhere, he stayed in his room and attempted to live the life of a scholar, — an existence for which he was in every conceivable way unfitted. For a time he studied hard out of books; but the most profitable knowledge he acquired in his solitude was the great deal he learned about himself. He tried to write. He had always thought it in him to "write something," if he ever should find the necessary leisure. But the play he began amounted to no more than a harmless pretext for discoursing in a disillusioned strain on Life and Art in the many letters he wrote to people he had known abroad, — people, for whom, all at once, he conceived a feeling of intimacy that no doubt surprised them when they received his letters. His volume of essays was never actually written, but the fact that he was hard at work on it served well as an answer to: —

"Why the devil don't we ever see you at the club nowadays?"

For the fellows asked him that, of course, when he met them in the Yard or in the electric cars; and Haydock tarried once or twice after his lecture and hoped politely that he was coming to the next club dinner. He wasn't at the next club dinner,

however, nor the next, nor the next. Haydock stopped reminding him of them. The club had gradually ceased to have any but a spectacular interest for Thorn. His part at a dinner there would be — and, since his return, always had been — that of decorous audience in the stalls, watching a sprightly farce. The club didn't insist on an audience, so Thorn's meetings with its members were few. He saw Haydock and Prescott, in a purely official way, more than any of them. Strangely enough, Prescott seemed to be trying to do better in Thorn's course. He came to the lectures as regularly as he had avoided them before the midyears. He handed in written work of such ingenious unintelligence that there was no question in Thorn's mind as to the boy's having conscientiously evolved it unaided. The instructor liked the spirit of Prescott's efforts, although it was a perpetual "rubbing in" of the memory of his own indiscretion; it displayed a pretty understanding of *noblesse oblige*.

The second half year was long and dreary and good for Thorn. It set him down hard, — so hard that when he collected himself and began to look about him once more, he knew precisely where he was — which was something he hadn't known until then. He was thirty-two years old; he looked thirty-five, and he felt a hundred, to begin with. He wasn't an undergraduate, and he hadn't been one for a good many years. He still felt that he loved youth and sympathized with its every phase, — from its mindless gambolings to its preposterous maturity. But he knew now that it was with the love and sympathy of one who had lost it. He had learned, too, that when it goes, it bids one a cavalier adieu, and takes with it what one has come to regard as one's rights, — like a saucy house-maid departing with the spoons. He knew that he had no rights; he had forfeited them by losing some of his hair. He wouldn't get any of them back again until he had lost all of it. He was the merest speck on the horizon of the fellows whom he had, earlier in the year,

tried to know on a basis of equality, — a sp·ck too far away, too microscopic even to annoy them. If he had only known it all along, he told himself, how different his year might have been. He wouldn't have squandered the first four months of it, for one thing, in a stupid insistence on a relation that must of necessity be artificial — unsatisfying. He wouldn't have spent the last five of it in coming to his senses. He wouldn't have misused all of it in burning — or at least in allowing to fall into a precarious state of unrepair — the bridges that led back to the friends of his own age and time.

“I have learned more than I have taught, this year,” thought Thorn.

To-day was Thorn's birthday. Impelled by a tender, tepid feeling of self-pity the instructor had come once more to the club to look at it and say good-bye before leaving Cambridge. He would have liked to breakfast on the piazza and suffer luxuriously alone. But just at the moment he was beginning to feel most deeply, Sears Wolcott appeared at the open French window, and said he was “Going to eat out there in the landscape too.” So Thorn, in spite of himself, had to revive.

“What did you think of the Pudding show last night?” began Sears. Talk with him usually meant leading questions and their simplest answers.

“It was very amusing — very well done,” said Thorn. What was the use, he asked himself, of drawing a cow-eyed stare from Wolcott by saying what he really thought — that Strawberry Night at the Pudding had been “exuberant,” “noisy,” “intensely young.”

“I saw you after it was over,” Sears went on; “why didn't you buck up with the old grads around the piano? You looked lonely.”

“I was lonely,” answered Thorn, truthfully this time.

“Where were your classmates? There was a big crowd out.”

“My classmates? Oh, they were there, I suppose. I haven’t seen much of them this year.”

Wolcott’s next question was: —

“Why the devil can’t we have better strawberries at this club, I wonder? Where’s the granulated sugar? They know I never eat this damned face powder on anything.” He called loudly for the steward, and Thorn went on with his breakfast in silence. After Sears had been appeased with granulated sugar, he asked: —

“Going to be here next year?”

“I’ve been reappointed; but I think I shall live in town. Why do you ask?”

“Oh, nothing — I was thinking I might take your courses. What mark is Prescott going to get for the year?”

Thorn looked up to meet Wolcott’s eyes unflinchingly; but the boy was deeply absorbed in studying the little air bubbles on the surface of his coffee.

“I don’t know what mark he’ll get. I haven’t looked at his book yet,” said Thorn. Sears remarked “Oh!” and laughed as he submerged the bubbles with a spoon. It was unlike him not to have said, “You do go through the formality of reading his books then?”

Prescott and Wynne joined them. They chattered gaily with Wolcott about nothing out there on the piazza, and watched the slim lady on the other side of the nodding lilac bushes cut nasturtiums. Thorn listened to them, and looked at them, and liked them; but he couldn’t be one of them, even for the moment. He couldn’t babble unpremeditatedly about nothing, because he had forgotten how it was done. So, in a little while, he got up to leave them. He had to mark some examination books and pack his trunks and go abroad, he told them. He said good-bye to Prescott and Wolcott and Wynne and some others who had come in while they were at breakfast, and hoped they would have “a good summer.” They hoped the same to him.

As he strolled back to his room with the sounds of their voices in his ears, but with no memory of what they had been saying, he wondered if, after all, they hadn't from the very first bored him just a little; if his unhappiness — his sense of failure when he talked to young people — didn't come from the fact that they commended themselves to his affections rather than to his intellect. Thorn was a vain man in a quiet way.

Prescott's final examination book certainly didn't commend itself to his intellect. It was long, and conscientious, and quite incorrect from cover to cover. The instructor left it until the last. He almost missed his train in deciding upon its mark.

XXXII. THE CAPTAIN'S VICES ¹

FRANÇOIS COPPÉE

[We have all of us seen village "characters" frittering away their useful possibilities in village loafing places and pool rooms. The genial futility of this sort of existence has impressed all of us. To make a story of this feature of daily life, that will at the same time preserve and expose its geniality, requires an unusual amount of logical imagination. The problem which Captain Mercadier faces is no more interesting than the problem of how he could be reformed and not spoilt in the process, which the author's imagination had to face. To be told that the plot consists of the adoption by Captain Mercadier, the *bon viveur*, of a forlorn crippled child sounds a trifle melodramatic. Whereas the wonderfully delicate and gradual explanation of this emphasizes not the strangeness of the Captain's action, but its inevitability. To accentuate and at the same time to make consonant — that is the art of composing the incidents of life by means of the imagination.]

It is of no importance, the name of the little provincial city where Captain Mercadier — twenty-six years of service, twenty-two campaigns, and three wounds — installed himself when he was retired on a pension.

It was quite like all those other little villages which solicit without obtaining it a branch of the railway; just as if it were not the sole dissipation of the natives to go every day, at the same hour, to the Place de la Fontaine to see the diligence come in at full gallop, with its gay cracking of the whips and clang of bells.

It was a place of three thousand inhabitants — ambitiously denominated souls in the statistical tables — and was exceedingly proud of its title of chief city of the canton. It had ramparts planted with trees, a pretty river with good fishing, a church of the charming epoch of the flamboyant Gothic, disgraced by a frightful station of the cross, brought directly from the quarter of Saint Sulpice. Every Monday its market was gay with great red and blue umbrellas, and countrymen filled its

¹ Reprinted from *Ten Tales by Coppée* (translated by Walter Learned) with the kind permission of Harper and Brothers.

streets in carts and carriages. But for the rest of the week it retired with delight into that silence and solitude which made it so dear to its rustic population. Its streets were paved with cobblestones; through the windows of the ground-floor one could see samplers and wax-flowers under glass domes, and, through the gates of the gardens, statuettes of Napoleon in shell-work. The principal inn was naturally called the Shield of France; and the town-clerk made rhymed acrostics for the ladies of society.

Captain Mercadier had chosen that place of retreat for the simple reason that he had been born there, and because, in his noisy childhood, he had pulled down the signs and plugged up the bell-buttons. He returned there to find neither relations, nor friends, nor acquaintances; and the recollections of his youth recalled only the angry faces of shop-keepers who shook their fists at him from the shop-doors, a catechism which threatened him with hell, a school which predicted the scaffold, and, finally, his departure for his regiment, hastened by a paternal malediction.

For the Captain was not a saintly man; the old record of his punishment was black with days in the guard-house inflicted for breaches of discipline, absences from roll-calls, and nocturnal uproars in the mess-room. He had often narrowly escaped losing his stripes as a corporal or a sergeant, and he needed all the chance, all the license of a campaigning life, to gain his first epaulet. Firm and brave soldier, he had passed almost all his life in Algiers at that time when our foot soldiers wore the high shako, white shoulder-belts and huge cartridge-boxes. He had had Lamoricière for commander. The Duc de Nemours, near whom he received his first wound, had decorated him, and when he was sergeant-major, Père Bugrand had called him by his name and pulled his ears. He had been a prisoner of Abd-el-Kader, bearing the scar of a yataghan stroke on his neck, of one ball in his shoulder and another in his chest; and notwithstanding absinthe, duels, debts of play, and almond-eyed

Jewesses, he fairly won, with the point of the bayonet and sabre, his grade of captain in the First Regiment of Sharpshooters.

Captain Mercadier — twenty-six years of service, twenty-two campaigns, and three wounds — had just retired on his pension, not quite two thousand francs, which, joined to the two hundred and fifty francs from his cross, placed him in that estate of honorable penury which the State reserves for its old servants.

His entry into his natal city was without ostentation. He arrived one morning on the imperiale of the diligence, chewing an extinguished cigar, and already on good terms with the conductor, to whom, during his journey, he had related the passage of the Porte de Fer; full of indulgence, moreover, for the distractions of his auditor, who often interrupted the recital by some oath or epithet addressed to the off mare. When the diligence stopped he threw on the sidewalk his old valise, covered with railway placards as numerous as the changes of garrison that its proprietor had made, and the idlers of the neighborhood were astonished to see a man with a decoration — a rare thing in the province — offer a glass of wine to the coachman at the bar of an inn near by.

He installed himself at once. In a house in the outskirts, where two captive cows lowed, and fowls and ducks passed and repassed through the gate-way, a furnished chamber was to let. Preceded by a masculine-looking woman, the Captain climbed the stair-way with its great wooden balusters, perfumed by a strong odor of the stable, and reached a great tiled room, whose walls were covered with a bizarre paper representing, printed in blue on a white background and repeated infinitely, the picture of Joseph Poniatowski crossing the Elster on his horse. This monotonous decoration, recalling nevertheless our military glories, fascinated the Captain without doubt, for, without concerning himself with the uncomfortable straw

chairs, the walnut furniture, or the little bed with its yellowed curtain, he took the room without hesitation. A quarter of an hour was enough to empty his trunk, hang up his clothes, put his boots in a corner, and ornament the wall with a trophy composed of three pipes, a sabre, and a pair of pistols. After a visit to the grocer's, over the way, where he bought a pound of candles and a bottle of rum, he returned, put his purchase on the mantle-shelf, and looked around him with an air of perfect satisfaction. And then, with the promptitude of the camp, he shaved without a mirror, brushed his coat, cocked his hat over his ear, and went for a walk in the village in search of a café.

It was an inveterate habit of the Captain to spend much of his time at a café. It was there that he satisfied at the same time the three vices which reigned supreme in his heart — tobacco, absinthe, and cards. It was thus that he passed his life, and he could have drawn a plan of all the places where he had ever been stationed by their tobacco shops, cafés, and military clubs. He never felt himself so thoroughly at ease as when sitting on a worn velvet bench before a square of green cloth near a heap of beer-mugs and saucers. His cigar never seemed good unless he struck his match under the marble of the table, and he never failed, after hanging his hat and his sabre on a hat-hook and settling himself comfortably, by unloosing one or two buttons of his coat, to breathe a profound sigh of relief, and exclaim:

“That is better!”

His first care was, therefore, to find an establishment which he could frequent, and after having gone around the village without finding anything that suited him, he stopped at last to regard with the eye of a connoisseur the Café Prosper, situated at the corner of the Place du Marché and the Rue de la Pavoisse.

It was not his ideal. Some of the details of the exterior were too provincial: the waiter, in his black apron, for example, the little stands in their green frames, the footstools, and the

wooden tables covered with waxed cloth. But the interior pleased the Captain. He was delighted upon his entrance by the sound of the bell which was touched by the fair and fleshy *dame de comptoir*, in her light dress, with a poppy-colored ribbon in her sleek hair. He saluted her gallantly, and believed that she sustained with sufficient majesty her triumphal place between two piles of punch-bowls properly crowned by billiard-balls. He ascertained that the place was cheerful, neat, and strewn evenly with yellow sand. He walked around it, looking at himself in the glasses as he passed; approved the panels where guardsmen and amazons were drinking champagne in a landscape filled with red holly-hocks; called for his absinthe, smoked, found the divan soft and the absinthe good, and was indulgent enough not to complain of the flies that bathed themselves in his glass with true rustic familiarity.

Eight days later he had become one of the pillars of the Café Prosper.

They soon learned his punctual habits and anticipated his wishes, while he, in turn, lunched with the patrons of the place — a valuable recruit for those who haunted the café, folks oppressed by the tedium of a country life, for whom the arrival of that newcomer, past master in all games, and an admirable *raconteur* of his wars and his loves, was a true stroke of good-fortune. The Captain himself was delighted to tell his stories to folks who were still ignorant of his repertoire. There were fully six months before him in which to tell of his games, his feats, his battles, the retreat of Constantine, the capture of Bou-Maza, and the officers' receptions with the concomitant intoxication of rum-punch.

Human weakness! He was by no means sorry, on his part, to be something of an oracle; he from whom the sub-lieutenants, newcomers at Saint-Cyr, fled dismayed, fearing his long stories.

His usual auditors were the keeper of the café, a stupid and silent beer-cask, always in his sleeved vest, and remarkable

only for his carved pipe; the bailiff, a scoffer, dressed invariably in black, scorned for his inelegant habit of carrying off what remained of his sugar; the town-clerk, the gentleman of acrostics, a person of much amiability and a feeble constitution, who sent to the illustrated journals solutions of enigmas and rebuses; and lastly, the veterinary surgeon of the place, the only one who, from his position of atheist and democrat, was allowed to contradict the Captain. This practitioner, a man with tufted whiskers and eye-glasses, presided over the radical committee of electors, and when the curé took up a little collection among his devotees for the purpose of adorning his church with some frightful red and gilded statues, denounced, in a letter to the *Siècle*, the cupidity of the Jesuits.

The Captain having gone out one evening for some cigars after an animated political discussion, the aforesaid veterinary grumbled to himself certain phrases of heavy irritation concerning "coming to the point," and "a mere fencing-master," and "cutting a figure." But as the object of these vague menaces suddenly returned, whistling a march and beating time with his cane, the incident was without result.

In short, the group lived harmoniously together, and willingly permitted themselves to be presided over by the new-comer, whose white beard and martial bearing were quite impressive. And the small city, proud of so many things, was also proud of its retired Captain.

Perfect happiness exists nowhere, and Captain Mercadier, who believed that he had found it at the Café Prosper, soon recovered from his illusion.

For one thing, on Mondays, the market-day, the Café Prosper was untenable.

From early morning it was overrun with truck-peddlers, farmers, and poultrymen. Heavy men with coarse voices, red necks, and great whips in their hands, wearing blue blouses and otter-skin caps, bargaining over their cups, stamping

their feet, striking their fists, familiar with the servant, and bungling at billiards.

When the Captain came, at eleven o'clock, for his first glass of absinthe, he found this crowd gathered, and already half-drunk, ordering a quantity of lunches. His usual place was taken, and he was served slowly and badly. The bell was continually sounding, and the proprietor and the waiter, with napkins under their arms, were running distractedly hither and thither. In short, it was an ill-omened day, which upset his entire existence.

Now, one Monday morning, when he was resting quietly at home, being sure that the café would be much too full and busy, the mild radiance of the autumn sun persuaded him to go down and sit upon the stone seat by the side of the house. He was sitting there, depressed and smoking a damp cigar, when he saw coming down the end of the street — it was a badly paved lane leading out into the country — a little girl of eight or ten, driving before her a half-dozen geese.

As the captain looked carelessly at the child, he saw that she had a wooden leg.

There was nothing paternal in the heart of the soldier. It was that of a hardened bachelor. In former days, in the streets of Algiers, when the little begging Arabs pursued him with their importunate prayers, the Captain had often chased them away with blows from his whip; and on those rare occasions when he had penetrated the nomadic household of some comrade who was married and the father of a family, he had gone away cursing the crying babies and awkward children who had touched with their greasy hands the gilding on his uniform.

But the sight of that particular infirmity, which recalled to him the sad spectacle of wounds and amputations, touched, on that account, the old soldier. He felt almost a constriction of the heart at the sight of that sorry creature, half-clothed in her tattered petticoats and old chemise, bravely running

along behind her geese, her bare foot in the dust, and limping on her ill-made wooden stump.

The geese, recognizing their home, turned into the poultry yard, and the little one was about to follow them when the Captain stopped her with this question:

"Eh! little girl, what's your name?"

"Pierette, monsieur, at your service," she answered, looking at him with her great black eyes, and pushing her disordered locks from her forehead.

"You live in this house, then? I haven't seen you before."

"Yes, I know you pretty well, though, for I sleep under the stairs, and you wake me up every evening when you come home."

"Is that so, my girl? Ah, well, I must walk on my toes in future. How old are you?"

"Nine, monsieur, come All-Saints day."

"Is the landlady here a relative of yours?"

"No, monsieur, I am in service."

"And they give you?"

"Soup, and a bed under the stairs."

"And how came you to be lame like that, my poor little one?"

"By the kick of a cow when I was five."

"Have you father or mother?"

The child blushed under her sunburned skin. "I came from the Foundling Hospital," she said briefly. Then, with an awkward courtesy, she passed limping into the house, and the Captain heard, as she went away on the pavement of the court, the hard sound of the little wooden leg.

Good heavens! he thought, mechanically walking towards his café, that's not at all the thing. A soldier, at least, they pack off to the Invalides, with the money from his medal to keep him in tobacco. For an officer, they fix up a collectorship, and he marries somewhere in the provinces. But this poor girl, with such an infirmity, — that's not at all the thing!

Having established in these terms the injustice of fate, the

Captain reached the threshold of his dear café, but he saw there such a mob of blue blouses, he heard such a din of laughter and click of billiard-balls, that he returned home in very bad humor.

His room — it was, perhaps, the first time that he had spent in it several hours of the day — looked rather shabby. His bed-curtains were the color of an old pipe. The fireplace was heaped with old cigar-stumps, and one could have written his name in the dust on the furniture. He contemplated for some time the walls where the sublime lancer of Leipsic rode a hundred times to a glorious death. Then, for an occupation, he passed his wardrobe in review. It was a lamentable series of bottomless pockets, socks full of holes, and shirts without buttons.

“I must have a servant,” he said.

Then he thought of the little lame girl.

“That’s what I’ll do. I’ll hire the next little room; winter is coming, and the little thing will freeze under the stairs. She will look after my clothes and my linen and keep the barracks clean. A valet, how’s that?”

But a cloud darkened the comfortable picture. The Captain remembered that quarter-day was still a long way off, and that his account at the Café Prosper was assuming alarming proportions.

“Not rich enough,” he said to himself. “And in the meantime they are robbing me down there. That is positive. The board is too high, and that wretch of a veterinary plays bezique much too well. I have paid his way now for eight days. Who knows? Perhaps I had better put the little one in charge of the mess, soup au café in the morning, stew at noon, and ragout every evening — campaign life, in fact. I know all about that. Quite the thing to try.”

Going out he saw at once the mistress of the house, a great brutal peasant, and the little lame girl, who both, with pitchforks in their hands, were turning over the dung-heap in the yard.

"Does she know how to sew, to wash, to make soup?" he asked brusquely.

"Who — Pierette? Why?"

"Does she know a little of all that?"

"Of course. She came from an asylum where they learn how to take care of themselves."

"Tell me, little one," added the Captain, speaking to the child, "I am not scaring you — no? Well, my good woman, will you let me have her? I want a servant."

"If you will support her."

"Then that is finished. Here are twenty francs. Let her have to-night a dress and a shoe. To-morrow we'll arrange the rest."

And, with a friendly tap on Pierette's cheek, the Captain went off, delighted that everything was concluded. Possibly he thought he would have to cut off some glasses of beer and absinthe, and be cautious of the veterinary's skill at bezique. But that was not worth speaking of, and the new arrangement would be quite the thing.

Captain, you are a coward!

Such was the apostrophe with which the caryatides of the Café Prosper hereafter greeted the Captain, whose visits became rarer day by day.

For the poor man had not seen all the consequences of his good action. The suppression of his morning absinthe had been sufficient to cover the modest expense of Pierette's keeping, but how many other reforms were needed to provide for the unforeseen expenses of his bachelor establishment! Full of gratitude, the little girl wished to prove it by her zeal. Already the aspect of his room was changed. The furniture was dusted and arranged, the fireplace cleaned, the floor polished, and spiders no longer spun their webs over the deaths of Poniatowski in the corner. When the Captain came home the inviting odor of cabbage-soup saluted him on the staircase, and the sight

of the smoking plates on the coarse but white table-cloth, with a bunch of flowers and polished table-ware, was quite enough to give him a good appetite. Pierette profited by the good humor of her master to confess some of her secret ambitions. She wanted andirons for the fireplace, where there was now always a fire burning, and a mould for the little cakes that she knew how to make so well. And the Captain, smiling at the child's requests, but charmed with the home-like atmosphere of his room, promised to think of it, and on the morrow replaced his Londres by cigars for a sou each, hesitated to offer five points at *ecarte*, and refused his third glass of beer or his second glass of *chartreuse*.

Certainly the struggle was long; it was cruel. Often, when the hour came for the glass that was denied him by economy, when thirst seized him by the throat, the Captain was forced to make an heroic effort to withdraw his hand already reaching out towards the swan's beak of the café; many times he wandered about, dreaming of the king turned up and of quint and quatorze. But he almost always courageously returned home; and as he loved Pierette more through every sacrifice that he made for her, he embraced her more fondly every day. For he did embrace her. She was no longer his servant. When once she stood before him at the table, calling him "Monsieur," and so respectful in her bearing, he could not stand it, but seizing her by her two hands, he said to her, eagerly:

"First embrace me, and then sit down and do me the pleasure of speaking familiarly, confound it!"

And so to-day it is accomplished. Meeting a child has saved that man from an ignominious age.

He has substituted for his old vices a young passion. He adores the little lame girl who skips around him in his room, which is comfortable and well furnished.

He has already taught Pierette to read, and, moreover, recalling his calligraphy as a sergeant-major, he has set her copies

in writing. It is his greatest joy when the child, bending attentively over her paper, and sometimes making a blot which she quickly licks up with her tongue, has succeeded in copying all the letters of an interminable adverb in *ment*. His uneasiness is in thinking that he is growing old and has nothing to leave his adopted child.

And so he becomes almost a miser; he theorizes; he wishes to give up his tobacco, although Pierette herself fills and lights his pipe for him. He counts on saving from his slender income enough to purchase a little stock of fancy goods. Then when he is dead she can live an obscure and tranquil life, hanging up somewhere in the back room of the small shop an old cross of the Legion of Honor, her souvenir of the Captain.

Every day he goes to walk with her on the rampart. Sometimes they are passed by folks who are strangers in the village, who look with compassionate surprise at the old soldier, spared from the wars, and the poor lame child. And he is moved — oh, so pleasantly, almost to tears — when one of the passers-by whispers, as they pass:

“Poor father! Yet how pretty his daughter is.”

XXXIII. A COWARD ¹

GUY DE MAUPASSANT

[This story and the two following concern the moral and physical problem of the duel. The duel itself has almost gone out of fashion. Like the military caste with its arbitrary ideas of right and privilege, which it really stands for, the duel is on the way to disorganization. (It is disorganization by which the world progresses just as much as by organization.) Like the military caste, again, with its scant diplomacies and its wars, the duel with its minor etiquette and its single encounters, failed to solve moral problems. But it still serves to typify them. This story is discussed in the introduction, pages 401-402.]

IN society they called him "the handsome Signoles." His name was Viscount Gontran Joseph de Signoles.

An orphan and the possessor of a sufficient fortune, as the saying goes, he cut a dash. He had a fine figure and bearing, enough conversation to make people credit him with cleverness, a certain natural grace, an air of nobility and of pride, a gallant mustache, and a gentle eye — a thing which pleases women.

In the drawing-rooms he was in great request, much sought after as a partner for the waltz; and he inspired among men that smiling hatred which they always cherish for others of an energetic figure. He passed a happy and tranquil life, in a comfort of mind which was most complete. It was known that he was a good fencer, and as a pistol-shot even better.

"If ever I fight a duel," said he, "I shall choose pistols. With that weapon I am sure of killing my man."

Now, one night, having accompanied two young ladies, his friends, escorted by their husbands, to the theatre, he invited them all after the play to take an ice at Tortoni's. They had been there for several minutes, when he perceived that a gentleman seated at a neighboring table was staring obstinately at

¹ Reprinted from *The Odd Number, Thirteen Tales* by Guy de Maupassant (translated by Jonathan Sturges) with the kind permission of Harper and Brothers.

one of his companions. She seemed put out, uneasy, lowered her head. At last she said to her husband:

“There is a man who is looking me out of countenance. I do not know him; do you?”

The husband, who had seen nothing, raised his eyes, but declared:

“No, not at all.”

The young lady continued, half smiling, half vexed:

“It is very unpleasant; that man is spoiling my ice.”

Her husband shrugged his shoulders:

“Bast! don’t pay any attention to it. If we had to occupy ourselves about every insolent fellow that we meet we should never have done.”

But the viscount had risen brusquely. He could not allow that this stranger should spoil an ice which he had offered. It was to him that this insult was addressed, because it was through him and on his account that his friends had entered this café. So the matter concerned him only.

He advanced towards the man and said to him:

“You have, sir, a manner of looking at those ladies which I cannot tolerate. I beg of you to be so kind as to cease from this insistence.”

The other answered:

“You are going to mind your own business, curse you.”

The viscount said, with close-pressed teeth:

“Take care, sir, you will force me to pass bounds.”

The gentleman answered but one word, a foul word, which rang from one end of the cafe to the other, and, like a metal spring, caused every guest to execute a sudden movement. All those whose backs were turned wheeled round; all the others raised their heads; three waiters pivoted upon their heels like tops; the two ladies at the desk gave a jump, then turned round their whole bodies from the waists up, as if they had been two automata obedient to the same crank.

A great silence made itself felt. Then, on a sudden, a dry sound cracked in the air. The viscount had slapped his adversary's face. Every one rose to interfere. Cards were exchanged between the two.

When the viscount had reached home he paced his room for several minutes with great, quick strides. He was too much agitated to reflect at all. One single idea was hovering over his mind — "a duel" — without arousing in him as yet an emotion of any sort. He had done that which he ought to have done; he had shown himself to be that which he ought to be. People would talk about it, they would praise him, they would congratulate him. He repeated in a loud voice, speaking as one speaks when one's thoughts are very much troubled:

"What a brute the fellow was!"

Then he sat down and began to reflect. He must find seconds, the first thing in the morning. Whom should he choose? He thought over those men of his acquaintance who had the best positions, who were the most celebrated. He finally selected the Marquis de la Tour-Noire, and the Colonel Bourdin, a nobleman and a soldier. Very good indeed! Their names would sound well in the papers. He perceived that he was thirsty, and he drank, one after another, three glasses of water; then he began again to walk up and down the room. He felt himself full of energy. If he blustered a little, if he showed himself resolute at all points, if he demanded rigorous and dangerous conditions, if he insisted on a serious duel, very serious, terrible, his opponent would probably withdraw and make apologies.

He picked up the card which he had pulled out of his pocket and thrown on the table, and he reread it with a single glance. He had already done so at the café and in the cab, by the glimmer of every street lamp, on his way home. "Georges Lamil, 51 Rue Moncey." Nothing more.

He examined these assembled letters, which seemed to him

mysterious, and full of a confused meaning. Georges Lamil? Who was this man? What had he been about? Why had he stared at that woman in such a way? Was it not revolting that a stranger, an unknown, should so come and trouble your life, all on a sudden, simply because he had been pleased to fix his eyes insolently upon a woman that you knew? And the viscount repeated yet again, in a loud voice:

“What a brute!”

Then he remained motionless, upright, thinking, his look ever planted on the card. A rage awoke in him against this piece of paper, an anger full of hate in which was mixed a strange, uneasy feeling. It was stupid, this whole affair! He took a little penknife which lay open to his hand, and pricked it into the middle of the printed name, as if he had poniarded some one.

However, they must fight! He considered himself as indeed the insulted party. And, having thus the right, should he choose the pistol or the sword? With the sword he risked less; but with the pistol he had the chance of making his adversary withdraw. It is very rare that a duel with swords proves mortal, a mutual prudence preventing the combatants from engaging near enough for the point of a rapier to enter very deep. With the pistol he risked his life seriously; but he might also come out of the affair with all the honors of the situation, and without going so far as an actual meeting.

He said:

“I must be firm. He will be afraid.”

The sound of his voice made him tremble, and he looked about him. He felt himself very nervous. He drank another glass of water, then began to undress himself to go to bed.

As soon as he was in bed, he blew out the light and shut his eyes.

He thought:

“I’ve got all day to-morrow to attend to my affairs. I’d better sleep first so as to be calm.”

He was very warm under the bedclothes, but he could not manage to doze off. He turned and twisted, remained five minutes on his back, then placed himself on his left side, then rolled over to his right.

He was still thirsty. He got up again to drink. Then an anxiety seized him:

“Shall I be afraid?”

Why did his heart fall to beating so madly at each of the well-known noises of his chamber? When the clock was about to strike, the little grinding sound of the spring which stands erect caused him to give a start; and for several seconds after that he was obliged to open his mouth to breathe, he remained so much oppressed.

He set himself to reasoning with himself upon the possibility of this thing:

“Shall I be afraid?”

No, certainly not, he would not be afraid, because he was resolute to go to the end, because he had his will firmly fixed to fight and not to tremble. But he felt so deeply troubled that he asked himself:

“Can a man be afraid in spite of him?”

And this doubt invaded him, this uneasiness, this dread. If some force stronger than his will, if some commanding, and irresistible power should conquer him, what would happen? Yes, what could happen? He should certainly appear upon the field, since he willed to do it. But if he trembled? But if he fainted? And he thought of his situation, of his reputation, of his name.

And a curious necessity seized him on a sudden to get up again and look at himself in the mirror. He relit his candle. When he perceived his face reflected in the polished glass he hardly recognized himself, and it seemed to him that he had never seen this man before. His eyes appeared enormous; and he was pale, surely he was pale, very pale.

He remained upright before the mirror. He put out his

tongue as if to test the state of his health, and all on a sudden this thought entered into him after the fashion of a bullet:

“The day after to-morrow, at this time, I shall perhaps be dead.”

And his heart began again to beat furiously.

“The day after to-morrow, at this time, I shall perhaps be dead. This person before me, this ‘I’ which I see in this glass, will exist no longer. What! here I am, I am looking at myself, I feel myself to live, and in twenty-four hours I shall be laid to rest upon this couch, dead, my eyes shut, cold, inanimate, gone.”

He turned towards his bed and he distinctly saw himself on the back in the same sheets which he had just left. He had the hollow face which dead men have, and that slackness to the hands which will never stir more.

So he grew afraid of his bed, and, in order not to look at it again, he passed into his smoking-room. He took a cigar mechanically, lit it, and again began to walk the room. He was cold; he went towards the bell to wake his valet; but he stopped, his hand lifted towards the bell-rope:

“That fellow will see that I am afraid.”

And he did not ring, he made the fire himself. When his hands touched anything they trembled slightly, with a nervous shaking. His head wandered; his troubled thoughts became fugitive, sudden, melancholy; an intoxication seized on his spirit as if he had been drunk.

And ceaselessly he asked himself:

“What shall I do? What will become of me?”

His whole body vibrated, jerky tremblings ran over it; he got up, and approaching the window, he opened the curtains.

The day was coming, a day of summer. The rosy sky made rosy the city, the roofs, and the walls. A great fall of tenuous light, like a caress from the rising sun, enveloped the awakened world; and, with this glimmer, a hope, gay, rapid, brutal, seized

on the heart of the viscount! Was he mad to let himself be so struck down by fear, before anything had even been decided, before his seconds had seen those of this Georges Lamil, before he yet knew if he was going to fight at all?

He made his toilet, dressed himself, and left the house with a firm step.

He repeated to himself, while walking:

"I must be decided, very decided. I must prove that I am not afraid."

His seconds, the marquis and the colonel, put themselves at his disposition, and after having pressed his hands energetically, discussed the conditions of the meeting.

The colonel asked:

"You want a serious duel?"

The viscount answered:

"Very serious."

The marquis took up the word.

"You insist on pistols?"

"Yes."

"Do you leave us free to settle the rest?"

The viscount articulated with a dry, jerky voice:

"Twenty paces, firing at the word, lifting the arm instead of lowering it. Exchange of shots until some one is badly wounded."

The colonel declared, in a satisfied tone:

"Those are excellent conditions. You are a good shot; the chances are all in your favor."

And they separated. The viscount returned home to wait for them. His agitation, which had been temporarily calmed, was now increasing with every moment. He felt along his arms, along his legs, in his chest, a kind of quivering, a kind of continuous vibration; he could not stay in one place, neither sitting down nor standing up. He had no longer a trace of moisture in his mouth, and he made at every instant a

noisy movement of the tongue as if to unglue it from his palate.

He tried to take his breakfast, but he could not eat. Then he thought of drinking in order to give himself courage, and had a decanter of rum brought him, from which he gulped down, one after the other, six little glasses.

A warmth, like a burn, seized on him. It was followed as soon by a giddiness of the soul. He thought:

“I know the way. Now it will go all right.”

But at the end of an hour he had emptied the decanter, and his state of agitation was become again intolerable. He felt a wild necessity to roll upon the ground, to cry, to bite.

Evening fell.

The sound of the door-bell caused him such a feeling of suffocation that he had not the strength to rise to meet his seconds.

He did not even dare to talk to them any longer — to say “How do you do?” to pronounce a single word, for fear lest they divine all from the alteration in his voice.

The colonel said:

“Everything is settled according to the conditions which you fixed. Your opponent at first insisted on the privileges of the offended party, but he yielded almost immediately, and has agreed to everything. His seconds are two officers.

The viscount said:

“Thank you.”

The marquis resumed:

“Excuse us if we only just run in and out, but we’ve still a thousand things to do. We must have a good doctor, because the duel is not to stop till after some one is badly hit, and you know there’s no trifling with bullets. A place must be appointed near some house where we can carry the wounded one of the two, if it is necessary, etc.; it will take us quite two or three hours more.”

The viscount articulated a second time:

"Thank you."

The colonel asked:

"You're all right? You're calm?"

"Yes, quite calm, thanks."

The two men retired.

When he felt himself alone again, it seemed to him that he was going mad. His servant having lit the lamps, he sat down before his table to write some letters. After tracing at the top of a page, "This is my Will," he got up again and drew off, feeling incapable of putting two ideas together, of taking a single resolution, of deciding anything at all.

And so he was going to fight a duel! He could no longer escape that. What could be passing within him? He wanted to fight, he had that intention and that resolution firmly fixed; and he felt very plainly that, notwithstanding all the effort of his mind and all the tension of his will, he would not be able to retain strength enough to go as far as the place of the encounter. He tried to fancy the combat, his own attitude, and the bearing of his adversary.

From time to time, his teeth struck against one another in his mouth with a little dry noise. He tried to read, and took up de Châteauvillard's duelling code. Then he asked himself: "My adversary, has he frequented the shooting-galleries? Is he well known? What's his class? How can I find out?"

He remembered the book by Baron de Vaux upon pistol-shooters, and he searched through it from one end to the other. Georges Lamil was not mentioned. But, however, if the man had not been a good shot, he would not have accepted immediately that dangerous weapon and those conditions, which were mortal.

His pistol-case by Gastinne Renette lay on a little round table. As he passed he opened it and took out one of the pistols, then

placed himself as if to shoot, and raised his arm; but he trembled from head to foot, and the barrel shook in all directions.

Then he said:

“It is impossible. I cannot fight like this.”

At the end of the barrel he regarded that little hole, black and deep, which spits out death; he thought of dishonor, of the whispers in the clubs, of the laughter in the drawing-rooms, of the disdain of women, of the allusions in the papers, of the insults which would be thrown at him by cowards.

He went on staring at the pistol, and raising the hammer, he suddenly saw a priming glitter beneath it like a little red flame. The pistol had been left loaded, by chance, by oversight. And he experienced from that a confused inexplicable joy.

If in the presence of the other he had not the calm and noble bearing which is fit, he would be lost forever. He would be spotted, marked with a sign of infamy, hunted from society. And he should not have that calm and bold bearing; he knew it, he felt it. And yet he was really brave, because he wanted to fight! He was brave, because — The thought which just grazed him did not even complete itself in his spirit, but, opening his mouth wide, he brusquely thrust the pistol-barrel into the very bottom of his throat and pressed upon the trigger. . . .

When his valet ran in, attracted by the report, he found him dead, on his back. A jet of blood had spattered the white paper on the table and made a great red stain below the four words:

“This is my Will.”

XXXIV. BAZAROV'S DUEL ¹

IVAN TURGENEV

[Bazarov is a young Russian student of advanced scientific ideas. He represents the pitiless and somewhat crude materialism of the Nihilists of the eighteen sixties. Himself the son of a peasant, he scorns the refinements of traditional belief and social custom. He goes to visit his college friend Arkady and there meets Arkady's uncle, Pavel Petrovitch, the acme of aristocratic elegance in manner and of ultra conservatism in ideas. To him Bazarov's ideas, indeed his very presence, seems a piece of impudence. Bazarov, for his part, views Pavel Petrovitch as an antique survival. The older man's attitude immediately becomes one of hostility; that of the younger man one of amused contempt. When finally Pavel Petrovitch sees the upstart kiss his brother's mistress, Fenitchka, he enters his room and challenges him to a duel in the manner described in the present extract.]

Two hours later Pavel Petrovitch knocked at Bazarov's door.

"I must apologize for hindering you in your scientific pursuits," he began, seating himself on a chair in the window, and leaning with both hands on a handsome walking-stick with an ivory knob (he usually walked without a stick), "but I am constrained to beg you to spare me five minutes of your time . . . no more."

"All my time is at your disposal," answered Bazarov, over whose face there passed a quick change of expression directly Pavel Petrovitch crossed the threshold.

"Five minutes will be enough for me. I have come to put a single question to you."

"A question? What is it about?"

"I will tell you, if you will kindly hear me out. At the commencement of your stay in my brother's house, before I had renounced the pleasure of conversing with you, it was my fortune to hear your opinions on many subjects; but so far as

¹ Reprinted from *Fathers and Children* (translated by Constance Garnett) with the kind permission of The Macmillan Company.

my memory serves, neither between us, nor in my presence, was the subject of single combats and duelling in general broached. Allow me to hear what are your views on that subject?"

Bazarov, who had risen to meet Pavel Petrovitch, sat down on the edge of the table and folded his arms.

"My view is," he said, "that from the theoretical standpoint, duelling is absurd; from the practical standpoint, now — it's quite a different matter."

"That is, you mean to say, if I understand you right, that whatever your theoretical views on duelling, you would not in practice allow yourself to be insulted without demanding satisfaction?"

"You have guessed my meaning absolutely. "

"Very good. I am very glad to hear you say so. Your words relieve me from a state of incertitude."

"Of uncertainty, you mean to say."

"That is all the same; I express myself so as to be understood; I . . . am not a seminary rat. Your words save me from a rather deplorable necessity. I have made up my mind to fight you."

Barazov opened his eyes wide. "Me?"

"Undoubtedly."

"But what for, pray?"

"I could explain the reason to you," began Pavel Petrovitch, "but I prefer to be silent about it. To my idea your presence here is superfluous; I cannot endure you; I despise you; and if that is not enough for you . . ."

Pavel Petrovitch's eyes glittered . . . Bazarov's too were flashing.

"Very good," he assented. "No need of further explanations. You've a whim to try your chivalrous spirit upon me. I might refuse you this pleasure, but — so be it!"

"I am sensible of my obligation to you," replied Pavel Petro-

vitch; "and may reckon then on your accepting my challenge without compelling me to resort to violent measures."

"That means, speaking without metaphor, to that stick?" Bazarov remarked coolly. "That is precisely correct. It's quite unnecessary for you to insult me. Indeed, it would not be a perfectly safe proceeding. You can remain a gentleman. . . . I accept your challenge, too, like a gentleman."

"That is excellent," observed Pavel Petrovitch, putting his stick in the corner. "We will say a few words directly about the conditions of our duel; but I should like first to know whether you think it necessary to resort to the formality of a trifling dispute, which might serve as a pretext for my challenge?"

"No; it's better without formalities."

"I think so myself. I presume it is also out of place to go into the real grounds of our difference. We cannot endure one another. What more is necessary?"

"What more, indeed?" repeated Bazarov ironically.

"As regards the conditions of the meeting itself, seeing that we shall have no seconds — for where could we get them?"

"Exactly so; where could we get them?"

"Then I have the honor to lay the following proposition before you: The combat to take place early to-morrow, at six, let us say, behind the copse, with pistols, at a distance of ten paces. . . ."

"At ten paces? that will do; we hate one another at that distance."

"We might have it eight," remarked Pavel Petrovitch.

"We might."

"To fire twice; and, to be ready for any result, let each put a letter in his pocket, in which he accuses himself of his end."

"Now, that I don't approve of at all," observed Bazarov. "There's a slight flavor of the French novel about it, something not very plausible."

"Perhaps. You will agree, however, that it would be unpleasant to incur a suspicion of murder?"

"I agree as to that. But there is a means or avoiding that painful reproach. We shall have no seconds, but we can have a witness."

"And whom, allow me to inquire?"

"Why, Piotr."

"What Piotr?"

"Your brother's valet. He's a man who has attained to the acme of contemporary culture, and he will perform his part with all the *comilfo* (*comme il faut*) necessary in such cases."

"I think you are joking, sir."

"Not at all. If you think over my suggestion, you will be convinced that it's full of common-sense and simplicity. You can't hide a candle under a bushel; but I'll undertake to prepare Piotr in a fitting manner, and bring him on to the field of battle."

"You persist in jesting still," Pavel Petrovitch declared, getting up from his chair. "But after the courteous readiness you have shown me, I have no right to pretend to lay down. . . . And so, everything is arranged. . . . By the way, perhaps you have no pistols?"

"How should I have pistols, Pavel Petrovitch? I'm not in the army."

"In that case, I offer you mine. You may rest assured that it's five years now since I shot with them."

"That's a very consoling piece of news."

Pavel Petrovitch took up his stick. . . . "And now, my dear sir, it only remains for me to thank you and to leave you to your studies. I have the honor to take leave of you."

"Till we have the pleasure of meeting again, my dear sir," said Bazarov, conducting his visitor to the door.

Pavel Petrovitch went out, while Bazarov remained standing a minute before the door, and suddenly exclaimed, "Pish, well,

I'm dashed! how fine, and how foolish! A pretty farce we've been through! Like trained dogs dancing on their hind-paws. But to decline was out of the question; why, I do believe he'd have struck me, and then . . ." (Bazarov turned white at the very thought; all his pride was up in arms at once) — "then it might have come to my strangling him like a cat." He went back to his microscope, but his heart was beating, and the composure necessary for taking observations had disappeared. "He caught sight of us to-day," he thought; "but would he really act like this on his brother's account? And what a mighty matter is it — a kiss? There must be something else in it. Bah! isn't he perhaps in love with her himself? To be sure, he's in love; it's as clear as day. What a complication! It's a nuisance!" he decided at last; "It's a bad job, look at it which way you will. In the first place, to risk a bullet through one's brains, and in any case to go away. . . . It's a bad job, an awfully bad job."

The day passed in a kind of peculiar stillness and languor. Fenitchka gave no sign of her existence; she sat in her little room like a mouse in its hole. Nikolai Petrovitch had a care-worn air. He had just heard that blight had begun to appear in his wheat, upon which he had in particular rested his hopes. Pavel Petrovitch overwhelmed every one, even Prokofitch, with his icy courtesy. Bazarov began a letter to his father, but tore it up, and threw it under the table.

"If I die," he thought, "they will find it out; but I'm not going to die. No, I shall struggle along in this world a good while yet." He gave Piotr orders to come to him on important business the next morning directly it was light. Piotr imagined that he wanted to take him to Petersburg with him. Bazarov went late to bed, and all night long he was harassed by disordered dreams. . . . Piotr waked him up at four o'clock; he dressed at once, and went out with him.

It was a lovely, fresh morning; tiny flecked clouds hovered

overhead in little curls of foam on the pale clear blue; a fine dew lay in drops on the leaves and grass, and sparkled like silver on the spiders' webs; the damp, dark earth seemed still to keep traces of the rosy dawn; from the whole sky the songs of larks came pouring in showers. Bazarov walked as far as the copse, sat down in the shade at its edge, and only then disclosed to Piotr the nature of the service he expected of him. The refined valet was mortally alarmed; but Bazarov soothed him by the assurance that he would have nothing to do but stand at a distance and look on, and that he would not incur any sort of responsibility. "And meantime," he added, "only think what an important part you have to play!" Piotr threw up his hands, looked down, and leaned against a birch-tree, looking green with terror.

The road from Maryino skirted the copse; a light dust lay on it, untouched by wheel or foot since the previous day. Bazarov unconsciously stared along this road, picked and gnawed a blade of grass, while he kept repeating to himself, "What a piece of foolery!" The chill of the early morning made him shiver twice. . . . Piotr looked at him dejectedly, but Bazarov only smiled; he was not afraid.

The tramp of horses' hoofs was heard along the road. . . . A peasant came into sight from behind the trees. He was driving before him two horses hobbled together, and as he passed Bazarov he looked at him rather strangely, without touching his cap, which it was easy to see disturbed Piotr, as an unlucky omen. "There's some one else up early too," thought Bazarov; "but he at least has got up for work, while we"

"Fancy the gentleman's coming," Piotr faltered suddenly.

Bazarov raised his head and saw Pavel Petrovitch. Dressed in a light check jacket and snow-white trousers, he was walking rapidly along the road; under his arm he carried a box wrapped up in green cloth.

"I beg your pardon, I believe I have kept you waiting,"

he observed, bowing first to Bazarov, then to Piotr, whom he treated respectfully at that instant as representing something in the nature of a second. "I was unwilling to wake my man."

"It doesn't matter," answered Bazarov; "we've only just arrived ourselves."

"Ah! so much the better!" Pavel Petrovitch took a look round. "There's no one in sight; no one hinders us. We can proceed?"

"Let us proceed."

"You do not, I presume, desire any fresh explanations?"

"No, I don't."

"Would you like to load?" inquired Pavel Petrovitch, taking the pistols out of the box.

"No; you load, and I will measure out the paces. My legs are longer," added Bazarov with a smile. "One, two, three."

"Yevgeny Vassilyevitch," Piotr faltered with an effort (he was shaking as though he were in a fever), "say what you like, I am going farther off."

"Four . . . five. . . . Good. Move away, my good fellow, move away; you may get behind a tree even, and stop up your ears, only don't shut your eyes; and if any one falls, run and pick him up. Six. . . seven. . . eight. . ." Bazarov stopped. "Is that enough?" he said, turning to Pavel Petrovitch; "or shall I add two paces more?"

"As you like," replied the latter, pressing down the second bullet.

"Well, we'll make it two paces more." Bazarov drew a line on the ground with the toe of his boot. "There's the barrier then. By the way, how many paces may each of us go back from the barrier? That's an important question too. That point was not discussed yesterday."

"I imagine, ten," replied Pavel Petrovitch, handing Bazarov both pistols. "Will you be so good as to choose?"

"I will be so good. But, Pavel Petrovitch, you must admit

our combat is singular to the point of absurdity. Only look at the countenance of our second."

"You are disposed to laugh at everything," answered Pavel Petrovitch. "I acknowledge the strangeness of our duel, but I think it my duty to warn you that I intend to fight seriously. *A bon entendeur, salut!*"

"Oh! I don't doubt that we've made up our minds to make away with each other; but why not laugh too and unite *utile dulci*? You talk to me in French, while I talk to you in Latin."

"I am going to fight in earnest," repeated Pavel Petrovitch, and he walked off to his place. Bazarov on his side counted off ten paces from the barrier, and stood still.

"Are you ready?" asked Pavel Petrovitch.

"Perfectly."

"We can approach one another."

Bazarov moved slowly forward, and Pavel Petrovitch, his left hand thrust in his pocket, walked towards him, gradually raising the muzzle of his pistol. . . . "He's aiming straight at my nose," thought Bazarov, "and doesn't he blink down it carefully, the ruffian! Not an agreeable sensation though. I'm going to look at his watch chain."

Something whizzed sharply by his very ear, and at the same instant there was the sound of a shot. "I heard it, so it must be all right," had time to flash through Bazarov's brain. He took one more step, and without taking aim, pressed the spring.

Pavel Petrovitch gave a slight start, and clutched at his thigh. A stream of blood began to trickle down his white trousers.

Bazarov flung aside the pistol, and went up to his antagonist. "Are you wounded?" he said.

"You had the right to call me up to the barrier," said Pavel Petrovitch, "but that's of no consequence. According to our agreement, each of us has the right to one more shot."

"All right, but, excuse me, that'll do another time," answered Bazarov, catching hold of Pavel Petrovitch, who was beginning

to turn pale. "Now, I'm not a duellist, but a doctor, and I must have a look at your wound before anything else. Piotr! come here, Piotr! where have you got to?"

"That's all nonsense. . . . I need no one's aid," Pavel Petrovitch declared jerkily, "and . . . we must . . . again . . ." He tried to pull at his moustaches, but his hand failed him, his eyes grew dim, and he lost consciousness.

"Here's a pretty pass! A fainting fit! What next!" Bazarov cried unconsciously, as he laid Pavel Petrovitch on the grass. "Let's have a look at what's wrong." He pulled out a handkerchief, wiped away the blood, and began feeling round the wound. . . . "The bone's not touched," he muttered through his teeth; "the ball didn't go deep; one muscle, *vastus externus*, grazed. He'll be dancing about in three weeks! . . . And to faint! Oh, these nervous people, how I hate them! My word, what a delicate skin!"

"Is he killed?" the quaking voice of Piotr came rustling behind his back.

Bazarov looked round. "Go for some water as quick as you can, my good fellow, and he'll outlive us yet."

But the modern servant seemed not to understand his words, and he did not stir. Pavel Petrovitch slowly opened his eyes. "He will die!" whispered Piotr, and he began crossing himself.

"You are right. . . . What an imbecile countenance!" remarked the wounded gentleman with a forced smile.

"Well, go for the water, damn you!" shouted Bazarov.

"No need. . . . It was a momentary *vertigo*. . . . Help me to sit up . . . there, that's right. . . . I only need something to bind up this scratch, and I can reach home on foot, or else you can send a droshky for me. The duel, if you are willing, shall not be renewed. You have behaved honorably . . . to-day, to-day — observe."

"There's no need to recall the past," rejoined Bazarov; "and as regards the future, it's not worth while for you to trouble

your head about that either, for I intend being off without delay. Let me bind up your leg now; your wound's not serious, but it's always best to stop bleeding. But first I must bring this corpse to his senses."

Bazarov shook Piotr by the collar, and sent him for a droshky.

"Mind you don't frighten my brother," Pavel Petrovitch said to him; "don't dream of informing him."

Piotr flew off; and while he was running for a droshky, the two antagonists sat on the ground and said nothing. Pavel Petrovitch tried not to look at Bazarov; he did not want to be reconciled to him in any case; he was ashamed of his own haughtiness, of his failure; he was ashamed of the whole position he had brought about, even while he felt it could not have ended in a more favorable manner. "At any rate, there will be no scandal," he consoled himself by reflecting, "and for that I am thankful." The silence was prolonged, a silence distressing and awkward. Both of them were ill at ease. Each was conscious that the other understood him. That is pleasant to friends, and always very unpleasant to those who are not friends, especially when it is impossible either to have things out or to separate.

"Haven't I bound up your leg too tight?" inquired Bazarov at last.

"No, not at all; it's capital," answered Pavel Petrovitch; after a brief pause, he added, "There's no deceiving my brother; we shall have to tell him we quarrelled over politics."

"Very good," assented Bazarov. "You can say I insulted all anglomaniacs."

"That will do capitally. What do you imagine that man thinks of us now?" continued Pavel Petrovitch, pointing to the same peasant, who had driven the hobbled horses past Bazarov a few minutes before the duel, and going back again along the road, took off his cap at the sight of the "gentlefolk."

"Who can tell!" answered Bazarov; "it's quite likely he

thinks nothing. The Russian peasant is that mysterious unknown about whom Mrs. Radcliffe used to talk so much. Who is to understand him! He doesn't understand himself!"

"Ah! so that's your idea!" Pavel Petrovitch began; and suddenly he cried, "Look what your fool of a Piotr has done! Here's my brother galloping up to us!"

Bazarov turned round and saw the pale face of Nikolai Petrovitch, who was sitting in the droshky. He jumped out of it before it had stopped, and rushed up to his brother.

"What does this mean?" he said in an agitated voice. "Yevgeny Vassilyitch, pray, what is this?"

"Nothing," answered Pavel Petrovitch; "they have alarmed you for nothing. I had a little dispute with Mr. Bazarov, and I have had to pay for it a little."

"But what was it all about, mercy on us!"

"How can I tell you? Mr. Bazarov alluded disrespectfully to Sir Robert Peel. I must hasten to add that I am the only person to blame in all this, while Mr. Bazarov has behaved most honorably. I called him out."

"But you're covered with blood, good Heavens!"

"Well, did you suppose I had water in my veins? But this blood-letting is positively beneficial to me. Isn't that so, doctor? Help me to get into the droshky, and don't give way to melancholy. I shall be quite well to-morrow. That's it; capital. Drive on, coachman."

Nikolai Petrovitch walked after the droshky; Bazarov was remaining where he was. . . .

"I must ask you to look after my brother," Nikolai Petrovitch said to him, "till we get another doctor from the town."

Bazarov nodded his head without speaking. In an hour's time Pavel Petrovitch was already lying in bed with a skilfully bandaged leg.

XXXV. AN UNFINISHED STORY ¹

O. HENRY

[This story is discussed from the point of view of its moral issue in the introduction, pages 398-399. The writer's "problem" of how to see a story in life is also particularly well illustrated here. We have all thought and read and have probably known personally of the temptations to which lonely, underpaid shop-girls in our cities are subjected. We have all seen the kind of life they lead before our eyes, and we can guess at the dullness of their evenings, if they have no money to spare and no friends, in a great city. So we recognize that a story, expressing the casual, yet recurrent, observation of so many of us would have a strong appeal. Any writer has, in this case, seen the life he wishes to write about. How will he see it as a story?

The rule here is: do not go about the bush, begin with the thing you have in mind — the shop, the uniform, uninteresting daily round, the poor, easily flattered girl, anxious for a bit of cheerfulness as the right of her youth, the date with a "swell." Ask yourself now what Dulcie's life is really like — what are her expenses, where does she live, where does she eat, what are her actual (not her possible) pleasures, what influences for good may probably be among them? Besides this, what is there in O. Henry's masterpiece? Of course you may not be so lucky as to think of Lord Kitchener's strong-faced picture on her bureau as the thing that will save her, this time, at all events; but if you have observed Dulcie's life thoroughly enough, you will still have a story. A symbol of the good influences of the world will surely come to you, though probably not with the stroke of genius that selected Lord Kitchener's picture, and then left the story "unfinished."]

WE no longer groan and heap ashes upon our heads when the flames of Tophet are mentioned. For, even the preachers have begun to tell us that God is radium, or ether or some scientific compound, and that the worst we wicked ones may expect is a chemical reaction. This is a pleasing hypothesis; but there lingers yet some of the old, goodly terror of orthodoxy.

There are but two subjects upon which one may discourse with a free imagination, and without the possibility of being controverted. You may talk of your dreams; and you may

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tell what you heard a parrot say. Both Morpheus and the bird are incompetent witnesses; and your listener dare not attack your recital. The baseless fabric of a vision, then, shall furnish my theme — chosen with apologies and regrets instead of the more limited field of pretty Polly's small talk.

I had a dream that was so far removed from the higher criticism that it had to do with the ancient, respectable, and lamented bar-of-judgment theory.

Gabriel had played his trump; and those of us who could not follow suit were arraigned for examination. I noticed at one side a gathering of professional bondsmen in solemn black and collars that buttoned behind; but it seemed there was some trouble about their real estate titles; and they did not appear to be getting any of us out.

A fly cop — an angel policeman — flew over to me and took me by the left wing. Near at hand was a group of very prosperous-looking spirits arraigned for judgment.

“Do you belong with that bunch?” the policeman asked.

“Who are they?” was my answer.

“Why,” said he, “they are —”

But this irrelevant stuff is taking up space that the story should occupy.

Dulcie worked in a department store. She sold Hamburg edging, or stuffed peppers, or automobiles, or other little trinkets such as they keep in department stores. Of what she earned, Dulcie received six dollars per week. The remainder was credited to her and debited to somebody else's account in the ledger kept by G ——. Oh, primal energy, you say, Reverend Doctor — Well then, in the Ledger of Primal Energy.

During her first year in the store, Dulcie was paid five dollars per week. It would be instructive to know how she lived on that amount. Don't care? Very well; probably you are interested in larger amounts. Six dollars is a larger amount. I will tell you how she lived on six dollars per week.

One afternoon at six, when Dulcie was sticking her hat-pin within an eighth of an inch of her *medulla oblongata*, she said to her chum, Sadie — the girl that waits on you with her left side:

“Say, Sade, I made a date for dinner this evening with Piggy.”

“You never did!” exclaimed Sadie admiringly. “Well, ain’t you the lucky one? Piggy’s an awful swell; and he always takes a girl to swell places. He took Blanche up to the Hoffman House one evening, where they have swell music, and you see a lot of swells. You’ll have a swell time, Dulcie.”

Dulcie hurried homeward. Her eyes were shining, and her cheeks showed the delicate pink of life’s — real life’s — approaching dawn. It was Friday; and she had fifty cents left of her last week’s wages.

The streets were filled with the rush-hour floods of people. The electric lights of Broadway were glowing — calling moths from miles, from leagues, from hundreds of leagues out of darkness around to come in and attend the singeing school. Men in accurate clothes, with faces like those carved on cherry stones by the old salts in sailors’ homes, turned and stared at Dulcie as she sped, unheeding, past them. Manhattan, the night-blooming cereus, was beginning to unfold its dead-white, heavy-odored petals.

Dulcie stopped in a store where goods were cheap and bought an imitation lace collar with her fifty cents. That money was to have been spent otherwise — fifteen cents for supper, ten cents for breakfast, ten cents for lunch. Another dime was to be added to her small store of savings; and five cents was to be squandered for licorice drops — the kind that made your cheek look like the toothache, and last as long. The licorice was an extravagance — almost a carouse — but what is life without pleasures?

Dulcie lived in a furnished room. There is this difference between a furnished room and a boarding-house. In a furnished room, other people do not know it when you go hungry.

Dulcie went up to her room — the third floor back in a West Side brownstone-front. She lit the gas. Scientists tell us that the diamond is the hardest substance known. Their mistake. Landladies know of a compound beside which the diamond is as putty. They pack it in the tips of gas-burners; and one may stand on a chair and dig at it in vain until one's fingers are pink and bruised. A hairpin will not remove it; therefore let us call it immovable. So Dulcie lit the gas. In its one-fourth-candle-power glow we will observe the room.

Couch-bed, dresser, table, washstand, chair — of this much the landlady was guilty. The rest was Dulcie's. On the dresser were her treasures — a gilt china vase presented to her by Sadie, a calendar issued by a pickle works, a book on the divination of dreams, some rice powder in a glass dish, and a cluster of artificial cherries tied with a pink ribbon.

Against the wrinkly mirror stood pictures of General Kitchener, William Muldoon, the Duchess of Marlborough, and Benvenuto Cellini. Against one wall was a plaster of Paris plaque of an O'Callahan in a Roman helmet. Near it was a violent oleograph of a lemon-colored child assaulting an inflammatory butterfly. This was Dulcie's final judgment in art; but it had never been upset. Her rest had never been disturbed by whispers of stolen copes; no critic had elevated his eyebrows at her infantile entomologist.

Piggy was to call for her at seven. While she swiftly makes ready, let us discreetly face the other way and gossip.

For the room, Dulcie paid two dollars per week. On week-days her breakfast cost ten cents; she made coffee and cooked an egg over the gaslight while she was dressing. On Sunday mornings she feasted royally on veal chops and pineapple fritters at "Billy's" restaurant, at a cost of twenty-five cents — and tipped the waitress ten cents. New York presents so many temptations for one to run into extravagance. She had her lunches in the department-store restaurant at a cost of

sixty cents for the week; dinners were \$1.05. The evening papers — show me a New Yorker going without his daily paper! — came to six cents; and two Sunday papers — one for the personal column and the other to read — were ten cents. The total amounts to \$4.76. Now, one has to buy clothes, and —

I give it up. I hear of wonderful bargains in fabrics, and of miracles performed with needle and thread; but I am in doubt. I hold my pen poised in vain when I would add to Dulcie's life some of those joys that belong to woman by virtue of all the unwritten, sacred, natural, inactive ordinances of the equity of heaven. Twice she had been to Coney Island and had ridden the hobby-horses. 'Tis a weary thing to count your pleasures by summers instead of by hours.

Piggy needs but a word. When the girls named him, an undeserving stigma was cast upon the noble family of swine. The words-of-three-letters lesson in the old blue spelling book begins with Piggy's biography. He was fat; he had the soul of a rat, the habits of a bat, and the magnanimity of a cat. . . . He wore expensive clothes, and was a connoisseur in starvation. He could look at a shop-girl and tell you to an hour how long it had been since she had eaten anything more nourishing than marshmallows and tea. He hung about the shopping districts, and prowled around in department stores with his invitations to dinner. Men who escort dogs upon the streets at the end of a string look down upon him. He is a type; I can dwell upon him no longer; my pen is not the kind intended for him; I am no carpenter.

At ten minutes to seven Dulcie was ready. She looked at herself in the wrinkly mirror. The reflection was satisfactory. The dark blue dress, fitting without a wrinkle, the hat with its jaunty black feather, the but-slightly-soiled gloves — all representing self-denial, even of food itself — were vastly becoming.

Dulcie forgot everything else for a moment except that she was beautiful, and that life was about to lift a corner of its

mysterious veil for her to observe its wonders. No gentleman had ever asked her out before. Now she was going for a brief moment into the glitter and exalted show.

The girls said that Piggy was a "spender." There would be a grand dinner, and music, and splendidly dressed ladies to look at, and things to eat that strangely twisted the girls' jaws when they tried to tell about them. No doubt she would be asked out again.

There was a blue pongee suit in a window that she knew — by saving twenty cents a week instead of ten, in — let's see — Oh, it would run into years! But there was a second-hand store in Seventh Avenue where —

Somebody knocked at the door. Dulcie opened it. The landlady stood there with a spurious smile, sniffing for cooking by stolen gas.

"A gentleman's downstairs to see you," she said. "Name is Mr. Wiggins."

By such epithet was Piggy known to unfortunate ones who had to take him seriously.

Dulcie turned to the dresser to get her handkerchief; and then she stopped still, and bit her underlip hard. While looking in her mirror she had seen fairyland and herself, a princess, just awakening from a long slumber. She had forgotten one that was watching her with sad, beautiful, stern eyes — the only one there was to approve or condemn what she did. Straight and slender and tall, with a look of sorrowful reproach on his handsome, melancholy face, General Kitchener fixed his wonderful eyes on her out of his gilt photograph frame on the dresser.

Dulcie turned like an automatic doll to the landlady.

"Tell him I can't go," she said dully. "Tell him I'm sick, or something. Tell him I'm not going out."

After the door was closed and locked, Dulcie fell upon her bed, crushing her black tip, and cried for ten minutes. General Kitchener was her only friend. He was Dulcie's ideal of a

gallant knight. He looked as if he might have a secret sorrow, and his wonderful moustache was a dream, and she was a little afraid of that stern yet tender look in his eyes. She used to have little fancies that he would call at the house sometime, and ask for her, with his sword clanking against his high boots. Once, when a boy was rattling a piece of chain against a lamp-post she had opened the window and looked out. But there was no use. She knew that General Kitchener was away over in Japan, leading his army against the savage Turks; and he would never step out of his gilt frame for her. Yet one look from him had vanquished Piggy that night. Yes, for that night.

When her cry was over Dulcie got up and took off her best dress, and put on her old blue kimono. She wanted no dinner. She sang two verses of "Sammy." Then she became intensely interested in a little red speck on the side of her nose. And after that was attended to, she drew up a chair to the rickety table, and told her fortune with an old deck of cards.

"The horrid, impudent thing!" she said aloud. "And I never gave him a word or a look to make him think it!"

At nine o'clock Dulcie took a tin box of crackers and a little pot of raspberry jam out of her trunk, and had a feast. She offered General Kitchener some jam on a cracker; but he only looked at her as the sphinx would have looked at a butterfly — if there are butterflies in the desert.

"Don't eat it if you don't want to," said Dulcie. "And don't put on so many airs and scold so with your eyes. I wonder if you'd be so superior and snippy if you had to live on six dollars a week."

It was not a good sign for Dulcie to be rude to General Kitchener. And then she turned Benvenuto Cellini face downward with a severe gesture. But that was not inexcusable; for she had always thought he was Henry VIII, and she did not approve of him.

At half-past nine Dulcie took a last look at the pictures on

the dresser, turned out the light, and skipped into bed. It's an awful thing to go to bed with a good-night look at General Kitchener, William Muldoon, the Duchess of Marlborough, and Benvenuto Cellini.

This story really doesn't get anywhere at all. The rest of it comes later — sometime when Piggy asks Dulcie again to dine with him, and she is feeling lonelier than usual, and General Kitchener happens to be looking the other way; and then —

As I said before, I dreamed that I was standing near a crowd of prosperous-looking angels, and a policeman took me by the wing and asked if I belonged with them.

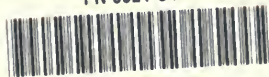
“Who are they?” I asked.

“Why,” said he, “they are the men who hired working-girls, and paid 'em five or six dollars a week to live on. Are you one of the bunch?”

“Not on your immortality,” said I. “I'm only the fellow that set fire to an orphan asylum, and murdered a blind man for his pennies.”

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