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ADRIAN H. JAFFE AND VIRGIL SCOTT
M I C H I G A N S T A T E C O L L E G E

Studies in the Short Story

WILLIAM SLOANE
ASSOCIATES, INC.
Publishers - New York



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First Printing



Printed in the United States of America

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For permission to reprint the stories included in this volume, grateful acknowledgment is made to:

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Maxim Lieber for *The Girl* by Meridel Le Sueur.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Robert M. McBride and Company for *The Chink and the Child* by Thomas Burke, from LIMEHOUSE NIGHTS.

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A Note to the Teacher

S*tudies in the Short Story* is, among other things, a collection of stories, but it should be emphasized that it has been designed primarily as a textbook and not as an anthology. While there are many excellent collections of stories which may be used in classes, we have felt for a long time that there has been no satisfactory *text-book* of the short story as a literary genre which could serve as the basis of a unified course. It is to fill this need that we compiled and wrote this book. Consequently the stories that we have selected for inclusion in this text have had to pass two tests: first, the test of literary value, and second, the test of whether or not they exemplified to the student, in an orderly and regular scheme of instruction, the particular elements that he needed to know. The book has been organized on a very definite principle of moving from the simple to the complex, from the point where the beginning student commonly is, to the point where in our opinion he should arrive at the end of a course of study.

Let us be more specific. The usual freshman or sophomore brings to a college course from his high-school discussions or his own voluntary reading of fiction a few hazy (and often strictly personal) notions about what constitutes a "good" story, and a set of reading habits which enable him to spot the superficial things which a short story says or does. In his high-school classes he has probably "diagrammed" the "rising action," the "climax," and the "denouement" of a story's "plot." Probably he has also learned to type a short story on the basis of an apparently emphasized element; he has been told that stories are "plot" or "character" or "setting" or "theme" stones. Perhaps he has also learned to discuss, though vaguely and superfi-

dally, the people in a short story, and he has been taught just enough about theme to have gotten the idea that the word is synonymous with "moral." If our tone here is derogatory, we do not intend any criticism of high-school teachers of literature; at fourteen or fifteen the student is generally not mature enough to approach fiction in a more adult fashion. Nevertheless, the concept of the intent and content of fiction which a student gets from high-school discussions is not only limited and shallow but is often erroneous or misleading. His diagraming, plus his voluntary reading of adventure stories and comics, has not only given him little beyond the ability to summarize what happens in a story, but has also encouraged him to think that any story in which "nothing much happens" is a poor story and that any story in which there is action, suspense, melodrama, or an unexpected ending is a good story. Probably his recognition of an apparently emphasized element in a story has also done him more harm than good; it has obscured for him the perception of a story as a unit in which *all* the elements are interdependent and important in the total meaning and effect of the story, and it has given him no ability to understand those stories in which more than one element is emphasized. His discussions of characterization or theme may have been more valuable to him, although the one has often given him little more than the ability to comment on the fact that "the characters seemed real/" while the other has fostered the idea that any story which is not "moral" in an ethical or religious sense, or which denies those values to which most men pay lip service, is therefore unworthy of consideration.

Both the organization and content of *Studies in the Short Story* have been determined by our theory, based on experience and observation, of what a student is able to get out of a story at the beginning of an introductory course in fiction and by our ideas of what he should be able to appreciate at the end of such a course. More specifically, our first aim has been to show the student what is meant by intensive reading, to help him understand what the intent, content and effect of any given story is; our second aim has been to help him acquire certain critical principles which will enable him to decide whether the intent of a story is effectively realized and worth while, and to weigh one story critically against another. To accomplish the

first aim we have tried to give the student a working knowledge of the fundamentals involved in the intelligent reading of fiction: to give him a basic understanding of what constitutes an effective plot, what is involved in convincing characterization, how writers transmit and readers derive emotion from fiction, and of how stories comment, over and beyond a group of specific people in a specific situation, on man's existence. To accomplish the second aim we have included in the text one section which illustrates the characteristics of ineffective fiction (these characteristics are not always merely negative) and have presented throughout the book a number of elementary standards by which the student can weigh one story against another. Beyond this, we have tried to give the student a concept of the short story as a unit in which all the elements are interdependent and significant.

A textbook with this approach, we feel, has long been needed in introductory courses in fiction. But this approach has necessarily imposed on the text certain limitations which should be mentioned here. For instance, since our organization is from the simple to the complex, it follows that the book is intended as a *course* in the short story, not as an anthology; to violate the order of the stones—to follow a discussion of a story in Part IV with the discussion of a story in Part II, for example—is to disregard what we feel to be the essential logic of the book. Moreover, we have had to select our examples on not one but several bases which have not always been compatible. Ordinarily an anthologist can adopt a single critical standard for his selection of material and can then choose those stories which in his opinion best exemplify that standard. We, having a more complex system of organization to consider, have had to choose stories in each section which best illustrate the basic principle or problem of each successive step in that section. Keeping in mind the fact that many stories of recognized excellence are too complex and difficult for students at the beginning of such a course, we have, in a few cases, included stories which do not in every detail stand up to the critical standards at which the book aims. These stories, however, appear only in the opening sections. Like all anthologists, we have had to omit favorite stories because of limitations of space or because they had no place in the scheme of the book.

Beyond this, we have tried to make the book as catholic and as usable as our tastes and our understanding of students will permit. We have tried to furnish examples of many types of stories, from adventure stories to subtle psychological studies, from the objectivity of Hemingway to the acute subjectivity of Virginia Woolf, from the humor of Dorothy Parker to the pathos of Chekhov. We have included a number of stories in each section so that, by judicious selection, the instructor can adapt the book to a six-weeks unit, a quarter or a semester course. We have tried to strike a medium between familiar "classics" and excellent but as yet unanthologized stories. Most important, we have included only stories which, in our own classes, have proved highly teachable.

The book's analytical apparatus falls into three classes. First, we have prefaced the stories in each of the five parts with introductory material; both content and approach in these introductions have been determined by what we feel an undergraduate can absorb in a single unit or course and by what we consider to be the fundamental problems involved in reading fiction. Since we emphasize the problems of reading and not writing fiction, the introductory material naturally does not pretend to cover all the possible problems which fiction involves. Secondly, we have incorporated in the text one lengthy and two or three brief analyses of stories in the book, with the aim of giving the student a concrete illustration of what is involved in the consideration of the intent, meaning, and quality of the story without doing in the main too much of his work for him. Finally, we have provided study questions for each story which are designed to help the student to focus his attention on significant details of plot, character, emotional implication, and theme which he might otherwise overlook in his reading.

One thing about our impedimenta should be stressed. Our introductions, analyses, and questions are intended to aid the student, not to hamper the instructor. One of the important differences between the teaching of literature and the teaching of, for example, mathematics is that every teacher of literature has something to offer students which is peculiarly his own. Hence, any book which tends to prevent the instructor's giving what he has to impart to his students defeats its own purpose. The editors hope that this is not the case

with this text. Our introductions are by no means the last word in the discussion of the short story as a literary genre; we have left much unsaid or unstressed which the teacher can add. Nor do our questions exhaust either the possible approaches to, or the problems connected with, the stories in this book; they are intended merely to guide the student to an intelligent understanding and appreciation of a given story. In short, our introductions and questions are intended as student helps, not as lesson plans for the teacher who may wish to stress other aspects of a given story in his classes.

In the writing or compiling of any text the editors incur a number of debts. This text is no exception. We cannot hope here to express our appreciation individually to all the teachers who have given us generous suggestions, nor to all the students who have tested the effectiveness of the book for us. We do wish to express here our particular debt to Robert Penn Warren and Cleanth Brooks, whose *Understanding Fiction* is the foremost pioneer in the approach to fiction which we have used in this book; and to Patricia Geiger and Hilda Jaffe, who generously gave time they could ill spare to the preparation of the final manuscript.

A. H. J.

V. S.

East Lansing, Michigan
June, 1949

Par1 I

The First Three Levels of Reading: Reading for Plot, Character, Emotional Effect

THIS is A BOOK about reading short stories, and most books on the subject begin with a definition. But the editors of this book have an idea that you already have some notion of what a short story is, and they also feel that no one can satisfactorily define the term, and for that reason we are beginning our book at another point.

You are probably wondering at this moment just what a course in the short story can teach you which you do not already know. It is going to take us an entire book to answer this question. But let us begin by considering some of the things you find and many of the fundamental things which you have not yet learned to find when you read a story.

Those of you who say that you already read fiction will probably go a step further; you will also say that you like certain kinds of stories but don't care much for other kinds. If pushed a little, you may even try to explain why you like one story and don't like another. You may say that a given story is about baseball or crime or young love, and that you enjoy stories which deal with these subjects. Or you may like a story because things happen in it, because it is exciting or adventurous, or because it takes place in a foreign or exotic setting. We call these reasons *threshold interests* in fiction; they are the most common reasons for reading, and it is because of them that those magazines called "pulp" exist.

Now we are not going to begin this book by quarreling with your tastes. Good stories have been written around every conceivable subject and against every possible background; good stories, too, have appeared in pulp magazines as well as in "quality" magazines. But perhaps we can introduce you to the short story by suggesting this: Although you may like stories which are about baseball, say, you also have discovered that you like some baseball stories better than others. If you have experienced this, you have arrived at the point at which this book begins and from which it proceeds. For in deciding in favor of one story as against another, you have probably made some kind of interpretation of the story and you have also arrived at a critical judgment. What this book hopes to help you do is to take you a great deal further in exactly this direction.

The First Level of Reading: Reading for Plot

Probably the most common thing which readers get out of a story is what happens in that story. If you ask them later what a story is about, they will give you not a character sketch of each person in the story or a summary of what the story means but a synopsis of the story's action. This, for example, is what you invariably did in high school whenever you were required to turn in a book report.

Now there is nothing unnatural or wrong about being interested in the external action of a story. Such interest was in evidence when prehistoric cavemen narrated with gestures an exciting fight with a sabertoothed tiger, and the interest will probably be with us as long as men tell stories. It is the reason that the first story in this book is an adventure story.

But this whole matter of what happens in a story deserves discussion. Most readers of adventure stories—the detective story or the Western are common types—have discovered, in the course of their reading, that they prefer one story to another; that story A, say, was more exciting than story B. If asked to justify their preference—particularly if it is pointed out that the two stories may contain an almost equal amount of action—they may have considerable trouble. For this reason we begin our discussion of short stories with a consideration of plot. For if we can come to see why one adventure story

is better than another, we have taken our first step toward understanding what makes any story effective or ineffective.

Let us consider another illustration. We have all had the experience of seeing a tense, action-filled, exciting movie. We have also had the experience of hearing a child who has been impressed by a similar movie summarize this action for us. In the first instance, we have experienced excitement, fear, anger, love, hate, pathos—all the moods and emotions which make such pictures enjoyable. In the second instance, we have merely experienced boredom.

Now from this we can learn one of the fundamental facts about fiction—that (it is not the *content* which makes a story effective or ineffective, but rather *the way in which the material in the story is handle*. That, in fact, the most original plot, the most exotic setting, the most violent and exciting action can be so handled by a writer that the resulting story will be very bad, whereas a weaker plot, a more commonplace setting, and much less action can be so handled by a skillful writer that the resulting story will be very good.

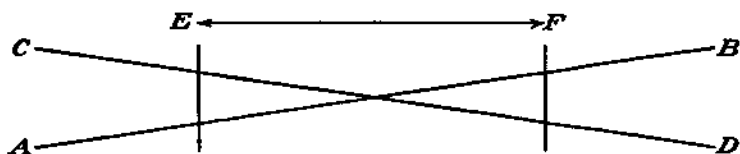
As soon as we realize this, we are in a position to consider some of the important methods by which writers make short stories effective. We can begin on the simplest level, by asking what writers do in order to present the action in their stories as effectively as possible.

To begin with, let us first ask ourselves exactly what the plot of a short story is. An editor once remarked that he would buy any story which had a clear beginning, middle, and end, and his statement gives us a clue to the basic requirement of a story's plot. For even the most action-filled of adventure stories is much more than a haphazard throwing together of a lot of incidents. Any story must start in a definite place and end in a definite place; the beginning must be logical and right in terms of the ending, the ending must be logical and right in terms of the beginning, and everything that happens in between must be logically related to both beginning and ending.) This is part of what we mean when we say that a short story must have *unity*, and what we mean by the term may perhaps be explained by an analogy to life. Every human life, like every story, has a beginning (birth or conception) and an ending (death), and all the events in that life have a logical relationship to both the birth and the death, and for this reason the birth and the death have a log-

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ical relationship to each other. To be more specific, a particular man is born to a diseased mother and a drunken father; he grows up in the slums, is a thief at five, a delinquent at ten; at twelve he is in reform school for larceny, at eighteen in prison for assault; a dipsomaniac at twenty-two, he dies at twenty-seven from drinking poisoned gin. Now in such a life we can see that every person who* touches his life (the father who beats him, the mother who hates his existence, the kids in his gang, the judge who sentences him, the cell mate who teaches him the subtleties of crime) and every detail in his life is the effect of a particular kind of birth and the cause of a particular kind of death, and that the specific death is a logical conclusion to a specific birth. In exactly this same way the various events in a short story are related.

But the usual short story differs in one respect from the analogy just used; it is not about a life but about a single, important incident in a life. The time span of a short story may be illustrated by a diagram, thus:



In this diagram the line AB represents the total life of a given person, and the space EF represents that part of this life with which the short story is concerned. Now this portion of a life may be very short or relatively long—it may be a single moment or a decade in the life of the character. But like the life summarized above, the incident must have a logical beginning and a logical ending, and everything in between must have a clear relationship to the line of advance from that beginning to that ending. And there is one more important characteristic of this span. It must represent a crisis in the life of the person concerned. It must be of such importance that the person afterward is not the same person that he was before. Thus, we call this span a *crisis situation*.

The line CD in the diagram above represents another basic factor in the short story. If we call the main character about which a story

is concerned a *protagonist*, we can say that this line represents the *antagonist* in a story. The meaning of these two terms (protagonist: one who struggles for; antagonist: one who struggles against) reveals what this factor is. For every story has an antagonist, a force which is opposed to the protagonist, or main character. It may not be another person: it may be an environment or an inanimate object or even some element within the protagonist himself; but the antagonist is always present in a story. Hence, a basic factor in a short story, in addition to unity, is *conflict*. Without conflict a short story—in fact, any piece of fiction—cannot exist. It is the element which every writer tries to introduce into a story as quickly as possible, and which he tries to maintain throughout the story. And if we look carefully at any story we will learn that it is not what happens but how much conflict there is which keeps us interested. We can see this very quickly if we look at the opening lines of either "The Killers" or "The Dry Rock." Both of these stories begin immediately with a clash between two forces. And if we read these opening lines we discover that we want to read on into the story. Yet, if we stop to consider them, we find that in these lines nothing much has really *happened*, in one, two men have come into a lunchroom, in the other a man and his wife have started off to a party. The fact is, then, that we are interested not because something exciting has happened but because the writer has shown us the clash of two opposing forces.

Because they realize that not action but conflict is the element of a story which interests readers, writers have come to make use of a number of devices to intensify their conflict. Of these the most important is what we can call *balancing forces*. Since a writer knows that conflict will hold a reader for him, he wants to stretch it out, to hold on to it for a reasonable length of time. To do this he equalizes as much as he can the conflicting forces. Hence the interest in a short story is often analogous to the interest in a good prize fight, where a spectator wants a knockout but does not get it until the fifteenth round. And if, in addition to this equalizing, the writer makes us want to see one force in that conflict win through, he has achieved what we call *suspense*.

This balancing and developing of conflict is the basic method by

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which a writer gets interest in a story. But in addition he may use a number of other devices. We cannot mention all of them here, but we can briefly note two. One we call the *dilemma*. The other we call *irony*.

We can best understand the meaning of the term *dilemma* if we examine another characteristic of most stories. In most stories, even in the most obvious action story, there is a double struggle, one struggle between the main character and an outside force (usually another person), the second between two instincts, traits, or impulses *within* the main character himself. It is to intensify this second struggle that writers use the dilemma. Briefly, the dilemma may be defined as a position in which a character finds himself where only two choices of action are possible, either one of which is undesirable. In the routine spy story, for example, the protagonist usually finds himself forced to choose between betraying his country or losing his life; when this choice is forced upon him, he is faced with a dilemma.

The term *irony* will be referred to many times throughout this book and therefore will be only partially defined here. There are many kinds of irony, and the device is used in many ways in short stories—in plot, in characterization, in theme, in details, in the achieving of an emotional effect. We are acquainted with the device as it applies to conversation; when a person says one thing but obviously means the opposite, we call his statement *ironical*. Now irony is often basic to the effect of a short story—one critic has gone so far as to say that no short story is completely effective unless it involves an irony. On the plot level, for example, we may see a man spend a life on the attainment of money, only to discover that the money is not worth the life. What he has experienced here is ironical—in this case, an *irony of situation*. From these two illustrations we can partially define the term. We can say that an irony involves a contrast, a disparity, a difference between what is and what would seem to be.

Finally, there are two more methods by which writers make their plots more effective. If you go back and look at the diagram on page 4 again, you will notice something else. You will see that the span of time which a writer chooses for his story cuts through the span of

time which a total life represents. Now you will also realize, if you consider the matter a moment, that some of the material outside the space *EF* probably has bearing on the crisis situation. Indeed, we cannot usually understand the full significance of what happens to a character during a crisis situation unless we know some of these background facts. Hence, in order to make this situation clear, logical, and significant, a writer usually has to pick up and get into his story things in the life of his character which have occurred before the situation.

Now this presents another problem. If the writer is going to interest us, he must get us to the conflict which is the heart of his story as quickly as possible; on the other hand, he will very probably have to put off that conflict long enough to acquaint us with the background facts which are necessary to make his conflict meaningful. It is for this reason that writers use two other interest devices—the *arousing of curiosity* and *foreshadowing* (the suggestion that conflict is going to follow). If you study the openings of most stories, particularly those in which the emphasis is on what happens, you will probably find the writer relying heavily on these two devices until he has gotten you over his story hump and into the conflict itself.

The Second Level of Reading: Reading for Character

What we have thus far considered in this introduction is that element in a short story which is most obvious, the element of plot. To a very great extent our consideration has been artificial, for in it we have forced ourselves to disregard the most basic element in a story. This element is character.

Our assertion that character is more basic than plot in a story insists upon some explanation. Let us again consider, for a moment, the adventure story. Even in this kind of story, a story where the emphasis is on what happens, we can readily see that what action there is is meaningful only because it happens to people. The action in a Western has meaning to us not because it is action per se but because that action involves a courageous and honest (or otherwise admirable) hero and a cowardly and dishonest (or otherwise despicable) villain. Or we can again use a prize fight as an analogy. A

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prize fight, true, may be good because of certain characteristics which are analogous to the plot of a story; good because the contestants are evenly matched or because it goes a full fifteen rounds. But that fight is fully meaningful to a spectator only if, in addition to this, *the spectator wants one of the contestants to win*. The same thing is true of a short story.

As a matter of fact, it can be argued that readers are more interested in the people in stories to whom things happen than they are in what happens per se, and the argument can be supported by a simple question. We have all read a number of the Sherlock Holmes stories. Can you repeat the plot of any one of these in any detail? Probably not. But you can give a rather complete character sketch of Holmes or Watson. The reason is partly that you are interested first in Holmes and only second in what happens to him—even in a story in which the emphasis seems to be on plot.

It is this fact which explains something about your reading which you have probably long been aware of. Action stories, you have probably discovered (the Western movie is an excellent example), pall on you after a time; having seen a dozen or so, you have a feeling, with each new one, that you have seen it before. The reason lies only partially in the similarity of plot and setting. It lies also in the fact that *the characters in Westerns (or detective stories or adventure stories) are repeated as often as the incidents*. Only the names are changed.

Now it is because plots are limited (every story has been told many times by many writers) but characters are not that the chief interest of most writers is in their people. Conscious of the fact that they cannot hope to invent a new plot situation, they lean for their originality on their people. They tend, if possible, to avoid the *type* or *stock character* (the character borrowed from other writers, such as the stupid, flat-footed detective who appears in thousands of detective stories) and to portray instead the *individual* character. In this way they achieve most of the originality which their story may have.

But we have titled this section "a second level of reading," and at this point you may be asking why. If character is the most important element in fiction, why haven't we called reading for character the

"first level of reading"? The answer lies not in the fact that reading for character is less important than reading for plot, but only that It *is more difficult*. When a writer describes what people *do*, we can immediately grasp the fact of the action; when he says "John walked across the room and picked up a book," we have no difficulty in understanding precisely what has been done. But when a writer tells us what characters *are*, we often have a great deal more difficulty in understanding. There are a number of reasons for this. For one thing, as readers we have never learned that reading is as active as writing, that a reader must concentrate on, think about, add up what he reads; that the process of intelligent reading is very similar to the process of understanding a joke, where a certain set of facts is given us from which we must deduce the point. But there is a more fundamental reason for the difficulty involved in understanding a character in a story. It is that where a writer presents action directly, he presents character indirectly.' We say that he *dramatizes* his characters.

Before we can understand exactly what this means, we should understand the necessity for it. Let us use a hypothetical illustration. Let us say that you have a roommate whom you dislike. Now you dislike him for a great many reasons—he borrows your shirts or ties and does not return them, he always sits in the most comfortable chair in the room, he disturbs you when you study, and so on. Actually, each of these is a different reason for your attitude, but from these single acts you tend to generalize, to say that you dislike your roommate because he is selfish. But suppose you have a friend across the hall, and suppose you tell your friend that your roommate is selfish. And suppose that this same roommate has lent your friend his car or some money, or has gotten him a date with a pretty girl. Obviously, on the strength of your generalization, your friend will not be *convinced* of your roommate's selfishness. He will understand the meaning of the word and possibly why you feel as you do, but he will not feel the same way toward your roommate, because you have presented him through an *abstraction* while the roommate has presented himself through concrete acts. But let your friend take your place for a while, let him always sit in the most uncomfortable

chair, sleep in the poorest bed, see his clothes disappear, and he will also be convinced that the dominant trait of your roommate is selfishness.

Now a writer tries to do two things when he characterizes a person in a story. He tries to get you to understand his character and he tries, as well, *to convince you emotionally* that his character is a particular kind of person. Because he must do both of these things at once, he approaches and reveals his character indirectly (or, we can say, dramatically). He does not *tell* you that a character is selfish; he *shows* this character acting selfishly. He employs a number of methods in doing this: action, dialogue, thoughts, appearance, opinions of other people in the story, or reaction to environment. Only rarely (and then only *after* he has dramatized his character) does the good writer *tell* us what a person in his story is like. And this is why reading for character is more difficult than reading for plot; we have to watch what a character does or note what he says or thinks and then *deduce* what he is, just as we watch what our roommate does or says and then figure out what his character traits are.

This is the first problem connected with reading for character. But there are two or three others which we should mention here. We have seen that a short story makes certain plot demands on a writer. In the same way it makes certain character demands on him. Of these the three most important are *consistency*, *motivation*, and *plausibility*.

The matter of consistency is one of the important respects in which fiction differs from life. In life we have all met people who do certain unexpected things at unexpected times; who seem to be selfish but who act unselfishly in certain situations (like the hypothetical roommate above), or who seem to be honest but who occasionally act dishonestly. We have come to accept such inconsistency in life because we tend to accept that which we actually see. But we are unwilling to accept the same thing in fiction. If a person in a story is established as a selfish person, we expect him to act selfishly throughout a story. We expect characters in fiction to be *consistent*.

The statement above requires some modification, however. Earlier in this introduction we saw that a story represents a crisis situation in the life of a person, that the main character usually comes out of

the story different from the person he was when he went in. In other words, a story is concerned with a *change* in a given person. Now that change may be slight and subtle (a slight increase in wisdom, say) or it may be very great. But the important thing for us to note here is that *the change must be reconciled in some way to the character as established at the beginning of the story*. Hence, one of the preoccupations of the writer is to explain logically a change in his protagonist (to show how and why a selfish person, say, becomes unselfish). This revelation of *why* and *how* people act and change in a story is called *motivation*, and the point to emphasize here about it is this: If we see a character change in a story, we must also see and understand the reason for the change, and, moreover, we must be convinced that the cause for the change is strong enough to produce the effect—in short, that the change is logical. If we are convinced of this, we can say that the character is both consistent and motivated; if we aren't, he is inconsistent and unmotivated. And, in fact, the demand for motivation goes even further; in the best stories the reader is shown not only why a person changes but why he is the person he is in the first place.

The writer is also obligated, in addition to this, to convince us that a character in a story is a *real* person. This we call *plausibility*, and it is especially difficult to achieve in fiction because a short story presents us not with a whole person, as life may do, but with one or two traits of a person. But writers achieve the *effect* of plausibility in a number of ways. For one thing, careful writers avoid using *stock* or *type characters*. For another, they use certain methods in order to create an illusion—description, for example, or minor action—in such a way that we can see, hear, *experience* the character before us. And in spite of the fact that writers emphasize certain dominant traits in a character, good writers are careful to do a third thing. We have all seen modern versions of the 1890 melodramas, in which we have an honest, courageous, handsome hero; an unscrupulous, greedy, cruel, and dishonest villain; and a pure, beautiful, and chaste heroine. And we have also laughed when we saw these dramas performed. The reason is, essentially, that we do not accept the characters and hence cannot accept the action either. And we cannot accept these characters because they are "too good (or too bad) to be

true." In other words, they aren't human. Which is why good writers are careful to present *rounded* rather than *flat* characters—that is, to give their "good" characters some faults, their "bad" characters some virtues. This is why we make the generalization that before a character in a story can afford to be anything else, he must be a human being. What we are saying here is essentially what Chekhov meant when he said that it was the job of a writer neither to hate nor to love any character in a story but only to understand him.

In addition to plausibility, consistency, and motivation of characters, we usually find another element in a story. We call it contrast. Contrast operates in many ways. On a theme level, it is often presented to us in the form of irony. On the plot level, it operates as change of pace (cutting down or increasing the speed of events in various ways). On the emotional level, it may be apparent in switches from humor to pathos, love to hate, and the like. It is also common on a character level. We can see why. In the first place, a short story usually contains at least two and usually more characters, and contrast enables us to tell the characters apart. In the second place, contrast, as most writers have found, is a convenient method for emphasizing a trait; hence the very common use of character *foils* (contrasting characters) in fiction. But there is an even more important reason. We have seen that basically a story is a conflict. Now usually that conflict exists because the dominant traits of the two chief characters involved are such as will naturally clash; conflict is more naturally and logically achieved by bringing together an honest person, say, and a dishonest one. In other words, contrast is frequently the method by which the action in a story is forced to derive from the nature of the characters involved.)

Finally, there is one other important requirement for character in a good story. It is that a character is a unit in a story, is logically related to, and integrated with, the other elements in a story—with the plot, the setting, the emotional effect, and the meaning. A story is a unit in which every element is related to every other element. We need not discuss this in any detail here; it will become increasingly evident as we progress from story to story in this book. But in terms of character, what we mean here is that what happens in a story happens because of what the characters are, and that a story's

emotional effect and meaning are what they are because of the nature of the characters and the situation in which these characters find themselves. Which is why, in any final analysis, no element of a short story can be separated and discussed in terms of itself; it can be discussed only in terms of all the other elements in that same story.

*The Third Level of Reading: Reading for
Emotional Effect*

Stories, we have now noted, do a great many things at the same time: They give us, through the presentation of a crisis situation in the life of a character, a unified sequence of incidents; they also give us insight into the lives, motives, and desires of human beings. In addition to this, they should provide us with a third thing. They should make us *feel* something.

It is the function of nonfiction to make us understand. It is the function of fiction to make us both understand and feel. Because of the restrictions placed upon the writer of fiction—many of which we have discussed above—the nonfiction writer can claim with justification that "truth (by which he means 'fact') is stranger than fiction." The fiction writer, on the other hand, knows that he has an even greater advantage, for he can give a reader an emotional as well as an intellectual understanding of life. Probably a great many boys have learned to tell the truth because they have been told the story of Washington and the cherry tree; probably very few have learned this simply by having the value of truth intellectually analyzed for them.

On the simplest level, it is relatively easy for us to get an emotional effect from the reading of a story. In the good adventure story, for example, we can feel the fear of the hero; in the "thriller" we can quite easily experience horror or terror. But on subtler levels, experiencing emotion as the result of reading a story is not quite so easy. Yet the emotions which writers like Hemingway or Anderson or Chekhov are offering to you are, once you "get" them, usually * more satisfying, more genuine, than the superficial emotions which you get from most adventure stories. For this reason it is important

14 FIRST THREE LEVELS OF READING

that you learn exactly how writers manage to transmit an emotion from a page to a reader.

We cannot hope here to list all the methods writers use to achieve an emotional effect. Indeed, it is impossible to list them, for emotion does not derive from any set of tricks or techniques; it derives from a total story seen and experienced as a single unit. This is why emotional effects are as numerous as stories. But we can explain the process in general terms, and we can arrive at a very important generalization which will enable you not only to find the emotional effect in a story but to test its validity.

In general, the emotion in a story is achieved just as characterization is achieved. T. S. Eliot's statement that one cannot transmit an emotion directly is as valid a generalization for fiction as it is for poetry. We can illustrate what this means in this way: As I sit at this typewriter, I can say, at this point, that I am very sad, and intellectually you will probably understand the statement. But the important thing to note is that by saying this / *cannot make you feel sad*. The reason is that I have used an abstraction to attempt to get across to you something which is concrete (that is, something which is finally comprehensible only through one or more of your five senses). Hence, if I wish to transmit to you the *feeling* of sadness, I must work indirectly. I must first realize that the word *sadness* is an abstraction which is a summary of many concrete things: the weather, the color of my wallpaper, bad news, a quarrel with a friend, indigestion, a thousand things; and that it is evidenced in a number of ways: a hung head, twisted lips, a shuffling or dragging walk, lines of pain in the face, a certain kind of posture, a certain vocal tone, and so on. And if I want to transmit this feeling to you, I must present you with the details which are (a) the cause and (b) the evidences of this emotion. In the meantime, if the transmission is to be complete, you, the reader, will have to do certain things too. You are not the person in a story I may write nor are you me; hence you can never experience the *exact* emotion which I am trying to communicate to you. But fortunately you and I have had similar experiences; you, too, have been bothered by ugly wallpaper, have quarreled with a friend, have received bad news, have experienced indigestion; and you, too, have revealed resultant emotions in your

actions. Hence, my details may very probably make you remember similar experiences in your life; and when you remember these experiences, you will probably remember the emotions associated with them as well.

It is in this way, and only in this way, that a writer can make you feel something. And it is exactly this which makes emotion so difficult to extract from a story; the reader must work just as the writer must work; he must think and deduce and remember. That is why reading for emotional effect is at least as difficult as reading for character and much more difficult than reading for plot.

Finally, one other point. Writers employ many devices in order to put across to you an emotion; they may use certain stylistic rhythms, may describe, may even editorialize (that is, use direct statements or summaries in an attempt to tell you how, at a given point in a story, you *should* feel). But finally, the writer will achieve an honest (that is, an effective) emotional effect only if that effect derives primarily from one basic thing: a particular character in a particular situation. We will discuss this at greater length in a later section in this book; but at the moment we can point out that the generalization implies a great deal more than it says. It implies, in fact, that the transmission of an emotion from a story to a reader can be achieved effectively only when everything else in that story contributes to the effect. And this, in turn, means that emotion depends upon a plot which is unified and related logically to the characters, and upon characters which are plausible, convincing, consistent, and adequately motivated. In short, when the other things which we have discussed in this introduction are accomplished, an effective emotional impact will have been accomplished as well.

Summary

The first four stories in this book are stories with three different emphases. One has action as a focus of interest; the second and third character, the fourth emotion. Before we turn to them, perhaps it will help if we summarize what we have noted in this introduction. We can do this by suggesting questions which you should ask yourself as you read each of the following stories.

QUESTIONS ON PLOT

1. Summarize the action of the story. Are the incidents logically related to each other? Has the story a satisfactory ending in terms of the beginning and middle (that is, is the problem of the story satisfactorily solved)?

2. In what respect does the story represent a crisis in the life of the main character?

3. What are the forces in the story which create the conflict? Are these forces balanced? Is the conflict adequately developed so that the story contains suspense? Does the victory of one force over the other seem logical or illogical? Does the victory seem too easy?

4. What special devices does the author employ to heighten the effectiveness of his action? Does he employ any dilemmas? Any contrast or change of pace?

5. Does either the situation or the ending involve any irony? If so, define it.

6. How does the author arouse your interest in the story? Does he arouse your curiosity? Does he foreshadow his coming conflict? If so, where and how?

QUESTIONS ON CHARACTER

1. What are the dominant and subordinate character traits of the various characters in the story? Are they told or shown? If shown, what methods are employed (description, action, dialogue, thoughts, opinions of others, reaction to environment)?

2. Are the characters stock or individual? Why?

3. Are the characters motivated (do you know why they act as they do)? Is this motivation convincing (does the cause seem strong enough to produce the effect)? Do the characters act consistently? Are they plausible? Why or why not?

4. Does the author employ contrast to aid in his characterization? Is this contrast such as will help to explain the conflict? Why or why not?

5. Is the main character logically related to the action of the story? If so, how? If not, why not?

6. Are the subordinate characters logically related to the action of the story? Are all of them necessary to the story?

QUESTIONS ON EMOTIONAL EFFECT

1. Do you derive any feeling or emotional effect from the story? If so, can you define it?

2. If the story produces in you any feeling, how in your opinion has the author achieved his effect? Is most of the story dramatized? Does the author ever use exposition? Is the emotional effect basically the result of understanding the situation of a given character? If not, what seems to be the basis for the effect?

3. If you have not experienced any emotion as the result of reading a story, why, in your opinion, is this effect lacking? What do you think the writer might have done to achieve such an effect?

The Most Dangerous Game

by RICHARD CONNELL

OFF there to the right—somewhere—is a large island," said Whitney. "It's rather a mystery—" "What island is it?" Rainsford asked.

"The old charts call it 'Ship-Trap Island,' " Whitney replied. "A suggestive name, isn't it? Sailors have a curious dread of the place. I don't know why. Some superstition—"

"Can't see it," remarked Rainsford, trying to peer through the dank tropical night that was palpable as it pressed its thick warm blackness in upon the yacht.

"You've good eyes," said Whitney, with a laugh, "and I've seen you pick off a moose moving in the brown fall bush at four hundred yards, but even you can't see four miles or so through a moonless Caribbean night."

"Nor four yards," admitted Rainsford. "Ugh! It's like moist black velvet."

"It will be light in Rio," promised Whitney. "We should make it in a few days. I hope the jaguar guns have come from Purdey's. We should have some good hunting up the Amazon. Great sport, hunting."

"The best sport in the world," agreed Rainsford.

"For the hunter," amended Whitney. "Not for the jaguar."

"Don't talk rot, Whitney," said Rainsford. "You're a big-game hunter, not a philosopher. Who cares how a jaguar feels?"

"Perhaps the jaguar does," observed Whitney.

"Bah! They've no understanding."

"Even so, I rather think they understand one thing—fear. The fear of pain and the fear of death."

"Nonsense," laughed Rainsford. "This hot weather is making you soft, Whitney. Be a realist. The world is made up of two classes—the hunters and the huntees. Luckily, you and I are hunters. Do you think we've passed that island yet?"

"I can't tell in the dark. I hope so."

"Why?" asked Rainsford.

"The place has a reputation—a bad one."

"Cannibals?" suggested Rainsford.

"Hardly. Even cannibals wouldn't live in such a God-forsaken place. But it's gotten into sailor lore, somehow. Didn't you notice that the crew's nerves seemed a bit jumpy to-day?"

"They were a bit strange, now you mention it. Even Captain Nielsen—"

"Yes, even that tough-minded old Swede, who'd go up to the devil himself and ask him for a light. Those fishy blue eyes held a look I never saw there before. All I could get out of him was: 'This place has an evil name among sea-faring men, sir.' Then he said to me, very gravely: 'Don't you feel anything?'—as if the air about us was actually poisonous. Now, you mustn't laugh when I tell you this—I did feel something like a sudden chill.

"There was no breeze. The sea was as flat as a plate-glass window. We were drawing near the island then. What I felt was a—a mental chill; a sort of sudden dread."

"Pure imagination," said Rainsford. "One superstitious sailor can taint the whole ship's company with his fear."

"Maybe. But sometimes I think sailors have an extra sense that tells them when they are in danger. Sometimes I think evil is a tangible thing—with wave lengths, just as sound and light have. An evil place can, so to speak, broadcast vibrations of evil. Anyhow, I'm glad we're getting out of this zone. Well, I think I'll turn in now, Rainsford."

"I'm not sleepy," said Rainsford. "I'm going to smoke another pipe up on the after deck."

"Good night, then, Rainsford. See you at breakfast."

"Right. Good night, Whitney."

There was no sound in the night as Rainsford sat there, but the

muffled throb of the engine that drove the yacht swiftly through the darkness, and the swish and ripple of the wash of the propeller.

Rainsford, reclining in a steamer chair, indolently puffed on his favorite brier. The sensuous drowsiness of the night was on him. "It's so dark," he thought, "that I could sleep without closing my eyes; the night would be my eyelids—"

An abrupt sound startled him. Off to the right he heard it, and his ears, expert in such matters, could not be mistaken. Again he heard the sound, and again. Somewhere, off in the blackness, some one had fired a gun three times.

Rainsford sprang up and moved quickly to the rail, mystified. He strained his eyes in the direction from which the reports had come, but it was like trying to see through a blanket. He leaped upon the rail and balanced himself there, to get greater elevation; his pipe, striking a rope, was knocked from his mouth. He lunged for it; a short, hoarse cry came from his lips as he realized he had reached too far and had lost his balance. The cry was pinched off short as the blood-warm waters of the Caribbean Sea closed over his head.

He struggled up to the surface and tried to cry out, but the wash from the speeding yacht slapped him in the face and the salt water in his open mouth made him gag and strangle. Desperately he struck out with strong strokes after the receding lights of the yacht, but he stopped before he had swum fifty feet. A certain cool-headedness had come to him; it was not the first time he had been in a tight place. There was a chance that his cries could be heard by some one aboard the yacht, but that chance was slender, and grew more slender as the yacht raced on. He wrestled himself out of his clothes, and shouted with all his power. The lights of the yacht became faint and ever-vanishing fireflies; then they were blotted out entirely by the night.

Rainsford remembered the shots. They had come from the right, and doggedly he swam in that direction, swimming with slow, deliberate strokes, conserving his strength. For a seemingly endless time he fought the sea. He began to count his strokes, he could do possibly a hundred more and then—

Rainsford heard a sound. It came out of the darkness, a high

screaming sound, the sound of an animal in an extremity of anguish and terror.

He did not recognize the animal that made the sound; he did not try to; with fresh vitality he swam toward the sound. He heard it again; then it was cut short by another noise, crisp, staccato.

"Pistol shot," muttered Rainsford, swimming on.

Ten minutes of determined effort brought another sound to his ears—the most welcome he had ever heard—the muttering and growling of the sea breaking on a rocky shore. He was almost on the rocks before he saw them; on a night less calm he would have been shattered against them. With his remaining strength he dragged himself from the swirling waters. Jagged crags appeared to jut into the opaqueness, he forced himself upward, hand over hand. Gasping, his hands raw, he reached a flat place at the top. Dense jungle came down to the very edge of the cliffs. What perils that tangle of trees and underbrush might hold for him did not concern Rainsford just then. All he knew was that he was safe from his enemy, the sea, and that utter weariness was on him. He flung himself down at the jungle edge and tumbled headlong into the deepest sleep of his life.

When he opened his eyes he knew from the position of the sun that it was late in the afternoon. Sleep had given him new vigor; a sharp hunger was picking at him. He looked about him, almost cheerfully.

"Where there are pistol shots, there are men. Where there are men, there is food," he thought. But what kind of men, he wondered, in so forbidding a place? An unbroken front of snarled and ragged jungle fringed the shore.

He saw no sign of a trail through the closely knit web of weeds and trees; it was easier to go along the shore, and Rainsford floundered along by the water. Not far from where he had landed, he stopped.

Some wounded thing, by the evidence a large animal, had thrashed about in the underbrush; the jungle weeds were crushed down and the moss was lacerated; one patch of weeds was stained crimson. A small, glittering object not far away caught Rainsford's eye and he picked it up. It was an empty cartridge.

"A twenty-two," he remarked. "That's odd. It must have been a fairly large animal too. The hunter had his nerve with him to tackle it with a light gun. It's clear that the brute put up a fight. I suppose the first three shots I heard was when the hunter flushed his quarry and wounded it. The last shot was when he trailed it here and finished it."

He examined the ground closely and found what he had hoped to find—the print of hunting boots. They pointed along the cliff in the direction he had been going. Eagerly he hurried along, now slipping on a rotten log or a loose stone, but making headway; night was beginning to settle down on the island.

Blak darkness was blacking out the sea and jungle when Rainsford sighted the lights. He came upon them as he turned a crook in the coast line, and his first thought was that he had come upon a village, for there were many lights. But as he forged along he saw to his great astonishment that all the lights were in one enormous building—a lofty structure with pointed towers plunging upward into the gloom. His eyes made out the shadowy outlines of a palatial chateau; it was set on a high bluff, and on three sides of it cliffs dived down to where the sea licked greedy lips in the shadows.

"Mirage," thought Rainsford. But it was no mirage, he found, when he opened the tall spiked iron gate. The stone steps were real enough; the massive door with a leering gargoyle for a knocker was real enough; yet about it all hung an air of unreality.

He lifted the knocker, and it creaked up stiffly, as if it had never before been used. He let it fall, and it startled him with its booming loudness. He thought he heard steps within; the door remained closed. Again Rainsford lifted the heavy knocker, and let it fall. The door opened then, opened as suddenly as if it were on a spring, and Rainsford stood blinking in the river of glaring gold light that poured out. The first thing Rainsford's eyes discerned was the largest man Rainsford had ever seen—a gigantic creature, solidly made and black-bearded to the waist. In his hand the man held a long-barreled revolver, and he was pointing it straight at Rainsford's heart.

Out of the snarl of beard two small eyes regarded Rainsford.

"Don't be alarmed," said Rainsford, with a smile which he hoped

was disarming. "I'm no robber. I fell off? a yacht. My name is Sanger Rainsford of New York City."

The menacing look in the eyes did not change. The revolver pointed as rigidly as if the giant were a statue. He gave no sign that he understood Rainsford's words, or that he had even heard them. He was dressed in uniform, a black uniform trimmed with gray astrakhan.

"I'm Sanger Rainsford of New York," Rainsford began again. "I fell off a yacht. I am hungry."

The man's only answer was to raise with his thumb the hammer of his revolver. Then Rainsford saw the man's free hand go to his forehead in a military salute, and he saw him click his heels together and stand at attention. Another man was coming down the broad marble steps, an erect, slender man in evening clothes. He advanced to Rainsford and held out his hand.

In a cultivated voice marked by a slight accent that gave it added precision and deliberateness, he said: "It is a very great pleasure and honor to welcome Mr. Sanger Rainsford, the celebrated hunter, to my home."

Automatically Rainsford shook the man's hand.

"I've read your book about hunting snow leopards in Tibet, you see," explained the man. "I am General Zaroff."

Rainsford's first impression was that the man was singularly handsome; his second was that there was an original, almost bizarre quality about the general's face. He was a tall man past middle age, for his hair was a vivid white; but his thick eyebrows and pointed military mustache were as black as the night from which Rainsford had come. His eyes, too, were black and very bright. He had high cheek bones, a sharp-cut nose, a spare, dark face, the face of a man used to giving orders, the face of an aristocrat. Turning to the giant in uniform, the general made a sign. The giant put away his pistol, saluted, withdrew.

"Ivan is an incredibly strong fellow," remarked the general, "but he has the misfortune to be deaf and dumb. A simple fellow, but, I'm afraid, like all his race, a bit of a savage."

"Is he Russian?"

"He is a Cossack," said the general, and his smile showed red lips and pointed teeth. "So am I."

"Come," he said, "we shouldn't be chatting here. We can talk later. Now you want clothes, food, rest. You shall have them. This is a most restful spot."

Ivan had reappeared, and the general spoke to him with lips that moved but gave forth no sound.

"Follow Ivan, if you please, Mr. Rainsford," said the general. "I was about to have my dinner when you came. I'll wait for you. You'll find that my clothes will fit you, I think."

It was to a huge, beam-ceilinged bedroom with a canopied bed big enough for six men that Rainsford followed the silent giant. Ivan laid out an evening suit, and Rainsford, as he put it on, noticed that it came from a London tailor who ordinarily cut and sewed for none below the rank of duke.

The dining room to which Ivan conducted him was in many ways remarkable. There was a medieval magnificence about it; it suggested a baronial hall of feudal times with its oaken panels, its high ceiling, its vast refectory table where twoscore men could sit down to eat. About the hall were the mounted heads of many animals—lions, tigers, elephants, moose, bears; larger or more perfect specimens Rainsford had never seen. At the great table the general was sitting, alone.

"You'll have a cocktail, Mr. Rainsford," he suggested. The cocktail was surpassingly good; and, Rainsford noted, the table appointments were of the finest—the linen, the crystal, the silver, the china.

They were eating *borsch*, the rich, red soup with whipped cream so dear to Russian palates. Half apologetically General Zaroff said: "We do our best to preserve the amenities of civilization here. Please forgive any lapses. We are well off! the beaten track, you know. Do you think the champagne has suffered from its long ocean trip?"

"Not in the least," declared Rainsford. He was finding the general a most thoughtful and affable host, a true cosmopolite. But there was one small trait of the general's that made Rainsford uncomfortable. Whenever he looked up from his plate he found the general studying him, appraising him narrowly.

"Perhaps," said General Zaroff, "you were surprised that I recognized your name. You see, I read all books on hunting published in English, French, and Russian. I have but one passion in my life, Mr. Rainsford, and it is the hunt."

"You have some wonderful heads here," said Rainsford as he ate a particularly well cooked filet mignon. "That Cape buffalo is the largest I ever saw."

"Oh, that fellow. Yes, he was a monster."

"Did he charge you?"

"Hurled me against a tree," said the general. "Fractured my skull. But I got the brute."

"I've always thought," said Rainsford, "that the Cape buffalo is the most dangerous of all big game."

For a moment the general did not reply; he was smiling his curious reel-lipped smile. Then he said slowly: "No. You are wrong, sir. The Cape buffalo is not the most dangerous big game." He sipped his wine. "Here in my preserve on this island," he said in the same slow tone, "I hunt more dangerous game."

Rainsford expressed his surprise. "Is there big game on this island?"

The general nodded. "The biggest."

"Really?"

"Oh, it isn't here naturally, of course. I have to stock the island."

"What have you imported, general?" Rainsford asked. "Tigers?"

The general smiled. "No," he said. "Hunting tigers ceased to interest me some years ago. I exhausted their possibilities, you see. No thrill left in tigers, no real danger. I live for danger, Mr. Rainsford."

The general took from his pocket a gold cigaret case and offered his guest a long black cigaret with a silver tip; it was perfumed and gave off a smell like incense.

"We will have some capital hunting, you and I," said the general. "I shall be most glad to have your society."

"But what game—" began Rainsford.

"I'll tell you," said the general. "You will be amused, I know. I think I may say, in all modesty, that I have done a rare thing. I have invented a new sensation. May I pour you another glass of port, Mr. Rainsford?"

"Thank you, general."

The general filled both glasses, and said: "God makes some men poets. Some He makes kings, some beggars. Me He made a hunter. My hand was made for the trigger, my father said. He was a very rich man with a quarter of a million acres in the Crimea, and he was an ardent sportsman. When I was only five years old he gave me a little gun, specially made in Moscow for me, to shoot sparrows with. When I shot some of his prize turkeys with it, he did not punish me; he complimented me on my marksmanship. I killed my first bear in the Caucasus when I was ten. My whole life has been one prolonged hunt. I went into the army—it was expected of noble-men's sons—and for a time commanded a division of Cossack cavalry, but my real interest was always the hunt. I have hunted every kind of game in every land. It would be impossible for me to tell you how many animals I have killed."

The general puffed at his cigar.

"After the debacle in Russia I left the country, for it was imprudent for an officer of the Czar to stay there. Many noble Russians lost everything. I, luckily, had invested heavily in American securities, so I shall never have to open a tea room in Monte Carlo or drive a taxi in Paris. Naturally, I continued to hunt—grizzlies in your Rockies, crocodiles in the Ganges, rhinoceroses in East Africa. It was in Africa that the Cape buffalo hit me and laid me up for six months. As soon as I recovered I started for the Amazon to hunt jaguars, for I had heard they were unusually cunning. They weren't." The Cossack sighed. "They were no match at all for a hunter with his wits about him, and a high-powered rifle. I was bitterly disappointed. I was lying in my tent with a splitting headache one night when a terrible thought pushed its way into my mind. Hunting was beginning to bore me! And hunting, remember, had been my life. I have heard that in America business men often go to pieces when they give up the business that has been their life."

"Yes, that's so," said Rainsford.

The general smiled. "I had no wish to go to pieces," he said. "I must do something. Now, mine is an analytical mind, Mr. Rainsford. Doubtless that is why I enjoy the problems of the chase."

"No doubt, General Zaroff."

"So," continued the general, "I asked myself why the hunt no longer fascinated me. You are much younger than I am, Mr. Rainsford, and have not hunted as much, but you perhaps can guess the answer."

"What was it?"

"Simply this: hunting had ceased to be what you call 'a sporting proposition.' It had become too easy. I always got my quarry. Always. There is no greater bore than perfection."

The general lit a fresh cigar.

"No animal had a chance with me any more. That is no boast; it is a mathematical certainty. The animal had nothing but his legs and his instinct. Instinct is no match for reason. When I thought of this it was a tragic moment for me, I can tell you."

Rainsford leaned across the table, absorbed in what his host was saying.

"It came to me as an inspiration what I must do," the general went on.

"And that was?"

The general smiled the quiet smile of one who has faced an obstacle and surmounted it with success. "I had to invent a new animal to hunt," he said.

"A new animal? You're joking."

"Not at all," said the general. "I never joke about hunting. I needed a new animal. I found one. So I bought this island, built this house, and here I do my hunting. The island is perfect for my purposes—there are jungles with a maze of trails in them, hills, swamps—"

"But the animal, General Zaroff?"

"Oh," said the general, "it supplies me with the most exciting hunting in the world. No other hunting compares with it for an instant. Every day I hunt, and I never grow bored now, for I have a quarry with which I can match my wits."

Rainsford's bewilderment showed in his face.

"I wanted the ideal animal to hunt," explained the general. "So I said: 'What are the attributes of an ideal quarry?' And the answer was, of course: 'It must have courage, cunning, and, above all, it must be able to reason.' "

"But no animal can reason," objected Rainsford.

"My dear fellow," said the general, "there is one that can."

"But you can't mean—" gasped Rainsford.

"And why not?"

"I can't believe you are serious, General Zaroff. This is a grisly joke."

"Why should I not be serious? I am speaking of hunting."

"Hunting? Good God, General Zaroff, what you speak of is murder."

The general laughed with entire good nature. He regarded Rainsford quizzically. "I refuse to believe that so modern and civilized a young man as you seem to be harbors romantic ideas about the value of human life. Surely your experiences in the war—"

"Did not make me condone cold-blooded murder," finished Rainsford stiffly.

Laughter shook the general. "How extraordinarily droll you are!" he said. "One does not expect nowadays to find a young man of the educated class, even in America, with such a naive, and, if I may say so, mid-Victorian point of view. It's like finding a snuff-box in a limousine. Ah, well, doubtless you had Puritan ancestors. So many Americans appear to have had. I'll wager you'll forget your notions when you go hunting with me. You've a genuine new thrill in store for you, Mr. Rainsford."

"Thank you, I'm a hunter, not a murderer."

"Dear me," said the general, quite unruffled, "again that unpleasant word. But I think I can show you that your scruples are quite ill founded."

"Yes?"

"Life is for the strong, to be lived by the strong, and, if need be, taken by the strong. The weak of the world were put here to give the strong pleasure. I am strong. Why should I not use my gift? If I wish to hunt, why should I not? I hunt the scum of the earth—sailors from tramp ships—lascars, blacks, Chinese, whites, mongrels—a thorobred horse or hound is worth more than a score of them."

"But they are men," said Rainsford hotly.

"Precisely," said the general. "That is why I use them. It gives me pleasure. They can reason, after a fashion. So they are dangerous."

"But where do you get them?"

The general's left eyelid fluttered down in a wink. "This island is called Ship-Trap," he answered. "Sometimes an angry god of the high seas sends them to me. Sometimes, when Providence is not so kind, I help Providence a bit. Come to the window with me."

Rainsford went to the window and looked out toward the sea.

"Watch! Out there!" exclaimed the general, pointing into the night. Rainsford's eyes saw only blackness, and then, as the general pressed a button, far out to sea Rainsford saw the flash of lights.

The general chuckled. "They indicate a channel," he said, "where there's none: giant rocks with razor edges crouch like a sea monster with wide-open jaws. They can crush a ship as easily as I crush this nut." He dropped a walnut on the hardwood floor and brought his heel grinding down on it. "Oh, yes," he said, casually, as if in answer to a question, "I have electricity. We try to be civilized here."

"Civilized? And you shoot down men?"

A trace of anger was in the general's black eyes, but it was there for but a second, and he said, in his most pleasant manner: "Dear me, what a righteous young man you are! I assure you I do not do the thing you suggest. That would be barbarous. I treat these visitors with every consideration. They get plenty of good food and exercise. They get into splendid physical condition. You shall see for yourself to-morrow."

"What do you mean?"

"We'll visit my training school," smiled the general. "It's in the cellar. I have about a dozen pupils down there now. They're from the Spanish bark San Lucar that had the bad luck to go on the rocks out there. A very inferior lot, I regret to say. Poor specimens and more accustomed to the deck than to the jungle."

He raised his hand, and Ivan, who served as waiter, brought thick Turkish coffee. Rainsford, with an effort, held his tongue in check.

"It's a game, you see," pursued the general blandly. "I suggest to one of them that we go hunting. I give him a supply of food and an excellent hunting knife. I give him three hours' start. I am to follow, armed only with a pistol of the smallest caliber and range.

If my quarry eludes me for three whole days, he wins the game. If I find him"—the general smiled—"he loses."

"Suppose he refuses to be hunted?"

"Oh," said the general, "I give him his option, of course. He need not play that game if he doesn't wish to. If he does not wish to hunt, I turn him over to Ivan. Ivan once had the honor of serving as official knouter to the Great White Czar, and he has his own ideas of sport. Invariably, Mr. Rainsford, invariably they choose the hunt."

"And if they win?"

The smile on the general's face widened. "To date I have not lost," he said.

Then he added, hastily: "I don't wish you to think me a braggart, Mr. Rainsford. Many of them afford only the most elementary sort of problem. Occasionally I strike a tartar. One almost did win. I eventually had to use the dogs."

"The dogs?"

"This way, please. I'll show you."

The general steered Rainsford to a window. The lights from the windows sent a flickering illumination that made grotesque patterns on the courtyard below, and Rainsford could see moving about there a dozen or so huge black shapes; as they turned toward him, their eyes glittered greenly.

"A rather good lot, I think," observed the general. "They are let out at seven every night. If anyone should try to get into my house—or out of it—something extremely regrettable would occur to him." He hummed a snatch of song from the *Folies Bergere*.

"And now," said the general, "I want to show you my new collection of heads. Will you come with me to the library?"

"I hope," said Rainsford, "that you will excuse me to-night, General Zaroff. I'm really not feeling at all well."

"Ah, indeed?" the general inquired solicitously. "Well, I suppose that's only natural, after your long swim. You need a good, restful night's sleep. To-morrow you'll feel like a new man, I'll wager. Then we'll hunt, eh? I've one rather promising prospect—"

Rainsford was hurrying from the room.

"Sorry you can't go with me to-night," called the general. "I expect rather fair sport—a big, strong black. He looks resourceful—"

Well, good night, Mr. Rainsford; I hope you have a good night's rest."

The bed was good, and the pajamas of the softest silk, and he was tired in every fiber of his being, but nevertheless Rainsford could not quiet his brain with the opiate of sleep. He lay, eyes wide open. Once he thought he heard stealthy steps in the corridor outside his room. He sought to throw open the door; it would not open. He went to the window and looked out. His room was high up in one of the towers. The lights of the chateau were out now, and it was dark and silent, but there was a fragment of sallow moon, and by its wan light he could see, dimly, the courtyard; there, weaving in and out in the pattern of shadow, were black, noiseless forms; the hounds heard him at the window and looked up, expectantly, with their green eyes. Rainsford went back to the bed and lay down. By many methods he tried to put himself to sleep. He had achieved a doze when, just as morning began to come, he heard, far off in the jungle, the faint report of a pistol.

General Zaroff did not appear until luncheon. He was dressed faultlessly in the tweeds of a country squire. He was solicitous about the state of Rainsford's health.

"As for me," sighed the general, "I do not feel so well. I am worried, Mr. Rainsford. Last night I detected traces of my old complaint."

To Rainsford's questioning glance the general said: "Ennui. Boredom."

Then, taking a second helping of *Crepes Suzette*, the general explained: "The hunting was not good last night. The fellow lost his head. He made a straight trail that offered no problems at all. That's the trouble with these sailors; they have dull brains to begin with, and they do not know how to get about in the woods. They do excessively stupid and obvious things. It's most annoying. Will you have another glass of *Chablis*, Mr. Rainsford?"

"General," said Rainsford firmly, "I wish to leave this island at once."

The general raised his thickets of eyebrows; he seemed hurt. "But, my dear fellow," the general protested, "you've only just come. You've had no hunting—"

"I wish to go to-day," said Rainsford. He saw the dead black eyes of the general on him, studying him. General Zaroff's face suddenly brightened.

He filled Rainsford's glass with venerable Chablis from a dusty bottle.

"To-night," said the general, "we will hunt—you and I."

Rainsford shook his head. "No, general," he said. "I will not hunt."

The general shrugged his shoulders and delicately ate a hothouse grape. "As you wish, my friend," he said. "The choice rests entirely with you. But may I not venture to suggest that you will find my idea of sport more diverting than Ivan's?"

He nodded toward the corner to where the giant stood, scowling, his thick arms crossed on his hogshhead of chest.

"You don't mean—" cried Rainsford.

"My dear fellow," said the general, "have I not told you I always mean what I say about hunting? This is really an inspiration. I drink to a foeman worthy of my steel—at last."

The general raised his glass, but Rainsford sat staring at him.

"You'll find this game worth playing," the general said enthusiastically. "Your brain against mine. Your woodcraft against mine. Your strength and stamina against mine. Outdoor chess! And the stake is not without value, eh?"

"And if I win—" began Rainsford huskily.

"I'll cheerfully acknowledge myself defeated if I do not find you by midnight of the third day," said General Zaroff. "My sloop will place you on the mainland near a town."

The general read what Rainsford was thinking.

"Oh, you can trust me," said the Cossack. "I will give you my word as a gentleman and a sportsman. Of course you, in turn, must agree to say nothing of your visit here."

"I'll agree to nothing of the kind," said Rainsford.

"Oh," said the general, "in that case— But why discuss that now? Three days hence we can discuss it over a bottle of Veuve Cliquot, unless—"

The general sipped his wine.

Then a businesslike air animated him. "Ivan," he said to Rains-

ford, "will supply you with hunting clothes, food, a knife. I suggest you wear moccasins; they leave a poorer trail. I suggest too that you avoid the big swamp in the southeast corner of the island. We call it Death Swamp. There's quicksand there. One foolish fellow tried it. The deplorable part of it was that Lazarus followed him. You can imagine my feelings, Mr. Rainsford. I loved Lazarus; he was the finest hound in my pack. Well, I must beg you to excuse me now. I always take a siesta after lunch. You'll hardly have time for a nap, I fear. You'll want to start, no doubt. I shall not follow till dusk. Hunting at night is so much more exciting than by day, don't you think? Au revoir, Mr. Rainsford, au revoir."

General Zaroff, with a deep, courtly bow, strolled from the room.

From another door came Ivan. Under one arm he carried khaki hunting clothes, a haversack of food, a leather sheath containing a long-bladed hunting knife; his right hand rested on a cocked revolver thrust in the crimson sash about his waist. . . .

Rainsford had fought his way through the bush for two hours. "I must keep my nerve. I must keep my nerve," he said through tight teeth.

He had not been entirely clear-headed when the chateau gates snapped shut behind him. His whole idea at first was to put distance between himself and General Zaroff, and, to this end, he had plunged along, spurred on by the sharp rowels of something very like panic. Now he had got a grip on himself, had stopped, and was taking stock of himself and the situation.

He saw that straight flight was futile; inevitably it would bring him face to face with the sea. He was in a picture with a frame of water, and his operations, clearly, must take place within that frame.

"I'll give him a trail to follow," muttered Rainsford, and he struck oil from the rude paths he had been following into the trackless wilderness. He executed a series of intricate loops; he doubled on his trail again and again, recalling all the lore of the fox hunt, and all the dodges of the fox. Night found him leg-weary, with hands and face lashed by the branches, on a thickly wooded ridge. He knew it would be insane to blunder on through the dark, even if he had the strength. His need for rest was imperative and he

thought: "I have played the fox, now I must play the cat of the fable." A big tree with a thick trunk and outspread branches was nearby, and, taking care to leave not the slightest mark, he climbed up into the crotch, and stretching out on one of the broad limbs, after a fashion, rested. Rest brought him new confidence and almost a feeling of security. Even so zealous a hunter as General Zaroff could not trace him there, he told himself; only the devil himself could follow that complicated trail through the jungle after dark. But, perhaps, the general was a devil—

An apprehensive night crawled slowly by like a wounded snake, and sleep did not visit Rainsford, altho the silence of a dead world was on the jungle. Toward morning when a dingy gray was varnishing the sky, the cry of some startled bird focused Rainsford's attention in that direction. Something was coming through the bush, coming slowly, carefully, coming by the same winding way Rainsford had come. He flattened himself down on the limb, and through a screen of leaves almost as thick as tapestry, he watched. The thing that was approaching was a man.

It was General Zaroff. He made his way along with his eyes fixed in utmost concentration on the ground before him. He paused, almost beneath the tree, dropped to his knees and studied the ground. Rainsford's impulse was to hurl himself down like a panther, but he saw that the general's right hand held something metallic—a small automatic pistol.

The hunter shook his head several times, as if he were puzzled. Then he straightened up and took from his case one of his black cigarettes; its pungent incense-like smoke floated up to Rainsford's nostrils.

Rainsford held his breath. The general's eyes had left the ground and were traveling inch by inch up the tree. Rainsford froze there, every muscle tensed for a spring. But the sharp eyes of the hunter stopped before they reached the limb where Rainsford lay; a smile spread over his brown face. Very deliberately he blew a smoke ring into the air; then he turned his back on the tree and walked carelessly away, back along the trail he had come. The swish of the underbrush against his hunting boots grew fainter and fainter.

The pent-up air burst hotly from Rainsford's lungs. His first thought made him feel sick and numb. The general could follow a

trail through the woods at night; he could follow an extremely difficult trail; he must have uncanny powers; only by the merest chance had the Cossack failed to see his quarry.

Rainsford's second thought was even more terrible. It sent a shudder of cold horror through his whole being. Why had the general smiled? Why had he turned back?

Ramsford did not want to believe what his reason told him was true, but the truth was as evident as the sun that had by now pushed through the morning mists. The general was playing with him! The general was saving him for another day's sport! The Cossack was the cat; he was the mouse. Then it was that Rainsford knew the full meaning of terror.

"I will not lose my nerve. I will not."

He slid down from the tree, and struck off again into the woods. His face was set and he forced the machinery of his mind to function. Three hundred yards from his hiding place he stopped where a huge dead tree leaned precariously on a smaller, living one. Throwing off his sack of food, Rainsford took his knife from its sheath and began to work with all his energy.

The job was finished at last, and he threw himself down behind a fallen log a hundred feet away. He did not have to wait long. The cat was coming again to play with the mouse.

Following the trail with the sureness of a bloodhound, came General Zaroff. Nothing escaped those searching black eyes, no crushed blade of grass, no bent twig, no mark, no matter how faint, in the moss. So intent was the Cossack on his stalking that he was upon the thing Rainsford had made before he saw it. His foot touched the protruding bough that was the trigger. Even as he touched it, the general sensed his danger and leaped back with the agility of an ape. But he was not quite quick enough; the dead tree, delicately adjusted to rest on the cut living one, crashed down and struck the general a glancing blow on the shoulder as it fell; but for his alertness, he must have been smashed beneath it. He staggered, but he did not fall; nor did he drop his revolver. He stood there, rubbing his injured shoulder, and Rainsford, with fear again gripping his heart, heard the general's mocking laugh ring through the jungle.

"Rainsford," called the general, "if you are within sound of my

voice, as I suppose you are, let me congratulate you. Not many men know how to make a Malay man-catcher. Luckily, for me, I too have hunted in Malacca. You are proving interesting, Mr. Rainsford. I am going' now to have my wound dressed; it's only a slight one. But I shall be back. I shall be back."

When the general, nursing his bruised shoulder, had gone, Rainsford took up his flight again. It was flight now, a desperate, hopeless flight, that earned him on for some hours. Dusk came, then darkness, and still he pressed on. The ground grew softer under his moccasins; the vegetation grew ranker, denser; insects bit him savagely. Then, as he stepped forward, his foot sank into the ooze. He tried to wrench it back, but the muck sucked viciously at his foot as if it were a giant leech. With a violent effort, he tore his foot loose. He knew where he was now. Death Swamp and its quicksand.

His hands were tight closed as if his nerve were something tangible that some one in the darkness was trying to tear from his grip. The softness of the earth had given him an idea. He stepped back from the quicksand a dozen feet or so and, like some huge prehistoric beaver, he began to dig.

Rainsford had dug himself in in France when a second's delay meant death. That had been a placid pastime compared to his digging now. The pit grew deeper; when it was above his shoulders, he climbed out and from some hard saplings cut stakes and sharpened them to a fine point. These stakes he planted in the bottom of the pit with the points sticking up. With flying fingers he wove a rough carpet of weeds and branches and with it he covered the mouth of the pit. Then, wet with sweat and aching with tiredness, he crouched behind the stump of a lightning-charred tree.

He knew his pursuer was coming; he heard the padding sound of feet on the soft earth, and the night breeze brought him the perfume of the general's cigaret. It seemed to Rainsford that the general was coming with unusual swiftness; he was not feeling his way along, foot by foot. Rainsford, crouching there, could not see the general, nor could he see the pit. He lived a year in a minute. Then he felt an impulse to cry aloud with joy, for he heard the sharp crackle of the breaking branches as the cover of the pit gave way; he heard the sharp scream of pain as the pointed stakes found their

mark. He leaped up from his place of concealment. Then he cowered back. Three feet from the pit a man was standing, with an electric torch in his hand.

"You've done well, Rainsford," the voice of the general called. "Tour Burmese tiger pit has claimed one of my best dogs. Again you score. I think, Mr. Rainsford, I'll see what you can do against my whole pack. I'm going home for a rest now. Thank you for a most amusing evening."

At daybreak Rainsford, lying near the swamp, was awakened by a sound that made him know that he had new things to learn about fear. It was a distant sound, faint and wavering, but he knew it. It was the baying of a pack of hounds.

Rainsford knew he could do one of two things. He could stay where he was and wait. That was suicide. He could flee. That was postponing the inevitable. For a moment he stood there, thinking. An idea that held a wild chance came to him, and, tightening his belt, he headed away from the swamp.

The baying of the hounds drew nearer, then still nearer, nearer, ever nearer. On a ridge Rainsford climbed a tree. Down a water-course, not a quarter of a mile away, he could see the bush moving. Straining his eyes, he saw the lean figure of General Zaroff; just ahead of him Rainsford made out another figure whose wide shoulders surged through the tall jungle weeds; it was the giant Ivan, and he seemed pulled forward by some unseen force; Rainsford knew that Ivan must be holding the pack in leash.

They would be on him any minute now. His mind worked frantically. He thought of a native trick he had learned in Uganda. He slid down the tree. He caught hold of a springy young sapling and to it he fastened his hunting knife, with the blade pointing down the trail; with a bit of wild grapevine he tied back the sapling. Then he ran for his life. The hounds raised their voices as they hit the fresh scent. Rainsford knew now how an animal at bay feels.

He had to stop to get his breath. The baying of the hounds stopped abruptly, and Rainsford's heart stopped too. They must have reached the knife.

He shinned excitedly up a tree and looked back. His pursuers

had stopped. But the hope that was in Rainsford's brain when lie climbed died, for he saw in the shallow valley that General Zaroff was still on his feet. But Ivan was not. The knife, driven by the recoil of the springing tree, had not wholly failed.

Rainsford had hardly tumbled to the ground when the pack took up the cry again.

"Nerve, nerve, nerve!" he panted, as he dashed along. A blue gap showed between the trees dead ahead. Ever nearer drew the hounds. Rainsford forced himself on toward that gap. He reached it. It was the shore of the sea. Across a cove he could see the gloomy gray stone of the chateau. Twenty feet below him the sea rumbled and hissed. Rainsford hesitated. He heard the hounds. Then he leaped far out into the sea. . . .

When the general and his pack reached the place by the sea, the Cossack stopped. For some minutes he stood regarding the blue-green expanse of water. He shrugged his shoulders. Then he sat down, took a drink of brandy from a silver flask, lit a perfumed cigaret, and hummed a bit from "Madame Butterfly."

General Zaroff had an exceedingly good dinner in his great paneled dining hall that evening. With it he had a bottle of Pol Roger and half a bottle of Chambertin. Two slight annoyances kept him from perfect enjoyment. One was the thought that it would be difficult to replace Ivan; the other was that his quarry had escaped him; of course the American hadn't played the game—so thought the general as he tasted his after-dinner liqueur. In his library he read, to soothe himself, from the works of Marcus Aurelius. At ten he went up to his bedroom. He was dehciously tired, he said to himself, as he locked himself in. There was a little moonlight, so, before turning on his light, he went to the window and looked down at the courtyard. He could see the great hounds, and he called: "Better luck another time," to them. Then he switched on the light.

A man, who had been hiding in the curtains of the bed, was standing there.

"Rainsford!" screamed the general. "How in God's name did you get here?"

"Swam," said Rainsford. "I found it quicker than walking through the jungle."

The general sucked in his breath and smiled. "I congratulate you," he said. "You have won the game."

Rainsford did not smile. "I am still a beast at bay," he said, in a low, hoarse voice. "Get ready, General Zaroff."

The general made one of his deepest bows. "I see," he said. "Splendid! One of us is to furnish a repast for the hounds. The other will sleep in this very excellent bed. On guard, Rainsford_____"

He had never slept in a better bed, Rainsford decided.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. In terms of the action of "The Most Dangerous Game," what specific purposes does the opening serve? What, for example, is the purpose of (a) the brief discussion on hunters and hunted, and (b) the mention of the attitude of the crew toward Ship-Trap Island?

2. How much information necessary to the meaning of the story can you find in the first passage? How is it disguised as information?

3. What purposes, other than the establishment of place, does the setting (the tropical night, the sea, the detailed description of the interior of the castle, and the description of the jungle) serve in this story?

4. The actual story here does not really begin until late in section four, the first three and a half sections being used to establish character, to give information necessary to the complete understanding of the story, to set the scene, to prepare for the central dramatic situation, etc. Find the methods by which the author manages to keep you interested while he is giving you this information.

5. We have noted that in the story in which the focus of interest is on plot or action, reader interest ordinarily is aroused and maintained by two kinds of interest pull: curiosity and suspense. Where in "The Most Dangerous Game" does the interest pull switch from the first type to the second?

6. The plot of "The Most Dangerous Game" involves a simple irony. What is it? Can you also find in the story examples of dilemmas?

7. Why does Connell end his story so abruptly? The duel, as ac-

tion, could have been made as exciting as the hunt, for we have now been convinced that the General is a dangerous man and we also want Rainsford to win through. Why, then, are all details of the duel omitted? (In answering this question consider the whole structure, direction, and point of the story; in your discussion take into account the opening lines which explain Rainsford's views on hunting, the General's comments on the weak and the strong, and the various emotional changes through which Rainsford goes during the actual hunt.) Can we conclude that the details on the duel have no relevance to the story?

8. What elements of contrast can you find between Rainsford and Whitney in the opening section? What purpose does this serve beyond merely enabling us to differentiate between the characters? (Does it, for example, add anything to our interest in the story? Does it help to characterize Rainsford? If so, why and how?)

9. What are Rainsford's traits? What are Zaroff's? Are both of these characters convincing? Why or why not? What passages or details are primarily used to establish character?

10. Are Connell's characters plausible? Has Rainsford any faults? Has Zaroff any admirable traits? (Consider, in particular, section one, which introduces us to Rainsford, and section three, which introduces us to Zaroff.)

11. How many examples of characterization by stock response can you find in "The Most Dangerous Game"?

12. How does Council use contrast to characterize his actors? (Consider, especially, the whole of section three and most of section four, where Zaroff is introduced and developed.) Which details, those which make for contrast or those which can be called stock traits seem more effectively to give you the feel, the *belief*, in the character? (For example, does the General's cruelty come through more convincingly in the revelation that he is a Cossack—a race notoriously cruel—or in his talking about hunting men with dogs and humming a musical comedy tune at the same moment?)

13. In "The Most Dangerous Game" there are a few places where motivation had to be handled skillfully and carefully if the story was to continue to win our acceptance. Comment on the following:

a. What are the basic motivating factors in the story? (Why does Zaroff live and act as he does? Why does Rainsford act as he does?)

b. The act which starts this story off, which gets Rainsford onto

Ship-Trap Island, is his leap onto the ship's rail in the second section of the story. Is this adequately (convincingly) motivated? Is it motivated at all? If so, how? If not, why not?

c. In Rainsford's first introduction to Zaroff, it suits the author's purpose *not* to have the General immediately see in Rainsford a potential quarry. Why? Is this logical in terms of Zaroff's character traits? Is the General's change in attitude, his decision to hunt Rainsford, adequately explained? Is it convincing? What details in sections three and four help to explain this change?

d. In the actual hunt itself can you detect any spots which seem to be weakly motivated, any acts or any refusals to act which seem to have been handled as they were for the sake of drawing out the story and in which character traits seem not to have been carefully enough considered? There are probably at least two such places.

e. Rainsford's action at the end of the story (his insistence on the duel) is probably the only logical decision he could have made, if we consider it in terms of both his original character traits and the things he has learned in the course of the story. Why?

The Lovely Leave

by DOROTHY PARKER

HER HUSBAND had telephoned her by long distance to tell her about the leave. She had not expected the call, and she had no words arranged. She threw away whole seconds explaining her surprise at hearing him, and reporting that it was raining hard in New York, and asking was it terribly hot where he was. He had stopped her to say, look, he didn't have time to talk long; and he had told her quickly that his squadron was to be moved to another field the next week and on the way he would have twenty-four hours' leave. It was difficult for her to hear. Behind his voice came a jagged chorus of young male voices, all crying the syllable "Hey!"

"Ah, don't hang up yet," she said. "Please. Let's talk another minute, just another——"

"Honey, I've got to go," he said. "The boys all want a crack at the telephone. See you a week from today, around five. 'By.'"

Then there had been a click as his receiver went back into place. Slowly she cradled her telephone, looking at it as if all frustrations and bewilderments and separations were its fault. Over it she had heard his voice, coming from far away. All the months, she had tried not to think of the great blank distance between them; and now that far voice made her know she had thought of nothing else. And his speech had been brisk and busy. And from back of him had come gay, wild young voices, voices he heard every day and she did not, voices of those who shared his new life. And he had heeded them and not her, when she begged for another minute. She took her hand off the telephone and held it away from her with the fingers spread stiffly apart, as if it had touched something horrid.

Then she told herself to stop her nonsense. If you looked for things to make you feel hurt and wretched and unnecessary, you were certain to find them, more easily each time, so easily, soon, that you did not even realize you had gone out searching. Women alone often developed into experts at the practice. She must never join their dismal league.

What was she dreary about, anyway? If he had only a little while to talk, then he had only a little while to talk, that was all. Certainly he had had time to tell her he was coming, to say that they would be together soon. And there she was, sitting scowling at the telephone, the kind, faithful telephone that had brought her the lovely news. She would see him in a week. Only a week. She began to feel, along her back and through her middle, little quivers of excitement, like tiny springs uncoiling into spirals.

There must be no waste to this leave. She thought of the preposterous shyness that had fallen upon her when he had come home before. It was the first time she had seen him in uniform. There he stood, in their little apartment, a dashing stranger in strange, dashing garments. Until he had gone into the army, they had never spent a night apart in all their marriage; and when she saw him, she dropped her eyes and twisted her handkerchief and could bring nothing but monosyllables from her throat. There must be no such squandering of minutes this time. There must be no such gangling diffidence to lop even an instant from their twenty-four hours of perfect union. Oh, Lord, *only* twenty-four hours. . . .

No. That was exactly the wrong thing to do; that was directly the wrong way to think. That was the way she had spoiled it before. Almost as soon as the shyness had left her and she felt she knew him again, she had begun counting. She was so filled with the desperate consciousness of the hours sliding away—only twelve more, only five, oh, dear God, only one left—that she had no room for gaiety and ease. She had spent the golden time in grudging its going.

She had been so woebegone of carriage, so sad and slow of word as the last hour went, that he, nervous under the pall, had spoken sharply and there had been a quarrel. When he had had to leave for his train, there were no clinging farewells, no tender words to keep. He had gone to the door and opened it and stood with it against his

shoulder while he shook out his flight cap and put it on, adjusting it with great care, one inch over the eye, one inch above the ear. She stood in the middle of the living-room, cool and silent, looking at him.

When his cap was precisely as it should be, he looked at her.

"Well," he said. He cleared his throat. "Guess I'd better get going."

"I'm sure you had," she said.

He studied his watch intently. "I'll just make it," he said.

"I'm sure you will," she said.

She turned, not with an actual shrug, only with the effect of one, and went to the window and looked out, as if casually remarking the weather. She heard the door close loudly and then the grind of the elevator.

When she knew he was gone, she was cool and still no longer. She ran about the little flat, striking her breast and sobbing.

Then she had two months to ponder what had happened, to see how she had wrought the ugly small ruin. She cried in the nights.

She need not brood over it any more. She had her lesson; she could forget how she had learned it. This new leave would be the one to remember, the one he and she would have, to keep forever. She was to have a second chance, another twenty-four hours with him. After all, that is no short while, you know; that is, if you do not think of it as a thin little row of hours dropping off like beads from a broken string. Think of it as a whole long day and a whole long night, shining and sweet, and you will be all but awed by your fortune. For how many people are there who have the memory of a whole long day and a whole long night, shining and sweet, to carry with them in their hearts until they die?

To keep something, you must take care of it. More, you must understand just what sort of care it requires. You must know the rules and abide by them. She could do that. She had been doing it all the months, in the writing of her letters to him. There had been rules to be learned in that matter, and the first of them was the hardest: never say to him what you want him to say to you. Never tell him how sadly you miss him, how it grows no better, how each day without him is sharper than the day before. Set down for him the gay happenings about you, bright little anecdotes, not invented, neces-

sarily, but attractively embellished. Do not bedevil him with the pinings of your faithful heart because he is your husband, your man, your love. For you are writing to none of these. You are writing to a soldier.

She knew those rules. She would have said that she would rather die, and she would have meant something very near the words, than send a letter of complaint or sadness or cold anger to her husband, a soldier far away, strained and weary from his work, giving all he had for the mighty cause. If in her letters she could be all he wanted her to be, how much easier to be it when they were together. Letters were difficult; every word had to be considered and chosen. When they were together again, when they could see and hear and touch each other, there would be no stiltedness. They would talk and laugh together. They would have tenderness and excitement. It would be as if they had never been separated. Perhaps they never had been. Perhaps a strange new life and strange empty miles and strange gay voices had no existence for two who were really one.

She had thought it out. She had learned the laws of what not to do. Now she could give herself up to the ecstasy of waiting his coming.

It was a fine week. She counted the time again, but now it was sweet to see it go. Two days after tomorrow, day after tomorrow, tomorrow. She lay awake in the dark, but it was a thrilling wakefulness. She went tall and straight by day, in pride in her warrior. On the street, she looked with amused pity at women who walked with men in civilian suits.

She bought a new dress; black—he liked black dresses—simple—he liked plain dresses—and so expensive that she would not think of its price. She charged it, and realized that for months to come she would tear up the bill without removing it from its envelope. All right—this was no time to think of months to come.

The day of the leave was a Saturday. She flushed with gratitude to the army for this coincidence, for after one o'clock, Saturday was her own. She went from her office without stopping for lunch, and bought perfume and toilet water and bath oil. She had a bit of each remaining in bottles on her dressing table and in her bathroom, but it made her feel desired and secure to have rich new stores of

them. She bought a nightgown, a delightful thing of soft chiffon patterned with little bouquets, with innocent puffs of sleeves and a Romney neck and a blue sash. It could never withstand laundering, a French cleaner must care for it—all right. She hurried home with it, to fold it in a satin sachet.

Then she went out again and bought the materials for cocktails and whiskies-and-sodas, shuddering at their cost. She went a dozen blocks to buy the kind of salted biscuits he liked with drinks. On the way back she passed a florist's shop in the window of which were displayed potted fuchsia. She made no attempt to resist them. They were too charming, with their delicate parchment-colored inverted cups and their graceful magenta bells. She bought six pots of them. Suppose she did without lunches the next week—all right.

When she was done with the little living-room, it looked gracious and gay. She ranged the pots of fuchsia along the window sill, she drew out a table and set it with glasses and bottles, she plumped the pillows and laid bright-covered magazines about invitingly. It was a place where someone entering eagerly would find delighted welcome.

Before she changed her dress, she telephoned downstairs to the man who tended both the switchboard and the elevator.

"Oh," she said, when he eventually answered. "Oh, I just want to say, when my husband, Lieutenant McVicker, comes, please send him right up."

There was no necessity for the call. The wearied attendant would have brought up anyone to any flat without the additional stress of a telephoned announcement. But she wanted to say the words. She wanted to say "my husband" and she wanted to say "lieutenant."

She sang, when she went into the bedroom to dress. She had a sweet, uncertain little voice that made the lusty song ludicrous.

*"Off we go, into the wild blue yonder,
Climbing high into the sun, sun, sun, sun.
Here they come; zooming to meet our thunder—
At 'em boys, give 'er the gun!"*

She kept singing, in a preoccupied way, while she gave close at-

tention to her lips and her eyelashes. Then she was silent and held her breath as she drew on the new dress. It was good to her. There was a reason for the cost of those perfectly plain black dresses. She stood looking at herself in the mirror with deep interest, as if she watched a chic unknown, the details of whose costume she sought to memorize.

As she stood there, the bell rang. It rang three times, loud and quick. He had come.

She gasped, and her hands fluttered over the dressing table. She seized the perfume atomizer and sprayed scent violently all about her head and shoulders, some of it reaching them. She had already perfumed herself, but she wanted another minute, another moment, anything. For it had taken her again—the outrageous shyness. She could not bring herself to go to the door and open it. She stood, shaking, and squirted perfume.

The bell rang three times loud and quick again, and then an endless peal.

"Oh, wait, can't you?" she cried. She threw down the atomizer, looked wildly around the room as if for a hiding-place, then sternly made herself tall and sought to control the shaking of her body. The shrill noise of the bell seemed to fill the flat and crowd the air out of it.

She started for the door. Before she reached it, she stopped, held her hands over her face, and prayed, "Oh, please let it be all right/* she whispered. "Please keep me from doing wrong things. Please let it be lovely."

Then she opened the door. The noise of the bell stopped. There he stood in the brightly lighted little hall. All the long sad nights, and all the strong and sensible vows. And now he had come. And there she stood.

"Well, for heaven's sake!" she said. "I had no idea there was anybody out here. Why, you were just as quiet as a little mouse."

"Well! Don't you ever open the door?" he said.

"Can't a woman have time to put on her shoes?" she said.

He came in and closed the door behind him. "Ah, darling," he said. He put his arms around her. She slid her cheek along his lips, touched her forehead to his shoulder, and broke away from him.

"Well!" she said. "Nice to see you, Lieutenant. How's the war?"

"How are you?" he said. "You look wonderful."

"Me?" she said. "Look at you."

He was well worth looking at. His fine clothes complemented his fine body. The precision of his appointments was absolute, yet he seemed to have no consciousness of it. He stood straight, and he moved with grace and assurance. His face was browned. It was thin, so thin that the bones showed under the cheeks and down the jaws; but there was no look of strain in it. It was smooth and serene and confident. He was the American officer, and there was no finer sight than he.

"Well!" she said. She made herself raise her eyes to his and found suddenly that it was no longer difficult. "Well, we can't just stand here saying 'well' at each other. Come on in and sit down. We've got a long time ahead of us—oh, Steve, isn't it wonderful! Hey. Didn't you bring a bag?"

"Why, you see," he said, and stopped. He slung his cap over onto the table among the bottles and glasses. "I left the bag at the station. I'm afraid I've got sort of rotten news, darling."

She kept her hands from flying to her breast.

"You—you're going overseas right away?" she said.

"Oh, Lord, no," he said. "Oh, no, no, no. I said this was rotten news. No. They've changed the orders, baby. They've taken back all leaves. We're to go right on to the new field. I've got to get a train at six-ten."

She sat down on the sofa. She wanted to cry; not silently with slow crystal tears, but with wide mouth and smeared face. She wanted to throw herself stomach-down on the floor, and kick and scream, and go limp if anyone tried to lift her.

"I think that's awful," she said. "I think that's just filthy."

"I know," he said. "But there's nothing to do about it. This is the army, Mrs. Jones."

"Couldn't you have said something?" she said. "Couldn't you have told them you've had only one leave in six months? Couldn't you have said all the chance your wife had to see you again was just this poor little twenty-four hours? Couldn't you have explained what it meant to her? Couldn't you?"

"Come on, now, Mimi," he said. "There's a war on."

"I'm sorry," she said. "I was sorry as soon as I'd said it. I was sorry while I was saying it. But—oh, it's so hard!"

"It's not easy for anybody," he said. "You don't know how the boys were looking forward to their leaves."

"Oh, I don't give a damn about the boys!" she said.

"That's the spirit that'll win for our side," he said. He sat down in the biggest chair, stretched his legs and crossed his ankles.

"You don't care about anything but those pilots," she said.

"Look, Mimi," he said. "We haven't got time to do this. We haven't got time to get into a fight and say a lot of things we don't mean. Everything's all—all speeded up, now. There's no time left (or this.)"

"Oh, I know," she said. "Oh, Steve, don't I know!"

She went over and sat on the arm of his chair and buried her face in his shoulder.

"This is more like it," he said. "I've kept thinking about this." She nodded against his blouse.

"If you knew what it was to sit in a decent chair again," he said.

She sat up. "Oh," she said. "It's the chair. I'm so glad you like it."

"They've got the worst chairs you ever saw, in the pilots' room," he said. "A lot of busted-down old rockers—honestly, rockers—that big-hearted patriots contributed, to get them out of the attic. If they haven't better furniture at the new field, I'm going to do something about it, even if I have to buy the stuff myself."

"I certainly would, if I were you," she said. "I'd go without food and clothing and laundry, so the boys would be happy sitting down. I wouldn't even save out enough for air mail stamps, to write to my wife once in a while."

She rose and moved about the room.

"Mimi, what's the matter with you?" he said. "Are you—are you jealous of the pilots?"

She counted as far as eight, to herself. Then she turned and smiled at him.

"Why—I guess I am—" she said. "I guess that's just what I must be. Not only of the pilots. Of the whole air corps. Of the whole Army of the United States."

"You're wonderful," he said.

"You see," she said with care, "you have a whole new life—I have half an old one. Your life is so far away from mine, I don't see how they're ever going to come back together."

"That's nonsense," he said.

"No, please wait," she said. "I get strained and—and frightened, I guess, and I say things I could cut my throat for saying. But you know what I really feel about you. I'm so proud of you I can't find words for it. I know you're doing the most important thing in the world, maybe the only important thing in the world. Only—oh, Steve, I wish to heaven you didn't love doing it so much!"

"Listen," he said.

"No," she said. "You mustn't interrupt a lady. It's unbecoming an officer, like carrying packages in the street. I'm just trying to tell you a little about how I feel. I can't get used to being so completely left out. You don't wonder what I do, you don't want to find out what's in my head—why, you never even ask me how I am!"

"I do so!" he said. "I asked you how you were the minute I came in."

"That was white of you," she said.

"Oh, for heaven's sake!" he said. "I didn't have to ask you. I could see how you look. You look wonderful. I told you that."

She smiled at him. "Yes, you did, didn't you?" she said. "And you sounded as if you meant it. Do you really like my dress?"

"Oh, yes," he said. "I always liked that dress on you."

It was as if she turned to wood. "This dress," she said, enunciating with insulting distinctness, "is brand-new. I have never had it on before in my life. In case you are interested, I bought it especially for this occasion."

"I'm sorry, honey," he said. "Oh, sure, now I see it's not the other one at all. I think it's great. I like you in black."

"At moments like this," she said, "I almost wish I were in it for another reason."

"Stop it," he said. "Sit down and tell me about yourself. What have you been doing?"

"Oh, nothing," she said.

"How's the office?" he said.

"Dull," she said. "Dull as mud."

"Who have you seen?" he said.

"Oh, nobody," she said.

"Well, what do you *do*?" he said.

"In the evenings?" she said. "Oh, I sit here and knit and read detective stories that it turns out I've read before."

"I think that's all wrong of you," he said. "I think it's asinine to sit here alone, moping. That doesn't do any good to anybody. Why don't you go out more?"

"I hate to go out with just women," she said.

"Well, why do you have to?" he said. "Ralph's in town, isn't he? And John and Bill and Gerald. Why don't you go out with them? You're silly not to."

"It hadn't occurred to me," she said, "that it was silly to keep faithful to one's husband."

"Isn't that taking rather a jump?" he said. "It's possible to go to dinner with a man and stay this side adultery. And don't use words like 'one's.' You're awful when you're elegant."

"I know," she said. "I never have any luck when I try. No. You're the one that's awful, Steve. You really are. I'm trying to show you a glimpse of my heart, to tell you how it feels when you're gone, how I don't want to be with anyone if I can't be with you. And all you say is, I'm not doing any good to anybody. That'll be nice to think of when you go. You don't know what it's like for me here alone. You just don't know."

"Yes, I do," he said. "I know, Mimi." He reached for a cigarette on the little table beside him, and the bright magazine by the cigarette-box caught his eye. "Hey, is this this week's? I haven't seen it yet." He glanced through the early pages.

"Go ahead and read if you want to," she said. "Don't let me disturb you."

"I'm not reading," he said. He put down the magazine. "You see, I don't know what to say, when you start talking about showing me glimpses of your heart, and all that. I know. I know you must be having a rotten time. But aren't you feeling fairly sorry for yourself?"

"If *I'm* not," she said, "who would be?"

"What do you want anyone to be sorry for you for?" he said. "You'd be all right if you'd stop sitting around alone. I'd like to think of you having a good time while I'm away."

She went over to him and kissed him on the forehead.

"Lieutenant," she said, "you are a far nobler character than I am. Either that," she said, "or there is something else back of this."

"Oh, shut up," he said. He pulled her down to him and held her there. She seemed to melt against him, and stayed there, still.

Then she felt him take his left arm from around her and felt his head raised from its place against hers. She looked up at him. He was craning over her shoulder, endeavoring to see his wrist watch.

"Oh, now, really!" she said. She put her hands against his chest and pushed herself vigorously away from him.

"It goes so quickly," he said softly, with his eyes on his watch. "We've—we've only a little while, darling."

She melted again. "Oh, Steve," she whispered. "Oh, dearest."

"I do want to take a bath," he said. "Get up, will you, baby?"

She got right up. "You're going to take a bath?" she said.

"Yes," he said. "You don't mind, do you?"

"Oh, not in the least," she said. "I'm sure you'll enjoy it. It's one of the pleasantest ways of killing time, I always think."

"You know how you feel after a long ride on a train," he said.

"Oh, surely," she said.

He rose and went into the bedroom. "I'll hurry up," he called back to her.

"Why?" she said.

Then she had a moment to consider herself. She went into the bedroom after him, sweet with renewed resolve. He had hung his blouse and necktie neatly over a chair and he was unbuttoning his shirt. As she came in, he took it off. She looked at the beautiful brown triangle of his back. She would do anything for him, anything in the world.

"I—I'll go run your bath water," she said. She went into the bathroom, turned on the faucets of the tub, and set the towels and mat ready. When she came back into the bedroom he was just entering

it from the living-room, naked. In his hand he carried the bright magazine he had glanced at before. She stopped short.

"Oh," she said. "You're planning to read in the tub?"

"If you knew how I'd been looking forward to this!" he said. "Boy, a hot bath in a tub! We haven't got anything but showers, and when you take a shower, there's a hundred boys waiting, yelling at you to hurry up and get out."

"I suppose they can't bear being parted from you," she said.

He smiled at her. "See you in a couple of minutes," he said, and went on into the bathroom and closed the door. She heard the slow slip and slide of water as he laid himself in the tub.

She stood just as she was. The room was lively with the perfume she had sprayed, too present, too insistent. Her eyes went to the bureau drawer where lay, wrapped in soft fragrance, the nightgown with the little bouquets and the Romney neck. She went over to the bathroom door, drew back her right foot, and kicked the base of the door so savagely that the whole frame shook.

"What, dear?" he called. "Want something?"

"Oh, nothing," she said. "Nothing whatever. I've got everything any woman could possibly want, haven't I?"

"What?" he called. "I can't hear you, honey."

"Nothing," she screamed.

She went into the living-room. She stood, breathing heavily, her finger nails scarring her palms, as she looked at the fuchsia blossoms, with their dirty parchment-colored cups, their vulgar magenta bells.

Her breath was quiet and her hands relaxed when he came into the living-room again. He had on his trousers and shirt, and his necktie was admirably knotted. He carried his belt. She turned to him. There were things she had meant to say, but she could do nothing but smile at him, when she saw him. Her heart turned liquid in her breast.

His brow was puckered. "Look, darling," he said. "Have you got any brass polish?"

"Why, no," she said. "We haven't even got any brass."

"Well, have you any nail polish—the colorless kind? A lot of the boys use that."

"I'm sure it must look adorable on them," she said. "No. I haven't anything but rose-colored polish. Would that be of any use to you, heaven forbid?"

"No," he said, and he seemed worried. "Red wouldn't be any good at all. Hell, I don't suppose you've got a Blitz Cloth, have you? Or a Shine-O?"

"If I had the faintest idea what you were talking about," she said, "I might be better company for you."

He held the belt out toward her. "I want to shine my buckle," he said.

"Oh ... my ... dear . . . sweet . . . gentle . . . Lord," she said. "We've got about ten minutes left, and you want to shine your belt buckle."

"I don't like to report to a new C.O. with a dull belt buckle," he said.

"It was bright enough for you to report to your wife in, wasn't it?" she said.

"Oh, stop that," he said. "You just won't understand, that's all."

"It isn't that I won't understand," she said. "It's that I can't remember. I haven't been with a Boy Scout for so long."

He looked at her. "You're being great, aren't you?" he said. He looked around the room. "There must be a cloth around somewhere—oh, this will do." He caught up a pretty little cocktail napkin from the table of untouched bottles and glasses, sat down with his belt laid over his knees, and rubbed at the buckle.

She watched him for a moment, then rushed over to him and grasped his arm.

"Please," she said. "Please, I didn't mean it, Steve."

"Please let me do this, will you?" he said. He wrenched his arm from her hand and went on with his polishing.

"You tell me I won't understand!" she cried. "You won't understand anything about anybody else. Except those crazy pilots."

"They're all right!" he said. "They're fine kids. They're going to make great fighters." He went on rubbing at his buckle.

"Oh, I know it!" she said. "You know I know it. I don't mean k when I say things against them. How would I dare to mean it?"

They're risking their lives and their sight and their sanity, they're giving everything for——"

"Don't do that kind of talk, will you?" he said. He rubbed the buckle.

"I'm not doing any kind of talk!" she said. "I'm trying to tell you something. Just because you've got on that pretty suit, you think you should never hear anything serious, never anything sad or wretched or disagreeable. You make me sick, that's what you do! I know, I know—I'm not trying to take anything away from you, I realize what you're doing, I told you what I think of it. Don't, for heaven's sake, think I'm mean enough to grudge you any happiness and excitement you can get out of it. I know it's hard for you. But it's never lonely, that's all I mean. You have companionships no—no wife can ever give you. I suppose it's the sense of hurry, maybe, the consciousness of living on borrowed time, the—the knowledge of what you're all going into together that makes the comradeship of men in war so firm, so fast. But won't you please try to understand how I feel? Won't you understand that it comes out of bewilderment and disruption and—and being frightened, I guess? Won't you understand what makes me do what I do, when I hate myself while I'm doing it? Won't you please understand? Darling, won't you please?"

He laid down the little napkin. "I can't go through this kind of thing, Mimi," he said. "Neither can you." He looked at his watch. "Hey, it's time for me to go."

She stood tall and stiff. "I'm sure it is," she said.

"I'd better put on my blouse," he said.

"You might as well," she said.

He rose, wove his belt through the loops of his trousers, and went into the bedroom. She went over to the window and stood looking out, as if casually remarking the weather.

She heard him come back into the room, but she did not turn around. She heard his steps stop, knew he was standing there.

"Mimi," he said.

She turned toward him, her shoulders back, her chin high, cool, regal. Then she saw his eyes. They were no longer bright and gay

and confident. Their blue was misty and they looked troubled; they looked at her as if they pleaded with her.

"Look, Mimi," he said, "do you think I want to do this? Do you think I want to be away from you? Do you think that this is what I thought I'd be doing now? In the years—well, in the years when we ought to be together."

He stopped. Then he spoke again, but with difficulty. "I can't talk about it. I can't even think about it—because if I did I couldn't do my job. But just because I don't talk about it doesn't mean I want to be doing what I'm doing. I want to be with you, Mimi. That's where I belong. You know that, darling. Don't you?"

He held his arms open to her. She ran to them. This time, she did not slide her cheek along his lips.

When he had gone, she stood a moment by the fuchsia plants, touching delicately, tenderly, the enchanting parchment-colored caps, the exquisite magenta bells.

The telephone rang. She answered it, to hear a friend of hers inquiring about Steve, asking how he looked and how he was, urging that he come to the telephone and say hello to her.

"He's gone," she said. "All their leaves were canceled. He wasn't here an hour."

The friend cried sympathy. It was a shame, it was simply awful, it was absolutely terrible.

"No, don't say that," she said. "I know it wasn't very much time. But oh, it was lovely!"

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. The introduction to "The Lovely Leave" ends with the entrance of the girl's husband. What background details are given in the introduction and what is their relationship to the story? What do you know about the character of the girl? Are there contradictions in her character? If so, are they reconciled? What is her exact feeling for her husband?

2. What is the emphasis in the introduction—character or emotion? Why?

3. How are the background material, the characterization, and the

emotional attitude of the girl presented? Is she a round or a flat character? Do we accept her as a real person? If so, why?

4. "The Lovely Leave" is primarily a character story. What plot devices does it have in common with "The Most Dangerous Game"? Is there a strong story interest? Suspense? In what ways are Dorothy Parker's methods of arousing and maintaining story interest similar to Council's? In what ways do they differ?

5. What exactly are the character traits of the Lieutenant? Does the conflict between the girl and her husband come from character traits or from situation? Discuss.

6. The girl here is characterized mainly by thoughts and by actions. How is the Lieutenant characterized? Why?

7. How and where does Dorothy Parker motivate the husband's actions during the leave? Is the motivation adequate? Discuss, considering his character traits, his attitude toward the army, and his explanation to his wife just before he leaves.

8. Exactly what does the wife mean when she says the leave was lovely? Does this give us a clue as to the meaning of the story?

Ida M'Toy^{*}

by EUDORA WELTY

FOR ONE human being to point out another as "unforgettable" seems a trifle condescending, and in the ideal world we would all keep well aware of each other, but there are nevertheless a few persons one meets who are as inescapable of notice as skyrockets, it may be because like skyrockets they are radiant with their own substance and shower it about regardlessly. Ida M'Toy, an old Negro woman, for a long time a midwife in my little Mississippi town and for another long time a dealer in second-hand clothes in the same place, has been a skyrocket as far back as most people remember. Or, rather, she is a kind of meteor (for she is not ephemeral, only sudden and startling). Her ways seem on a path of their own without regard to any course of ours and of a somewhat wider circuit; she will probably leave a glow behind and return in the far future on some other lap of her careening through all our duller and steadier bodies. She herself deals with the rest of us in this mighty and spacious way, calling in allegories and the elements, so it is owing to her nature that I may speak a little grandly.

The slave traders of England and New England, when they went capturing, took away the most royal of Africans along with their own slaves, and I have not much doubt that Ida has come down from a race of tall black queens. I wish I might have seen her when she was young. She has sharp clever features, light-filled black eyes, arched nostrils, and fine thin mobile lips, and her hair, gray now, springs like a wild kind of diadem from the widow's peak over her forehead. Her voice is indescribable but it is a constant part of her

^{*} The author of this piece, Eudora Welty, regards it as a sketch and *not* as a short story.

presence and is filled with invocation. She never speaks lightly of any person or thing, but she flings out her arm and points at something and begins, "O, precious, I'm telling you to look at that—*look* at it! " and then she invokes about it, and tolerates no interruptions. I have heard long chants and utterances on the origin and history and destination of the smallest thing, any article or object her eye lights on; a bit of candle stuck on the mantelpiece will set her off, as if its little fire had ignited her whole mind. She invokes what she wishes to invoke and she has in all ways something of the seer about her. She wields a control over great numbers of her race by this power, which has an integrity that I believe nothing could break, and which sets her up, aloof and triumphant, above the rest. She is inspired and they are not. Maybe off by themselves they could be inspired, but nobody else could be inspired in the same room with Ida, it would be too crowded.

Ida is not a poor old woman, she is a rich old woman. She accepts it that she is held in envy as well as respect, but it is only another kind of tribute as far as she is concerned, and she is not at all prouder of being rich or of having been married in the home of a white lady, "in her bay window," than she is of being very wise. She expects to be gaped at, but she is not vain.

Ida's life has been divided in two (it is, in many ways, eloquent of duality); but there is a thread that runs from one part into the other, and to trace this connection between delivering the child and clothing the man is an interesting speculation. Moreover, it has some excuse, for Ida herself helps it along by a wild and curious kind of talk that sashays from one part to the other and sounds to some of her customers like "ranting and raving." It is my belief that if Ida had not been a midwife she would not be the same kind of second-hand clothes dealer she is. Midwifery set her off, it gave her a hand in the mysteries, and she will never let go that flying hold merely because she is engaged in something else. An ex-chemist would run a second-hand clothes business with extra touches—a reminiscence of glitter would cling to the garments he sold, and it is the same with Ida. So it is well when you meet her to think what she was once.

Ida's memory goes back to her beginnings, when she was, she says,

the first practical nurse in Jackson at the age of twenty-one, and she makes the past sound very dark and far back. She thanks God, she says, that today Capitol Street is not just three planks to walk on and is the prettiest place on earth, but that "people white and black is too high and don't they know Ida seen them when they carried a little tin coal-oil lamp that wasn't any bigger than their little fingers?" Ida speaks of herself in the third person and in indirect discourse often and especially when she says something good of herself or something of herself long ago. She will intone, 'Ida say that she was good to the poor white people as she was to the rich, as she made a bargain to nurse a poor white lady in obstetrical case for a peck of peas. Ida said no, she couldn't see her suffer, and therefore a peck of black-eyed peas would be sufficient." She wants all she says to be listened to with the whole attention, and declares she does wish it were all written down. "Let her keep it straight, darling, if she remember Ida's true words, the angels will know it and be waiting around the throne for her." But Ida's true words are many and strange. When she talks about the old days it is almost like a story of combat against evil. "Ida fitted a duel from twenty-one to fifty-six, and then they operated on her right side and she was never able to stoop down to the floor again. She was never like those young devils, that pace around in those white shoes and those white clothes and up and down the streets of an evening while their patient is calling for a drink of water down poor parched throat—though I wore those white shoes and those white clothes. Only, my heart was in another direction."

Ida said, "I was nursing ever since there was a big road in Jackson. There was only nine doctors, and they were the best in all the world, all nine, right here in Jackson, but they were weak in finance. There wasn't nary hospital nowhere—there wasn't nary brick in Jackson, not one brick, no brick walk, no brick store, no brick nothing-else. There wasn't no Old Ladies' Home at the end of the street, there wasn't no stopping place but the country. Town was as black as tar come night, and praise God they finally put some gas in bottles on the corners. There wasn't no such thing in the world as a nice buggy. Never heard tell of a cotton mattress, but tore up shucks and see the bed, so high, and the hay pillow stand up so beautiful!

Now they got all this electric light and other electricity. Can't do nothing without the clickety-click. And bless God they fly just like buzzards up in the air, but Ida don't intend to ride till she ride to Glory."

In those early days when Jackson seems to have been a Slough of Despond with pestilence sticking out its head in the nights as black as tar, Ida was not only a midwife, she nursed all diseases. "It was the yellow fever first, and the next after that was the worst pox that there ever was in this world—it would kill you then, in my girl-clays, six or seven a day. They had to stretch a rope across the road to keep the poor sick ones apart and many's the day I've et at the rope and carried the food back to the ones suffering." Ida remembers epidemics as major combats in which she was a kind of giant-killer. She nursed through influenza "six at a blow, until the doctor told me if I didn't quit nursing by sixes I would drop dead in the room." She says the doctors wrote her a recommendation as long as where she will show you up her arm, saying that when they called, it never was too cold and it never was too hot for Ida to go, and that the whole town would bow and say Amen, from the Jews on. "Bless my patients," she says, "nary one ever did die under my nursing, though plenty were sick enough to die. Hut laugh here," she directs. "My husband stayed sick on me twenty-one years and cost me one thousand whole dollars, but you can't nurse the heart to do no good, and in the night he fallen asleep and left me a widow, and I am a widow still."

When Ida found she could no longer stoop to the floor she stopped being a midwife and began selling clothes. She was successful at once in that too, for there is a natural flowering-ground for the second-hand clothes business in the small American community where the richest people are only a little richer than the poor people and the poorest have ways to save pride and not starve or go naked. In Jackson the most respectable matron, if she would like a little extra cash to buy a new camellia bush or take the excursion to New Orleans, can run over to Ida's with her husband's other suit and Ida will sell it to a customer as a bargain at \$5 and collect 25% for herself, and everybody except the husband ("Right off my back! Perfectly good suit!") will be satisfied.

It could be a grubby enough little business in actual fact, but Ida is not a grubby person, and in her handling it has become an affair of imagination and, to my notion, an expression of a whole attitude of life as integrated as an art or a philosophy.

Ida's store is her house, a white-painted little house with a porch across the front, a picket-fence around, and the dooryard planted to capacity in big flowers. Inside, it is a phantasmagoria of garments. Every room except the kitchen is hung with dresses or suits (the sexes are segregated) three and four times around the walls, for the turnover is large and unpredictable, though not always rapid—people have to save up or wait for cotton-money. She has assumed all the ceremonies of Business and employs its practices and its terms to a point within sight of madness. She puts on a show of logic and executive order before which the customer is supposed to quail; sometimes I think her customers take on worth with her merely as witnesses of the miracles of her workings, though that is unfair. Her house turns year by year into a better labyrinth, more inescapable, and she delights in its complication of aisles and curtains and its mystery of closed doors with little signs on ruled paper, "Nobody can come in here." Some day some little colored girl is goinir to tjct lost in Ida's house. The richer she gets, the more "departments" she builds and adds on to the house, and each one is named for the color of its walls, the pink department, or the blue. Even now her side yard is filled with miscellaneous doors, glass panes, planks, and little stacks of bricks that she is accumulating for a new green department she says she will build in 1943.

Her cupboards and drawers arc a progressive series of hiding places, which is her interpretation of the filing system. She hides trinkets of mysterious importance or bits of paper filled with abbreviated information; she does not hide money, however, and she tells how much she has on hand (\$660.60 is the latest figure), and her life insurance policy is nailed up on the wall over the mantel. Everybody knows her to be an old woman living with only a small grandchild to guard her in a house full of cash money, and yet she has not been murdered. She never will be. I have wondered what Ida would do if she saw a burglar coming after her money. I am convinced that she has no axe or gun ready for him, but a flow of

words will be unstoppered that will put the fear of God in him for life; and I think the would-be burglars have the same suspicion, and will continue to keep away, not wanting so much fear of God as that.

She keeps as strict and full a ledger of transaction as the Book of Judgment, and in as enthusiastic and exalted a spirit of accuracy as an angel book-keeper should have. The only trouble is, it is almost impossible to find in it what she is looking for—but perhaps there will be confusion on Doomsday too. The book, a great black one, which she now has little William, her grandson, to hold for her while she consults it, (and he will kneel under it like a little mural figure) covers a period of 26 years, concerns hundreds of people, "white and black," and innumerable transactions, all noted down in a strange code full of flourishes, for Ida properly considers all she does confidential. "You could find anything in the world in this book," she says reverently, then slamming it shut in your face, "if you turn enough pages and go in the right direction. Nothing in here is wrong," she says. Loose slips are always flying out of the ledger like notes in the Sybil's book, and she sets William flying to chase them and get them inside again.

She writes her own descriptions of the garments brought to her to sell, and a lady giving over her finest white dress of last summer must not be surprised, if she looks over Ida's shoulder, to see her pen the words, "Rally Day, \$2.00" or note down her best spring straw hat as "Tom Boy, 75C." The customer might be right, but Ida does not ever ask the customer. After a moment of concentration Ida goes and hangs the object for sale on the wall in the room of her choice, and a tag is pinned to the sleeve, saying simply, "Mrs. So-and-So." Accuracy is a passion with Ida, and so is her belief in her own conscience, and I do not know what it must have cost her to pin a tag on one poor sagging dress that has hung there year in, year out, saying "Don't know who this is."

She bears respect to clothes in the same degree as she bears it to the people from whose backs they come; she treats them like these people, until indeed it seems that dignity is in them, shapeless and even ridiculous as they have seemed at first; she gives them the space on the wall and the room in the house that correspond to the honor in which she holds the human beings, and she even speaks in

the proper tone of voice when she is in the room with them. They hang at human height from the hangers on the walls, the brighter and more important ones in front and on top. With the most serene impartiality she makes up her mind about client and clothes, and she has been known to say, "For God's sake take it back. Wouldn't a man white or black wear that suit out of here."

There is a magnificence in Ida's business, an extent and an influence at which she hints without ceasing, that undoubtedly inspire the poorest or idlest customer with almost an anxiety to buy. It is almost like an appeasement, and the one that goes off with nothing must feel mean, foolish, and naked indeed, naked to scorn. "I clothe them," she says, "from Jackson to Vicksburg, Meridian to Jackson, Big Black to 'Azoo, Memphis to New Orleans—Clinton! Bolton! Edwards! Bovina! Pocahontas! Flora! Benton! 'Azoo City! Everywhere. There ain't nobody hasn't come to Ida, or sooner or later will come."

If no one else had thought of the second-hand clothes business, Ida would have originated it, for she did originate it as far as she is concerned; and likewise I am forced to believe that if there had never been any midwives in the world Ida would have invented midwifery, so ingenious and delicate-handed and wise she is, and sure of her natural right to take charge. She loves transformation and bringing things about, she simply cannot resist it. The Negro midwives of this state have a kind of organization these days and lesser powers, they do certain things in certain book-specified ways, and all memorize and sing at meetings a song about "First we put—Drops in their eyes," but in Ida's day a midwife was a lone person, invested with the whole charge of life; she had to draw upon her own resources and imagination. Ida's constant gestures today still involve a dramatic out-thrust of the right hand, and let any prominent names be mentioned (and she mentions them) and she will fling out her palm and cry into the conversation, "Born in this hand!" "Four hundred little white babies,—or more," she says. "My God, I was bringing them all the time. I got 'em everywhere—doctors, lawyers, school teachers, and preachers, married ladies." She has been in the clothes business for twenty-six years, but she was a midwife for thirty-five.

She herself has been married, twice, and by her first husband she had one son, "The only one I ever did have and I want his name written down: Julius Knight." Her mother (before she died) and her brothers lived out in the country, and only one little grandson has lived with her for a long time. Her husband Braddie M'Toy, whom she called Toy, is remembered collecting and delivering clothes in a wagon when he was young, and was to be seen always on some street if not another, moving very slowly on account of his heart.

Now without Toy, Ida uses a telephone down the road and a kind of de luxe grapevine service to rouse up her clients and customers. Anybody who is asked to by Ida feels a duty to phone any stranger for her and "tell them for God's sake to come get their money and bring the change." Strange Negroes call people at dawn, giving news of a sale, white ladies call unknown white ladies, notes on small rolls or scraps of paper folded like doctors' "powders" are conscientiously delivered, and the whole town contrives in her own spirit of emergency to keep Ida's messages on their way. Ida takes 25% of the sales price and if she sells your dress for a dollar you have to take her a quarter when you go, or come back another time, for she will not make change for anybody. She will not violate her system of book-keeping any more than she would violate her code of ethics or her belief in God—down to the smallest thing all is absolute in Ida's sight.

Whether it is due to a savage ancestry or a philosophical turn of mind, Ida finds all Ornament a wonderful and appropriate thing, the proper materializing of the rejoicing or sorrowing soul. I believe she holds Ornament next to birth and somehow kin to it. She despises a drab color and welcomes bright clothes with a queenly and triumphant smile, as if she acknowledges the bold brave heart that chose that. Inferior color means inferior spirit, and an inferior person should not hope to get or spend more than four-bits for an outfit. She dearly loves a dress that is at once identifiable as either rich mourning or "Rally-day"—the symbolic and celebrating kind appeal to her inevitably over the warm or the serviceable, and she will ask and (by oratory) get the finest prices for rather useless but splendid garments. "Girl, you buy this spangle-dress," she says

to a customer, and the girl buys it and puts it on and shines. Ida's scale of prices would make a graph showing precisely the rise from her condemnation of the subdued and nondescript to her acclaim of the bright and glorious. Her customers, poverty-bound little cooks and maids and cotton-choppers, go away feeling that they have turned into queens. Ida has put second-hand clothes on their backs and, with all the abrupt bullying of a busy fairy, wrapped them in some glowing raiment of illusion, set them in a whirl of bedazzlement; and they skitter out with shining eyes and empty hands, with every hoarded penny spent. Ida has put them in inner spangles and she has taken an actual warm moist fifty-cent piece out of their palms, and in that world both items exchanged are precious above price, fifty cents being as miraculous as glory. With something second-hand, worn, yet finer than could ever be bought new, she brings to them a perfection in her own eyes and in theirs. She dresses them up and turns them with a little ceremonial jerk towards the mirror, and a magic must hang over the green cracked glass, for (I have seen it happen a hundred times) the glances that go into its surface begin to shine with a pride that could only be a kind of enchantment. It is nice on Saturdays to pass in front of Ida's house on the edge of town and see the customers emerge. With some little flash of scarf, some extra glitter of trimming for which they have paid dearly, dressed like some visions in Ida's speculations on the world, glorious or menial as befits their birth, merit, and willingness, but all rampant and somehow fulfilled by this last touch of costume as though they have been tapped by a spirit when Ida's thimble rapped them, they float dizzily down the steps and through the flowers out the gate; and you could not help thinking of the phrase "going out into the world," as if Ida had just birthed them anew.

I used to think she must be, a little, the cross between a transcendentalist and a witch, with the happiness and kind of self-wonder that this combination must enjoy. They say that all things we write could be; and sometimes in amazement I wonder if a tiny spark of the wonderful Philosopher of Clothes, Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, could be flashing for an instant, and somewhat barbarically, in the wild and enthusiastic spirit of this old black woman. Her life

like his is proudly emblematic—she herself being the first to see her place in the world. It is she literally who clothes her entire world, as far and wide as she knows—a hard-worked midwife grown old, with a memory like a mill turning through it all the lives that were born in her hand or have passed through her door.

When she stalks about, alternately clapping her hand over her forehead and flinging out her palm and muttering "Born in this hand!" as she is likely to do when some lady of the old days comes bringing a dress to sell, you cannot help believing that she sees them all, her children and her customers, in the double way, naked and clothed, young and then old, with love and with contempt, with open arms or with a push to bar the door. She is moody now, if she has not always been, and sees her customers as a procession of sweet supplicant spirits that she has birthed, who have returned to her side, and again sometimes as a bunch of scarecrows or even changelings, that she wishes were well gone out of sight. "They would steal from their own mother," she says, and while she is pinning up some purchase in a newspaper and the customer is still counting out the pennies, she will shout in a deep voice to the grandchild that flutters around like a little blackbird, "Hold the door, William."

I have never caught Ida doing anything except selling clothes or holding forth on her meditations, but she has a fine garden. "If you want to carry me something I really like," she will say, bringing up the subject first, "carry me dallion potatoes (dahlia bulbs) *first*, and old newspapers second." Ida has the green finger from her mother, and she says, "You're never going to see any flowers prettier than these right here." She adores giving flowers away; under your protest she will cut every one in the garden, every red and white rose on the trellis, which is a wooden sunset with painted rays, the blossoms with little two-inch stems the way a child cuts them, and distribute them among all present and those passing in the road. She is full of all the wild humors and extravagances of the godlike toward this entire town and its environs. Sometimes, owing to her superior wisdom, she is a little malign, but much oftener she will become excruciatingly tender, holding, as if in some responsibility toward all the little ones of the world, the entire population to her great black cameoed breast. Then she will begin to call people "It." "It's all hot

and tired, it is, coming so far to see Ida. Ah, take these beautiful flowers Ida grew with her own hand, *that's* what it would like. Put 'em in its bedroom," and she presses forward all the flowers she has cut and then, not content, a bouquet dripping from a vase, one of a kind of everything, all into your arms.

She loves music too, and in her house she has one room, also hung with clothes, called the music room. "I got all the music in the world in here," she used to say, jabbing a linger at a silent radio and an old gramophone shut up tight, "but what's the use of letting those contrivances run when you can make your own music?" And ignoring the humble customers waiting she would fling down at the old pump-organ in the corner and tear into a frenzy of chords. "I make my own!" she would shout into the turmoil. She would send for little William, with a voice like a little bird's, and he knew how to sing with her, though he would give out. "Bass, William!" she would shout, and in his tiny treble he sang bass, bravely.

When Ida speaks of her mother it is in a strange kind of pity, a tender amazement. She says she knew when her mother was going to die, and with her deep feeling for events and commemorations, she gave her a fine big party. Ida would no more shrink from doing anything the grand way than she would shrink from other demands upon her greatness. "Hush now," she told me, "don't say a word while I tell you this. All that day long I was cooking dinner between niggers. I had: four turkeys, four hens, four geese, four hams, red cake, white cake, chocolate cake, caramel cake, every color cake known. The table reached from the front door to the ice box. I had all the lights burning up electricity, and all the flowers cut. I had the plates changed seven times, and three waiters from the hotel. I'd got Mama a partner. Mama was eighty years old and I got her another old lady eighty years old to march with. I had everybody come. All her children—one son, the big shot, came all the way from Detroit, riding in a train, to be at Mama's grand dinner. We had somebody play 'Silent Night' and march music to follow later. And there was Mama: look at Mama! Mama loved powder. Mama had on a little old-fashioned hat, but she wouldn't take it off—had nice hair, too. Mama did all right for the march, she marched all right, and sat down on time at the right place at the head of the table, but she

wouldn't take off her hat. So the waiters, they served the chicken soup first, and Mama says, 'Where my coffee? Bring on turnip and cornbread. Didn't you make a blackberry pie?' I said, 'Mama, you don't eat coffee first.' But she said, 'Where my coffee? Bring on turnip and cornbread. Didn't you make a blackberry pie? What's the matter with you?' Everything was so fine, you know. It took her two big sons, one on each side, to quiet her, that's the way Mama acted!" And Ida ended the story laughing and crying. It was plain that there was one person who had no recognition of Ida's grandeur and high place in the world, and who had never yielded at all to the glamour as others did. It was a cruelty for Ida, but perhaps all vision has lived in the house with cruelty.

Nowadays, she is carried to such heights of business and power, and its paraphernalia crowds her so, that she is overcome with herself, and suddenly gives way to the magnitude of it all. A kind of chaos comes over her. Now and then she falls down in a trance and stays "dead as that chair for three days." White doctors love her and by a little struggle take care of her. Ida bears with them. "They took my appendix," she will say. "Well, they took my teeth." She says she has a paralyzed heel, though it is hard to see how she can tell—perhaps like Achilles she feels that her end is coming by entering that way. "The doctor told me I got to rest until 1945," she declares, with a lifted hand warding you off. "Rest! Rest! Rest! I must rest." If a step is heard on the front porch she instantly cries warning from within the house, "Don't set your heels down! When you speak to me, whisper!" When a lady that was a stranger came to see her, Ida appeared, but said in haste, "Don't tell me your name, for I'm resting my mind. The doctors don't want me to have any more people in my head than I got already." Now on Saturdays if a dusty battered car full of customers from across the cottonfields draws up, one by one all the shades in the house are yanked down. Ida wishes to see no one, she wishes to sell nothing.

Perhaps the truth is that she has expended herself to excess and now suffers with a corresponding emptiness that she does not want anyone to see. She can show you the track of the pain it gives her: her finger crosses her two breasts. She is as hard to see as a queen.

And I think she lives today the way she would rather be living,

directly in symbols. People are their vestures now. Memories, the great memories of births and marriages and deaths, are nearly the same as the pieces of jewelry ("\$147.65 worth") she has bought on anniversary days and wears on her person. "That's Mama's death," she says—a silver watch on a silver chain. She holds out for your admiration the yellow hands that she asserts most of this country was born in, on which now seven signet rings flash. "Don't go to church any longer," she says—"or need to go. I just sit at home and enjoy my fingers."

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Is the author sympathetic to Ida in her portrayal, or hostile?
2. Is Eudora Welty's description of Ida entirely objective, or are there elements of prejudice or admiration?
3. Why do you think Eudora Welty chose to describe Ida and to construct an entire sketch around her?
4. To what extent is there any plot in the piece? Does anything happen? If there is little plot, what holds your interest?
5. What human qualities do you think Ida represents? Consider in this regard the children she has brought into the world, her sympathy for the sick, her emphasis on beauty, her generosity.
6. There are many examples in the sketch of Ida's eccentricity and foolish arrangements, such as her bookkeeping system and her refusal to consult doctors for her ailments. Do these examples detract from her stature? Do they add to it? Explain.
7. What is the significance of Ida's mother's rejection of her daughter's generosity? Does this rejection tell you anything about human relationships? Is Ida's generosity in this case realistic or materialistic? Might this rejection have a wider human significance?
8. What do you think is the attitude of the community to Ida? Is that of the whites the same as that of the Negroes? Do you attribute the help the community is willing to give her to admiration or to pity? Do you think Ida symbolizes anything to the community? If so, what?
9. Is there a discernible theme to the sketch? What is the meaning of Ida's life as you conceive it? Is what her life represents meaningful to all humanity?

The Lament

by ANTON CHEKHOV

IT is TWILIGHT. A thick wet snow is slowly twirling around the newly lighted street lamps, and lying in soft thin layers on roofs, on horses' backs, on people's shoulders and hats. The cab-driver Iona Potapov is quite white, and looks like a phantom; he is bent double as far as a human body can bend double; he is seated on his box; he never makes a move. If a whole snowdrift fell on him, it seems as if he would not find it necessary to shake it off. His little horse is also quite white, and remains motionless; its immobility, its angularity, and its straight wooden-looking legs, even close by, give it the appearance of a gingerbread horse worth a *kopek*. It is, no doubt, plunged in deep thought. If you were snatched from the plow, from your usual gray surroundings, and were thrown into this slough full of monstrous lights, unceasing noise, and hurrying people, you too would find it difficult not to think.

Iona and his little horse have not moved from their place for a long while. They left their yard before dinner, and up to now, not a fare. The evening mist is descending over the town, the white lights of the lamps replacing brighter rays, and the hubbub of the street getting louder. "Cabby for Viborg way!" suddenly hears Iona. "Cabby!"

Iona jumps, and through his snow-covered eyelashes sees an officer in a greatcoat, with his hood over his head.

"Viborg way!" the officer repeats. "Are you asleep, eh? Viborg way!"

With a nod of assent Iona picks up the reins, in consequence of which layers of snow slip off the horse's back and neck. The officer seats himself in the sleigh, the cabdriver smacks his lips to encourage

his horse, stretches out his neck like a swan, sits up, and, more from habit than necessity, brandishes his whip. The little horse also stretches its neck, bends its wooden-looking legs, and makes a move undecidedly.

"What are you doing, werewolf!" is the exclamation Iona hears from the dark mass moving to and fro, as soon as they have started.

"Where the devil are you going? To the r-r-right!"

"You do not know how to drive. Keep to the right!" calls the officer angrily.

A coachman from a private carriage swears at him; a passerby, who has run across the road and rubbed his shoulder against the horse's nose, looks at him furiously as he sweeps the snow from his sleeve. Iona shifts about on his seat as if he were on needles, moves his elbows as if he were trying to keep his equilibrium, and gapes about like someone suffocating, who does not understand why and wherefore he is there.

"What scoundrels they all are!" jokes the officer; "one would think they had all entered into an agreement to jostle you or fall under your horse."

Iona looks round at the officer, and moves his lips. He evidently wants to say something, but the only sound that issues is a snuffle.

"What?" asks the officer.

Iona twists his mouth into a smile, and with an effort says hoarsely:

"My son, *barin*, died this week."

"Hm! What did he die of?"

Iona turns with his whole body toward his fare, and says:

"And who knows! They say high fever. He was three days in the hospital, and then died. . . . God's will be done."

"Turn round! The devil!" sounds from the darkness. "Have you popped off, old doggie, eh? Use your eyes!"

"Go on, go on," says the officer, "otherwise we shall not get there by tomorrow. Hurry up a bit!"

The cabdriver again stretches his neck, sits up, and, with a bad grace, brandishes his whip. Several times again he turns to look at his fare, but the latter has closed his eyes, and apparently is not disposed to listen. Having deposited the officer in the Viborg, he stops

by the tavern, doubles himself up on his seat, and again remains motionless, while the snow once more begins to cover him and his horse. An hour, and another. . . . Then, along the footpath, with a squeak of galoshes, and quarreling, come three young men, two of them tall and lanky, the third one short and humpbacked.

"Cabby, to the Police Bridge!" in a cracked voice calls the humpback. "The three of us for two *griveniks*!"

Iona picks up his reins, and smacks his lips. Two *griveniks* is not a fair price, but he does not mind whether it is a *rouble* or five *kopeks*—to him it is all the same now, so long as they are fares. The young men, jostling each other and using bad language, approach the sleigh, and all three at once try to get onto the seat; then begins a discussion as to which two shall sit and who shall be the one to stand. After wrangling, abusing each other, and much petulance, it is at last decided that the humpback shall stand, as he is the smallest.

"Now then, hurry up!" says the humpback in a twanging voice, as he takes his place and breathes in Iona's neck. "Old fiury! Here, mate, what a cap you have! There is not a worse one to be found in all Petersburg! . . ."

"He-he!—he-he!" giggles Iona. "Such a . . ."

"Now you, 'such a,' hurry up, are you going the whole way at this pace? Are you? . . . Do you want it in the neck?"

"My head feels like bursting," says one of the lanky ones. "Last night at the Donkmasovs, Vaska and I drank the whole of four bottles of cognac."

"I don't understand what you lie for," says the other lanky one angrily; "you lie like a brute."

"God strike me, it's the truth!"

"It's as much the truth as that a louse coughs!"

"He, he," grins Iona, "what gay young gentlemen!"

"Pshaw, go to the devil!" says the humpback indignantly.

"Are you going to get on or not, you old pest? Is that the way to drive? Use the whip a bit! Go on, devil, go on, give it to him well!"

Iona feels at his back the little man wriggling, and the tremble in his voice. He listens to the insults hurled at him, sees the people, and little by little the feeling of loneliness leaves him. The humpback goes on swearing until he gets mixed up in some elaborate six-foot

oath, or chokes with coughing. The lankies begin to talk about a certain Nadejda Petrovna. Iona looks round at them several times; he waits for a temporary silence, then, turning round again, he murmurs:

"My son . . . died this week."

"We must all die," sighs the humpback, wiping his lips after an attack of coughing. "Now, hurry up, hurry up! Gentlemen, I really cannot go any farther like this! When will he get us there?"

"Well, just you stimulate him a little in the neck!"

"You old pest, do you hear, I'll bone your neck for you! If one treated the like of you with ceremony one would have to go on foot! Do you hear, old serpent Gorinytch! Or do you not care a spit?"

Iona hears rather than feels the blows they deal him.

"He, he," he laughs. "They are gay young gentlemen, God bless 'em!"

"Cabby, are you married?" asks a lanky one.

"I? He, he, gay young gentlemen! Now I have only a wife and the moist ground. . . . He, ho, ho . . . that is to say, the grave. My son has died, and I am alive. . . . A wonderful thing, death mistook the door . . . instead of coming to me, it went to my son. . . ."

Iona turns round to tell them how his son died, but at this moment, the humpback, giving a little sigh, announces, "Thank God, we have at last reached our destination," and Iona watches them disappear through the dark entrance. Once more he is alone, and again surrounded by silence. . . . His grief, which has abated for a short while, returns and rends his heart with greater force. With an anxious and hurried look, he searches among the crowds passing on either side of the street to find whether there may be just one person who will listen to him. But the crowds hurry by without noticing him or his trouble. Yet it is such an immense, illimitable grief. Should his heart break and the grief pour out, it would flow over the whole earth, so it seems, and yet no one sees it. It has managed to conceal itself in such an insignificant shell that no one can see it even by day and with a light.

Iona sees a hall porter with some sacking, and decides to talk to him.

"Friend, what sort of time is it?" he asks.

"Past nine. What are you standing here for? Move on."

Iona moves on a few steps, doubles himself up, and abandons himself to his grief. He sees it is useless to turn to people for help. In less than five minutes he straightens himself, holds up his head as if he felt some sharp pain, and gives a tug at the reins; he can bear it no longer. "The stables," he thinks, and the little horse, as if it understood, starts off at a trot.

About an hour and a half later Iona is seated by a large dirty stove. Around the stove, on the floor, on the benches, people are snoring; the air is thick and suffocatingly hot. Iona looks at the sleepers, scratches himself, and regrets having returned so early.

"I have not even earned my fodder," he thinks. "That's what's my trouble. A man who knows his job, who has had enough to eat, and his horse too, can always sleep peacefully."

A young cabdriver in one of the corners half gets up, grunts sleepily, and stretches towards a bucket of water.

"Do you want a drink?" Iona asks him.

"Don't I want a drink!"

"That's so? Your good health! But listen, mate—you know, my son is dead. . . . Did you hear? This week, in the hospital. . . . It's a long story."

Iona looks to see what effect his words have, but sees none—the young man has hidden his face and is fast asleep again. The old man sighs, and scratches his head. Just as much as the young one wants to drink, the old man wants to talk. It will soon be a week since his son died, and he has not been able to speak about it properly to anyone. One must tell it slowly and carefully; how his son fell ill, how he suffered, what he said before he died, how he died. One must describe every detail of the funeral, and the journey to the hospital to fetch the dead son's clothes. His daughter Anissia has remained in the village—one must talk about her too. Is it nothing he has to tell? Surely the listener would gasp and sigh, and sympathize with him? It is better, too, to talk to women; although they are stupid, two words are enough to make them sob.

"I'll go and look after my horse," thinks Iona; "there's always time to sleep. No fear of that!"

He puts on his coat, and goes to the stables to his horse; he thinks

of the corn, the hay, the weather. When he is alone, he dares not think of his son; he can speak about him to anyone, but to think of him, and picture him to himself, is unbearably painful.

"Are you tucking in?" Iona asks his horse, looking at its bright eyes; "go on, tuck in, though we've not earned our corn, we can eat hay. Yes! I am too old to drive—my son could have, not I. He was a first-rate cabdriver. If only he had lived!"

Iona is silent for a moment, then continues:

"That's how it is, my old horse. There's no more Kuzma Ionitch. He has left us to live, and he went off pop. Now let's say, you had a foal, you were the foal's mother, and suddenly, let's say, that foal went and left you to live after him. It would be sad, wouldn't it?"

The little horse munches, listens, and breathes over its master's hand. . . .

Iona's feelings are too much for him, and he tells the little horse the whole story.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Unlike the three stories we have now read, "The Lament" seems, on first reading, to lack interest both as incident and as character study. As a focus of interest "The Most Dangerous Game" had action and hence suspense; though there is action in "The Lament," it is not particularly exciting. "The Lovely Leave" and "Ida M'Toy" were interesting as character study, and in reading them we got an insight into the character, thoughts, feelings, and motives of two individuals; but Iona in "The Lament" is not drawn in any great detail, and we do not feel that we know him when we have finished the story. Is the story, then, a poorer story than "The Most Dangerous Game" or "The Lovely Leave" or "Ida M'Toy"? What, exactly, is Chekhov's purpose in it? What is the focus of interest in the story? Is the author's purpose effectively achieved? (Reread the third section of the introduction above.)

2. "The Lament" contains an introduction and five scenes. How does each scene contribute to the ending? (Consider here the nature of the ending and its effect.) Can the scenes be said to form a progression, a rising action toward a climax? If so, how or why?

3. In spite of the fact that the emphasis in "The Lament" is not on

plot, Chekhov does use some of the story-telling devices discussed in the introduction to this section. What are they?

4. You have probably noted that Chekhov gives us very little characterization in this story. Actually, all we have about the main character is a touch of description, a few clues as to Iona's position in life, and one fact from his background. In terms of the purpose of the story, this is deliberate. Why? How does Chekhov's sketchiness add to the effectiveness of the story? Why would the effect have been less if we had come to know Iona as well as we came to know the wife in "The Lovely Leave"?

5. Are Iona's antagonists in this story (particularly the officer and the drunken youths) cruel or merely thoughtless? (And why have we asked this question? Has it anything to do with the final effect of the story?)

6. Are Iona's comments and his inane (almost feeble-minded) laughter in scene two out of character or mood? What is his motivation here? What background details have bearing on his reactions in this scene? Has the comment, ". . . to him it was all the same now, so long as they are fares" anything to do with his reactions here? Why is the comment following this scene, "His grief, which has abated for a short time" ironic because of the preceding scene?

7. Why, exactly, does Iona go to the stable at the end of the story? Does he intend in advance to tell his horse his story? Has this anything to contribute to the effect of the story?

8. Section three of the introduction above discusses "true" versus "false" effects in fiction, particularly in terms of emotional effect. Some mention is made of sentimentality versus genuine emotional effects. "The Lament" is poignant. Is it sentimental or honest? Does Chekhov editorialize to gain his emotional effect, or does he present his story dramatically and objectively? Does he overwrite or understate at the points of crisis? Does his effect come from a character in a particular situation, or from such things as description or style? Is his character worth feeling sorry for? Is the situation false or improbable? In short, does Chekhov *earn* his effect or not? If so, discuss how.

9. Iona's actual situation is not fully revealed to us for a page and a half. Why does not the writer give us at the outset the fact of the dead son? In what way does the long introduction prepare us for this revelation?

10. The full meaning of Iona's loss is not revealed to us until the

very end of the story. Find the various details throughout the story which partially reveal his feelings. Comment on the arrangement of these details. In what way is this arrangement designed to give us a maximum emotional effect?

11. How is the effect of the story increased by the lines, "Iona . . . looks like a phantom. . . . His little horse . . . has the appearance of a gingerbread horse worth a *kopek*." (Note that this line tends to give an effect of unreality to both Iona and the horse. Why does Chekhov want such an effect?)

12. The first line of exposition in this story (the first use of the abstract word *grief*) comes in the paragraph following the second scene. We noted in section three of the introduction above that generally one cannot transmit an emotion directly, that one must do it indirectly, by dramatization. Why, then, is this paragraph convincing? What can we conclude from it about the proper (effective) use of exposition in the transmission of emotion? (Note, too, that Chekhov increases the amount of his exposition as he nears the end of his story.)

13. What would have been the effect of the story if in the ending Chekhov had given us in detail Iona's story to his horse? From this what generalization can you make about the most effective method of presenting an emotional climax in fiction?

14. If you were to characterize the style of "The Lament," you would probably say that it was lean, dry, objective, and neutral; that is, the author seldom, if ever, enters himself into the story, and he never points up his crises by editorializing or by heightened or poeticized style. (Consider, for example, the opening paragraph, the paragraphs following each scene, the tone of Chekhov's expository sentences, and the flatness of the ending.) What does the author gain (or lose) from using this kind of style? Does it increase or decrease the emotional effectiveness of the story? Why?

15. Although we have not yet said much about a story's theme, we can probably see that this story has a meaning beyond what it says about a specific person in a specific situation. How would you summarize this meaning? (Consider especially the setting; the age and positions of each antagonist throughout the story; the social relationship of Iona and each antagonist; and the ending.)

16. "The Lament" presents us with an ironical comment on life. Can you define this comment? Can it be stated as a paradox?

Part II

The Fourth Level of Reading: Reading for Theme

WE HAVE SEEN that what is generally known as *story* or as *plot* is the sum total of all the incidents which take place, of all the things which the characters do or which happen to them in the course of the narrative. We tend to consider a story to be interesting to almost the exact extent to which we consider the characters or the incidents to be interesting; that is, on this level of reading we are judging the events in the same way that we judge events in our own experience. For this reason, a story in which the hero has adventures is exciting to us; a story in which the episodes are sad is sad to us; we are gripped with suspense when the story presents a situation to which there seems to be no apparent solution, as in the typical mystery tale. When we say that "we cannot put the book down," even though it is far past the time for bed, we are saying in effect that we cannot rest easy without knowing what happens to the people in the predicament in which the author has chosen to place them.

This level of reading is the primary one, and it is for this type of enjoyment that long before stories were written men spun yarns and told tales to enthralled listeners; for through the medium of narrative we may widen our horizons and live in larger worlds than our personal experiences would ever allow. But there is something else which a story may do, another level of experience which it may open up to the reader, a level of richer appreciation and of that sort

of lasting significance which is the very essence of art. To understand this other level, it is necessary to consider the problem of the artist and the impulses which lead him to create.

Fundamentally the artist (and the term *artist* includes not only painters and musicians but writers as well) is a man who has something to say, who has a consideration upon the nature of the world which he feels constrained to impart. That artist, like all of us, lives in human society, undergoes all the problems of the business of living. He works, he suffers, he enjoys himself, he loves, he marries, he has children, he may have a nagging wife or a bad headache, he wants to sleep late in the morning, he talks to people and takes trips and makes phone calls and eats. He is a human being in a human society, short, tall, fat, or skinny. As he lives, however, he considers what he finds in the world about him and comes in the course of time to hold certain views about those problems which confront all men. They may be small or local problems, but they may also be problems which seem in their very nature to be part and parcel of the human condition, large problems which all men face and which, perhaps, few men may ever solve to perfection or even to satisfaction. These problems are too numerous to be listed in tables or indexes, but fundamental to all of them is their universality. They are universal in the sense that they are not local, confined, transient, accidental, but have rather to do with relationships in general which all men, regardless of their race, period of history or society, understand because, and only because, they are men. They are problems, in short, of the human condition.

Love in all its myriad forms is one of these problems, and so, for example, is the relationship of man to God or to his conception of the nature of divine power. So for the same reasons are the perpetual questions of ethics and morality, of the distinctions between good and bad, right and wrong. So are problems of conduct, of the individual, of the family. These problems in their nature transcend temporal limits in the same way that the generations of man span the past and reach into the future. It is for this reason that when a Greek makes a statement about the relationship of his own group of gods to himself, his statement can have a meaningful bearing upon our own views even though we are not Greeks and do not in our Western cul-

ture believe in Greek pantheism. When Othello falls prey to his jealousy and kills his innocent wife, it is more than the weakness of a single Moor or the cleverness of a single Venetian which we witness; it is a statement about human weakness which grips us as strongly now as it gripped Shakespeare's first audience and which we feel whether we are Americans of 1929, Germans of 1890, Frenchmen of 1770, or Elizabethan Englishmen.

Thus we may consider that the theme of a story constitutes the consideration of the problem which the author wishes to make, and that theme is by its nature universal. The need for universality in theme is clear if you consider, for example, a famous and successful farce called *Of Thee I Sing*. In this musical comedy, which was enormously popular in the 1930's, the authors cleverly satirize through skits and songs the Supreme Court, the Vice-President, and our Congress. The audiences of those days roared with laughter, because it was the current affairs of the times which they were seeing on the stage. It was not Supreme Courts in general but the Supreme Court which President Franklin Roosevelt wished in those years to alter; it was not Congress in general but the particular group of men who made up the Congress of those days. It would be facile to conclude that the theme of this stage presentation had something to do perhaps with the nature of good government, or the nature of democratic parliamentary processes, but today, if *Of Thee I Sing* were to be produced again in its original form, it is doubtful if anybody would find it funny. Because, and this is the point of the concept of universality, the problems which *Of Thee I Sing* considered were local and had a setting in a particular place in our history. We are no longer at that point, and these problems and relationships are no longer with us in the same form. Consequently, if we do not remember them or did not live at that time, the point of the play is quite lost. For this reason, topical themes, as clever and important as they may be, seldom constitute the stuff of art. Universality alone survives.

But theme is not something like a little moral lesson which an author chooses to teach us. He does not sit down and produce a pat little maxim which says "look before you leap" or "penny-wise and pound foolish." If this is what he wanted to do, he would not write

a story. Theme is rather the significance of a series of events occurring to a group of persons. It is in the last analysis the sum total of the story from the point of view of the significance to the reader that the story has had.

Theme has been associated in the previous discussions with the idea of problem, and when we talk of problems we may well fall into the error of believing that there must be specific answers. We do this because in our experience we have come to the belief that problems are things which are solved, as in arithmetic or logic. We may recognize that we have not solved the problem but we are never willing to concede that there is not somewhere, in the back of the book or with the teacher or in the reaches of the universe, a definite answer. But very often in human affairs problems have no specific solutions or any solutions at all for that matter. There may be a solution for one man, for many men, even for most men, but in few cases can we say that the problem has been solved, for everybody and for all time, as we can so easily say when we have succeeded in determining the value of x in an algebraic equation.

Therefore, when a student asks "What does this story mean?" he cannot hope to receive from any person outside of himself an adequate answer. The story means different things to different people, and all the teacher can do is help the student to acquire the means of arriving at understanding. A man can be taught to drive a car, but after he has learned he will go where he chooses.

Because of this, theme in a story is not always an answer to a problem but may lie in merely indicating that there is a problem where none seems on the surface to exist. We may assume that, for example, all men and all women are happy in all marriages because in terms of our own experiences or of our own culture we conceive marriage to be a happy condition. That is to say, we tend to define marriage, and many other social institutions which we admire and approve, in terms of the effects which we consider them to have or which we want them to have. Thus happiness becomes inextricably interwoven as a necessary concomitant of marriage to such an extent that we either assume that married people are happy because they are married, or recoil with surprise when it comes to our attention that in an individual instance this is not so. We even talk darkly of "the

wreck of the institution" when in reality we are faced with an unusually unhappy example of it. Now a story which developed, for example, some of the ways in which marriages may be made unhappy might not in itself give an answer so much as it would point out the existence of a problem. And often, as we have seen; problems exist which have no answers at all because they are compounded of the nature of life itself and of humanity. By the same token, however, consciousness of problem is often of the greatest value in, at least, setting the terms. A great artist may show this, calling to us in effect not to find a solution but to understand with compassion and hence to encompass more in our world.

For this reason the author makes a selection of material, plot, and character which is designed to make up a meaningful whole, and not for the sole purpose of weaving a tale. He deliberately places his characters in situations to which they react in ways which in turn illuminate and illustrate the concept which he wishes to consider. He does not merely say as some sort of ancient saw "love is worth more than money," but rather his story will have to do with a man who is faced with such a choice and chooses love over money. He does not say in so many words "there are many ways of expressing one's belief in God," but writes instead a story in which different men express their beliefs in God in different ways. And if he should in addition prefer one over all the others, it will be the man who represents this attitude who will be seen as solving his human problem most satisfactorily.

This selection is similar in many respects to the selection we make when we use a camera. Here all about is the world, big, beautiful, and exciting. There is a lovely cathedral, here a towering mountain, there a crowded and colorful street. But we cannot show it all on a small film. We point our range finder here and there, cutting first one and then another thing out, adding here, subtracting there, until we have succeeded to the best of our ability in putting a frame around the picture we want. When we snap the shutter we have forever made a certain selection which will be within our frame; all else we have discarded. Ten men with the same camera, taking a picture of the same house, would all put different frames around their pictures, would have different boundaries to their concept of

the world, because the men are different and their selection of what is important is different. In the same way an author selects for a purpose, and the underlying basis of his selection is his theme.

Theme, then, is the sum total of all that has taken place in the story, the total significance of the tale. To be meaningful to us the theme must have universal application, we must be able to grasp it because we are human men and women rather than because we chance to live in Michigan or Peru or Italy in a particular year. For theme in literature is the same as theme in life. We all live and suffer and enjoy ourselves and go through an extraordinary number of experiences in our lives, and we all end up in death. Man has done this for thousands of years; there have been a billion poignant sufferings, a billion billion feelings and emotions and fears and joys and prejudices and attitudes. Very often, when a very good person dies, a person who has worked all his life to spread his own concept of the good and moral, we wonder what it has all added up to now that all which remains is memory and inanimate clay. And when we wonder about this, we are asking ourselves in effect "What was the theme, what was the significance, of this life that is now gone?" If we say that there was none, if we say that it was all useless and pointless, then we are saying the most desperate thing in the world; for we are postulating that there is no meaning underlying the surface events, that they were merely plot, perhaps sad, perhaps joyful, perhaps even exciting from time to time, but only a plot, and that now the book is finished. When we say this of one life we say this of all the millions of lives which have gone before us. It is an empty and desolate "darkling plain, where ignorant armies clash at night" which we call our world.

The author contrives lives, contrives situations, creates in fiction what did not really happen but what could as well have happened. He moves his people about and makes them grow up and die and love and marry not as actual people did but as actual people do. And when his story is over, when death has overtaken his lives, either in actuality or because the story closes, we may ask as we do of real people, "What is the theme, what is the significance of this story which is now finished?" If it has meaning to us, then the story was not in vain, just as we may console ourselves when a friend passes

away that his life was not in vain because it had meaning for us. Literature, great art, in this way postulates not a desolate world, not a hopeless world, but a world in which all that has happened, all the livings and dyings and laughings and cryings of all the men and women of the past, have meaning and did not happen in vain. Without this we would not want much to live. Without this the human condition would be a miserable and meaningless one. Without this life would be a noise in the plumbing and little more. And this is perhaps why men write and why art is as long as life is short; for it is the great life force in our world.

Let us therefore look at some stories in which all that happens is not in vain, stories which have themes and consequently have significance over and beyond the plot and characters.

The Price of the Head

by JOHN RUSSELL

THE POSSESSIONS of Christopher Alexander Pellett were these: his name, which he was always careful to retain intact; a suit of ducks, no longer intact, in which he lived and slept; a continuous thirst for liquor, and a set of red whiskers. Also he had a friend. Now, no man can gain friendship, even among the gentle islands of Polynesia, except by virtue of some quality attaching to him. Strength, humor, villainy: he must show some trait by which the friend can catch and hold. How, then, explain the loving devotion lavished upon Christopher Alexander Pellett by Karaki, the company boat boy? This was the mystery at Fufuti.

There was no harm in Pellett. He never quarreled. He never raised his fist. Apparently he had never learned that a white man's foot, though it wobble ever so much, is given him wherewith to kick natives out of the road. He never even cursed anyone except himself and the Chinese half-caste who sold him brandy: which was certainly allowable because the brandy was very bad.

On the other hand, there was no perceptible good in him. He had long lost the will to toil, and latterly even the skill to beg. He did not smile, nor dance, nor exhibit any of the amiable eccentricities that sometimes recommend the drunken to a certain toleration. In any other part of the world he must have passed without a struggle. But some chance had drifted him to the beaches where life is as easy as a song and his particular fate had given him a friend. And so he persisted. That was all. He persisted, a sodden lump of flesh preserved in alcohol. . . .

Karaki, his friend, was a heathen from Bougainville, where some people are smoked and others eaten. Being a black, a Melanesian, he

was as much an alien in brown Fufuti as any white. He was a serious, efficient little man with deeply sunken eyes, a great mop of kinky hair, and a complete absence of expression. His tastes were simple. He wore a red cotton kerchief belted around his waist and a brass curtain ring suspended from his nose.

Some powerful chief in his home island had sold Karaki into the service of the trading company for three years, annexing his salary of tobacco and beads in advance. When the time should be accomplished, Karaki would be shipped back to Bougainville, a matter of some eight hundred miles, where he would land no richer than before except in experience. This was the custom. Karaki may have had plans of his own.

It is seldom that one of the black races of the Pacific shows any of the virtues for which subject populations are admired. Fidelity and humility can be exacted from other colors between tan and chocolate. But the black remains the inscrutable savage. His secret heart is his own. Hence the astonishment of Fufuti, which knew the ways of black recruits, when Karaki took the worthless beachcomber to his bosom.

"Hy, you, Johnny," called Moy Jack, the Chinese half-caste. "Better you come catch this fella mahster b'long you. He fella plenty too much drunk, galow."

Karaki left the shade of the copra shed where he had been waiting an hour or more and came forward to receive the sagging bulk that was thrust out-of-doors. He took it scientifically by wrist and armpit and swung toward the beach. Moy Jack stood on his threshold watching with cynic interest.

"Hy, you," he said; "what name you make so much bobeley 'long that fella mahster? S'pose you bling me all them fella pearl; me pay you one dam fella good trade—my word!"

It annoyed Moy Jack that he had to provide the white man with a daily drunk in exchange for the little seed pearls with which Pellett was always flush. He knew where those pearls came from. Karaki did forbidden diving in the lagoon to get them. Moy Jack made a good thing of the traffic, but he could have made a much better thing by trading directly with Karaki for a few sticks of tobacco.

"What name you give that fella mahster all them fella pearl?" demanded Moy Jack offensively. "He plenty too much no good, galow. Close up he die altogether."

Karaki did not reply. He looked at Moy Jack once, and the half-caste trailed off into mutterings. For an instant there showed a strange light in Karaki's dull eyes, like the flat, green flicker of a turning shark glimpsed ten fathoms down. . . .

Karaki bore his charge down the beach to the little thatched shelter of pandanus leaves that was all his home. Tenderly he eased Pellett to a mat, pillowed his head, bathed him with cool water, brushed the filth from his hair and whiskers. Pellett's whiskers were true whiskers, the kind that sprout like the barbels of a catfish, and they were a glorious coppery, sun-gilt red. Karaki combed them out with a sandalwood comb. Later he sat by with a fan and kept the flies from the bloated face of the drunkard.

It was a little past midday when something brought him scurrying into the open. For weeks he had been studying every weather sign. He knew that the change was due when the southeast trade begins to harden through this flawed belt of calms and cross winds. And now, as he watched, the sharp shadows began to blur along the sands and a film crept over the face of the sun.

All Fufuti was asleep. The houseboys snored in the back veranda. Under his netting the agent dreamed happily of big copra shipments and bonuses. Moy Jack dozed among his bottles. Nobody would have been mad enough to stir abroad in the noon hour of repose: nobody but Karaki, the untamed black, who cared nothing for custom nor yet for dreams. The light pad of his steps was lost in the surf drone on the barrier reefs. He flitted to and fro like a wraith. And while Fufuti slept he applied himself to a job for which he had never been hired. . . .

Karaki had long ago ascertained two vital facts: where the key to the trade room was kept and where the rifles and ammunition were hidden. He opened the trade room and selected three bolts of Turkey-red cloth, a few knives, two cases of tobacco, and a fine small ax. There was much else he might have taken as well. But Karaki was a man of simple tastes, and efficient.

With the ax he next forced the rifle chest and removed therefrom

one Winchester and a big box of cartridges. With the ax again he broke into the boat sheds. Finally with the ax he smashed the bottoms out of the whaleboat and the two cutters so they would be of no use to anyone for many days to come. It was really a very handy little ax, a true tomahawk, ground to a shaving edge. Karaki took a workman's pleasure in its keen, deep strokes. It was almost his chief prize.

On the beach lay a big proa, a stout outrigger canoe of the kind Karaki's own people used at Bougainville, so high of prow and stern as to be nearly crescent-shaped. The northwest monsoon of last season had washed it ashore at Fufuti, and Karaki had repaired it, by the agent's own order. This proa he now launched in the lagoon, and aboard it he stored his loot.

Of supplies he had to make a hasty selection. He took a bag of rice and another of sweet potatoes. He took as many coconuts as he could carry in a net in three trips. He took a cask of water and a box of biscuit.

And here happened an odd thing.

In his search for the biscuit he came upon the agent's private store of liquor, a dozen bottles of rare Irish whisky. He glanced at them and passed them by. He knew what the stuff was, and he was a savage, a black man. But he passed it by. When Moy Jack heard of that later he remembered what he had seen in Karaki's eyes and ventured the surprising prediction that Karaki would never be taken alive.

When all was ready Karaki went back to his thatch and aroused Christopher Alexander Pellett.

"Hy, mahster, you come 'long me."

Mr. Pellett sat up and looked at him. That is to say, he looked. Whether he saw anything or not belongs among the obscurer questions of psychopathy.

"Too late," said Mr. Pellett profoundly. "This shop is closed. Copy boy! Give all those damned loafers good night. I'm—I'm goin'—bed!"

Whereupon he fell flat on his back.

"Wake up, mahster," insisted Karaki, shaking him. "You too much strong fella sleep. Hy-ah, mahster! Rum! You like'm rum?"

You catch'm rum any amount—my word! Plenty rum, mahster!"

But even this magic call, which never failed to rouse Pellett from his couch in the mornings, fell now on deaf ears. Pellett had had his skinful, and the fitness of things decreed that he should soak the clock around.

Karaki knelt beside him, pried him up until he could get a shoulder under his middle, and lifted him like a loose bag of meal. Pellett weighed one hundred and fifty pounds; Karaki not much more than a hundred. Yet in some deft coolie fashion of his own the little black man packed his burden, with the feet dragging behind, clear down to the beach. Moreover, he managed to get it aboard the proa. Pellett was half drowned and the proa half swamped. Rut Karaki managed.

No man saw their departure. Fufuti still dreamed on. Long before the agent awoke to wrath and ruin their queer crescent craft had slipped from the lagoon and faded away on the wings of the trade.

That first day Karaki had all he could do to keep the proa running straight before the wind. Big smoky seas came piling up out of the southeast and would have piled aboard if he had given them the least chance. He was only a heathen who did not know a compass from a degree of latitude. But his forefathers used to people these waters on cockleshell voyages that make the venture of Columbus look like a ride in a ferry-boat. Karaki bailed with a tin pan and sailed with a mat and steered with a paddle: but he proceeded.

Along about sunrise Mr. Pellett stirred in the bilge and raised a peagreen face. He took one bewildered glance overside at the seething waste and collapsed with a groan. After a decent interval he tried again, but this was an illusion that would not pass, and he twisted around to Karaki sitting crouched and all aglisten with spray in the stern.

"Rum!" he demanded.

Karaki shook his head, and a haunted look crept into Pellett's eyes.

"Take—take away all that stuff," he begged pathetically, pointing at the ocean. . . .

Thereafter for two days he was very, very sick, and he learned

how a small boat in any kind of a sea can move forty-seven different ways within one and the same minute. This is no trifling bit of knowledge, as those who have acquired it can tell. It was nearly fatal to Pellett.

On the third day he awoke with a mouth and a stomach of fumed leather and a great weakness, but otherwise in command of his few faculties. The gale had fallen and Karaki was quietly preparing fresh coconuts. Pellett quaffed two before he thought to miss the brandy with which his breakfast draught was always laced. But when he remembered the milk choked in his throat.

"Me like'm rum."

"No got'm rum."

Pellett looked forward and aft to windward and to Ice. There was a great deal of horizon in sight, but nothing else. For the first time he was aware of a strangeness in events.

"What name you come so far?" he asked.

"We catch'm one big fella wind," explained Karaki.

Pellett was in no condition to question his statement nor to observe from the careful stocking of the proa that they had not been blown to sea on a casual fishing trip. Pellett had other things to think of. Some of the things were pink and others purple and others were striped like the rainbow in most surprising designs, and all were highly novel and interesting. They came thronging out of the vasty deep to entertain Christopher Alexander Pellett. Which they did.

You cannot cut off alcohol from a man who has been continuously pickled for two years without results more or less picturesque. These were days when the proa went shouting across the empty southern seas to madrigal and choric song. Tied hand and foot and lashed under a thwart, Pellett raved in the numbers of his innocent youth. It would have been singular hearing had there been any to hear, but there was only Karaki, who did not care for the lesser Cavalier poets and on whom whole pages of "Atalanta in Calydon" were quite wasted. Now and then he threw a dipperful of sea water over the white man, or spread a mat to keep the sun from him, or fed him coconut milk by force. Karaki was a poor audience, but an excellent nurse. Also, he combed Pellett's whiskers twice every day.

They ran into calms. But the trade picked them up again more gently, so that Karaki ventured to make westing, and they fled under skies as bright as polished brass.

*My heart is within me
As an ash in the fire;
Whosoever hath seen me
Without lute, without lyre,
Shall sing of me grievous things,
even things that were ill
to desire—*

Thus chanted Christopher Alexander Pellett, whose face began to show a little more like flesh and a little less like rotten kelp. . . .

Whenever a fair chance offered Karaki landed on the lee of some one of the tiny islets with which the Santa Cruz region is peppered and would make shift to cook rice and potatoes in the tin dipper. This was risky, for one day the islet proved to be inhabited. Two white men in a cutter came out to stop them. Karaki could not hide his resemblance to a runaway nigger, and he did not try to. But when the cutter approached within fifty yards he suddenly announced himself as a runaway nigger with a gun. He left the cutter sinking and one of the men dead.

"There's a bullet hole alongside me here," said Pellett from under the thwart. "You'd better plug it."

Karaki plugged it and released his passenger, who sat up and began stretching himself with a certain naive curiosity of his own body.

"So you're real," observed Pellett, staring hard at Karaki. "By George, you *are*, and that's comfort."

He was right. Karaki was very real.

"What side you take'm this fella canoe?"

"Balbi," said Karaki, using the native word for Bougainville.

Pellett whistled. An eight-hundred-mile evasion in an open boat was considerable undertaking. It enlisted his respect. Moreover, he had just had emphatic proof of the efficiency of this little black man.

"Balbi all some home b'long you?"

"Yes."

"All right, Commodore," said Pellett. "Lead on. I don't know why you shipped me for supercargo, but I'll see you through."

Strangely—or perhaps not so strangely—the whole Fufuti interval of his history had been fading from his brain while the poison was ebbing from his tissues. The Christopher Alexander Pellett that emerged was one from earlier years: pretty much of a wreck, it was true, and a feckless, indolent, paltry creature at best, but ordinarily human and rather more than ordinarily intelligent.

He was very feeble at first, but Karaki's diet of coconuts and sweet potatoes did wonders for him, and the time came when he could rejoice in the good salt taste of the spray on his lips and forget for hours together the crazy craving for stimulant. They made a strange crew, this pair—simple savage and convalescent drunkard—but there was never any question as to which was in command. That was well seen in the third week when their food began to fail and Pellett noticed that Karaki ate nothing for a whole day.

"See here, this won't do," he cried. "You've given me the last coconut and kept none for yourself."

"Me no like'm eat," said Karaki shortly.

Christopher Alexander Pellett pondered many matters in long, idle hours while the rush of foam under the proa and the creak and fling of her outriggers were the only sounds between sea and sky. Sometimes his brow was knotted with pain. It is not always pleasant to be wrenched back into level contact with one's memories. Thoughts are no sweeter company for having long been drowned. He had met the horrors of delirium. He had now to face the livelier devils of his past. He had fled them before.

But here was no escape of any kind. So he turned and grappled with them and laid them one by one.

When they had been at sea twenty-nine days they had nothing left of their provisions but a little water. Karaki doled it out by moistening a shred of coconut husk and giving Pellett the shred to suck. In spite of Pellett's petulant protest, he would take none himself. Again the heathen nursed the derelict, this time through the last stages of thirst, scraping the staves of the cask and feeding him the ultimate drop of moisture on the point of a knife.

On the thirty-sixth day from Fufuti they sighted Choiseul, a great green wall that built up slowly across the west.

Once fairly under its headlands, Karaki might have indulged a certain triumph. He had taken as his target the whole length of the Solomons, some six hundred miles. But to have fetched the broad-side of them anywhere in such a craft as the proa through storm and current, without instrument or chart, was distinctly a feat of navigation. Karaki, however, did no celebrating. Instead, he stared long and anxiously over his shoulder into the east.

The wind had been fitful since morning. By noon it was dead calm on a restless, oily sea. A barometer would have told evil tales, but Karaki must have guessed them anyway, for he staggered forward and unstepped the little mast. Then he bound all his cargo securely under the thwarts and put all his remaining strength into the paddle, heading for a small outpost island where a line of white showed beach. They had been very lucky thus far, but they were still two miles off-shore when the first rush of the hurricane caught them.

Karaki himself was reduced to a rattle of bones in a dried skin, and Pellett could scarce lift a hand. But Karaki fought for Pellett among the waves that leaped up like sheets of fire on the reef. Why or how they got through neither could have said. Perhaps because it was written that after drink, illness, madness, and starvation the white man should be saved by the black man again and a last time from ravening waters. When they came ashore on the islet they were both nearly flayed, but they were alive, and Karaki still gripped Pellett's shirt. . . .

For a week they stayed while Pellett fattened on unlimited coconut and Karaki tinkered the proa. It had landed in a water-logged tangle, but Karaki's treasures were safe. He got his bearings from a passing native fisherman, and then he knew that *all* his treasures were safe. His home island lay across Bougainville Strait, the stretch of water just beyond. . . .

"Balbi over there?" asked Pellett.

"Yes," said Karaki.

"And a mighty good thing too," cried Pellett heartily. "This is the

limit of British authority, old boy. Big fella mahster b'long Bere-tani stop'm here, no can go that side."

Karaki was quite aware of it. If he feared one thing in the world, he feared the Fiji high court and its resident commissioner for the Southern Solomons, who did sure justice upon all who transgressed in its jurisdiction. Once beyond the Strait he might still be liable for the stolen goods and the broken contract. But never—this was the point—never could he be punished for anything he might choose to do over there in Bougainville.

So Karaki was content.

And so was Christopher Alexander Pellett. His body had been wrung and swept and scoured, and he had downed his devils. Sweet air and sunshine were on his lips and in his heart. His bones were sweet in him. As his vigor returned he swam the lagoon or helped Karaki at the proa. He would spend hours hugging the warm sand or rejoicing in the delicate tracery of some tiny sea shell, singing softly to himself while the ground swell hushed along the beach, savoring life as he never had done.

"Oh, this is good—good!" he said.

Karaki puzzled him. Not that he vexed himself, for a smiling wonder at everything, almost childlike, filled him these days. But he thought of this taciturn savage, how he had capped thankless service with rarest sacrifice.

And now that he could consider soberly, the why of it eluded him. Why? Affection? Friendship? It must be so, and he warmed toward the silent little man with the sunken eyes and the expressionless face from which he could never raise a wink.

"Hy, you, Karaki, what name you no laugh all same me? What? You too much fright 'long that fella stuff you steal? Forget it, you old black scamp. If they ever trouble you, I'll square them somehow. By George, I'll say I stole it myself!"

Karaki only grunted and sat down to clean his Winchester with a bit of rag and some drops of oil he had crushed from a dried coconut.

"No, that don't reach him either," murmured Pellett, baffled. "I'd like to know what's going on under that topknot of yours, old chap.

You're like Kipling's cat, that walks by himself. God knows I'm not ungrateful. I wish I could show you——"

He sprang up.

"Karaki! Me one big fella friend 'long you: savee? You one big fella friend 'long me: savee? We two dam big fella friend, my word! . . . What?"

"Yes," said Karaki. No other response. He looked at Pellett and he looked away toward Bougainville. "Yes," he said, "my word," and went on cleaning his gun—the black islander, inscrutable, incomprehensible, an enigma always, and to the end.

The end came two days later at Bougainville.

Under a gorgeous dawn they came into a bay that opened before their prow as with jeweled arms of welcome. The land lay lapped in bright garments like a sleeper half awakened, all flushed and smiling, sensuous, intimate, thrilling with life, breathing warm scents——

These were some of the foolish phrases Pellett babbled to himself as he leaped ashore and ran up on a rocky point to see and to feel and to draw all the charm of the place to himself.

Meanwhile Karaki, that simple and efficient little man, was proceeding methodically about his own affairs. He landed his bolts of cloth, his tobacco, his knives, and the other loot. He landed his box of cartridges and his rifle and his fine tomahawk. The goods were somewhat damaged by sea water, but the weapons had been carefully cleaned and polished. . . .

Pellett was declaiming poetry aloud to the alluring solitude when he was aware of a gentle footfall and turned, surprised to find Karaki standing just behind him with the rifle at his hip and the ax in his hand.

"Well," said Pellett cheerfully, "what d'you want, old chappie?"

"Me like," said Karaki, while there gleamed in his eyes the strange light that Moy Jack had glimpsed there, like the flicker of a turning shark; "me like'm too much one fella head b'long you!"

"What? Head! Whose—my head?"

"Yes," said Karaki simply.

That was the way of it. That was all the mystery. The savage

had fallen enamored of the head of the beachcomber, and Christopher Alexander Pellett had been betrayed by his fatal red whiskers. In Karaki's country a white man's head, well smoked, is a thing to be desired above wealth, above lands and chiefships, fame, and the love of women. In all Karaki's country was no head like the head of Pellett. Therefore Karaki had served to win it with the patience and single faith of a Jacob. For this he had schemed and waited, committed theft and murder, expended sweat and cunning, starved and denied himself, nursed, watched, tended, fed, and saved his man that he might bring the head alive and on the hoof—so to speak—to the spot where he could remove it at leisure and enjoy the fruits of his labor in safety.

Pellett saw all this at a flash, understood it so far as any white could understand it: the whole elemental and stupendous simplicity of it. And standing there in his new strength and sanity under the fair promise of the morning, he gave a laugh that pealed across the waters and started the sea birds from their cliffs, the deep-throated laugh of a man who fathoms and accepts the last great jest.

For finally, by corrected list, the possessions of Christopher Alexander Pellett were these: his name, still intact; the ruins of some rusty ducks; his precious red whiskers—and a soul which had been neatly recovered, renewed, reurbished, reanimated, and restored to him by his good friend Karaki.

*Thou shouldst die as he dies,
For whom none sheddeth tears;
Filling thine eyes
And fulfilling thine ears
With the brilliance . . . the bloom
and the beauty . . .*

Thus chanted Christopher Alexander Pellett over the waters of the bay, and then whirled, throwing wide his arms:

"Shoot, damn you! It's cheap at the price!"

ANALYSIS

It is of course clear that the central interest in this story lies in the development of the plot, in the sense that the impelling force upon the reader to finish the narrative is his strong desire to know the final outcome of the strange voyage across the open sea and to understand the curious relationship between the white man and the unlettered savage. But it is equally clear that there lies beneath this story something more than exciting plot. Let us examine some of the elements which indicate that this is so.

We have seen in the discussion of the nature of theme that on the fourth level of reading, that level which is concerned with more than plot and entertainment alone, we look for significance. We ask ourselves, in other words, whether or not all that has taken place in the story adds up to some sort of meaningful conclusion or idea. This significance is to be found in the sum total of the story and is therefore not susceptible of consideration until we are in a position to view the complete set of happenings. It is for this reason that it is useful, in discussing theme, to look at the end of the story first.

In "The Price of the Head," if we are to come to some conclusion concerning the nature of theme, we must look at the extremely startling ending of the story. After many perilous adventures, after many examples of personal courage, after the long voyage is completed, the two main characters, Pellctt and Karaki, *do not*, as we might expect, find peace or contentment in a job well done. If the main purpose of the story had been to describe an adventurous voyage, the goal of the story would be identical with the goal of the major characters: safety on the island. That is to say, the story would have kept us in suspense so long as the matter of the attainment of the goal remained in question; once the goal was achieved, we would be as satisfied and as thoroughly at the end of the story as the characters themselves. To illustrate this point, consider by way of example a story about a man in jail. He plans a very elaborate method of escape and the story shows us all the preparations he makes to reach freedom: the making of a file, the fixing of an alibi, the bribing of a guard, the arrangement for a car to pick him up at the gate. From time to time in the course of the story obstacles come into his way: his cellmate threatens to inform on him, the lock on the door is changed, the file he has laboriously fashioned suddenly breaks. We have identified ourselves so closely with this prisoner and *with his goal of freedom* that each of these obstacles to his sue-

cess causes *us* pain and distress just as they cause distress to the prisoner. However, at the end of the story two major possibilities exist: the prisoner will have succeeded in his plan or he will have been thwarted. In either case, however, the story is over as soon as we have found out the result of all the prisoner's planning.

Now in "The Price of the Head" we have what appears to be the same type of situation. Karaki and Pellett engage in a difficult and dangerous adventure which may at any time fail. Their goal is, of course, safe arrival at Karaki's island, or such is the ostensible goal as far as we can determine, and during the course of the voyage, identifying ourselves with this goal, we feel satisfied or disappointed as the men seem to be succeeding or failing. But as we have seen, something of the greatest importance occurs *after* the story should have come to an end. That is, we learn that safe arrival at Karaki's island was not as we had supposed the goal at all, at least insofar as Karaki is concerned, and Karaki and Pellett, having gotten there, do not find satisfaction at all but become related to each other in an entirely new set of circumstances. We may conclude, therefore, that the purpose of the story is other than the relation of an adventuresome tale. It is not to the satisfaction of our suspense that the story has been primarily directed.

If this is so, then what can we say is the purpose of the story? Let us examine what happens at the end. Pellett is confronted by Karaki with inevitable death; he knows, as we know, that he cannot possibly escape. He is alone and unarmed. Karaki is purposeful and has the weapons and the strength. Therefore, we are not once again engaged in a situation of suspense, because there is no alternative to Pellett's dying. We do not ask ourselves if Pellett will escape, because we know that he will not. In such a set of facts our interest can lie only in the manner in which Pellett will take his death. The orientation of the story thus changes from that of plot to that of character, just as the answer to our questions will now be found in the nature of Pellett's character rather than in the external events.

If we now return to the beginning of the story, we may find certain aspects which tended to suggest that we were going to deal later with a character rather than with a mere series of incidents. You can notice that in the very first descriptions of Pellett care is taken by the author to indicate that while he is a drunken outcast he is not *only* that. He does not fit entirely the picture of a besotted castaway which we all may have. For example, he is shown early in the story

to have extreme gentleness toward the natives, to be lacking in quarrelsomeness, and to have none of the usual "amiable eccentricities" of his state. He is an individual early in the story rather than a type. Later in the narrative we learn even more about the man. He discloses through his recitations of great English verse a thorough education and a previous acquaintance with art and letters. He shows great strength of character in being willing after the worst effects of the voyage are over to come to grips with his personal problems.

In the same way, Karaki is not by any means a typical native in the stock sense to which we have become accustomed in our reading. He has great courage and purposefulness and an enormous amount of resourcefulness. While he appears to be in the conventional relationship to Pellett of the inferior aborigine to the superior white man, it is in reality he who plans the voyage, fits out the boat, takes Pellett without his knowledge or consent, and sees the matter through practically without help and certainly without direction.

It should be clear that all that happened on the voyage, if the purpose of the story had merely been to relate exciting episodes, could as well have taken place without selecting as main characters two persons with individual and personal characteristics. It would have sufficed the author's purpose to use types: any derelict white man and any native, with only the most meager effort at character delineation. But when we become aware of the fact that at the end of the story we are dealing with an internal problem, that of Pellett's attitude toward, and ability to face, death, we see how essential it was that we know a good deal about Pellett beforehand, about Pellett the individual rather than about Pellett the stereotyped derelict.

At the end of the story Pellett, faced with certain death, says "It's cheap at the price." The pronoun refers, of course, to his head, which will pass into the possession of Karaki. We must ask, however, what Pellett received in return for his head that he considered to be a good bargain, and this refers us back to some of the things which the voyage accomplished. The Pellett who faces death bravely, almost gaily, is not the same man who started out on the journey. He has been cleansed not only of his physical addiction to alcohol but of the fears and neuroses and weaknesses which had driven him to drink in the first place. His constant swilling has been a means of escape from himself. In drink he has found a cheap and simple answer to the problems of living which he was not strong

enough to face squarely and from which in consequence he ran away. As the rigors of the voyage cleansed his body and renewed his physical condition, so did the need for facing his real problems clean his mind of fear and strengthen him to consider life maturely and with courage. He is, in short, a man who has been redeemed and who, as a result, at the end of the redeeming journey, is for the first time in many years able to recognize, appreciate, and govern himself by moral, intangible, ethical values. He has found (ironically enough at the moment before death) the nature of good; he has discovered moral truth and virtue and for such a discovery his head is little enough price to pay.

Now this is a simple theme, not in the sense that it is unimportant, but that it is clear, uncomplicated, and in many ways not highly original. It is a theme compounded of many concepts with which we are very familiar in our ethical culture, and it is a theme with which as a consequence of this culture we would almost all tend to be in general sympathy. It is a theme, moreover, which we would like to see postulated in an ideal world, for we feel very comfortable when the better instincts of man emerge through trial. In these senses the theme is simple. Notice that the motivating force of the story is plot, and notice further that the forces which change Pellett are the same forces which make up the plot: the sea, the voyage, the arduous conditions. That is to say, if the boat had capsized or the voyage come to grief in some other way, not only would the story have been changed to the unsuccessful attainment of the goal, but Pellett would not have arrived at a point where he could even consider that moral redemption was more valuable than his head. His redemption, and in consequence the point of the story, depends entirely upon the selfsame set of external circumstances as does the voyage itself—if you wreck the one you wreck the other. For these reasons we have suggested that you read this story first as an example of simple theme and then as an example of theme developed from plot.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Select throughout the story those references to, or descriptions of, Pellett which show him to be atypical of his kind.
2. Make the same selection from the story for Karaki.
3. In the story the reader is asked to believe that a derelict changes

to such an extent that he is able to accept death as a cheap price to pay for moral redemption. Discuss whether or not this change is consistent: that is, whether it takes place with sufficient motivation to make it wholly credible.

4. At the end of the story, when you know that Karaki is a murderer, do you feel that he is entirely corrupt, evil, or immoral, or is there an element in your reaction to him of sympathy or, at least, of understanding? What does Russell do in this story to prevent your complete rejection of Karaki despite his serious crime?

5. It is easy to pick out the many things which Karaki does for Pellett during the voyage. Despite this, can you find references to the things which Pellett does for himself?

6. Does Russell allow you to form your own judgments concerning the effect of the voyage upon Pellett, or does he tell you how to react? Discuss, with examples from the text.

7. The theme of "The Price of the Head" involves a double irony. One is concerned with Pellett, the other with Karaki. Can you define these ironies and explain how they add to the effectiveness of the story?

The Dry Rock

by IRWIN SHAW

WE'RE LATE," Helen said, as the cab stopped at a light. "We're twenty minutes late." She looked at her husband accusingly.

"All right," Fitzsimmons said. "I couldn't help it. The work was on the desk and it had to . . ."

"This is the one dinner party of the year I didn't want to be late for," Helen said. "So naturally . . ."

The cab started and was halfway across the street when the Ford sedan roared into it, twisting, with a crashing and scraping of metal, a high mournful scream of brakes, the tinkling of glass. The cab shook a little, then subsided.

Hie cabby, a little gray man, turned and looked back, worriedly. "Everybody is all right?" he asked nervously.

"Everybody is fine," Helen said bitterly, pulling at her cape to get it straight again after the jolting.

"No damage done," said Fitzsimmons, smiling reassuringly at the cabby, who looked very frightened.

"I am happy to hear that," the cabby said. He got out of his car and stood looking sadly at his fender, now thoroughly crumpled, and his headlight, now without a lens. The door of the Ford opened and its driver sprang out. He was a large young man with a light gray hat. He glanced hurriedly at the cab.

"Why don't yuh watch where the hell yer goin'?" he asked harshly.

"The light was in my favor," said the cabby. He was a small man of fifty, in a cap and a ragged coat, and he spoke with a heavy accent. "It turned green and I started across. I would like your license, Mister."

"What for?" the man in the gray hat shouted. "Yer load's all right. Get on yer way. No harm done." He started back to his car.

The cabby gently put his hand on the young man's arm. "Excuse me, friend," he said. "It is a five-dollar job, at least. I would like to see your license."

The young man pulled his arm away, glared at the cabby. "Aaah," he said and swung. His fist made a loud surprising noise against the cabby's nose. The old man sat down slowly on the running board of his cab, holding his head wearily in his hands. The young man in the gray hat stood over him, bent over, fists still clenched. "Didn't I tell yuh no harm was done?" he shouted. "Why didn't yuh lissen t'me? I got a good mind to . . ."

"Now, see here," Fitzsimmons said, opening the rear door and stepping out.

"What d'you want?" The young man turned and snarled at Fitzsimmons, his fists held higher. "Who asked for you?"

"I saw the whole thing," Fitzsimmons began, "and I don't think you . . ."

"Aaah," snarled the young man. "Dry up."

"Claude," Helen called. "Claude, keep out of this."

"Claude," the young man repeated balefully. "Dry up, Claude."

"Are you all right?" Fitzsimmons asked, bending over the cabby, who still sat reflectively on the running board, his head down, his old and swollen cap hiding his face, blood trickling down his clothes.

"I'm all right," the cabby said wearily. He stood up, looked wonderingly at the young man. "Now, my friend, you force me to make trouble. Police!" he called, loudly. "*Police!*"

"Say, lissen," the man in the gray hat shouted. "What the hell do yuh need to call the cops for? Hey, cut it out!"

"*Police!*" the old cabby shouted calmly, but with fervor deep in his voice. "Police!"

"I ought to give it to yuh good." The young man shook his fist under the cabby's nose. He jumped around nervously. "This is a small matter," he shouted, "nobody needs the cops!"

"Police!" called the cabby.

"Claude." Helen put her head out the window. "Let's get out of here and let the two gentlemen settle this any way they please."

"I apologize!" The young man held the cabby by his lapels with both large hands, shook him, to emphasize his apology. "Excuse me. I'm sorry. Stop yelling police, for God's sake!"

"I'm going to have you locked up," the cabby said. He stood there, slowly drying the blood off his shabby coat with his cap. His hair was gray, but long and full, like a musician's. He had a big head for his little shoulders, and a sad, lined little face and he looked older than fifty, to Fitzsimmons, and very poor, neglected, badly nourished. "You have committed a crime," the cabby said, "and there is a punishment for it."

"Will yuh talk to him?" The young man turned savagely to Fitzsimmons. "Will yuh tell him I'm sorry?"

"It's entirely up to him," Fitzsimmons said.

"We're a half hour late," Helen announced bitterly. "The perfect dinner guest."

"It's not enough to be sorry," said the cab driver. "*Police . . .*"

"Say, lissen, Bud," the young man said, his voice quick and confidential, "what's yer name?"

"Leopold Tarloff," the cabby said. "I have been driving a cab on the streets of New York for twenty years and everybody thinks just because you're a cab driver they can do whatever they want to you."

"Lissen, Leopold," the young man pushed his light gray hat far back on his head. "Let's be sensible. I hit yer cab. All right. I hit you. All right."

"What's all right about it?" Tarloff asked.

"What I mean is, I admit it, I confess I did it, that's what I mean. All right." The young man grabbed Tarloff's short ragged arms as he spoke, intensely. "Why the fuss? It happens every day. Police are unnecessary. I'll tell yuh what I'll do with yuh, Leopold. Five dollars, yuh say, for the fender. All right. And for the bloody nose, another pound. What do yuh say? Everybody is satisfied. Yuh've made yerself a fiver on the transaction; these good people go to their party without no more delay."

Tarloff shook his arms free from the huge hands of the man in the

gray hat. He put his head back and ran his fingers through his thick hair and spoke coldly. "I don't want to hear another word. I have never been so insulted in my whole life."

The young man stepped back, his arms wide, palms up wonderingly. "I insult him!" He turned to Fitzsimmons. "Did you hear me insult this party?" he asked.

"Claude!" Helen called. "Are we going to sit here all night?"

"A man steps up and hits me in the nose," Tarloff said. "He thinks he makes everything all right with five dollars. He is mistaken. Not with five hundred dollars."

"How much d'yuh think a clap in the puss is worth?" the young man growled. "Who d'yuh think y'are—Joe Louis?"

"Not ten thousand dollars," Tarloff said, on the surface calm, but quivering underneath. "Not for twenty thousand dollars. My dignity."

"His dignity!" the young man whispered. "For Christ's sake!"

"What do you want to do?" Fitzsimmons asked, conscious of Helen glooming in the rear seat of the cab.

"I would like to take him to the station house and make a complaint," Tarloff said. "You would have to come with me, if you'd be so kind. What is your opinion on the matter?"

"Will yuh tell him the cops are not a necessity!" the young man said hoarsely. "Will yuh tell the bastidd?"

"Claude!" called Helen.

"It's up to you," Fitzsimmons said, looking with what he hoped was an impartial, judicious expression at Tarloff, hoping he wouldn't have to waste any more time. "You do what you think you ought to do."

Tarloff smiled, showing three yellow teeth in the front of his small and childlike mouth, curved and red and surprising in the lined and weatherbeaten old hackie's face. "Thank you very much," he said. "I am glad to see you agree with me."

Fitzsimmons sighed.

"Yer drivin' me crazy!" the young man shouted at Tarloff. "Yer makin' life impossible!"

"To you," Tarloff said with dignity, "I talk from now on only in a court of law. That's my last word."

The young man stood there, breathing heavily, his fists clenching and unclenching, his pale gray hat shining in the light of a street lamp. A policeman turned the corner, walking in a leisurely and abstracted manner, his eyes on the legs of a girl across the street.

Fitzsimmons went over to him. "Officer," he said, "there's a little job for you over here." The policeman regretfully took his eyes off the girl's legs and sighed and walked slowly over to where the two cars were still nestling against each other.

"What are yuh?" the young man was asking Tarloff, when Fitzsimmons came up with the policeman. "Yuh don't act like an American citizen. What are yuh?"

"I'm a Russian," Tarloff said. "But I'm in the country twenty-five years now, I know what the rights of an individual are."

"Yeah," said the young man hopelessly. "Yeah . . ."

The Fitzsimmonses drove silently to the police station in the cab, with Tarloff driving slowly and carefully, though with hands that shook on the wheel. The policeman drove with the young man in the young man's Ford. Fitzsimmons saw the Ford stop at a cigar store and the young man jump out and go into the store, into a telephone booth.

"For three months," Helen said, as they drove, "I've been trying to get Adele Lowrie to invite us to dinner. Now we've finally managed it. Perhaps we ought to call her and invite the whole party down to night court."

"It isn't night court," Fitzsimmons said patiently. "It's a police station. And I think you might take it a little better. After all, the poor old man has no one else to speak up for him."

"Leopold Tarloff," Helen said. "It sounds impossible. Leopold Tarloff. Leopold Tarloff."

They sat in silence until Tarloff stopped the cab in front of the police station and opened the door for them. The Ford with the policeman and the young man drove up right behind them and they all went in together.

There were some people up in front of the desk lieutenant, a dejected-looking man with long mustaches and a loud, blonde woman who kept saying that the man had threatened her with a baseball

bat three times that evening. Two Negroes with bloody bandages around their heads were waiting, too.

"It will take some time," said the policeman. "There are two cases ahead of you. My name is Kraus."

"Oh, my," said Helen.

"You'd better call Adele," Fitzsimmons said. "Tell her not to hold dinner for us."

Helen held her hand out gloomily for nickels.

"I'm sorry," Tarloff said anxiously, "to interrupt your plans for the evening."

"Perfectly all right," Fitzsimmons said, trying to screen his wife's face from Tarloff by bending over to search for the nickels in his pocket.

Helen went off, disdainfully holding her long formal skirt up with her hand, as she walked down the spit- and butt-marked corridor of the police station toward a pay telephone. Fitzsimmons reflectively watched her elegant back retreat down the hallway.

"I am tired," Tarloff said. "I think I will have to sit down, if you will excuse me." He sat on the floor, looking up with a frail apologetic smile on his red face worn by wind and ram and traffic-police-men. Fitzsimmons suddenly felt like crying, watching the old man sitting there among the spit and cigarette butts, on the floor against the wall, with his cap off and his great bush of musician's gray hair giving the lie to the tired, weathered face below it.

Four men threw open the outside doors and walked into the police station with certainty and authority. They all wore the same light-gray hats with the huge flat brims. The young man who had hit Tarloff greeted them guardedly. "I'm glad you're here, Pidgear," he said to the man who, by some subtle mixture of stance and clothing, of lift of eyebrow and droop of mouth, announced himself as leader.

They talked swiftly and quietly in a corner.

"A Russian!" Pidgear's voice rang out angrily. "There are 10,000 cab drivers in the metropolitan area, you have to pick a Russian to punch in the nose!"

"I'm excitable!" the young man yelled. "Can I help it if I'm excitable? My father was the same way; it's a family characteristic."

"Go tell that to the Russian," Pidgear said. He went over to one of the three men who had come in with him, a large man who needed a shave and whose collar was open at the throat, as though no collar could be bought large enough to go all the way around that neck. The large man nodded, went over to Tarloff, still sitting patiently against the wall.

"You speak Russian?" the man with the open collar said to Tarloff.

"Yes, sir," Tarloff said.

The large man sat down slowly beside him, gripped Tarloff's knee confidentially in his tremendous hairy hand, spoke excitedly, winningly, in Russian.

Pidgear and the young man who had hit Tarloff came over to Fitzsimmons, leaving the two other men in the gray hats, small, dark men with shining eyes, who just stood at the door and looked hotly on.

"My name is Pidgear," the man said to Fitzsimmons, who by now was impressed with the beautiful efficiency of the system that had been put into motion by the young driver of the Ford—an obviously legal mind like Pidgear, a man who spoke Russian, and two intense men with gray hats standing on call just to see justice done, and all collected in the space of fifteen minutes. "Alton Pidgear," the man said, smiling professionally at Fitzsimmons. "I represent Mr. Rusk."

"Yeah," said the young man.

"My name is Fittzsimmons."

"Frankly, Mr. Fitzsimmons," Pidgear said, "I would like to see you get Mr. Tarloff to call this whole thing off. It's an embarrassing affair for all concerned; nobody stands to gain anything by pressing it."

Helen came back and Fitzsimmons saw by the expression on her face that she wasn't happy. "They're at the soup by now," she said loudly to Fitzsimmons. "Adele said for us to take all the time we want, they're getting along fine."

"Mr. Rusk is willing to make a handsome offer," Pidgear said. "Five dollars for the car, five dollars for the nose . . ."

"Go out to dinner with your husband," Helen muttered, "and you wind up in a telephone booth in a police station. 'Excuse me for be-

ing late, darling, but I'm calling from the 8th precinct, this is our night for street-fighting.' "

"Sssh, Helen, please," Fitzsimmons said. He hadn't eaten since nine that morning and his stomach was growling with hunger.

"It was all a mistake," Pidgear said smoothly. "A natural mistake. Why should the man be stubborn? He is being reimbursed for everything, isn't he? I wish you would talk to him, Mr. Fitzsimmons; we don't want to keep you from your social engagements. Undoubtedly," Pidgear said, eyeing their evening clothes respectfully, "you and the madam were going to an important dinner party. It would be too bad to spoil an important dinner party for a little thing like this. Why, this whole affair is niggling," he said, waving his hand in front of Fitzsimmons' face. "Absolutely niggling."

Fitzsimmons looked over to where Tarloff and the other Russian were sitting on the floor. From Tarloff's face and gestures, even though he was talking in deepest Russian, Fitzsimmons could tell Tarloff was still as firm as ever. Fitzsimmons looked closely at Rusk, who was standing looking at Tarloff through narrow, baleful eyes.

"Why're you so anxious?" Fitzsimmons asked.

Rusk's eyes clouded over and his throat throbbed against his collar with rage. "I don't want to appear in court!" he yelled. "I don't want the whole goddamn business to start all over again, investigation, lawyers, fingerprints . . ."

Pidgear punched him savagely in the ribs, his fist going a short distance, but with great violence.

"Why don't you buy time on the National Broadcasting System?" Pidgear asked. "Make an address, coast to coast!"

Rusk glared murderously for a moment at Pidgear, then leaned over toward Fitzsimmons, pointing a large blunt finger at him. "Do I have to put my finger in your mouth?" he whispered hoarsely.

"What does he mean by that?" Helen asked loudly. "Put his finger in your mouth? Why should he put his finger in your mouth?"

Rusk looked at her with complete hatred, turned, too full for words, and stalked away, with Pidgear after him. The two little men in the gray hats watched the room without moving.

"Claude?" Helen began.

"Obviously," Fitzsimmons said, his voice low, "Mr. Rusk isn't anxious for anyone to look at his fingerprints. He's happier this way."

"You picked a fine night!" Helen shook her head sadly. "Why can't we just pick up and get out of here?"

Rusk, with Pidgear at his side, strode back. He stopped in front of the Fitzsimmonsescs. "I'm a family man," he said, trying to sound like one. "I ask yuh as a favor. Talk to the Russian."

"I had to go to Bergdorf Goodman," Helen said, too deep in her own troubles to bother with Rusk, "to get a gown to spend the evening in a police station. 'Mrs. Claude Fitzsimmons was lovely last night in blue velvet and silver fox at Officer Kraus's reception at the 8th Precinct. Other guests were the well-known Leopold TarloffT, and the Messrs. Pidgear and Rusk, in gray hats. Other guests included the Russian Ambassador and two leading Italian artillerymen, also in gray hats.' "

Pidgear laughed politely. "Your wife is a very witty woman," he said.

"Yes," said Fitzsimmons, wondering why he'd married her.

"Will yuh for Christ's sake *ask*?" Rusk demanded. "Can it hurt yuh?"

"We're willing to do our part," Pidgear said. "We even brought down a Russian to talk to him and clear up any little points in his own language. No effort is too great."

Fitzsimmons' stomach growled loudly. "Haven't eaten all day," he said, embarrassed.

"That's what happens," Pidgear said. "Naturally."

"Yeah," said Rusk.

"Perhaps I should go out and get you a malted milk," Helen suggested coldly.

Fitzsimmons went over to where Tarloff was sitting with the other Russian. The others followed him.

"Are you sure, Mr. Tarloff," Fitzsimmons said, "that you still want to prosecute?"

"Yes," Tarloff said promptly.

"Ten dollars," Rusk said. "I offer yuh ten dollars. Can a man do more?"

"Money is not the object." With his cap Tarloff patted his nose which was still bleeding slowly and had swelled enormously, making Tarloff look lopsided and monstrous.

"What's the object?" Rusk asked.

"The object, Mr. Rusk, is principle."

"You talk to him," Rusk said to Fitzsimmons.

"All right," Officer Kraus said, "you can go up there now."

They all filed up in front of the lieutenant sitting high at his desk.

Tarloff told his story, the accident, the wanton punch in the nose.

"It's true," Pidgear said, "that there was an accident, that there was a slight scuffle after by mistake. But the man isn't hurt. A little swelling in the region of the nose. No more." He pointed dramatically to Tarloff.

"Physically," Tarloff said, clutching his cap, talking with difficulty because his nose was clogged, "physically that's true. I am not badly hurt. But in a mental sense . . ." He shrugged. "I have suffered an injury."

"Mr. Rusk is offering the amount of ten dollars," Pidgear said. "Also, he apologizes; he's sorry."

The lieutenant looked wearily down at Rusk. "Are you sorry?" he asked.

"I'm sorry," said Rusk, raising his right hand. "On the Bible, I swear I'm sorry."

"Mr. Tarloff," the lieutenant said, "if you wish to press charges, there are certain steps you will have to take. A deposition will have to be taken. Have you got witnesses?"

"Here," Tarloff said with a shy smile at the Fitzsimmonses.

"They will have to be present," the lieutenant said sleepily.

"Oh, God," Helen said.

"A warrant will have to be sworn out, there must be a hearing, at which the witnesses must also be present . . ."

"Oh, God," Helen said.

"Then the trial," said the lieutenant.

"Oh, God!" Helen said loudly.

"The question is, Mr. Tarloff," said the lieutenant, yawning, "are you willing to go through all that trouble?"

"The fact is," Tarloff said unhappily, "he hit me in the head without provocation. He is guilty of a crime on my person. He insulted me. He did me an injustice. The law exists for such things. One individual is not to be hit by another individual in the streets of the city without legal punishment." Tarloff was using his hands to try to get everyone, the Fitzsimmonses, the lieutenant, Pidgear, to understand. "There is a principle. The dignity of the human body. Justice. For a bad act a man suffers. It's an important thing . . ."

"I'm excitable," Rusk shouted. "If yuh want, yuh can hit me in the head."

"That is not the idea," Tarloff said.

"The man is sorry," the lieutenant said, wiping his eyes, "he is offering you the sum of ten dollars; it will be a long, hard job to bring this man to trial; it will cost a lot of the taxpayers' money; you are bothering these good people here who have other things to do. What is the sense in it, Mr. Tarloff?"

Tarloff scraped his feet slowly on the dirty floor, looked sadly, hopefully, at Fitzsimmons. Fitzsimmons looked at his wife, who was glaring at Tarloff, tapping her foot sharply again and again. Fitzsimmons looked back at Tarloff, standing there, before the high desk, small, in his ragged coat and wild gray hair, his little worn face twisted and grotesque with the swollen nose, his eyes lost and appealing. Fitzsimmons shrugged sadly. Tarloff drooped inside his old coat, shook his head wearily, shrugged, deserted once and for all before the lieutenant's desk, on the dry rock of principle.

"O.K.," he said.

"Here." Rusk brought the ten-dollar bill out with magical speed.

Tarloff pushed it away. "Get out of here," he said, without looking up.

No one talked all the way to Adele Lowrie's house. Tarloff opened the door and sat, looking straight ahead, while they got out. Helen went to the door of the house and rang. Silently, Fitzsimmons offered Tarloff the fare. Tarloff shook his head. "You have been very good," he said. "Forget it."

Fitzsimmons put the money away slowly.

"Claude!" Helen called. "The door's open."

Fitzsimmons hated his wife, suddenly, without turning to look at her. He put out his hand and Tarloff shook it wearily.

"I'm awfully sorry," Fitzsimmons said. "I wish I ..."

Tarloff shrugged. "That's all right," he said. "I understand." His face, in the shabby light of the cab, worn and old and battered by the streets of the city, was a deep well of sorrow. "There is no time. Principle." He laughed, shrugged. "Today there is no time for anything."

He shifted gears and the taxi moved slowly off, its motor grinding noisily.

"Claude!" Helen called.

"Oh, shut up!" Fitzsimmons said as he turned and walked into Adele Lowrie's house.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. The theme of "The Dry Rock" is a comment upon our civilization. What is this comment?

2. What are the dominant and subordinate traits of each of the characters in "The Dry Rock"?

3. The dominant traits of characters in a story usually take one of a number of possible directions: They may focus on a character's goal in life (as greed), on his standard of values (as frivolity), on his outlook on life (as disillusionment), and so forth. What is the direction of the dominant traits of the characters in "The Dry Rock"? How is this direction related to the theme?

4. Only one character in the story, Tarloff, is individualized; the others are sketched broadly (compare the descriptive details of Tarloff with those of Rusk or Helen). How has the author disguised this? Are the characters plausible? Why? Are they motivated? Does the reader's experience or observation contribute anything to the plausibility and the motivation? How? If we consider "The Dry Rock" as primarily a theme story, what is the author's purpose in handling his characters in this fashion? Does it add to or subtract from the effectiveness of the emotional impact? Why? Does it make the theme more meaningful? If so, how? What is the implied significance of Tarloffs being the only individual in the story?

5. If we consider Tarloff as the protagonist in this story, and Rusk, Pidgear, Helen, and Officer Kraus the antagonists (a case can be made for its being Fitzsimmons' story, which we will disregard here), what is Fitzsimmons' place in the story? Is he essential to it? Why? (Consider here not merely the action of the story but the theme as well. Consider, too, the point of view, that is, the position from which the story is seen.)

6. Comment upon the significance of Tarloff's being a Russian.

7. We have seen that in most stories a main character goes through a change as a result of a crisis situation. It can be argued, however, that no character, with the possible exception of Fitzsimmons, changes in "The Dry Rock." Do you think that the author's use of static character is deliberate? What significant point does it contribute to the meaning of the story?

8. Show in what ways each character in "The Dry Rock" contributes to the theme of the story.

9. What does the plot contribute to the meaning of the story?

10. "The Dry Rock" actually presents a double conflict: a primary one (Tarloff versus Rusk and company) and a secondary one (Fitzsimmons versus Helen). What does the secondary conflict contribute to the theme?

11. In order to arrive at the theme of "The Dry Rock," Shaw had to end his story as he did. Why? If the ending of the story were a happy one, what would the story say instead? (This is a question for those who wonder why many writers and critics criticize the happy endings in movies.) In terms of character and conflict, how does Shaw make his ending logical? Consider especially, in answering this, the character of Fitzsimmons. In what respects is the present ending ironical? Would a happy ending have contained a similar irony?

12. How does the statement at the end of the story "Fitzsimmons hated his wife, suddenly . . ." contribute to the theme? Consider Fitzsimmons' character and explain why this attitude should crystallize at this particular point in the story and not earlier. What things are involved in this suddenly discovered hatred? Why is this sudden discovery an ironical comment upon Fitzsimmons himself? In answering this, consider his character, his part in the story and his contribution to the ending, as well as his final attitude.

13. Find and discuss the ironical details in the story (such as

Rusk's statement, "What are you? Yuh don't act like an American citizen. What are yuh?").

14. Is there any irrelevant character in "The Dry Rock"? Any unnecessary line or detail? Can it be said that "The Dry Rock" is unified? Is the emphasis of the story on theme or emotional effect? Or both? Is, perhaps, the one vitally necessary to the other? If so, explain why.

Part III



The True and the False: An Exercise in Comparison and Criticism

AT THIS POINT in our consideration of short stories we have noted the basic characteristics of effective short stories and have examined six such stories. By implication we have also given you material which should enable you to criticize a story—that is, to test it and decide whether it is a relatively good or a relatively bad short story, and why. On the matter of ineffectiveness, however, what we have given you so far has been only implicative and negative. What we intend to do in this introduction is to discuss more specifically the positive characteristics of the ineffective or *dishonest* short story.

This is necessary because, unfortunately, a dishonest story is often more positive than we have yet suggested; it is often something more than merely a story which lacks adequate character motivation or plot unity. There are many short stories in which the writer substitutes dishonest devices for honest ones, in which weaknesses in the nature of the story are covered up by tricks. In this part we propose to point out the most common of these tricks.

A note at this point: We cannot discuss here the various reasons for what we call dishonest writing—there are many and the cause does not always lie at the door of the writer. But we should make clear what we mean by the adjectives *honest* and *dishonest*, for outside fiction these terms have a stronger and somewhat different

connotation from the one we intend here. Briefly, what we mean by *dishonest* is ineffective or false, and what we mean by *honest* is genuine, effective, true. A dishonest emotion, for example, is one which does not "come across" to the reader, or, if it does, comes across in a diluted or shallow form. The terms, of course, refer to stories and not to the writers of those stories.

Dishonesty in Plot

There are many varieties of dishonesty in the treatment of plot, but most of them can be grouped under the general heading, *Plot Manipulation*. Plot manipulation can be defined as the wrenching of the external direction of a story one way or another in complete disregard of the other elements in that story—usually the element of character plausibility, consistency, or motivation. To make this definition clearer, let us consider three very common ways in which writers manipulate their plots.

The most common of these is the forcing of a happy ending upon a story. Now there is nothing fundamentally wrong with a happy ending—so long as that ending is logical in terms of the story's characters, conflict, theme, and direction. We have noted above that a story is essentially the bringing together of two opposing forces, the development of the conflict between those forces, and the resolution of that conflict *in terms of the relative strength of these forces*. And when the protagonist in this conflict is clearly stronger than the antagonist, a happy ending is logical. But in a great many story situations the antagonist is established as the stronger force; and though we may *want* the protagonist to win, logic tells us that the antagonist *should* win. This is the reason for the tragic ending in *Hamlet*, where the protagonist is brought into conflict with an evil, corrupt, but very powerful society; though we may want Hamlet to win out against this evil, logic tells us that he will inevitably lose—which he does.

But many writers feel, rightly or wrongly, that their readers dislike tragedy and are disturbed by unpleasantness, and these writers often try to give readers what they want without considering the nature of their story material. Moreover, many writers subscribe, as well, to the principle of *poetic justice*, which means that good, no

matter how weak, always triumphs, and that evil, no matter how strong, always suffers defeat. Since the antagonist in a story usually symbolizes evil and the protagonist good, the outcome of many stories, in terms of this principle, is predetermined. But in order to make his story *prove* his principle, the writer may have to resort to a "gimmick"—which is a slang term for trick. He may bring two forces together, forces which we see clashing all around us in life; he may pit, say, a good man against an evil group of men, or an admirable hero against a cold natural force. From his observation the writer knows that in story situations like these the antagonist is usually stronger than the protagonist, and so he may portray his forces—for nine tenths of the story. Then he may introduce his gimmick—which is often a coincidence (though clever writers will often "plant" this coincidence in the opening of the story)—and the gimmick is the means to an unexpected, and often illogical, happy ending. A good example of such manipulation is seen in the moving picture version of *The Lost Weekend*. Here the protagonist is shown in the stranglehold of alcohol (the antagonist), and nothing, neither his self-respect, his family, his girl, nor his ambition to write, can break this hold. We watch this man's losing battle for two hours or more, and then the gimmick is introduced—in this case, the pretty girl (who, until now, has been unable to do anything for the protagonist) carrying a typewriter which she has just reclaimed from a pawnshop; and the protagonist immediately goes on the wagon and sits down to start his writing career. (Jackson's novel, incidentally, ended tragically, which was logical in terms of his materials.)

Plot manipulation for the sake of a happy ending is the most common form of dishonesty in handling the incidents in a story. One or two other types of trickery, however, should be mentioned. When we study the brief synopsis of the movie version of *The Lost Weekend*, we notice that two tricks have been used to force the happy ending: first, coincidence has been used (the typewriter and the girl entering the story at exactly the right moment) in disregard of the principle in fiction that outside circumstances must not be allowed to force the solution in a story, but that the characters must be permitted to work out their own destinies; and second, a character is arbitrarily changed in order to effect the ending, in disregard of the

principle that a character in a story can change only if the writer shows adequate and convincing reason for that change. Now if a reader is permitted to recognize these weaknesses, it is obvious that he will not accept the story, that he will fail to be convinced and will dismiss the story as false. In order to avoid such recognition, writers may disguise weaknesses in a story in a number of ways. Many of the devices employed for this purpose will be discussed in later sections of this introduction, but let us here mention two plot devices which writers often use to cover up basic deficiencies in a story. One we call *melodrama*, which means action for the sake of action; by introducing a great deal of external action a writer can take a reader's mind off such things as the motivation behind that action or the logic of the action in terms of the whole story. If we remember that action in a story must derive naturally from the nature of the characters and must be logically related to the story's purpose, theme, and emotional effect, we will be able to spot melodrama when we find it in a story. (Melodrama often takes the form, in humorous stories, of unnecessary complication; a writer, by tangling his characters up and keeping them tangled, can get our minds off character and keep them on action.) A second device is more common; we can call it the trick or surprise ending. Again, we must be careful not to condemn all stories that have surprise endings. There are many stories that use rather than abuse a surprise ending, in which such an ending is logical and right in terms of the whole story. In very good stories such an ending may be so related to the plot, character, and theme that it furnishes a final flash of illumination that makes clear the whole meaning, purpose, and direction of the story. But the surprise ending is often abused; it is abused when it is seized upon to take the reader's mind off the essential elements or problems in the story, when it distracts the reader so that the weak points in the story—characterization, direction, meaning, emotional effect—are forgotten. So we can make a generalization about trick endings in a story. When they are the whole reason for the existence of a story, they are probably dishonest. Or we can put this in another way: In the stories where the surprise ending is legitimate, the ending makes very little difference so far as our interest in the story is concerned; but if such an ending is so important to

the story that we cannot reread it with pleasure because knowing the surprise turn in advance kills our interest in it, then we can be fairly certain that the ending is a trick and dishonest.

Falsity in Characterization

The above paragraphs suggest that falsity in one element in a story will result in falsity in other elements. The fact that we cannot discuss falsity in plot without continual reference to character or theme or emotional effect again illustrates the fact that the elements in a short story depend for their effectiveness upon each other and that a story is therefore only as strong as its weakest point.

False or ineffective characterization in a story stems from two causes. One is that ineffective characterization is easier than effective characterization, and hence more frequently found in the work of careless writers. The other is that character, for various reasons, is not considered in its relationship to the total purpose or direction of the story. The specific kinds of ineffective characterization which we will define and discuss in the next page or two all derive from one or both of these causes.

In popular fiction the most common kind of character is the *type* or *stock character*. Again and again we meet in magazine stories the beautiful and seductive but heartless *femme fatale*, the handsome and athletic hero, the beautiful, frank, "natural" heroine, and so on. We call these characters *stock* because they appear over and over again in story after story; one writer borrows them from another, puts them through a "formula" plot, and passes them on to another writer. And here both causes lie behind such characterization. Stock characters are easy for a writer, for he does not have to observe or think, and he does not have to take time out, in the planning of each story, to acquaint himself with the drives, motives, desires, backgrounds, and character traits of a new acquaintance. And for the writer who is primarily concerned with his plot, the stock character is very useful, too. For no effort is required on the part of the reader in understanding a stock character; he has already become acquainted with this character in other stories, and if he reads for story, he prefers his reading to be as effortless as possible.

The stock character should be differentiated from the *shadowy*

character, which often exists for different reasons. A shadowy character is one whose traits, motives, desires, and drives are only vaguely presented, and the character frequently exists in fiction because he makes the outcome of many stories more convincing. A writer, for example, decides to tell you a story about an immoral man who in the course of the story becomes moral. He introduces into his story the antagonist who is to effect this change in his character, and he creates his situation. Now it is difficult to present convincingly the reform of a person who is genuinely bad; it requires a very strong force and a fully developed conflict, as well as very convincing motivation, and many writers are unwilling to devote the space or the thought or the effort to the accomplishment of all this. So our writer may do something else. He may present the immoral side of a man in such a way that we are never fully convinced that the man is immoral; and at the same time he may emphasize, usually by dramatization, this character's moral side. Hence, when the reformation is effected, we tend to accept it—until we stop to think, and discover that there has actually been no reformation in the first place. (We can add, here, that the above illustration does not cover all the reasons for shadowy characterization, that the shadowy character is often not so deliberate as our illustration suggests.)

A third type of dishonest character is the *flat character*. We have mentioned this type before, and have seen that it is often the character who is painted all black or all white or who is otherwise oversimplified. For the careful and thoughtful reader the oversimplified character will lack plausibility; but for the thoughtless reader an easy way for a writer to win his admiration or dislike is to get him on one side or the other of his conflict. It is well, therefore, always to distrust the writer who gets either his heroes or his villains too cheaply.

Finally, as we have noted above, characters in stories are often manipulated for the sake of a story's plot. The principle of consistency in characterization is frequently violated for the sake of a happy or a surprise ending. And this, like the other methods of ineffective characterization or plot manipulation, is often disguised either by devices which we have already discussed or by those which we will consider in the next few pages.

Falsity in Emotional Effect

Earlier in this book we have seen that a genuine emotional effect in a story rests, finally, upon our understanding of and sympathy with a given character in a given situation. We have also said that if we cannot believe in a character in a story or cannot understand the significance of the situation in terms of that character, any intended emotional effect will be lost. We see this very clearly in both "The Lament" and "The Dry Rock," each of which achieves its emotional effect honestly.

Now when a writer manipulates his plot or disregards character motivation or otherwise abuses his story material, he usually sacrifices any emotion he might otherwise have gained. If we cannot believe in a character because that character is not *real* but *stock*, we cannot derive any emotion—pity or love or anger or hate—from any situation in which that character may find himself. Or if a character trait is arbitrarily changed for the sake of a story ending or a stock theme, we can no longer derive any emotion from the situation because we can no longer accept the situation. We see this most clearly in 1890 melodrama, where we no longer feel what the writer intended us to feel because we cannot believe what the writer has presented to us. Or we observe this in many "slick" stories, which are pretty and brittle and interesting exercises in technique, but which leave us cold—neither fearful nor angry nor melancholy in the middle of the story, nor happy at the end.

But why, we may ask, did the 1890 audience react as it did toward its drama, or why do we sometimes seem to derive emotion from an obviously superficial or manipulated story? Again the answer lies in the fact that writers often resort to devices to cover up the basic lack of emotion in a story situation itself. These devices come under a single heading which we call *sentimentality*. Sentimentality is generally confused with *pathos*, but what it is instead is an emotional response in excess of the occasion. Thus, "The Lament" is pathetic but not sentimental, because the situation deserves pathos; but the emotion here is genuine because it derives from the character and the situation and is therefore genuinely earned. So we can say that what is meant by sentimentality in fiction is any emotion which

is not *earned* by the writer through the honest, effective, and convincing portrayal of a character in an honestly presented situation.

In order to see why many stories are basically sentimental, let us consider an illustration. Suppose that a writer, as he walks down the street, sees a small boy helping an old lady across a busy intersection. Now if this writer merely wishes to arouse in a reader a superficial emotion, he may try to derive from this incident an emotional response (probably pathos or tenderness) *by simply presenting the incident itself*. But if this writer is honest, he will realize that before this situation can be used to elicit a genuine emotion, he must present us with a great many relevant factors which will deepen and strengthen the emotional effect which is only *potentially* in this incident. For example, he will consider the characters involved. The old lady may not be worth helping across the street, and the boy may be acting as he does in hopes of getting a quarter for it, in which case the act is not admirable or pathetic at all. Moreover, the writer will consider all of the relevant factors in the situation—not merely the worth of the old lady but the fact of her helplessness in a large city, the disinterest of the adults who pass the old lady without noticing her need, and so on; and he will show that the boy is admirable outside of this situation and is acting altruistically. If the writer does something comparable to this, the act may then transmit pathos to the reader but it will not have been handled sentimentally, because the writer has realized that *no situation in and of itself can transmit a genuine emotion*.

But many writers, instead of considering the pertinent factors in a story situation and deriving their emotional effects from the presentation of a *total situation*, resort to tricks to achieve the *effect* of an emotion where no emotion exists. We say that they achieve an *unearned* emotion. There are four common devices which will achieve such an emotion. One is the *stock response*, which may be defined as the use of any character, situation, or concept the emotional meaning of which has been established outside of the specific piece of fiction in which it occurs. For example, most Americans have a certain emotional reaction when they come upon the word *mother*; they have been conditioned by poetry, stories, the institution of Mother's Day, and group opinion to feel that if all mothers are

not pure in heart, noble, and self-sacrificing, at least they should be. For this reason, most Americans get a synthetic feeling when they see or hear this word, a feeling which they mistake for tenderness or melancholy or love. Thus, it is very easy for a writer who wants us to feel a certain way about a character to attach to that character the fact of motherhood.

But why, if we *do* feel something in this situation, is the method dishonest or ineffective? Simply because the emotion so derived will be shallow and superficial. Consider, for example, what happens to the emotional effect we have been discussing when we attach to the noun *mother* the adjective *unwed* or *drunken*. The whole emotional concept is destroyed.

There exist other devices, all of them similar to the stock response, which make stones sentimental. For example, a writer may attempt to derive emotion not from the honest portrayal of character and situation, but from editorializing; he may hide the emotional barrenness of his story by telling us how we *should* feel or how he *wants* us to feel. Again we must point out that a writer may resort to exposition, to summarizing or telling the emotion he is trying to put across, so long as he has already earned that emotion by dramatically effective means. But if the entire emotion derives from this editorializing, then it will be as shallow and superficial as the emotion you might feel if I said here that at this moment I was very sad. Or a writer may overwrite, poetize, use heightened style to try to capture an emotion which is not there to begin with, and again the use of this device is an indication that something basic to the emotion is lacking in the story itself.

From the above paragraphs it will be noted that fake or shallow emotions derive, in general, from a basic weakness in a short story. If a genuine emotional effect comes finally from character and situation and from nowhere else in the story, and if a writer tries to get his emotional effect not here but from such external and irrelevant tricks as stock response, overwriting, or editorializing, what that writer is doing is trying to get around the real issues in his story; he is trying to find a cheap and convenient substitute for plot unity, character plausibility and consistency, and significant thematic content. For the lack of these is what produces a surface

emotion behind which or beneath which there is nothing genuine, honest, or convincing.

Falsity in Theme

The thoughtful reader of this introduction will have observed, by this time, that the specific kinds of falsity which we have discussed above have one characteristic in common: they are all examples of oversimplification. A stock or flat or inconsistent character is an oversimplified character; the writer has failed to consider the fact that all human beings are individuals, with complex individual motives and desires and traits. Similarly, the writer of formula plots has failed to recognize that every new set of characters he creates demands a new situation; and the writer who handles his stories sentimentally has forgotten that every emotion is the result of a very complex set of circumstances and details and that for this reason no human emotion can ever exactly parallel another human emotion. In the discussion which follows we will note that oversimplification is the basic characteristic, too, of the ineffective theme.

First, the false or dishonest theme is oversimplified because it is almost always stereotyped; it is stock, as plots or characters or emotional responses are often stock. It is the product not of a given writer's observations of and thoughts about life, but of mass opinion or prejudice. Generally it is a lie, because it summarizes not what men really believe but what they want to believe. You find the stereotyped theme in the countless stories which tell you that "the course of true love never runs smooth," but that he who marries always "lives happily ever after"; or you find it in the stories which imply that the acquisition of wealth or fame is the way to a good life (or the reverse, which is also stock); in those which tell you that honesty is always the best policy; or in those which suggest that mothers are always pure and unselfish. The stock theme, in other words, is the borrowed theme. It is the theme which recognizes that everything in life is a drug except reality, which is unbearable. It represents a refusal on the part of the writer to challenge an axiom. But good writers, like good scientists, live by challenging axioms, and they write what they have observed to be the truth, not what their society has told them is the truth. In their stories they offer us their individ-

ual interpretation of the facts of existence, and what they say has validity (whether we agree with it or not) because it is genuinely the writer's property and not just something he has borrowed for the moment.

The dishonest theme is usually oversimplified, too, because the writer fails or refuses to take into account all of the ramifications, the meanings, or implications, of a given theme. For example, it is possible that the principle of poetic justice (the principle which states that good always triumphs and evil is always defeated) is operative in our world. But to the naive writer poetic justice merely means that the thief gets caught or that all good people eventually become millionaires. In life we are all aware that this is not the case: good people may live without getting any of life's breaks, material or otherwise, and there are probably a good many thieves, of one kind or another, whose names appear in the American equivalent of Burke's *Peerage*. Yet there may be compensations for the good but unlucky person over and beyond his suffering, and there may be similar compensations for the thief. The compensation may be ironical, and to us who observe it, it may seem to be anything but compensatory. But the point is that the honest writer will really examine all this before he writes about it; he will first determine whether or not he really believes in poetic justice, and then he will determine exactly why and to what extent. He will not accept a theme which he himself has not thought about, tested against his observation of life, and come to believe in.

What we have said in this section should enable you to weigh, compare, and test the stories which you will read not just in this book but later, after you have left this class or this campus. As a kind of summary of what we have said here and elsewhere in this book, we follow this introduction with two stories. We ask you to analyze them, to determine what they say and how; and then we ask you to compare them and to decide which story is honest and which is dishonest. You should use, in this comparison, not only what you have learned from the paragraphs above but what you have also learned elsewhere in this book.

A Double-Dyed Deceiver

by O. HENRY

THE TROUBLE began in Laredo. It was the Llano Kid's fault, for he should have confined his habit of manslaughter to Mexicans. But the Kid was past twenty; and to have only Mexicans to one's credit at twenty is to blush unseen on the Rio Grande border.

It happened in old Justo Valdo's gambling house. There was a poker game at which sat players who were not all friends, as happens often where men ride in from afar to shoot Folly as she gallops. There was a row over so small a matter as a pair of queens; and when the smoke had cleared away it was found that the Kid had committed an indiscretion, and his adversary had been guilty of a blunder. For, the unfortunate combatant, instead of being a Greaser, was a high-blooded youth from the cow ranches, of about the Kid's own age and possessed of friends and champions. His blunder in missing the Kid's right ear only a sixteenth of an inch when he pulled his gun did not lessen the indiscretion of the better marksman.

The Kid, not being equipped with a retinue, nor bountifully supplied with personal admirers and supporters—on account of a rather umbrageous reputation, even for the border—considered it not incompatible with his indisputable gameness to perform that judicious fractional act known as "pulling his freight."

Quickly the avengers gathered and sought him. Three of them overtook him within a rod of the station. The Kid turned and showed his teeth in that brilliant but mirthless smile that usually preceded his deeds of insolence and violence, and his pursuers fell back without making it necessary for him even to reach for his weapon.

But in this affair the Kid had not felt the grim thirst for encounter that usually urged him on to battle. It had been a purely chance row, born of the cards and certain epithets impossible for a gentleman to brook that had passed between the two. The Kid had rather liked the slim, haughty, brown-faced young chap whom his bullet had cut off in the first pride of manhood. And now he wanted no more blood. He wanted to get away and have a good long sleep somewhere in the sun on the mesquite grass with his handkerchief over his face. Even a Mexican might have crossed his path in safety while he was in this mood.

The Kid openly boarded the north-bound passenger train that departed five minutes later. But at Webb, a few miles out, where it was flagged to take on a traveller, he abandoned that manner of escape. There were telegraph stations ahead; and the Kid looked askance at electricity and steam. Saddle and spur were his rocks of safety.

The man whom he had shot was a stranger to him. But the Kid knew that he was of the Coralitos outfit from Hidalgo; and that the punchers from that ranch were more relentless and vengeful than Kentucky feudists when wrong or harm was done to one of them. So, with the wisdom that has characterized many great fighters, the Kid decided to pile up as many leagues as possible of chaparral and pear between himself and the retaliation of the Coralitos bunch.

Near the station was a store; and near the store, scattered among the mesquites and elms, stood the saddled horses of the customers. Most of them waited, half asleep, with sagging limbs and drooping heads. But one, a long-legged roan with a curved neck, snorted and pawed the turf. Him the Kid mounted, gripped with his knees, and slapped gently with the owner's own quirt.

If the slaying of the temerarious card-player had cast a cloud over the Kid's standing as a good and true citizen, this last act of his veiled his figure in the darkest shadows of disrepute. On the Rio Grande border if you take a man's life you sometimes take trash; but if you take his horse, you take a thing the loss of which renders him poor, indeed, and which enriches you not—if you are caught. For the Kid there was no turning back now.

With the springing roan under him he felt little care or uneas-

iness. After a five-mile gallop he drew in to the plainsman's jogging trot, and rode northeastward toward the Nueces River bottoms. He knew the country well—its most tortuous and obscure trails through the great wilderness of brush and pear, and its camps and lonesome ranches where one might find safe entertainment. Always he bore to the east; for the Kid had never seen the ocean, and he had a fancy to lay his hand upon the mane of the great Gulf, the gamesome colt of the greater waters.

So after three days he stood on the shore at Corpus Christi, and looked out across the gentle ripples of a quiet sea.

Captain Boone, of the schooner *Flyaway*, stood near his skiff, which one of his crew was guarding in the surf. When ready to sail he had discovered that one of the necessities of life, in the parallelogrammatic shape of plug tobacco, had been forgotten. A sailor had been dispatched for the missing cargo. Meanwhile the captain paced the sands, chewing profanely at his pocket store.

A slim, wiry youth in high-heeled boots came down to the water's edge. His face was boyish, but with a premature severity that hinted at a man's experience. His complexion was naturally dark; and the sun and wind of an outdoor life had burned it to a codec brown. His hair was as black and straight as an Indian's; his face had not yet been upturned to the humiliation of a razor; his eyes were a cold and steady blue. He carried his left arm somewhat away from his body, for pearl-handled .455s are frowned upon by town marshals, and are a little bulky when packed in the left armhole of one's vest. He looked beyond Captain Boone at the gulf with the impersonal and expressionless dignity of a Chinese emperor.

"Thinkin' of buyin' that 'ar gulf, buddy?" asked the captain, made sarcastic by his narrow escape from the tobaccoless voyage.

"Why, no," said the Kid gently, "I reckon not. I never saw it before. I was just looking at it. Not thinking of selling it, are you?"

"Not this trip," said the captain. "I'll send it to you C.O.D. when I get back to Buenas Tierras. Here comes that capstanfooted lubber with the chewin'. I ought to've weighed anchor an hour ago."

"Is that your ship out there?" asked the Kid.

"Why, yes," answered the captain, "if you want to call a schooner a ship, and I don't mind lyin'. But you better say Miller and Gon-

zales, owners, and ordinary plain, Billy-be-damned old Samuel K. Boone, skipper."

"Where are you going to?" asked the refugee.

"Buenas Tierras, coast of South America—I forgot what they called the country the last time I was there. Cargo—lumber, corrugated iron, and machetes."

"What kind of a country is it?" asked the Kid—"hot or cold?"

"Warmish, buddy," said the captain. "But a regular Paradise Lost for elegance of scenery and be-yooty of geography. Ye're wakened every morning by the sweet singin' of red birds with seven purple tails, and the sighin' of breezes in the posies and roses. And the inhabitants never work, for they can reach out and pick steamer baskets of the choicest hothouse fruit without gettin' out of bed. And there's no Sunday and no ice and no rent and no troubles and no use and no nothin'. It's a great country for a man to go to sleep with, and wait for somethin' to turn up. The bananys and oranges and hurricanes and pineapples that ye cat comes from there."

"That sounds to me!" said the Kid, at List betraying interest. "What'll the expressage be to take me out there with you?"

"Twenty-four dollars," said Captain Boone; "grub and transportation. Second cabin. I haven't got a first cabin."

"You've got my company," said the Kid, pulling out a buckskin bag.

With three hundred dollars he had gone to Laredo lor his regular "blowout." The duel in Valdos's had cut short his season of hilarity, but it had left him with nearly \$200 for and in the light that it had made necessary.

"All right, buddy," said the captain. "I hope your ma won't blame me for this little childish escapade of yours." He beckoned to one of the boat's crew. "Let Sanchez lift you out to the skill so *you* won't get your feet wet."

Thacker, the United States consul at Buenas Tierras, was not yet drunk. It was only eleven o'clock; and he never arrived at his desired state of beatitude—a state where he sang ancient maudlin vaudeville songs and pelted his screaming parrot with banana peels—until the middle of the afternoon. So, when he looked up from his

hammock at the sound of a slight cough, and saw the Kid standing in the door of the consulate, he was still in a condition to extend the hospitality and courtesy due from the representative of a great nation. "Don't disturb yourself," said the Kid easily. "I just dropped in. They told me it was customary to light at your camp before starting in to round up the town. I just came in on a ship from Texas."

"Glad to see you, Mr.—," said the consul.

The Kid laughed.

"Spraguc Dalton," he said. "It sounds funny to me to hear it. I'm called the Llano Kid in the Rio Grande country."

"I'm Thacker," said the consul. "Take that cane-bottom chair. Now if you've come to invest, you want somebody to advise you. These dingies will cheat you out of the gold in your teeth if you don't understand their ways. Try a cigar?"

"Much obliged," said the Kid, "but if it wasn't for my corn shucks and the little bag in my back pocket I couldn't live a minute." He took out his "makings," and rolled a cigarette.

"They speak Spanish here," said the consul. "You'll need an interpreter. If there's anything I can do, why, I'd be delighted. If you're buying fruit lands or looking for a concession of any sort, you'll want somebody who knows the ropes to look out for you."

"I speak Spanish," said the Kid, "about nine times better than I do English. Everybody speaks it on the range where I come from. And I'm not in the market for anything."

"You speak Spanish?" said Thacker thoughtfully. He regarded the Kid absorbedly.

"You look like a Spaniard, too," he continued. "And you're from Texas. And you can't be more than twenty or twenty-one. I wonder if you've got any nerve."

"You got a deal of some kind to put through?" asked the Texan with unexpected shrewdness.

"Are you open to a proposition?" said Thacker.

"What's the use to deny it?" said the Kid. "I got into a little gun frolic down in Laredo and plugged a white man. There wasn't any Mexican handy. And I come down to your parrot-and-monkey range just for to smell the morning-glories and marigolds. Now, do you *sabe*?"

Thacker got up and closed the door.

"Let me see your hand," he said.

He took the Kid's left hand, and examined the back of it closely.

"I can do it," he said excitedly. "Your flesh is as hard as wood and as healthy as a baby's. It will heal in a week."

"If it's a fist fight you want to back me for," said the Kid, "don't put your money up yet. Make it gun work, and I'll keep you company. But no barehanded scrapping, like ladies at a tea-party, for me."

"It easier than that," said Thacker. "Just step here, will you?"

Through the window he pointed to a two-story white-stuccoed house with wide galleries rising amid the deep-green tropical foliage on a wooded hill that sloped gently from the sea.

"In that house," said Thacker, "a fine old Castilian gentleman and his wife are yearning to gather you into their arms and fill your pockets with money. Old Santos Urique lives there. He owns half the gold-mines in the country."

"You haven't been eating loco weed, have you?" asked the Kid.

"Sit down again," said Thacker, "and I'll tell you. Twelve years ago they lost a kid. No, he didn't die—although most of 'em here do from drinking the surface water. He was a wild little devil, even if he wasn't but eight years old. Everybody knows about it. Some Americans who were through here prospecting for gold had letters to Senor Urique, and the boy was a favourite with them. They filled his head with big stories about the States; and about a month after they left, the kid disappeared, too. He was supposed to have stowed himself away among the banana bunches on a fruit steamer, and gone to New Orleans. He was seen once afterward in Texas, it was thought, but they never heard anything more of him. Old Urique has spent thousands of dollars having him looked for. The madam was broken up worst of all. The kid was her life. She wears mourning yet. But they say she believes he'll come back to her some day, and never gives up hope. On the back of the boy's left hand was tattooed a flying eagle carrying a spear in his claws. That's old Urique's coat of arms or something that he inherited in Spain."

The Kid raised his left hand slowly and gazed at it curiously.

"That's it," said Thacker, reaching behind the official desk for his

bottle of smuggled brandy. "You're not so slow. I can do it. What was I consul at Sandakan for? I never knew till now. In a week I'll have the eagle bird with the frog-sticker blended in so you'd think you were born with it. I brought a set of the needles and ink just because I was sure you'd drop in some day, Mr. Dalton."

"Oh, hell," said the Kid. "I thought I told you my name!"

"All right, 'Kiel,' then. It won't be that long. How does *Senorito Urique* sound, for a change?"

"I never played son any that I remember of," said the Kid. "If I had any parents to mention they went over the divide about the time I gave my first bleat. What is the plan of your round-up?"

Thacker leaned back against the wall and held his glass up to the light.

"We've come now," said he, "to the question of how far you're willing to go in a little matter of the sort."

"I told you why I came down here," said the Kid simply.

"A good answer," said the consul. "But you won't have to go that far. Here's the scheme. After I get the trade-mark tattooed on your hand I'll notify old Urique. In the meantime I'll furnish you with all of the family history I can find out, so you can be studying up points to talk about. You've got the looks, you speak the Spanish, you know the facts, you can tell about Texas, you've got the tattoo mark. When I notify them that the rightful heir has returned and is waiting to know whether he will be received and pardoned, what will happen? They'll simply rush down here and fall on your neck, and the curtain goes down for refreshments and a stroll in the lobby."

"I'm waiting," said the Kid. "I haven't had my saddle off in your camp long, pardner, and I never met you before; but if you intend to let it go at a parental blessing, why, I'm mistaken in my man, that's all."

"Thanks," said the consul. "I haven't met anybody in a long time that keeps up with an argument as well as you do. The rest of it is simple. If they take you in only for a while it's long enough. Don't give 'em time to hunt up the strawberry mark on your left shoulder. Old Urique keeps anywhere from \$50,000 to \$100,000 in his house all the time in a little safe that you could open with a shoe buttoner.

Get it. My skill as a tattooer is worth half the boodle. We go halves and catch a tramp steamer for Rio Janeiro. Let the United States go to pieces if it can't get along without my services. *¿Qué dice, señor?*"

"It sounds to me!" said the Kid, nodding his head. "I'm out for the dust."

"All right, then," said Thacker. "You'll have to keep close until we get the bird on you. You can live in the back room here. I do my own cooking, and I'll make you as comfortable as a parsimonious Government will allow me."

Thacker had set the time at a week, but it was two weeks before the design that he patiently tattooed upon the Kid's hand was to his notion. And then Thacker called a *muchacho*, and dispatched this note to the intended victim:

El Señor Don Santos Urique,
La Casa Blanca,

My Dear Sir:

I beg permission to inform you that there is in my house as a temporary guest a young man who arrived in Buenas Tierras from the United States some days ago. Without wishing to excite any hopes that may not be realized, I think there is a possibility of his being your long-absent son. It might be well for you to call and see him. If he is, it is my opinion that his intention was to return to his home, but upon arriving here, his courage failed him from doubts as to how he would be received.

Your true servant,
Thompson Thacker.

Half an hour afterward—quick time for Buenas Tierras—Señor Urique's ancient landau drove to the consul's door, with the bare-footed coachman beating and shouting at the team of fat, awkward horses.

A tall man with a white moustache alighted, and assisted to the ground a lady who was dressed and veiled in unrelieved black.

The two hastened inside, and were met by Thacker with his best diplomatic bow. By his desk stood a slender young man with clear-cut, sunbrowned features and smoothly brushed black hair.

Señora Urique threw back her heavy veil with a quick gesture. She

was past middle age, and her hair was beginning to silver, but her full, proud figure and clear olive skin retained traces of the beauty peculiar to the Basque province. But, once you had seen her eyes, and comprehended the great sadness that was revealed in their deep shadows and hopeless expression, you saw that the woman lived only in some memory.

She bent upon the young man a long look of the most agonized questioning. Then her great black eyes turned, and her gaze rested upon his left hand. And then with a sob, not loud, but seeming to shake the room, she cried "*¡Hijo mio!*" and caught the Llano Kid to her heart.

A month afterward the Kid came to the consulate in response to a message sent by Thacker.

He looked the young Spanish *caballero*. His clothes were imported, and the wiles of the jewellers had not been spent upon him in vain. A more than respectable diamond shone on his finger as he rolled a shuck cigarette.

"What's doing?" asked Thacker.

"Nothing much," said the Kid calmly. "I eat my first iguana steak to-day. They're them big lizards, you *sabe*? I reckon, though, that frijoles and side bacon would do me about as well. Do you care for iguanas, Thacker?"

"No, nor for some other kinds of reptiles," said Thacker.

It was three in the afternoon, and in another hour he would be in his state of beatitude.

"It's time you were making good, sonny," he went on, with an ugly look on his reddened face. "You're not playing up to me square. You've been the prodigal son for four weeks now, and you could have had veal for every meal on a gold dish if you'd wanted it. Now, Mr. Kid, do you think it's right to leave me out so long on a husk diet? What's the trouble? Don't you get your filial eyes on anything that looks like cash in the Casa Blanca? Don't tell me you don't. Everybody knows where old Urique keeps his stuff. It's U.S. currency, too; he don't accept anything else. What's doing? Don't say 'nothing' this time."

"Why, sure," said the Kid, admiring his diamond, "there's plenty of money up there. I'm no judge of collateral in bunches, but I will

undertake for to say that I've seen the rise of \$50,000 at a time in that tin grub box that my adopted father calls his safe. And he lets me carry the key sometimes just to show me that he knows I'm the real little Francisco that strayed from the herd a long time ago."

"Well, what are you waiting for?" asked Thacker angrily. "Don't you forget that I can upset your apple-cart any day I want to. If old Urique knew you were an impostor, what sort of things would happen to you? Oh, you don't know this country, Mr. Texas Kid. The laws here have got mustard spread between 'em. These people here'd stretch you out like a frog that had been stepped on, and give you about fifty sticks at every corner of the plaza. And they'd wear every stick out, too. What was left of you they'd feed to alligators."

"I might as well tell you now, pardner," said the Kid, sliding down low on his steamer chair, "that things are going to stay just as they are. They're about right now."

"What do you mean?" asked Thacker, rattling the bottom of his glass on his desk.

"The scheme's off," said the Kid. "And whenever you have the pleasure of speaking to me address me as Don Francisco Urique. I'll guarantee I'll answer to it. We'll let Colonel Urique keep his money. His little tin safe is as good as the time-locker in the First National Bank of Laredo as far as you and me are concerned."

"You're going to throw me down, then, are you?" said the consul.

"Sure," said the Kid cheerfully. "Throw you down. That's it. And now I'll tell you why. The first night I was up at the colonel's house they introduced me to a bedroom. No blankets on the floor—a real room, with a bed and things in it. And before I was asleep, in comes this artificial mother of mine and tucks in the covers. '*Panchito*,' she says, 'my little lost one, God has brought you back to me. I bless His name forever.' It was that, or some truck like that, she said. And down comes a drop or two of rain and hits me on the nose. And all that stuck by me, Mr. Thacker. And it's been that way ever since. And it's got to stay that way. Don't you think that it's for what's in it for me, either, that I say so. If you have any such ideas, keep 'em to yourself. I haven't had much truck with women in my life, and no mothers to speak of, but here's a lady that we've got to keep fooled. Once she stood it; twice she won't. I'm a low-down wolf,

and the devil may have sent me on this trail instead of God, but I'll travel it to the end. And now, don't forget that I'm Don Francisco Urique whenever you happen to mention my name."

"I'll expose you to-day, you—you double-dyed traitor," stammered Thacker.

The Kid arose and, without violence, took Thacker by the throat with a hand of steel, and shoved him slowly into a corner. Then he drew from under his left arm his pearl-handled .45 and poked the cold muzzle of it against the consul's mouth.

"I told you why I come here," he said, with his old freezing smile. "If I leave here, you'll be the reason. Never forget it, pardner. Now, what is my name?"

"Er—Don Francisco Urique," gasped Thacker.

From outside came a sound of wheels, and the shouting of some one, and the sharp thwacks of a wooden whipstock upon the backs of fat horses.

The Kid put up his gun, and walked toward the door. But he turned again and came back to the trembling Thacker, and held up his left hand with its back toward the consul.

"There's one more reason," he said slowly, "why things have got to stand as they are. The fellow I killed in Laredo had one of them same pictures on his left hand."

Outside, the ancient landau of Don Santos Urique rattled to the door. The coachman ceased his bellowing. Senora Urique, in a voluminous gay gown of white lace and flying ribbons, leaned forward with a happy look in her great soft eyes.

"Are you within, dear son?" she called, in the rippling Castilian.

"*Madre mia, yo vengo* (mother, I come)," answered the young Don Francisco Urique.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. What is the plot direction of "A Double-Dyed Deceiver"—that is, what is the *basic* thing which happens in the story?
2. What is the tone of the opening of the story? Is this tone appropriate to the story's subject matter? If not, can you explain O. Henry's purpose in treating his subject as he does? Has this anything

to do, say, with what happens to the Llano Kid at the end of the story? Would you say that this tone, then, is honest? Discuss.

3. How many examples of coincidence can you find in the story? Are the coincidences in any way disguised as coincidences? For what purposes are the coincidences used?

4. Discuss the dialogue in this story. Compare the things (conflict, characterization, emotion) which O. Henry accomplishes in his dialogue with those which Irwin Shaw accomplishes in "The Dry Rock."

5. How does O. Henry achieve his characterization? Is it effective or not? Are his people plausible? Consistent? Round or flat?

6. What do you know about Señora Urique? Can it be said that O. Henry's treatment of her is sentimental? Discuss.

7. Discuss the cause for and nature of the Kid's reformation. Is it convincing?

8. Would you say that O. Henry's characters work out their own destinies or that the author works them out for them? Compare, for example, "A Double-Dyed Deceiver" with "The Lovely Leave" or "The Dry Rock." What are the basic plot differences?

9. Discuss the final revelation of the Kid's about his having killed the Urique heir. Is this revelation O. Henry's reason for having written the story? If O. Henry had not withheld this essential piece of information—if he had put it into the introduction—would the story have been interesting or effective? (Could you read this story twice with much pleasure?) What do you tend to remember about the story after you have finished it? Does the ending distract your attention from such basic matters as character motivation or emotional effect? Discuss.

10. Is there any emotional effect in this story—do you feel either the Kid's love for Senora Urique, his killer instincts, his attitude toward Thacker, or other things toward which he expresses or reveals attitude? If not, why is this emotional effect lacking?

11. Find and discuss examples in "A Double-Dyed Deceiver" of each of the following: plot manipulation, stock characterization, shadowy characterization, flat characterization, sentimentality, stock response, editorializing.

12. Has "A Double-Dyed Deceiver" a theme? If so, can you summarize it? Would you accept this theme as a principle of human existence? If not, why not?

The Necklace

by GUY DE MAUPASSANT

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 housework aroused in her regrets which were despairing, and distracted 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 tablecloth three days old, opposite her husband, who uncovered the soup tureen and declared with an enchanted air, "Ah, the good *pot-au-jeu*! 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 marvelous plates, and of the whispered gallantries which you listen to with a sphinxlike 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 schoolmate 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 company at the palace of the Ministry on Monday evening, January eighteenth."

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 theater 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 toward the corners of her mouth. He stuttered:

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

But, by 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 attaches 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 a 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 toward the Seine, in despair, shivering with cold. At last they found on the quay one of those ancient noctambulant coupes which, exactly as if they were ashamed to show their misery during the day, are never seen round Paris until after night-fall.

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 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 jeweler 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 jeweler to jeweler, searching for a necklace like the other, consulting their memories, sick both of them with chagrin and 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 jeweler 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 of 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 dishcloths, 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 for 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 feted.

What would have happened if she had not lost that necklace? Who knows? Who knows? How life is strange and changeable! 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 Elysees to refresh herself from the labor of the week, she suddenly 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 goodwife, did not recognize her at all, and stammered:

"But—madam!—I do not know— You must be 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 naive 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!"

QUESTIONS I-OR STUDY

1. What is Mme. Loisel's dominant trait? (Consider, especially, her first reaction to the invitation, her reason for wanting the jewels instead of roses, her actions immediately after the ball.)

2. M. Loisel is used as a foil for Mme. Loisel. What are his character traits? What traits in her are emphasized by the contrast?

3. What sentence in the fifth paragraph of this story summarizes the basis for this story? How and why?

4. What does the first scene between M. and Mme. Loisel reveal about the husband's attitude toward the marriage? About the wife's?

5. What is Mme. Loisel's *motive* for wanting the jewels? Is it logical that she should choose a paste necklace instead of genuine jewels? Why or why not? (That is, is her choice entirely a coincidence, or is it consistent with the kind of person she is?)

6. Is it coincidence that Mme. Loisel loses the necklace? Why or why not? If not, can the loss be reconciled with her dominant trait?

7. In the editors' opinion, there is a weak spot in "The Necklace" at the point where the decision not to tell Mme. Forestier about the loss of the necklace comes from the husband, not from the wife. Can you explain why we consider this a weakness, why we consider it inconsistent that M. Loisel should not think of explaining the loss to her, and why we feel that it would have been more consistent had Mme. Loisel been the character who did not want to go to Mme. Forestier with the story of the loss?

8. Is Mme. Loisel's acceptance of the conditions of her poverty logically motivated? If so, what trait provides the motivation and how? Is this same trait the trait which motivated her to her actions in the first part of the story? If so, is there any irony in this fact?

9. Is it logical that Mme. Loisel should make herself known to Mme. Forestier in the final scene of the story? Consider what she would have done ten years later in this situation. If this is logical, what motivates her to do this?

10. Read carefully, considering each detail, the first five paragraphs of "The Necklace." What would you say are Mme. Loisel's values in life, as revealed by these paragraphs? (That is, what does she consider important? What does she live for? Why does she want servants? What kind of a husband would she have preferred?) The presentation of the details in these paragraphs is objective (that is, the author does not comment on *his* attitude toward Mme. Loisel or her values); but can you find evidences here of De Maupassant's opinion of her? If so, where?

11. What changes in her emotional attitude toward life does Mme. Loisel experience in this story? (There are at least four.) From these changes can you construct a generalization not only about Mme. Loisel but about you and me and the meaning of life? In other words, on the basis of what you have discovered so far about "The Necklace," can you summarize the theme of the story?

12. The ending of "The Necklace" is a "surprise" ending. Is it honest or dishonest? In deciding this, consider the following details:

- a. What was Mme. Loisel's motivation for choosing the necklace? Was her choice of a paste necklace logical in terms of her character?

b. Was it accidental that Mme. Loisel lost the necklace, or was it her own fault?

c. Does the ending jerk your mind off the rest of the story—that is, does it exist for its own sake, or does it instead serve to emphasize the rest of the story?

d. Does the ending illuminate in any way the theme of the story? (What did Mme. Loisel lose? What did she buy?)

e. Would the story be effective without the ending? That is, does the story *need* the ending in order to have any point at all? Do you think that knowing the story's ending would spoil a reading of the story?

f. Is the ending *essentially* a plot device or a thematic and emotional device? Why?

13. The opening of "The Necklace" is expository. Is the characterization here convincing? If so, why? Compare De Maupassant's handling of exposition with O. Henry's. What are the fundamental differences in content and tone?

14. On first reading, "The Necklace" will probably seem to be lacking in any emotional effect at all. Is this partly due to the style? Why? What, exactly, is the intended emotional effect? Is it stock (simple) or complex, a mixture of emotions? Explain why.

15. Does "The Necklace" end happily or unhappily? Consider the following details:

a. Your own values in life, which may not be De Maupassant's and which may obscure for you the point of the story.

b. Mme. Loisel's emotional outlook on life in the first part of the story.

c. Mme. Loisel's reactions to her bad luck.

d. Mme. Loisel's emotional point of view as shown in the final scene. (Is she bitter? As unhappy as she was in the opening of the story? If not, why not?)

e. What is emotionally more satisfying: happiness or the sense of having accomplished something very difficult and very worthwhile?

16. How does De Maupassant handle the ten years of drudgery in Mme. Loisel's life? Are the details of these ten years important in terms of (a) the thematic direction and (b) the emotional intent of this story? Why or why not? Can this be said to represent the subordination of plot to theme, character, and emotion? Why?

17. The physical details which De Maupassant stresses in the last section of the story are such details as Mme. Loisel's red hands, poor clothes, rough voice, and so on. You have probably discovered that what has happened on the inside to Mme. Loisel is not comparable to these external details. Why does De Maupassant pose these two types of details one against the other, do you think? Is it a method of avoiding oversimplification of theme? If so, why?

18. The emotional effect of this story is not simple but very complex. It rests, finally, upon a basic irony which underlies the whole story. Can you define that irony? Does the author's style add to this irony and hence to the emotional effect of the story? If so, why and how?

19. "The Necklace" is filled with ironical comments and details. (Consider, for example, such lines as M. Loisel's "How stupid you are," or the line, "How little a thing is needed for us to be lost or to be saved.") Find as many of these details as you can. Do they serve to point out the author's attitude toward his material? If so, why? Do they help to emphasize or clarify the theme? How or why? Do they contribute anything to the story's emotional effect?

20. Summarize the basic differences in handling, intent, and effect between "The Necklace" and "A Double-Dyed Deceiver."

In both "A Double-Dyed Deceiver" and "The Necklace" the authors withhold information from us which comes as a surprise at the end of the story. Consider the nature of the two endings in terms of each story. Consider, too, the point of view in each story. (Through whose eyes is each story seen or presented?) Then explain why O. Henry's withholding of information is dishonest where De Maupassant's is honest.

Part IV — — — —

Theme and the Individual Artist

IN OUR DISCUSSIONS up to this point we have attempted to make clear the nature of theme and to show you some of the problems in reading and in understanding which theme presents. By this time it is no doubt clear to you that themes can concern practically anything and everything which has to do with human experience and with universal ideas which are related to the human condition. For you must never forget that the artist is above all a man alive in his society, perhaps somewhat more perceptive, perhaps somewhat more fluent, perhaps possessed of particular talents and abilities, but fundamentally a living man who communicates in his medium his personal transmission of experience.

We should therefore expect that what different men consider important or significant will vary enormously. One will wish to talk of this, the other of that, and when we have come to respect the judgment of one man or another we say that he is an "expert" in his field and we tend to turn to him when we wish to know about a particular thing. We do this, of course, in all the aspects of our lives: we call a doctor when we want a judgment in the matter of an illness, a minister when we have an ethical or religious problem which worries us, an arithmetic teacher when we cannot work out the problem in the schoolbook. When we call upon the doctor, the minister, the teacher, we are at the same time in virtue of our act recognizing the special knowledge which they have, without necessarily proclaiming by this act that we consider them to be equally knowledgeable in other fields. That is to say, our failure to call in a doctor

when the furnace breaks down is at once an acknowledgment of the particular ability of the furnace repairman and of the particular ability of the doctor.

Thus we can understand that different authors talk about different things. We mean by this that they write in different styles, are concerned with different problems, and in the strict analysis of this term this is quite true. But there may be among stories two kinds of difference. The first is similar to the difference between the furnace repairman and the doctor: the area of ability, the area of concern, are entirely different. The doctor heals the sick, the furnace repairman fixes the furnace, and these are in most ways two unrelated acts, two sharply differentiated skills which operate in two different sets of circumstances. That is to say, we cannot say that Dr. Wagner is a better doctor than Mr. Eastland is a furnace repairman, because there is no valid way in which to compare the two men. It is like trying to add apples, walnuts, and string beans: unless you have a way of finding a common denominator you never can arrive at a meaningful sum. Stories which can be said to differ in this way are stories which are not in any sense trying to do the same thing or to treat of the same things or to communicate ideas on the same level. Compare in this regard a rousing sea yarn, an exciting detective story, a little sketch of a young girl growing up, a long novel about the postwar period, an introspective analysis of an unhappy man. Each of these may well be excellent of its type, but to compare them satisfactorily is almost impossible unless we find a common denominator.

It is, however, the second type of difference with which the forthcoming group of stories is primarily concerned. Stories may differ even though they try to do the same thing, even though they communicate the same idea. To understand this type of difference, consider the case of three men each of whom has taken a trip to Sweden. They return, and their families and friends ask them to describe Sweden and what they saw there. But what does the name "Sweden" mean in such a question? To one man Sweden is the cold and beautiful countryside he saw, the rocky coasts, and the fishing boats. To another man it is the particular people he met, the homes he visited, the food he ate, the cabarets he went to in Stockholm. To the third man it is the economic and social organization which he

found, the standard of living of the people, the types of courts and tribunals which function there. So each of them will honestly answer the request to tell about Sweden in entirely different ways, because to each the term has different referents. This type of difference occurs even when an exactly similar object is viewed by different men. By way of example take the case of a cathedral. Each man looking at it will, when he wishes to describe it, single out different aspects to talk about: the architectural beauty of the arch, the massiveness of the structure, the frescoes, the tone value of the windows. And in each instance a selection of importance is being made out of all the aspects which could be selected, and a rejection of what is not important is equally being made, so that in the final description you have the totality of the experience distilled through the critical apparatus of a man. What he ends up with is not a representation of the cathedral and not a representation of himself, but rather the cathedral as it impinges upon him and as it is transformed within him.

In the same way, a single theme, one major idea, will differ in the way in which it is presented (and hence in the effect it has upon the reader) to the extent that in all their complexity of experience and character the authors themselves differ one from the other. Here, then, is the purpose of the following group of stories: to take a single theme and to show it worked out by different people. No two stories of the group are alike because no two authors are alike, but each of the stories is trying to say the same thing. What they are trying to say is what we have called the problem of initiation.

By *initiation* we mean that a character, in the course of the story, learns something that he did not know before, and that what he learns is already known to, and shared by, the larger group of the world. We mean that the character is initiated into experience in much the same way as a pledge is initiated into his fraternity: after the paddling and the hazing and the ceremonies he becomes a part of the group, and his becoming a part of the group is directly related to the ceremonies he has passed through. As in ordinary initiations, the process is not a simple one, nor the hazards light, but the goal is participation in a larger circle and a wider grouping.

It is for this reason that in each of the following stories you will

find that the protagonist is young, that there are wide areas of experience which he knows nothing about, that events so conspire as to awaken and initiate him into larger knowledge. But neither what he learns nor the ways in which he learns are the same thing in each of the stories, precisely because each of the authors has a different set of values and makes a selection from among all the values which men may hold.

In sonatas there is an opening statement of theme, followed by variations upon the theme. We have made the opening statement of theme in our grouping of these stories. They should each then be read as variations, as different ways of saying the same thing. Above all, there is one aspect that we should like you to bear in mind when you have finished these stories: the extent to which they differ one from the other is the extent to which, in the last analysis, the authors differ one from the other.

The Leader of the People

by JOHN STEINBECK

ON SATURDAY afternoon Billy Buck, the ranch-hand, raked together the last of the old year's haystack and pitched small forkfuls over the wire fence to a few mildly interested cattle. High in the air small clouds like puffs of cannon smoke were driven eastward by the March wind. The wind could be heard whishing in the brush on the ridge crests, but no breath of it penetrated down into the ranch-cup.

The little boy, Jody, emerged from the house eating a thick piece of buttered bread. He saw Billy working on the last of the haystack. Jody tramped down scuffing his shoes in a way he had been told was destructive to good shoe-leather. A flock of white pigeons flew out of the black cypress tree as Jody passed, and circled the tree and landed again. A half-grown tortoise-shell cat leaped from the bunk-house porch, galloped on stiff legs across the road, whirled and galloped back again. Jody picked up a stone to help the game along, but he was too late, for the cat was under the porch before the stone could be discharged. He threw the stone into the cypress tree and started the white pigeons on another whirling flight.

Arriving at the used-up haystack, the boy leaned against the barbed wire fence. "Will that be all of it, do you think?" he asked.

The middle-aged ranch-hand stopped his careful raking and stuck his fork into the ground. He took off his black hat and smoothed down his hair. "Nothing left of it that isn't soggy from ground moisture," he said. He replaced his hat and rubbed his dry leathery hands together.

"Ought to be plenty mice," Jody suggested.

"Lousy with them," said Billy. "Just crawling with mice."

"Well, maybe, when you get all through, I could call the dogs and hunt the mice."

"Sure, I guess you could," said Billy Buck. He lifted a forkful of the damp ground-hay and threw it into the air. Instantly three mice leaped out and burrowed frantically under the hay again.

Jody sighed with satisfaction. Those plump, sleek, arrogant mice were doomed. For eight months they had lived and multiplied in the haystack. They had been immune from cats, from traps, from poison and from Jody. They had grown smug in their security, overbearing and fat. Now the time of disaster had come; they would not survive another day.

Billy looked up at the top of the hills that surrounded the ranch. "Maybe you better ask your father before you do it," he suggested.

"Well, where is he? I'll ask him now."

"He rode up to the ridge ranch after dinner. He'll be back pretty soon."

Jody slumped against the fence post. "I don't think he'd care."

As Billy went back to his work he said ominously, "You'd better ask him anyway. You know how he is."

Jody did know. His father, Carl Tiflin, insisted upon giving permission for anything that was done on the ranch, whether it was important or not. Jody sagged farther against the post until he was sitting on the ground. He looked up at the little puffs of wind-driven cloud. "Is it like to rain, Billy?"

"It might. The wind's good for it, but not strong enough."

"Well, I hope it don't rain until after I kill those damn mice." He looked over his shoulder to see whether Billy had noticed the mature profanity. Billy worked on without comment.

Jody turned back and looked at the side-hill where the road from the outside world came down. The hill was washed with lean March sunshine. Silver thistles, blue lupins and a few poppies bloomed among the sage bushes. Halfway up the hill Jody could see Double-tree Mutt, the black dog, digging in a squirrel hole. He paddled for a while and then paused to kick bursts of dirt out between his hind legs, and he dug with an earnestness which belied the knowledge he must have had that no dog had ever caught a squirrel by digging in a hole.

Suddenly, while Jody watched, the black dog stiffened, and backed out of the hole and looked up the hill toward the cleft in the ridge where the road came through. Jody looked up too. For a moment Carl Tiflin on horseback stood out against the pale sky and then he moved down the road toward the house. He carried something white in his hand.

The boy started to his feet. "He's got a letter," Jody cried. He trotted away toward the ranch house, for the letter would probably be read aloud and he wanted to be there. He reached the house before his father did, and ran in. He heard Carl dismount from his creaking saddle and slap the horse on the side to send it to the barn where Billy would unsaddle it and turn it out.

Jody ran into the kitchen. "We got a letter!" he cried.

His mother looked up from a pan of beans. "Who has?"

"Father has. I saw it in his hand."

Carl strode into the kitchen then, and Jody's mother asked, "Who's the letter from, Carl?"

He frowned quickly. "How did you know there was a letter?"

She nodded her head in the boy's direction. "Big-Britches Jody told me."

Jody was embarrassed.

His father looked down at him contemptuously. "He is getting to be a Big-Britches," Carl said. "He's minding everybody's business but his own. Got his big nose into everything."

Mrs. Tiflin relented a little. "Well, he hasn't enough to keep him busy. Who's the letter from?"

Carl still frowned on Jody. "I'll keep him busy if he isn't careful." He held out a sealed letter. "I guess it's from your father."

Mrs. Tiflin took a hairpin from her head and slit open the flap. Her lips pursed judiciously. Jody saw her eyes snap back and forth over the lines. "He says," she translated, "he says he's going to drive out Saturday to stay for a little while. Why, this is Saturday. The letter must have been delayed." She looked at the postmark. "This was mailed day before yesterday. It should have been here yesterday." She looked up questioningly at her husband, and then her face darkened angrily. "Now what have you got that look on you for? He doesn't come often."

Carl turned his eyes away from her anger. He could be stern with her most of the time, but when occasionally her temper arose, he could not combat it.

"What's the matter with you?" she demanded again.

In his explanation there was a tone of apology Jody himself might have used. "It's just that he talks," Carl said lamely. "Just talks."

"Well, what of it? You talk yourself."

"Sure I do. But your father only talks about one thing."

"Indians!" Jody broke in excitedly. "Indians and crossing the plains!"

Carl turned fiercely on him. "You get out, Mr. Big-Britches! Go on, now! Get out!"

Jody went miserably out the back door and closed the screen with elaborate quietness. Under the kitchen window his shamed, down-cast eyes fell upon a curiously shaped stone, a stone of such fascination that he squatted down and picked it up and turned it over in his hands.

The voices came clearly to him through the open kitchen window. "Jody's damn well right," he heard his father say. "Just Indians and crossing the plains. I've heard that story about how the horses got driven off about a thousand times. He just goes on and on, and he never changes a word in the things he tells."

When Mrs. Tiflin answered her tone was so changed that Jody, outside the window, looked up from his study of the stone. Her voice had become soft and explanatory. Jody knew how her face would have changed to match the tone. She said quietly, "Look at it this way, Carl. That was the big thing in my father's life. He led a wagon train clear across the plains to the coast, and when it was finished, his life was done. It was a big thing to do, but it didn't last long enough. Look!" she continued, "it's as though he was born to do that, and after he finished it, there wasn't anything more for him to do but think about it and talk about it. If there'd been any farther west to go, he'd have gone. He's told me so himself. But at last there was the ocean. He lives right by the ocean where he had to stop."

She had caught Carl, caught him and entangled him in her soft tone.

"I've seen him," he agreed quietly. "He goes down and stares off

west over the ocean." His voice sharpened a little. "And then he goes up to the Horseshoe Club in Pacific Grove, and he tells people how the Indians drove off the horses."

She tried to catch him again. "Well, it's everything to him. You might be patient with him and pretend to listen."

Carl turned impatiently away. "Well, if it gets too bad, I can always go down to the bunkhouse and sit with Billy," he said irritably. He walked through the house and slammed the front door after him.

Jody ran to his chores. He dumped the grain to the chickens without chasing any of them. He gathered the eggs from the nests. He trotted into the house with the wood and interlaced it so carefully in the wood-box that two armloads seemed to fill it to overflowing.

His mother had finished the beans by now. She stirred up the fire and brushed off the stove-top with a turkey wing. Jody peered cautiously at her to see whether any rancor toward him remained. "Is he coming today?" Jody asked.

"That's what his letter said."

"Maybe I better walk up the road to meet him."

Mrs. Tiflin clanged the stove-lid shut. "That would be nice," she said. "He'd probably like to be met."

"I guess I'll just do it then."

Outside, Jody whistled shrilly to the dogs. "Come on up the hill," he commanded. The two dogs waved their tails and ran ahead. Along the roadside the sage had tender new tips. Jody tore off some pieces and rubbed them on his hands until the air was filled with the sharp wild smell. With a rush the dogs leaped from the road and yapped into the brush after a rabbit. That was the last Jody saw of them, for when they failed to catch the rabbit, they went back home.

Jody plodded on up the hill toward the ridge top. When he reached the little cleft where the road came through, the afternoon wind struck him and blew up his hair and ruffled his shirt. He looked down on the little hills and ridges below and then out at the huge green Salinas Valley. He could see the white town of Salinas far out in the flat and the flash of its windows under the waning sun. Directly below him, in an oak tree, a crow congress had convened. The tree was black with crows all cawing at once.

Then Jody's eyes followed the wagon road down from the ridge

where he stood, and lost it behind a hill, and picked it up again on the other side. On that distant stretch he saw a cart slowly pulled by a bay horse. It disappeared behind the hill. Jody sat down on the ground and watched the place where the cart would reappear again. The wind sang on the hilltops and the puff-ball clouds hurried eastward.

Then the cart came into sight and stopped. A man dressed in black dismounted from the seat and walked to the horse's head. Although it was so far away, Jody knew he had unhooked the checkrein, for the horse's head dropped forward. The horse moved on, and the man walked slowly up the hill beside it. Jody gave a glad cry and ran down the road toward them. The squirrels bumped along off the road, and a road-runner flirted its tail and raced over the edge of the hill and sailed out like a glider.

Jody tried to leap into the middle of his shadow at every step. A stone rolled under his foot and he went down. Around a little bend he raced, and there, a short distance ahead, were his grandfather and the cart. The boy dropped from his unseemly running and approached at a dignified walk.

The horse plodded stumble-footedly up the hill and the old man walked beside it. In the lowering sun their giant shadows flickered darkly behind them. The grandfather was dressed in a black broadcloth suit and he wore kid congress gaiters and a black tie on a short, hard collar. He carried his black slouch hat in his hand. His white beard was cropped close and his white eyebrows overhung his eyes like moustaches. The blue eyes were sternly merry. About the whole face and figure there was a granite dignity, so that every motion seemed an impossible thing. Once at rest, it seemed the old man would be stone, would never move again. His steps were slow and certain. Once made, no step could ever be retraced; once headed in a direction, the path would never bend nor the pace increase nor slow.

When Jody appeared around the bend, Grandfather waved his hat slowly in welcome, and he called, "Why, Jody! Come down to meet me, have you?"

Jody sidled near and turned and matched his step to the old man's

step and stiffened his body and dragged his heels a little. "Yes, sir," he said. "We got your letter only today."

"Should have been here yesterday," said Grandfather. "It certainly should. How are all the folks?"

"They're fine, sir." He hesitated and then suggested shyly, "Would you like to come on a mouse hunt tomorrow, sir?"

"Mouse hunt, Jody?" Grandfather chuckled. "Have the people of this generation come down to hunting mice? They aren't very strong, the new people, but I hardly thought mice would be game for them."

"No, sir. It's just play. The haystack's gone. I'm going to drive out the mice to the dogs. And you can watch, or even beat the hay a little."

The stern, merry eyes turned down on him. "I see. You don't eat them, then. You haven't come to that yet."

Jody explained, "The dogs eat them, sir. It wouldn't be much like hunting Indians, I guess."

"No, not much—but then later, when the troops were hunting Indians and shooting children and burning teepees, it wasn't much different from your mouse hunt."

They topped the rise and started down into the ranch cup, and they lost the sun from their shoulders. "You've grown," Grandfather said. "Nearly an inch, I should say."

"More," Jody boasted. "Where they mark me on the door, I'm up more than an inch since Thanksgiving even."

Grandfather's rich throaty voice said, "Maybe you're getting too much water and turning to pith and stalk. Wait until you head out, and then we'll see."

Jody looked quickly into the old man's face to see whether his feelings should be hurt, but there was no will to injure, no punishing nor putting-in-your-place light in the keen blue eyes. "We might kill a pig," Jody suggested.

"Oh, no! I couldn't let you do that. You're just humoring me. It isn't the time and you know it."

"You know Riley, the big boar, sir?"

"Yes. I remember Riley well."

"Well, Riley ate a hole into that same haystack, and it fell down on him and smothered him."

"Pigs do that when they can," said Grandfather.

"Riley was a nice pig, for a boar, sir. I rode him sometimes, and he didn't mind."

A door slammed at the house below them, and they saw Jody's mother standing on the porch waving her apron in welcome. And they saw Carl Tiflin walking up from the barn to be at the house for the arrival.

The sun had disappeared from the hills by now. The blue smoke from the house chimney hung in flat layers in the purpling ranch-cup. The puff-ball clouds, dropped by the falling wind, hung listlessly in the sky.

Billy Buck came out of the bunkhouse and flung a wash basin of soapy water on the ground. He had been shaving in mid-week, for Billy held Grandfather in reverence, and Grandfather said that Billy was one of the few men of the new generation who had not gone soft. Although Billy was in middle age, Grandfather considered him a boy. Now Billy was hurrying toward the house too.

When Jody and Grandfather arrived, the three were waiting for them in front of the yard gate.

Carl said, "Hello, sir. We've been looking for you."

Mrs. Tiflin kissed Grandfather on the side of his beard, and stood still while his big hand patted her shoulder. Billy shook hands solemnly, grinning under his straw mustache. "I'll put up your horse," said Billy, and he led the rig away.

Grandfather watched him go, and then, turning back to the group, he said as he had said a hundred times before, "There's a good boy. I knew his father, old Mule-tail Buck. I never knew why they called him Mule-tail except he packed mules."

Mrs. Tiflin turned and led the way into the house. "How long are you going to stay, Father? Your letter didn't say."

"Well, I don't know. I thought I'd stay about two weeks. But I never stay as long as I think I'm going to."

In a short while they were sitting at the white oilcloth table eating their supper. The lamp with the tin reflector hung over the table.

Outside the dining-room windows the big moths battered softly against the glass.

Grandfather cut his steak into tiny pieces and chewed slowly. "I'm hungry," he said. "Driving out here got my appetite up. It's like when we were crossing. We all got so hungry every night we could hardly wait to let the meat get done. I could eat about five pounds of buffalo meat every night."

"It's moving around does it," said Billy. "My father was a government packer. I helped him when I was a kid. Just the two of us could about clean up a deer's ham."

"I knew your father, Billy," said Grandfather. "A fine man he was. They called him Mule-tail Buck. I don't know why except he packed mules."

"That was it, " Billy agreed. "He packed mules."

Grandfather put down his knife and fork and looked around the table. "I remember one time we ran out of meat—" His voice dropped to a curious low sing-song, dropped into a tonal groove the story had worn for itself. "There was no buffalo, no antelope, not even rabbits. The hunters couldn't even shoot a coyote. That was the time for the leader to be on the watch. I was the leader, and I kept my eyes open. Know why? Well, just the minute the people began to get hungry they'd start slaughtering the team oxen. Do you believe that? I've heard of parties that just ate up their draft cattle. Started from the middle and worked toward the ends. Finally they'd eat the lead pair, and then the wheelers. The leader of a party had to keep them from doing that."

In some manner a big moth got into the room and circled the hanging kerosene lamp. Billy got up and tried to clap it between his hands. Carl struck with a cupped palm and caught the moth and broke it. He walked to the window and dropped it out.

"As I was saying," Grandfather began again, but Carl interrupted him. "You'd better eat some more meat. All the rest of us are ready for our pudding."

Jody saw a flash of anger in his mother's eyes. Grandfather picked up his knife and fork. "I'm pretty hungry, all right," he said. "I'll tell you about that later."

When supper was over, when the family and Billy Buck sat in front of the fireplace in the other room, Jody anxiously watched Grandfather. He saw the signs he knew. The bearded head leaned forward; the eyes lost their sternness and looked wonderingly into the fire; the big lean fingers laced themselves on the black knees. "I wonder," he began, "I just wonder whether I ever told you how those thieving Piutes drove off thirty-five of our horses."

"I think you did," Carl interrupted. "Wasn't it just before you went up into the Tahoe country?"

Grandfather turned quickly toward his son-in-law. "That's right. I guess I must have told you that story."

"Lots of times," Carl said cruelly, and he avoided his wife's eyes. But he felt the angry eyes on him, and he said, "'Course I'd like to hear it again."

Grandfather looked back at the fire. His fingers unlaced and laced again. Jody knew how he felt, how his insides were collapsed and empty. Hadn't Jody been called a Big-Britches that very afternoon? He arose to heroism and opened himself to the term Big-Britches again. "Tell about Indians," he said softly.

Grandfather's eyes grew stern again. "Boys always want to hear about Indians. It was a job for men, but boys want to -hear about it. Well, let's see. Did I ever tell you how I wanted each wagon to carry a long iron plate?"

Everyone but Jody remained silent. Jody said, "No. You didn't."

"Well, when the Indians attacked, we always put the wagons in a circle and fought from between the wheels. I thought that if every wagon carried a long plate with rifle holes, the men could stand the plates on the outside of the wheels when the wagons were in the circle and they would be protected. It would save lives and that would make up for the extra weight of the iron. But of course the party wouldn't do it. No party had done it before and they couldn't see why they should go to the expense. They lived to regret it, too."

Jody looked at his mother, and knew from her expression that she was not listening at all. Carl picked at a callus on his thumb and Billy Buck watched a spider crawling up the wall.

Grandfather's tone dropped into its narrative groove again. Jody knew in advance exactly what words would fall. The story droned

on, speeded up for the attack, grew sad over the wounds, struck a dirge at the burials on the great plains. Jody sat quietly watching Grandfather. The stern blue eyes were detached. He looked as though he were not very interested in the story himself.

When it was finished, when the pause had been politely respected as the frontier of the story, Billy Buck stood up and stretched and hitched his trousers. "I guess I'll turn in," he said. Then he faced Grandfather. "I've got an old powder horn and a cap and ball pistol down to the bunkhouse. Did I ever show them to you?"

Grandfather nodded slowly. "Yes, I think you did, Billy. Reminds me of a pistol I had when I was leading the people across." Billy stood politely until the little story was done, and then he said, "Good night," and went out of the house.

Carl Tiflin tried to turn the conversation then. "How's the country between here and Monterey? I've heard it's pretty dry."

"It is dry," said Grandfather. "There's not a drop of water in the Laguna Seca. But it's a long pull from '87. The whole country was powder then, and in '61 I believe all the coyotes starved to death. We had fifteen inches of rain this year."

"Yes, but it all came too early. We could do with some now." Carl's eye fell on Jody. "Hadh't you better be getting to bed?"

Jody stood up obediently. "Can I kill the mice in the old haystack, sir?"

"Mice? Oh! Sure, kill them all off. Billy said there isn't any good hay left."

Jody exchanged a secret and satisfying look with Grandfather. "I'll kill every one tomorrow," he promised.

Jody lay in his bed and thought of the impossible world of Indians and buffaloes, a world that had ceased to be forever. He wished he could have been living in the heroic time, but he knew he was not of heroic timber. No one living now, save possibly Billy Buck, was worthy to do the things that had been done. A race of giants had lived then, fearless men, men of a staunchness unknown in this day. Jody thought of the wide plains and of the wagons moving across like centipedes. He thought of Grandfather on a huge white horse, marshaling the people. Across his mind marched the great phantoms, and they marched off the earth and they were gone.

He came back to the ranch for a moment, then. He heard the dull rushing sound that space and silence make. He heard one of the dogs, out in the doghouse, scratching a flea and bumping his elbow against the floor with every stroke. Then the wind arose again and the black cypress groaned and Jody went to sleep.

He was up half an hour before the triangle sounded for breakfast. His mother was rattling the stove to make the flames roar when Jody went through the kitchen. "You're up early," she said. "Where are you going?"

"Out to get a good stick. We're going to kill the mice today."

"Who is 'we'?"

"Why, Grandfather and I."

"So you've got him in it. You always like to have someone in with you in case there's blame to share."

"I'll be right back," said Jody. "I just want to have a good stick ready for after breakfast."

He closed the screen door after him and went out into the cool blue morning. The birds were noisy in the dawn and the ranch cats came down from the hill like blunt snakes. They had been hunting gophers in the dark, and although the four cats were full of gopher meat, they sat in a semi-circle at the back door and mewed piteously for milk. Doubletree Mutt and Smasher moved sniffing along the edge of the brush, performing the duty with rigid ceremony, but when Jody whistled, their heads jerked up and their tails waved. They plunged down to him, wriggling their skins and yawning. Jody patted their heads seriously, and moved on to the weathered scrap pile. He selected an old broom handle and a short piece of inch-square scrap wood. From his pocket he took a shoelace and tied the ends of the sticks loosely together to make a flail. He whistled his new weapon through the air and struck the ground experimentally, while the dogs leaped aside and whined with apprehension.

Jody turned and started down past the house toward the old haystack ground to look over the field of slaughter, but Billy Buck, sitting patiently on the back steps, called to him, "You better come back. It's only a couple of minutes till breakfast."

Jody changed his course and moved toward the house. He leaned

his flail against the steps. "That's to drive the mice out," he said. "I'll bet they're fat. I'll bet they don't know what's going to happen to them today."

"No, nor you either," Billy remarked philosophically, "nor me, nor anyone."

Jody was staggered by this thought. He knew it was true. His imagination twitched away from the mouse hunt. Then his mother came out on the back porch and struck the triangle, and all thoughts fell in a heap.

Grandfather hadn't appeared at the table when they sat down. Billy nodded at his empty chair. "He's all right? He isn't sick?"

"He takes a long time to dress," said Mrs. Tiflin. "He combs his whiskers and rubs up his shoes and brushes his clothes."

Carl scattered sugar on his mush. "A man that's led a wagon train across the plains has got to be pretty careful how he dresses."

Mrs. Tiflin turned on him. "Don't do that, Carl! Please don't!" There was more of threat than of request in her tone. And the threat irritated Carl.

"Well, how many times do I have to listen to the story of the iron plates, and the thirty-five horses? That time's done. Why can't he forget it, now it's done?" He grew angrier while he talked, and his voice rose. "Why does he have to tell them over and over? He came across the plains. All right! Now it's finished. Nobody wants to hear about it over and over."

The door into the kitchen closed softly. The four at the table sat frozen. Carl laid his mush spoon on the table and touched his chin with his fingers.

Then the kitchen door opened and Grandfather walked in. His mouth smiled tightly and his eyes were squinted. "Good morning," he said, and he sat down and looked at his mush dish.

Carl could not leave it there. "Did—did you hear what I said?"

Grandfather jerked a little nod.

"I don't know what got into me, sir. I didn't mean it. I was just being funny."

Jody glanced in shame at his mother, and he saw that she was looking at Carl, and that she wasn't breathing. It was an awful thing that he was doing. He was tearing himself to pieces to talk like that.

It was a terrible thing to him to retract a word, but to retract it in shame was infinitely worse.

Grandfather looked sidewise. "I'm trying to get right side up," he said gently. "I'm not being mad. I don't mind what you said, but it might be true, and I would mind that."

"It isn't true," said Carl. "I'm not feeling well this morning. I'm sorry I said it."

"Don't be sorry, Carl. An old man doesn't see things sometimes. Maybe you're right. The crossing is finished. Maybe it should be forgotten, now it's done."

Carl got up from the table. "I've had enough to eat. I'm going to work. Take your time, Billy!" He walked quickly out of the dining-room. Billy gulped the rest of his food and followed soon after. But Jody could not leave his chair.

"Won't you tell any more stories?" Jody asked.

"Why, sure I'll tell them, but only when—I'm sure people want to hear them."

"I like to hear them, sir."

"Oh! Of course you do, but you're a little boy. It was a job for men, but only little boys like to hear about it."

Jody got up from his place. "I'll wait outside for you, sir. I've got a good stick for those mice."

He waited by the gate until the old man came out on the porch. "Let's go down and kill the mice now," Jody called.

"I think I'll just sit in the sun, Jody. You go kill the mice."

"You can use my stick if you like."

"No, I'll just sit here a while."

Jody turned disconsolately away, and walked down toward the old haystack. He tried to whip up his enthusiasm with thoughts of the fat juicy mice. He beat the ground with his flail. The dogs coaxed and whined about him, but he could not go. Back at the house he could see Grandfather sitting on the porch, looking small and thin and black.

Jody gave up and went to sit on the steps at the old man's feet.

"Back already? Did you kill the mice?"

"No, sir. I'll kill them some other day."

The morning flies buzzed close to the ground and the ants dashed

about in front of the steps. The heavy smell of sage slipped down the hill. The porch boards grew warm in the sunshine.

Jody hardly knew when Grandfather started to talk. "I shouldn't stay here, feeling the way I do." He examined his strong old hands. "I feel as though the crossing wasn't worth doing." His eyes moved up the side-hill and stopped on a motionless hawk perched on a dead limb. "I tell those old stories, but they're not what I want to tell. I only know how I want people to feel when I tell them.

"It wasn't Indians that were important, nor adventures, nor even getting out here. It was a whole bunch of people made into one big crawling beast. And I was the head. It was westering and westering. Every man wanted something for himself, but the big beast that was all of them wanted only westering. I was the leader, but if I hadn't been there, someone else would have been the head. The thing had to have a head.

"Under the little bushes the shadows were black at white noonday. When we saw the mountains at last, we cried—all of us. But it wasn't getting here that mattered, it was movement and westering.

"We carried life out here and set it down the way those ants carry eggs. And I was the leader. The westering was as big as God, and the slow steps that made the movement piled up and piled up until the continent was crossed.

"Then we came down to the sea, and it was done." He stopped and wiped his eyes until the rims were red. "That's what I should be telling instead of stories."

When Jody spoke, Grandfather started and looked down at him. "Maybe I could lead the people some day," Jody said.

The old man smiled. "There's no place to go. There's the ocean to stop you. There's a line of old men along the shore hating the ocean because it stopped them."

"In boats I might, sir."

"No place to go, Jody. Every place is taken. But that's not the worst—no, not the worst. Westering has died out of the people. Westering isn't a hunger any more. It's all done. Your father is right. It is finished." He laced his fingers on his knee and looked at them.

Jody felt very sad. "If you'd like a glass of lemonade I could make it for you."

Grandfather was about to refuse, and then he saw Jody's face. "That would be nice," he said. "Yes, it would be nice to drink a lemonade."

Jody ran into the kitchen where his mother was wiping the last of the breakfast dishes. "Can I have a lemon to make a lemonade for Grandfather?"

His mother mimicked— "And another lemon to make a lemonade for you."

"No, ma'am. I don't want one."

"Jody! You're sick!" Then she stopped suddenly. "Take a lemon out of the cooler," she said softly. "Here, I'll reach the squeezer down to you."

ANALYSIS

In our analyses of the stories which have preceded "The Leader of the People," we have come to see that the usual springboard to an understanding of a story is that story's "focus of interest"—the element in the story which is emphasized more than the other elements. A first reading of "The Leader of the People," however, may leave you with the feeling that there is no such focus in the story, that plot, character, and emotional effect are equally emphasized and equally important. But comparison of this story and the others you have now read will also reveal certain very important differences between it and them: The commonplaceness of its action, for example, differentiates it from the action stories you have read, and though it has, like "The Lament," a certain pathos, it also seems to have a great deal more than this. Further comparison will suggest that "The Leader of the People" is, in a number of ways, similar to both "The Dry Rock" and "The Necklace," both of which used character as a means of elucidating a theme. Let us begin our study of "The Leader of the People," then, with a consideration of the main character and of his relationship to the other actors in the story.

A single reading of this story will probably indicate that its protagonist is Jody, and that in general this is a story about a boy's reaction to an environment, to the three men and one woman who people that environment, and to the situation which evolves because of the nature of these people. The fact that Jody appears in every scene, that the story is seen through his eyes, and that he is the one

who experiences the greatest change all serve to establish Jody (rather than Grandfather) as the protagonist.

Now the first thing we notice about Jody is that in many respects he is a typical boy—he scuffs his shoes; he throws stones at birds and cats; he has a few unimportant and routine responsibilities in an adult world and he reacts toward them as a normal boy is expected to react; and he is excited by the same things which excite most boys. But in the opening of the story are details which serve to make Jody not just another boy, but an individual reacting in an individual way to his world. For one thing, Jody is keenly aware of the world about him; for another, he is concerned with making this world, which seems to him to have been "figured out" by the adults in it, add up personally for him and in terms of his personality. Moreover, he is sensitive and easily hurt; he suffers keenly enough to understand, feel, and sympathize with the same suffering in others. But the one characteristic of Jody's which is emphasized throughout the story (very heavily in the first few pages) is the consciousness inside himself that he is growing up. Consciously or subconsciously, he senses within himself the purposelessness of his existence, a purposelessness which is underscored by his mother's comment, "Well, he hasn't enough to keep him busy." But this purposelessness, as Jody sees things, is not characteristic of the adults in his world; Carl runs the ranch, Jody's mother runs the house, and Billy has things to do which keep him busy. This is perhaps not consciously understood by Jody in the opening of the story; it comes through instead on two subconscious levels: through incident and through emotion or feeling. Thus, Jody's sense of purposelessness is shown by his sudden interest in the coming mice hunt, by his single use of "mature profanity," and by his mother's comment that he hasn't enough to keep him busy; and emotionally he reacts to this half-understood, half-felt consciousness of his place in an adult world by rebelliously scuffing his shoes, by torturing the animals around him, and by trying to be significant in this adult world through announcing the coming of a letter. To put this more briefly, Jody is a boy in an adult world who is trying to gain for himself the recognition, the equality, and the personal freedom which the adults around him have already won for themselves.

This, then, is a story about growing up. But growing up may mean any of a thousand things and may take any of a thousand directions. And the specific direction it does take in a story will rest,

finally, upon the author's definition of exactly what constitutes adulthood, and this in turn will rest upon the writer's notion of the meaning of life in general and of his world in particular. For some writers an individual may have grown up when he has acquired certain attitudes toward the people around him—tolerance or kindness or unselfishness or cynicism or indifference. For others the same process will have been completed when an individual has come to understand or to believe certain things about the nature of God, or the relation of man to his universe, or the meaning of death, or the purpose of living. Hence, the reader's realization that this story is concerned with a change from boyhood to manhood is only the first step in an understanding of the story's basic meaning. And precisely what that basic meaning is will come clear through our understanding of four things: (i) the nature of the other characters in Jody's world; (2) the emotional changes which Jody experiences in the course of the story; (3) the facts and implications of adulthood which Jody comes to understand as a result of his crisis experience; and (4) the facts and implications which a reader, on the basis of being able to see the total story, can understand over and beyond what Jody finally understands.

Let us first consider two of the adults in Jody's world. (Jody's mother can be passed over quickly; she is a kind of mediator between Jody and Carl. She partially understands and sympathizes with the boy, and at times she protects him.) Let us begin with Carl. Now Carl is seen, from the very beginning of the story, to have a very important part in Jody's struggle to realize maturity. Carl, for example, "insisted upon giving permission for anything that was done on the ranch, whether it was important or not"; and his introduction to us, when the dog stiffens and he stands out against the pale sky, suggests the degree of his domination. Moreover, this domination quickly assumes a definite direction. Carl, we discover, is jealous of his position on the ranch and does not want it encroached upon; when Jody assumes, even in minor things, any of his father's responsibilities, he is called Big-Britches; and when he adds a comment to his father's remarks about Grandfather, he is told to "Go on. Get out." A great many similar details make it clear that Carl is the antagonist in the story, that he is the obstacle which Jody must defeat or circumvent in order to realize maturity.

But our understanding of the story depends not alone on our realization that Carl is the antagonist; it depends as well on our un-

derstanding why Carl acts as he does. A man does not ordinarily fly into a rage because a boy has announced the arrival of a letter or because an old man lives in the past—not unless he is weak-minded and infantile, which Carl is not. To understand Carl's motives, let us consider the relationship between him and Grandfather. Carl, we discover after Grandfather arrives, reacts as childish toward the old man as he does toward the boy. He does not act as normal adults act when they are bored—as Jody's mother or Billy Buck act; he does not stare at spiders on the wall or allow his mind to blank out when Grandfather drones through a story. Rather, his reactions are violent; he rages, he takes every opportunity to wound the old man, and only a very embarrassing situation causes him any shame. And even this shame is mixed up with a kind of infantilism, for his apologies "tear him to pieces inside." It is as if he were apologizing to himself.

Why? Is Carl merely childish, or is there something more logical and more significant behind his acts? The answer lies partly in the backgrounds of Carl and Grandfather. In the course of this story we discover that Grandfather has been an important man in his time, "a leader of the people." The moment of greatness has passed, leaving him only memories, but the important thing is that he has had this moment. Carl, on the other hand, has never had such an experience. He is a small rancher, isolated from society, concerned with the routine business of making a ranch pay (earlier stories stress, for example, his worries over debts). His life is small, and it is small because he is living of, for, and to himself. He is in the ironical position of owning a ranch but of getting less out of life than his hired hand, simply because mere ownership and nothing more is unworthy of a man's life. In short, Carl has a purpose in life but the purpose is insignificant when compared to the purpose Grandfather had in life.

Carl is not a weak-minded man; a stupid man would never have realized this at all. He is rather a potentially strong man who has somehow been thwarted in his desire to put his strength to a worthwhile purpose. And his sense of personal frustration is underlined throughout the story: in his statement, "If it gets too bad, I can always go down to the bunkhouse"; in Grandfather's estimate of Billy, which implies that the old man considers Carl one of the many men in the new generation who *have* gone soft; in his follow-up of one of Grandfather's stories with dull talk about the weather;

in his bitter comment, "A man that's led a wagon train across the plains has got to be pretty careful how he dresses." Thus in the climactic apology scene Carl is, in a certain ironic sense, apologizing to himself rather than to Grandfather.

Carl, then, is a strong but frustrated man, a man who feels his strength but who feels, too, that he has made no very satisfying or significant use of it. So he does what Jody does, misdirects it. He tries to keep Jody in his place, to wound Grandfather's dignity, to destroy the significance of another's accomplishment in order that he can endure the knowledge of his own lack of accomplishment—and he does it for the same reason that Judy throws stones at birds or tortures the cats. And into his world comes Grandfather, who has a "granite dignity" about him.

Now as the lives of these men have differed, so do their characters. Grandfather is kind, tolerant, understanding; in him "there was no will to injure, no punishing nor putting-in-your-place light in the keen blue eyes"; and this is because there is in him no frustration, no sense of a life misspent. Moreover, he accepts Jody as an equal, simply because he is so big that he need not fear competition from a boy. Most important, he is wise; he recognizes something that Carl does not, which is that Jody is growing up, but he also knows that there are kinds and degrees of growth—"Maybe you're getting too much water and turning to pith and stalk. Wait until you head out, and then we'll see." And in the final scene we discover another type of greatness in Grandfather. The small man in the world will tend to hoard what he has, to deny others what he possesses, for he hopes thereby somehow to retain his superiority. This is what Carl does; he has a certain measure of adulthood and tries to deny Jody this same measure, to keep the boy in his place. But the big man will share what he has with others, will want others to taste the satisfactions he has tasted. Grandfather is like this; he encourages rather than thwarts Jody's growth, encourages it by attempting to give Jody the same conception and understanding of maturity which he has.

All this is basic in the theme of "The Leader of the People," but it explains only part of what Steinbeck has said in the story. To come somewhat closer to the total meaning of the story, let us see what happens emotionally to Jody.

If we follow the *emotional* changes in Jody throughout the story, we discover that there are five phases involved. We have described the first one, which involves rebelliousness, a desire to hurt or de-

stroy, a sense of approaching maturity and a sense, as well, of being frustrated in that growth. We have also pointed out the second phase, which merges naturally with the first—the phase in which Jody first asserts himself (tries, by announcing the letter, to become more "important," as the adults about him seem to him to be important) ; and we have seen the result of this attempt, Carl's humiliation of the boy.

But before this humiliation is complete, we are prepared for the entrance of Grandfather. And with this entrance we come upon the happy part of the story. We know, in advance, that Jody is very fond of Grandfather (this is shown by the way he does the chores and the eagerness with which he offers to go meet the old man), and once the two are brought together, we see why. For Grandfather understands Jody and accepts him as an equal. He talks "man to man" to the boy, even consents to go on the mice hunt with him. And though he chuckles at the hunt and recognizes the possibility of Jody's turning to pith and stalk, still behind these comments there is no will to injure. Thus, this scene establishes Jody's love for Grandfather and the reason for that love.

But as soon as Grandfather arrives at the ranch, we realize that his position is comparable to Jody's; Carl is jealous of the old man and from the start goes out of his way to put Grandfather, like Jody, in his place. The process takes two scenes, but in the process Jody knows how the man feels, knows "how his insides were collapsed and empty." Hence, when the climax does come and Grandfather's final defeat at the hands of Carl is complete, Jody feels as bad as Grandfather feels.

The final scene demands some attention, for it is relatively complex. In it we see all that the humiliation of Grandfather means emotionally to Jody. For one thing, Jody's urge to destroy is now gone; he is no longer interested in the mice hunt, not only because the cruelty has been washed out of him as a result of his witnessing the destruction of a helpless creature whom he loves, but also because the slaughter of a defenseless creature no longer seems significant. But there is more than this in the final scene. There is Jody's frantic attempt to believe, in spite of his father, that the Indians and the trek across the plains *were* important, are still important. All this, plus his realization that Grandfather now feels that he has lived nobly but in vain, prompts him to *his first completely and genuinely unselfish act in the story*—his offer to get Grandfather a lemonade.

And the feelings of both Jody and Grandfather are underscored by the ironic fact that neither of them is thirsty.

But is this, then, merely the story of a boy's change from selfishness to unselfishness, from cruelty to sympathy for others, from an urge to destroy the helpless (the mice) to a deep sympathy and compassion for the helpless (Grandfather)? This is basic to the story, for it is its emotional direction, but it is only partly its thematic meaning. So at this point let us retrace our steps and ask ourselves not what Jody *feels* but what he *learns* in each stage of this story.

The important mental stages through which Jody goes roughly parallel the emotional milestones in the story. Again we can start with Jody's initial rebelliousness, cruelty, itch for maturity and for direction and purpose in his existence. At this point Steinbeck introduces the first of two key symbols upon which the story rests—the mice. Now Jody's attitude toward the mice is, as we have seen, destructive; they are an outlet for cruelty, which in turn is due to frustration, and Jody's attitude toward them shows us his first basic concept of life. This desire to destroy—the same desire which we see so clearly in the adult Carl—carries through a third of the story, until Jody meets Grandfather. Actually, Jody's education does not begin until this point in the story.

But Jody loves and admires Grandfather, sees in him not just another adult (like his mother or father) but the summation of adulthood. Yet the destructive urge which is the basis for Jody's life has no place in Grandfather's character. Grandfather is kind, not cruel; and almost at once he begins to temper Jody's cruelty. "Have the people of this generation come down to hunting mice?" he asks; and when Jody replies, "It wouldn't be much like hunting Indians, I guess," he answers, "No, not much—but then, later, when the troops were hunting Indians and shooting children ... it wasn't much different from your mouse hunt." The direction of Jody's thinking is not yet changed—Jody still conceives of Indian hunting as primarily an outlet for one's destructive urges, the Indians and the mice differing only in the degree of the challenge. But by comparing the *slaughter* of helpless Indians to the *slaughter* of the mice, Grandfather prepares for a change in Jody's conception of the significance of the Indians. Hence, the Indians become the second key symbol in the story.

This change in Jody is further prepared for at the supper table

—by Grandfather's repeated "Boys always want to hear about Indians. It was a job for men, but boys always want to hear about it"; also by Jody's growing consciousness that the destructive urge in him is also Carl's basic urge, and that the results here are not pleasant. The change from Jody's first concept of the significance of the Indians to the second is very slowly traced in this scene (primarily by the story of the iron plates), but by bedtime the change has been effected. That night Jody lies in bed and thinks "of the impossible world of Indians and buffaloes, a world that has ceased to be forever. He wished he could have been living in the heroic time, but he knew he was not of heroic timber. . . . He thought of Grandfather on a huge white horse, marshaling the people." In this paragraph we see the precise nature of this change. For Jody the significance of the Indians has now changed; they now symbolize not an outlet for a destructive urge but a means to a personal, individual glory.

By the next morning this change in Jody has set. He is up early and goes out to get a stick to kill the mice, but on the way he is kind to the dogs and the cats and he ignores the birds. The breakfast-table scene follows, during which the final remnants of Jody's cruelty are washed out of him. But the final step in his conception of the purpose of life is not yet taken. It comes only after he has given up the mice hunt and returned to sit at Grandfather's feet. It is as if by this act he has shown Grandfather that he is ready to understand what the old man has to tell him. And what this is we get in the final scene of the story. "It wasn't Indians that were important," Grandfather tells him, "nor adventures, nor even getting out there. It was a bunch of people made into one big crawling beast. . . . It was westering and westering. Every man wanted something for himself, but the big beast that was all of them wanted only westering. I was the leader, but if I hadn't been there, someone else would have been the head. . . . it wasn't getting here that mattered, it was movement and westering."

In these words we discover the real theme of the story; we are shown that the purpose in life is not adventure, not destruction, not personal glory; it is not, in short, living for and of and to one's self. The real satisfaction in life comes rather with the submergence of the individual in the group, with the blotting out of personality and personal desire and with living only in terms of a group will and a group desire. And the object behind this is a man's desire to move

the human race from one place to another. This can be phrased as a paradox; we can say that only by losing himself, by destroying his individual personality, can a man realize himself fully.

One question remains: Does Jody understand this? We cannot be sure. His first comment, "Maybe I could lead the people someday," followed by his remark that he could do it in boats, indicates that he does. On the other hand, Grandfather's reply, "Westering has died out of the people. Westering isn't a hunger any more," followed by the line, "Jody felt very sad," indicates that perhaps he doesn't. The lemonade incident, too, is ambiguous, as we shall point out in a moment.

Actually, of course, the question is not fundamental. It is quite probable that there are two levels of understanding in this story: Jody's and the reader's. In other words, even if Jody does not fully understand, Steinbeck gives us leads which enable us to get a meaning over and beyond the meaning Jody gets. We need not discuss these leads in detail: the sharp contrasts in the story (as Carl talking about the weather after Grandfather has told a story), the implications which give us Carl's character and motives, the gradation of understanding within the story (consider, for example, Jody's mother's explanation for Grandfather's storytelling), the parallels which crop up here and there in the story (as in the opening, where Jody's purposelessness is set beside the purposeless digging of the dog for squirrels), the emotional stages through which Jody goes—all these furnish us with an understanding which is denied Jody. But two of these details might be mentioned here.

There is, for one thing, the little story of Riley, the boar, who digs under a haystack and smothers himself. You will observe that this follows closely the writer's portrayal of Carl. And if we consider the nature of a pig, the connotation of the word itself, we see in Riley a symbol of Carl. But we see more. We also see that the life which Carl has in common with Riley, the selfish existence, ends in death. Even the kind of death—smothering—is suggestive.

The story of Riley is followed by the introduction, during the evening meal, of the moth. But notice that here Steinbeck does not oversimplify. The obvious conclusion to the principle which Riley furnishes us is that by *not* living to and for one's self, man will live. But the moth, if it can be said to symbolize man's search for light and can bear comparison with Grandfather, does not live; like Riley, it also dies. The suggestion, therefore, is that death lies both

places for man. This suggestion, however, is modified. Notice, for example, that the moth's death was not inevitable; Billy misses it. Notice, too, the method of death; it is Carl who catches and "breaks" it, just as he later "breaks" Grandfather. In short, what Steinbeck says is that human beings who follow the way of the pig will certainly die, but that moths may or may not. This is important, for it illustrates the reverse of what we call *oversimplification*. The good writer knows that nothing in this life is too easy or too pat.

Just as the characters, the emotional and intellectual stages in the story, and the symbols help us to understand fully the meaning of the story, so does the ending. We have said that the ending is ambiguous—that is, that it means more than one thing—and the moth symbol will show us why. Again the writer is avoiding oversimplification. Hence, we cannot state definitely what the lemonade incident means; we can only suggest, by questions, a few of its possible meanings. Does it, for example, mean that Jody fully understands what Grandfather is trying to tell him about life, and that in gratitude for what he has learned he wants to do something for the old man? Certain details in the story suggest this. Or does it suggest that Jody understands that westering has died out of the people and that the man who sits here is the last of a race of giants? Is Jody's gesture a tribute to the man who has accomplished that which he, the boy, will never have a chance to try? Some details point here, too. Or is there still another interpretation? Could it be that Jody recognizes two things: first, that for the old man westering is over, but that for him it has not yet begun? Could his gesture be at once a tribute to the person who has shown him the meaning of life, and an expression of sympathy from one who sees the pathos of a life lived out, a life which has admitted defeat? It can be argued, too, that this is the meaning of the lemonade incident.

The Garden-Party

by KATHERINE MANSFIELD

AND AFTER ALL the weather was ideal. They could not have had a more perfect day for a garden-party if they had ordered it. Windless, warm, the sky without a cloud. Only the blue was veiled with a haze of light gold, as it is sometimes in early summer. The gardener had been up since dawn, mowing the lawns and sweeping them, until the grass and the dark flat rosettes where the daisy plants had been seemed to shine. As for the roses, you could not help feeling they understood that roses are the only flowers that-impress people at garden-parties; the only flowers that everybody is certain of knowing. Hundreds, yes, literally hundreds, had come out in a single night; the green bushes bowed down as though they had been visited by archangels.

Breakfast was not yet over before the men came to put up the marquee.

"Where do you want the marquee put, mother?"

"My dear child, it's no use asking me. I'm determined to leave everything to you children this year. Forget I am your mother. Treat me as an honoured guest."

But Meg could not possibly go and supervise the men. She had washed her hair before breakfast, and she sat drinking her coffee in a green turban, with a dark wet curl stamped on each cheek. Jose, the butterfly, always" came down in a silk petticoat and a kimono jacket.

"You'll have to go, Laura; you're the artistic one."

Away Laura flew, still holding her piece of bread-and-butter. It's so delicious to have an excuse for eating out of doors, and besides, she loved having to arrange things; she always felt she could do it so much better than anybody else.

Four men in their shirt-sleeves stood grouped together on the garden path. They carried staves covered with rolls of canvas, and they had big tool-bags slung on their backs. They looked impressive. Laura wished now that she had not got the bread-and-butter, but there was nowhere to put it, and she couldn't possibly throw it away. She blushed and tried to look severe and even a little bit short-sighted as she came up to them.

"Good morning," she said, copying her mother's voice. But that sounded so fearfully affected that she was ashamed, and stammered like a little girl, "Oh—er—have you come—is it about the mar-quee?"

"That's right, miss," said the tallest of the men, a lanky, freckled fellow, and he shifted his tool-bag, knocked back his straw hat and smiled down at her. "That's about it."

His smile was so easy, so friendly that Laura recovered. What nice eyes he had, small, but such a dark blue! And now she looked at the others, they were smiling too. "Cheer up, we won't bite," their smile seemed to say. How very nice workmen were! And what a beautiful morning! She mustn't mention the morning; she must be businesslike. The marquee.

"Well, what about the lily-lawn? Would that do?"

And she pointed to the lily-lawn with the hand that didn't hold the bread-and-butter. They turned, they stared in the direction. A little fat chap thrust out his under-lip, and the tall fellow frowned.

"I don't fancy it," said he. "Not conspicuous enough. You see, with a thing like a marquee," and he turned to Laura in his easy way, "you want to put it somewhere where it'll give you a bang slap in the eye, if you follow me."

Laura's upbringing made her wonder for a moment whether it was quite respectful of a workman to talk to her of bangs slap in the eye. But she did quite follow him.

"A corner of the tennis-court," she suggested. "But the band's going to be in one corner."

"H'm, going to have a band, are you?" said another of the workmen. He was pale. He had a haggard look as his dark eyes scanned the tennis-court. What was he thinking?

"Only a very small band," said Laura gently. Perhaps he wouldn't

mind so much if the band was quite small. But the tall fellow interrupted.

"Look here, miss, that's the place. Against those trees. Over there. That'll do fine."

Against the karakas. Then the karaka-trees would be hidden. And they were so lovely, with their broad, gleaming leaves, and their clusters of yellow fruit. They were like trees you imagined growing on a desert island, proud, solitary, lifting their leaves and fruits to the sun in a kind of silent splendour. Must they be hidden by a marquee?

They must. Already the men had shouldered their staves and were making for the place. Only the tall fellow was left. He bent down, pinched a sprig of lavender, put his thumb and forefinger to his nose and snuffed up the smell. When Laura saw that gesture she forgot all about the karakas in her wonder at him caring for things like that—caring for the smell of lavender. How many men that she knew would have done such a thing? Oh, how extraordinarily nice workmen were, she thought. Why couldn't she have workmen for friends rather than the silly boys she danced with and who came to Sunday night supper? She would get on much better with men like these.

It's all the fault, she decided, as the tall fellow drew something on the back of an envelope, something that was to be looped up or left to hang, -of these absurd class distinctions. Well, for her part, she didn't feel them. Not a bit, not an atom. . . . And now there came the chock-chock of wooden hammers. Some one whistled, some one sang out, "Are you right there, matey?" "Matey!" The friendliness of it, the—the——Just to prove how happy she was, just to show the tall fellow how at home she felt, and how she despised stupid conventions, Laura took a big bite of her bread-and-butter as she stared at the little drawing. She felt just like a work-girl.

"Laura, Laura, where are you? Telephone, Laura!" a voice cried from the house.

"Coming!" Away she skimmed, over the lawn, up the path, up the steps, across the veranda, and into the porch. In the hall her father and Laurie were brushing their hats ready to go to the office.

"I say, Laura," said Laurie very fast, "you might just give a squiz at my coat before this afternoon. See if it wants pressing."

"I will," said she. Suddenly she couldn't stop herself. She ran at Laurie and gave him a small, quick squeeze. "Oh, I do love parties, don't you?" gasped Laura.

"Ra-ther," said Laurie's warm, boyish voice, and he squeezed his sister too, and gave her a gentle push. "Dash off to the telephone, old girl."

The telephone. "Yes, yes; oh yes. Kitty? Good morning, dear. Come to lunch? Do, dear. Delighted of course. It will only be a very scratch meal—just the sandwich crusts and broken meringue-shells and what's left over. Yes, isn't it a perfect morning? Your white? Oh, I certainly should. One moment—hold the line. Mother's calling." And Laura sat back. "What, mother? Can't hear."

Mrs. Sheridan's voice floated down the stairs. "Tell her to wear that sweet hat she had on last Sunday."

"Mother says you're to wear that sweet hat you had on last Sunday. Good. One o'clock. Bye-bye."

Laura put back the receiver, flung her arms over her head, took a deep breath, stretched and let them fall. "Huh," she sighed, and the moment after the sigh she sat up quickly. She was still, listening. All the doors in the house seemed to be open. The house was alive with soft, quick steps and running voices. The green baize door that led to the kitchen regions swung open and shut with a muffled thud. And now there came a long, chuckling absurd sound. It was the heavy piano being moved on its stiff castors. But the air! If you stopped to notice, was the air always like this? Little faint winds were playing chase, in at the tops of the windows, out at the doors. And there were two tiny spots of sun, one on the inkpot, one on a silver photograph frame, playing too. Darling little spots. Especially the one on the inkpot lid. It was quite warm. A warm little silver star. She could have kissed it.

The front door bell pealed, and there sounded the rustle of Sadie's print skirt on the stairs. A man's voice murmured; Sadie answered, careless, "I'm sure I don't know. Wait. I'll ask Mrs. Sheridan."

"What is it, Sadie?" Laura came into the hall.

"It's the florist, Miss Laura."

It was, indeed. There, just inside the door, stood a wide, shallow tray full of pots of pink lilies. No other kind. Nothing but lilies—canna lilies, big pink flowers, wide open, radiant, almost frighteningly alive on bright crimson stems.

"Oh-oh, Sadie!" said Laura, and the sound was like a little moan. She crouched down as if to warm herself at that blaze of lilies; she felt they were in her fingers, on her lips, growing in her breast.

"It's some mistake," she said faintly. "Nobody ever ordered so many. Sadie, go and find mother."

But at that moment Mrs. Sheridan joined them.

"It's quite right," she said calmly. "Yes, I ordered them. Aren't they lovely?" She pressed Laura's arm. "I was passing the shop yesterday, and I saw them in the window. And I suddenly thought for once in my life I shall have enough canna lilies. The garden-party will be a good excuse."

"But I thought you said you didn't mean to interfere," said Laura. Sadie had gone. The florist's man was still outside at his van. She put her arm round her mother's neck and gently, very gently, she bit her mother's ear.

"My darling child, you wouldn't like a logical mother, would you? Don't do that. Here's the man."

He carried more lilies still, another whole tray.

"Bank them up, just inside the door, on both sides of the porch, please," said Mrs. Sheridan. "Don't you agree, Laura?"

"Oh, I *do*, mother."

In the drawing-room Meg, Jose and good little Hans had at last succeeded in moving the piano.

"Now, if we put this chesterfield against the wall and move everything out of the room except the chairs, don't you think?"

"Quite."

"Hans, move these tables into the smoking-room, and bring a sweeper to take these marks off the carpet and—one moment, Hans——" Jose loved giving orders to the servants, and they loved obeying her. She always made them feel they were taking part in some drama. "Tell mother and Miss Laura to come here at once."

"Very good, Miss Jose."

She turned to Meg. "I want to hear what the piano sounds like,

just in case I'm asked to sing this afternoon. Let's try over 'This Life is Weary.'"

Pom! Ta-ta-ta Tee-ta! The piano burst out so passionately that Jose's face changed. She clasped her hands. She looked mournfully and enigmatically at her mother and Laura as they came in.

This Life is *Wee-ary*,
A Tear—a Sigh.
A Love that *Chan-ges*,
This Life is *Wee-ary*,
A Tear—a Sigh.
A Love that *Chan-ges*,
And then . . . Good-bye!

But at the word "Good-bye," and although the piano sounded more desperate than ever, her face broke into a brilliant, dreadfully unsympathetic smile.

"Aren't I in good voice, mummy?" she beamed.

This Life is *Wee-ary*,
Hope comes to Die.
A Dream—a Wa-kening.

But now Sadie interrupted them. "What is it, Sadie?"

"If you please, m'm, cook says have you got the flags for the sandwiches?"

"The flags for the sandwiches, Sadie?" echoed Mrs. Sheridan dreamily. And the children knew by her face that she hadn't got them. "Let me see." And she said to Sadie firmly, "Tell cook I'll let her have them in ten minutes."

Sadie went.

"Now, Laura," said her mother quickly. "Come with me into the smoking-room. I've got the names somewhere on the back of an envelope. You'll have to write them out for me. Meg, go upstairs this minute and take that wet thing off your head. Jose, run and finish dressing this instant. Do you hear me, children, or shall I have to tell your father when he comes home to-night? And—and, Jose,

pacify cook if you do go into the kitchen, will you? I'm terrified of her this morning."

The envelope was found at last behind the dining-room clock, though how it had got there Mrs. Sheridan could not imagine.

"One of you children must have stolen it out of my bag, because I remember vividly—cream cheese and lemon-curd. Have you done that?"

"Yes."

"Egg and——" Mrs. Sheridan held the envelope away from her. "It looks like mice. It can't be mice, can it?"

"Olive, pet," said Laura, looking over her shoulder.

"Yes, of course, olive. What a horrible combination it sounds. Egg and olive."

They were finished at last, and Laura took them off to the kitchen. She found Jose there pacifying the cook, who did not look at all terrifying.

"I have never seen such exquisite sandwiches," said Jose's rapturous voice. "How many kinds did you say there were, cook? Fifteen?"

"Fifteen, Miss Jose."

"Well, cook, I congratulate you."

Cook swept up crusts with the long sandwich knife, and smiled broadly.

"Godber's has come," announced Sadie, issuing out of the pantry. She had seen the man pass the window.

That meant the cream puffs had come. Godber's were famous for their cream puffs. Nobody ever thought of making them at home.

"Bring them in and put them on the table, my girl," ordered cook.

Sadie brought them in and went back to the door. Of course Laura and Jose were far too grown-up to really care about such things. All the same, they couldn't help agreeing that the puffs looked very attractive. Very. Cook began arranging them, shaking off the extra icing sugar.

"Don't they carry one back to all one's parties?" said Laura.

"I suppose they do," said practical Jose, who never liked to be carried back. "They look beautifully light and feathery, I must say."

"Have one each, my dears," said cook in her comfortable voice. "Yer ma won't know."

Oh, impossible. Fancy cream puffs so soon after breakfast. The very idea made one shudder. All the same, two minutes later Jose and Laura were licking their fingers with that absorbed inward look that only comes from whipped cream.

"Let's go into the garden, out by the back way," suggested Laura. "I want to see how the men are getting on with the marquee. They're such awfully nice men."

But the back door was blocked by cook, Sadie, Godber's man and Hans.

Something had happened.

"Tuk-tuk-tuk," clucked cook like an agitated hen. Sadie had her hand clapped to her cheek as though she had toothache. Hans's face was screwed up in the effort to understand. Only Godber's man seemed to be enjoying himself; it was his story.

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

"There's been a horrible accident," said Cook. "A man killed."

"A man killed! Where? How? When?"

But Godber's man wasn't going to have his story snatched from under his very nose.

"Know those little cottages just below here, miss?" Know them? Of course, she knew them. "Well, there's a young chap living there, name of Scott, a carter. His horse shied at a traction-engine, corner of Hawke Street this morning, and he was thrown out on the back of his head. Killed."

"Dead!" Laura stared at Godber's man.

"Dead when they picked him up," said Godber's man with relish. "They were taking the body home as I come up here." And he said to the cook, "He's left a wife and five little ones."

"Jose, come here." Laura caught hold of her sister's sleeve and dragged her through the kitchen to the other side of the green baize door. There she paused and leaned against it. "Jose!" she said, horrified, "however are we going to stop everything?"

"Stop everything, Laura!" cried Jose in astonishment. "What do you mean?"

"Stop the garden-party, of course." Why did Jose pretend?

But Jose was still more amazed. "Stop the garden-party? My dear Laura, don't be so absurd. Of course we can't do anything of the kind. Nobody expects us to. Don't be so extravagant."

"But we can't possibly have a garden-party with a man dead just outside the front gate."

That really was extravagant, for the little cottages were in a lane to themselves at the very bottom of a steep rise that led up to the house. A broad road ran between. True, they were far too near. They were the greatest possible eyesore, and they had no right to be in that neighbourhood at all. They were little mean dwellings painted a chocolate brown. In the garden patches there was nothing but cabbage stalks, sick hens and tomato cans. The very smoke coming out of their chimneys was poverty-stricken. Little rags and shreds of smoke, so unlike the great silvery plumes that uncurled from the Sheridans' chimneys. Washerwomen lived in the lane and sweeps and a cobbler, and a man whose house-front was studded all over with minute bird-cages. Children swarmed. When the Sheridans were little they were forbidden to set foot there because of the revolting language and of what they might catch. But since they were grown up, Laura and Laurie on their prowls sometimes walked through. It was disgusting and sordid. They came out with a shudder. But still one must go everywhere; one must see everything. So through they went.

"And just think of what the band would sound like to that poor woman," said Laura.

"Oh, Laura!" Jose began to be seriously annoyed. "If you're going to stop a band playing every time some one has an accident, you'll lead a very strenuous life. I'm every bit as sorry about it as you. I feel just as sympathetic." Her eyes hardened. She looked at her sister just as she used to when they were little and fighting together. "You won't bring a drunken workman back to life by being sentimental," she said softly.

"Drunk! Who said he was drunk?" Laura turned furiously on Jose. She said, just as they had used to say on those occasions, "I'm going straight up to tell mother."

"Do, dear," cooed Jose.

"Mother, can I come into your room?" Laura turned the big glass door-knob.

"Of course, child. Why, what's the matter? What's given you such a colour?" And Mrs. Sheridan turned round from her dressing-table. She was trying on a new hat.

"Mother, a man's been killed," began Laura.

"Not in the garden?" interrupted her mother.

"No, no!"

"Oh, what a fright you gave me!" Mrs. Sheridan sighed with relief, and took off the big hat and held it on her knees.

"But listen, mother," said Laura. Breathless, half-choking, she told the dreadful story. "Of course, we can't have our party, can we?" she pleaded. "The band and everybody arriving. They'd hear us, mother; they're nearly neighbours!"

To Laura's astonishment her mother behaved just like Jose; it was harder to bear because she seemed amused. She refused to take Laura seriously.

"But, my dear child, use your common sense. It's only by accident we've heard of it. If some one had died there normally—and I can't understand how they keep alive in those poky little holes—we should still be having our party, shouldn't we?"

Laura had to say "yes" to that, but she felt it was all wrong. She sat down on her mother's sofa and pinched the cushion frill.

"Mother, isn't it really terribly heartless of us?" she asked.

"Darling!" Mrs. Sheridan got up and came over to her, carrying the hat. Before Laura could stop her she had popped it on. "My child!" said her mother, "the hat is yours. It's made for you. It's much too young for me. I have never seen you look such a picture. Look at yourself!" And she held up her hand-mirror.

"But, mother," Laura began again. She couldn't look at herself; she turned aside.

This time Mrs. Sheridan lost patience just as Jose had done.

"You are being very absurd, Laura," she said coldly. "People like that don't expect sacrifices from us. And it's not very sympathetic to spoil everybody's enjoyment as you're doing now."

"I don't understand," said Laura, and she walked quickly out of the room into her own bedroom. There, quite by chance, the first

thing she saw was this charming girl in the mirror, in her black hat trimmed with gold daisies, and a long black velvet ribbon. Never had she imagined she could look like that. Is mother right? she thought. And now she hoped her mother was right. Am I being extravagant? Perhaps it was extravagant. Just for a moment she had another glimpse of that poor woman and those little children, and the body being carried into the house. But it all seemed blurred, unreal, like a picture in the newspaper. I'll remember it again after the party's over, she decided. And somehow that seemed quite the best plan. . . .

Lunch was over by half-past one. By half-past two they were all ready for the fray. The green-coated band had arrived and was established in a corner of the tennis-court.

"My dear!" trilled Kitty Maitland, "aren't they too like frogs for words? You ought to have arranged them round the pond with the conductor in the middle on a leaf."

Laurie arrived and hailed them on his way to dress. At the sight of him Laura remembered the accident again. She wanted to tell him. If Laurie agreed with the others, then it was bound to be all right. And she followed him into the hall.

"Laurie!"

"Hallo!" He was half-way upstairs, but when he turned round and saw Laura he suddenly puffed out his cheeks and goggled his eyes at her. "My word, Laura! You do look stunning," said Laurie. "What an absolutely topping hat!"

Laura said faintly "Is it?" and smiled up at Laurie, and didn't tell him after all.

Soon after that people began coming in streams. The band struck up; the hired waiters ran from the house to the marquee. Wherever you looked there were couples strolling, bending to the flowers, greeting, moving on over the lawn. They were like bright birds that had alighted in the Sheridans' garden for this one afternoon, on their way to—where? Ah, what happiness it is to be with people who all are happy, to press hands, press cheeks, smile into eyes.

"Darling Laura, how well you look!"

"What a becoming hat, child!"

"Laura, you look quite Spanish. I've never seen you look so striking."

And Laura, glowing, answered softly, "Have you had tea? Won't you have an ice? The passion-fruit ices really are rather special." She ran to her father and begged him. "Daddy darling, can't the band have something to drink?"

And the perfect afternoon slowly ripened, slowly faded, slowly its petals closed.

"Never a more delightful garden-party . . ." "The greatest success . . ." "Quite the most . . ."

Laura helped her mother with the good-byes. They stood side by side in the porch till it was all over.

"All over, all over, thank heaven," said Mrs. Sheridan. "Round up the others, Laura. Let's go and have some fresh coffee. I'm exhausted. Yes, it's been very successful. But oh, these parties, these parties! Why will you children insist on giving parties!" And they all of them sat down in the deserted marquee.

"Have a sandwich, daddy dear. I wrote the flag."

"Thanks." Mr. Sheridan took a bite and the sandwich was gone. He took another. "I suppose you didn't hear of a beastly accident that happened to-day?" he said.

"My dear," said Mrs. Sheridan, holding up her hand, "we did. It nearly ruined the party. Laura insisted we should put it off."

"Oh, mother!" Laura didn't want to be teased about it.

"It was a horrible affair all the same," said Mr. Sheridan. "The chap was married too. Lived just below in the lane, and leaves a wife and half a dozen kiddies, so they say."

An awkward little silence fell. Mrs. Sheridan fidgeted with her cup. Really, it was very tactless of father . . .

Suddenly she looked up. There on the table were all those sandwiches, cakes, puffs, all uneaten, all going to be wasted. She had one of her brilliant ideas.

"I know," she said. "Let's make up a basket. Let's send that poor creature some of this perfectly good food. At any rate, it will be the greatest treat for the children. Don't you agree? And she's sure to

have neighbours calling in and so on. What a point to have it all ready prepared. Laura!" She jumped up. "Get me the big basket out of the stairs cupboard."

"But, mother, do you really think it's a good idea?" said Laura.

Again, how curious, she seemed to be different from them all. To take scraps from their party. Would the poor woman really like that?

"Of course! What's the matter with you to-day? An hour or two ago you were insisting on us being sympathetic, and now——"

Oh, well! Laura ran for the basket. It was filled, it was heaped by her mother.

"Take it yourself, darling," said she. "Run down just as you are. No, wait, take the arum lilies too. People of that class are so impressed by arum lilies."

"The stems will ruin her lace frock," said practical Jose.

So they would. Just in time. "Only the basket, then. And, Laura!"—her mother followed her out of the marquee—"don't on any account——"

"What, mother?"

No, better not put such ideas into the child's head! "Nothing! Run along."

It was just growing dusky as Laura shut their garden gates. A big dog ran by like a shadow. The road gleamed white, and down below in the hollow the little cottages were in deep shade. How quiet it seemed after the afternoon. Here she was going down the hill to somewhere where a man lay dead, and she couldn't realize it. Why couldn't she? She stopped a minute. And it seemed to her that kisses, voices, tinkling spoons, laughter, the smell of crushed grass were somehow inside her. She had no room for anything else. How strange! She looked up at the pale sky, and all she thought was, "Yes, it was the most successful party."

Now the broad road was crossed. The lane began, smoky and dark. Women in shawls and men's tweed caps hurried by. Men hung over the palings; the children played in the doorways. A low hum came from the mean little cottages. In some of them there was a flicker of light, and a shadow, crab-like, moved across the window. Laura bent her head and hurried on. She wished now she had put

on a coat. How her frock shone! And the big hat with the velvet streamer—if only it was another hat! Were the people looking at her? They must be. It was a mistake to have come; she knew all along it was a mistake. Should she go back even now?

No, too late. This was the house. It must be. A dark knot of people stood outside. Beside the gate an old, old woman with a crutch sat in a chair, watching. She had her feet on a newspaper. The voices stopped as Laura drew near. The group parted. It was as though she was expected, as though they had known she was coming here.

Laura was terribly nervous. Tossing the velvet ribbon over her shoulder, she said to a woman standing by, "Is this Mrs. Scott's house?" and the woman, smiling queerly, said, "It is, my lass."

Oh, to be away from this! She actually said, "Help me, God," as she walked up the tiny path and knocked. To be away from those staring eyes, or to be covered up in anything, one of those women's shawls even. I'll just leave the basket and go, she decided. I shan't even wait for it to be emptied.

Then the door opened. A little woman in black showed in the gloom.

Laura said, "Are you Mrs. Scott?" But to her horror the woman answered, "Walk in please, miss," and she was shut in the passage.

"No," said Laura, "I don't want to come in. I only want to leave this basket. Mother sent——"

The little woman in the gloomy passage seemed not to have heard her. "Step this way, please, miss," she said in an oily voice, and Laura followed her.

She found herself in a wretched little low kitchen, lighted by a smoky lamp. There was a woman sitting before the fire.

"Em," said the little creature who had let her in. "Em! It's a young lady." She turned to Laura. She said meaningly, "I'm 'er sister, Miss. You'll excuse 'er, won't you?"

"Oh, but of course!" said Laura. "Please, please don't disturb her. I—I only want to leave——"

But at that moment the woman at the fire turned round. Her face, puffed up, red, with swollen eyes and swollen lips, looked terrible. She seemed as though she couldn't understand why Laura was

there. What did it mean? Why was this stranger standing in the kitchen with a basket? What was it all about? And the poor face puckered up again.

"All right, my dear," said the other. "I'll think the young lady."

And again she began, "You'll excuse her, miss, I'm sure," and her face, swollen too, tried an oily smile.

Laura only wanted to get out, to get away. She was back in the passage. The door opened. She walked straight through into the bedroom, where the dead man was lying.

"You'd like a look at 'im, wouldn't you?" said Em's sister, and she brushed past Laura over to the bed. "Don't be afraid, my lass,—” and now her voice sounded fond and sly, and fondly she drew down the sheet—" 'e looks a picture. There's nothing to show. Come along, rny dear."

Laura came.

There lay a young man, fast asleep—sleeping so soundly, so deeply, that he was far, far away from them both. Oh, so remote, so peaceful. He was dreaming. Never wake him up again. His head was sunk in the pillow, his eyes were closed; they were blind under the closed eyelids. He was given up to his dream. What did garden-parties and baskets and lace frocks matter to him? He was far from all those things. He was wonderful, beautiful. While they were laughing and while the band was playing, this marvel had come to the lane. Happy . . . happy. . . . All is well, said that sleeping face. This is just as it should be. I am content.

But all the same you had to cry, and she couldn't go out of the room without saying something to him. Laura gave a loud childish sob.

"Forgive my hat," she said.

And this time she didn't wait for Em's sister. She found her way out of the door, down the path, past all those dark people. At the corner of the lane she met Laurie.

He stepped out of the shadow. "Is that you, Laura?"

"Yes."

"Mother was getting anxious. Was it all right?"

"Yes, quite. Oh, Laurie!" She took his arm, she pressed up against him.

"I say, you're not crying, are you?" asked her brother.

Laura shook her head. She was.

Laurie put his arm round her shoulder. "Don't cry," he said in his warm, loving voice. "Was it awful?"

"No," sobbed Laura. "It was simply marvelous. But, Laurie——" She stopped, she looked at her brother. "Isn't life," she stammered, "isn't life——" But what life was she couldn't explain. No matter. He quite understood.

"Isn't it, darling?" said Laurie.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Just as in "The Leader of the People," "The Garden Party" is concerned with an aspect of initiation, an aspect of the process of growing up and of learning. In order to understand the nature of the initiation, it is necessary to know two things: what it is that is learned and what the world was like prior to the learning. You will note that Katherine Mansfield devotes a long section of the story to describing the world of Laura as it was: the economic environment, the physical environment, the assumptions, and the prejudices. What is the first suggestion in the story that Laura is at a point where she is beginning to question her environment and to judge for herself?

2. One method of exposition in a story is to describe a single thing from two different points of view, a device which serves not only to exemplify different possible attitudes but to make clear wherein they differ. With this in mind, how many characters in the book are seen from more than one point of view?

3. What is the significance of the scene which describes the workman taking pleasure from sniffing the sprig of lavender?

4. In order to make credible the learning of something new on the part of someone, it is necessary to create a character who does not know everything, who is, in other words, ready to learn. The character must, in this sense, be innocent of what the initiates all know without question. What means does Katherine Mansfield use to indicate Laura's readiness to learn or to exemplify her innocence?

5. Laura has never questioned any of the assumptions of her life, for she has never thought anything that differed sharply from what her elders thought. It is for this reason that when she approaches her mother with the idea that the party should be called off, she expects

that in the natural course of events her mother will react in the same fashion. What is it that Laura finds out about the world when her mother will not take the idea seriously?

6. What is the fundamental nature of the idea which Laura has and which her elders reject? Is it merely a matter of whether or not form or courtesy or respect demand that the party be called off, or is something deeper, something more subtle involved? Is what Laura learns a new fact, a new idea, a new piece of knowledge, or is it rather that something she feels is not felt by her elders? Discuss this fully.

7. We almost always assume that the teacher knows more than the learner, that there is something of value which the learner is going to get from the teacher that will bring him closer to the point which the teacher has already achieved. Is this true in the case of Laura? Or, on the other hand, does Laura in her innocence have something which her elders have lost irrevocably to the impoverishment of their lives?

8. Explain the nature of Laura's reaction to her mother's suggestion that she bring a basket to the bereaved home.

9. Laura, when at the bereaved home, is fearful. Laura's mother is also fearful and sends Laurie to look for his sister. Are Laura and her mother in fear of the same thing? In what respects do their fears differ?

10. How do you explain Laura's apology to the unhappy widow for her hat?

11. What is it that Laura learns? Into what is she initiated?

The Killers

by ERNEST HEMINGWAY

THE DOOR of Henry's lunch-room opened and two men came in. They sat down at the counter.

"What's yours?" George asked them.

"I don't know," one of the men said. "What do you want to eat, Al?"

"I don't know," said Al. "I don't know what I want to eat."

Outside it was getting dark. The street-light came on outside the window. The two men at the counter read the menu. From the other end of the counter Nick Adams watched them. He had been talking to George when they came in.

"I'll have a roast pork tenderloin with apple sauce and mashed potatoes," the first man said.

"It isn't ready yet."

"What the hell do you put it on the card for?"

"That's the dinner," George explained. "You can get that at six o'clock."

George looked at the clock on the wall behind the counter.

"It's five o'clock."

"The clock says twenty minutes past five," the second man said.

"It's twenty minutes fast."

"Oh, to hell with the clock," the first man said. "What have you got to eat?"

"I can give you any kind of sandwiches," George said. "You can have ham and eggs, bacon and eggs, liver and bacon, or a steak."

"Give me chicken croquettes with green peas and cream sauce and mashed potatoes."

"That's the dinner."

"Everything we want's the dinner, eh? That's the way you work it."

"I can give you ham and eggs, bacon and eggs, liver——"

"I'll take ham and eggs," the man called Al said. He wore a derby hat and a black overcoat buttoned across the chest. His face was small and white and he had tight lips. He wore a silk muffler and gloves.

"Give me bacon and eggs," said the other man. He was about the same size as Al. Their faces were different, but they were dressed like twins. Both wore overcoats too tight for them. They sat leaning forward, their elbows on the counter.

"Got anything to drink?" Al asked.

"Silver beer, bevo, ginger-ale," George said.

"I mean you got anything to *drink*?"

"Just those I said."

"This is a hot town," said the other. "What do they call it?"

"Summit."

"Ever hear of it?" Al asked his friend.

"No," said the friend.

"What do you do here nights?" Al asked.

"They eat the dinner," his friend said. "They all come here and eat the big dinner."

"That's right," George said.

"So you think that's right?" Al asked George.

"Sure."

"You're a pretty bright boy, aren't you?"

"Sure," said George.

"Well, you're not," said the other little man. "Is he, Al?"

"He's dumb," said Al. He turned to Nick. "What's your name?"

"Adams."

"Another bright boy," Al said. "Ain't he a bright boy, Max?"

"The town's full of bright boys," Max said.

George put the two platters, one of ham and eggs, the other of bacon and eggs, on the counter. He set down two side-dishes of fried potatoes and closed the wicket into the kitchen.

"Which is yours?" he asked Al.

"Don't you remember?"

"Ham and eggs."

"Just a bright boy," Max said. He leaned forward and took the ham and eggs. Both men ate with their gloves on. George watched them eat.

"What are *you* looking at?" Max looked at George.

"Nothing."

"The hell you were. You were looking at me."

"Maybe the boy meant it for a joke, Max," Al said.

George laughed.

"*You* don't have to laugh," Max said to him. "*You* don't have to laugh at all, see?"

"All right," said George.

"So he thinks it's all right." Max turned to Al. "He thinks it's all right. That's a good one."

"Oh, he's a thinker," Al said. They went on eating.

"What's the bright boy's name down the counter?" Al asked Max.

"Hey, bright boy," Max said to Nick. "You go around on the other side of the counter with your boy friend."

"What's the idea?" Nick asked.

"There isn't any idea."

"You betfer go around, bright boy," Al said. Nick went around behind the counter.

"What's the idea?" George asked.

"None of your damn business," Al said. "Who's out in the kitchen?"

"The nigger."

"What do you mean the nigger?"

"The nigger that cooks."

"Tell him to come in."

"What's the idea?"

"Tell him to come in."

"Where do you think you are?"

"We know damn well where we are," the man called Max said. "Do we look silly?"

"You talk silly," Al said to him. "What the hell do you argue with this kid for? Listen," he said to George, "tell the nigger to come out here."

"What are you going to do to him?"

"Nothing. Use your head, bright boy. What would we do to a nigger?"

George opened the slit that opened back into the kitchen. "Sam," he called. "Come in here a minute."

The door to the kitchen opened and the nigger came in. "What was it?" he asked. The two men at the counter took a look at him.

"All right, nigger. You stand right there," Al said.

Sam, the nigger, standing in his apron, looked at the two men sitting at the counter. "Yes, sir," he said. Al got down from his stool.

"I'm going back to the kitchen with the nigger and bright boy," he said. "Go on back to the kitchen, nigger. You go with him, bright boy." The little man walked after Nick and Sam, the cook, back into the kitchen. The door shut after them. The man called Max sat at the counter opposite George. He didn't look at George but looked in the mirror that ran along back of the counter, Henry's had been made over from a saloon into a lunch-counter.

"Well, bright boy," Max said, looking into the mirror, "why don't you say something?"

"What's it all about?"

"Hey, Al," Max called, "bright boy wants to know what it's all about."

"Why don't you tell him?" Al's voice came from the kitchen.

"What do you think it's all about?"

"I don't know."

"What do you think?"

Max looked into the mirror all the time he was talking.

"I wouldn't say."

"Hey, Al, bright boy says he wouldn't say what he thinks it's all about."

"I can hear you, all right," Al said from the kitchen. He had propped open the slit that dishes passed through into the kitchen with a catsup bottle. "Listen, bright boy," he said from the kitchen to George. "Stand a little further along the bar. You move a little to the left, Max." He was like a photographer arranging for a group picture.

"Talk to me, bright boy," Max said. "What do you think's going to happen?"

George did not say anything.

"I'll tell you," Max said. "We're going to kill a Swede. Do you know a big Swede named Ole Andreson?"

"Yes."

"He comes here to eat every night, don't he?"

"Sometimes he comes here."

"He comes here at six o'clock, don't he?"

"If he comes."

"We know all that, bright boy," Max said. "Talk about something else. Ever go to the movies?"

"Once in a while."

"You ought to go to the movies more. The movies are fine for a bright boy like you."

"What are you going to kill Ole Andreson for? What did he ever do to you?"

"He never had a chance to do anything to us. He never even seen us."

"And he's only going to see us once," Al said from the kitchen.

"What are you going to kill him for, then?" George asked.

"We're killing him for a friend. Just to oblige a friend, bright boy."

"Shut up," said Al from the kitchen. "You talk too goddam much."

"Well, I got to keep bright boy amused. Don't I, bright boy?"

"You talk too damn much," Al said. "The nigger and my bright boy are amused by themselves. I got them tied up like a couple of girl friends in the convent."

"I suppose you were in a convent."

"You never know."

"You were in a kosher convent. That's where you were."

George looked up at the clock.

"If anybody comes in you tell them the cook is off, and if they keep after it, you tell them you'll go back and cook yourself. Do you get that, bright boy?"

"All right," George said. "What you going to do with us afterward?"

"That'll depend," Max said. "That's one of those things you never know at the time."

George looked up at the clock. It was a quarter past six. The door from the street opened. A street-car motorman came in.

"Hello, George," he said. "Can I get supper?"

"Sam's gone out," George said. "He'll be back in about half an hour."

"I'd better go up the street," the motorman said. George looked at the clock. It was twenty minutes past six.

"That was nice, bright boy," Max said. "You're a regular little gentleman."

"He knew I'd blow his head off," Al said from the kitchen.

"No," said Max. "It ain't that. Bright boy is nice. He's a nice boy. I like him."

At six-fifty-five George said: "He's not coming."

Two other people had been in the lunch-room. Once George had gone out to the kitchen and made a ham-and-egg sandwich "to go" that a man wanted to take with him. Inside the kitchen he saw Al, his derby hat tipped back, sitting on a stool beside the wicket with the muzzle of a sawed-off shotgun resting on the ledge. Nick and the cook were back to back in the corner, a towel tied in each of their mouths. George had cooked the sandwich, wrapped it up in oiled paper, put it in a bag, brought it in, and the man had paid for it and gone out.

"Bright boy can do everything," Max said. "He can cook and everything. You'd make some girl a nice wife, bright boy."

"Yes?" George said. "Your friend, Ole Andreson, isn't going to come."

"We'll give him ten minutes," Max said.

Max watched the mirror and the clock. The hands of the clock marked seven o'clock, and then five minutes past seven.

"Come on, Al," said Max. "We better go. He's not coming."

"Better give him five minutes," Al said from the kitchen.

In the five minutes a man came in, and George explained that the cook was sick.

"Why the hell don't you get another cook?" the man asked. "Aren't you running a lunch-counter?" He went out.

"Come on, Al," Max said.

"What about the two bright boys and the nigger?"

"They're all right."

"You think so?"

"Sure. We're through with it."

"I don't like it," said Al. "It's sloppy. You talk too much."

"Oh, what the hell," said Max. "We got to keep amused, haven't we?"

"You talk too much, all the same," Al said. He came out from the kitchen. The cut-off barrels of the shotgun made a slight bulge under the waist of his too tight-fitting overcoat. He straightened his coat with his gloved hands.

"So long, bright boy," he said to George. "You got a lot of luck."

"That's the truth," Max said. "You ought to play the races, bright boy."

The two of them went out the door. George watched them, through the window, pass under the arc-light and across the street. In their tight overcoats and derby hats they looked like a vaudeville team. George went back through the swinging-door into the kitchen and untied Nick and the cook.

"I don't want any more of that," said Sam, the cook. "I don't want any more of that."

Nick stood up. He had never had a towel in his mouth before. "Say," he said. "What the hell?" He was trying to swagger it off.

"They were going to kill Ole Andreson," George said. "They were going to shoot him when he came in to eat."

"Ole Andreson?"

"Sure."

The cook felt the corners of his mouth with his thumbs.

"They all gone?" he asked.

"Yeah," said George. "They're gone now."

"I don't like it," said the cook. "I don't like any of it at all."

"Listen," George said to Nick. "You better go see Ole Andreson."

"All right."

"You better not have anything to do with it at all," Sam, the cook, said. "You better stay way out of it."

"Don't go if you don't want to," George said.

"Mixing up in this ain't going to get you anywhere," the cook said. "You stay out of it."

"I'll go see him," Nick said to George. "Where does he live?" The cook turned away.

"Little boys always know what they want to do," he said.

"He lives up at Hirsch's rooming-house," George said to Nick.

"I'll go up there."

Outside the arc-light shone through the bare branches of a tree. Nick walked up the street beside the car-tracks and turned at the next arc-light down a side-street. Three houses up the street was Hirsch's rooming-house. Nick walked up the two steps and pushed the bell. A woman came to the door.

"Is Ole Andrcson here?"

"Do you want to see him?"

"Yes, if he's in."

Nick followed the woman up a flight of stairs and back to the end of a corridor. She knocked on the door.

"Who is it?"

"It's somebody to see you, Mr. Andreson," the woman said.

"It's Nick Adams."

"Come in."

Nick opened the door and went into the room. Ole Andreson was lying on the bed with all his clothes on. He had been a heavyweight prizefighter and he was too long for the bed. He lay with his head on two pillows. He did not look at Nick.

"What was it?" he asked.

"I was up at Henry's," Nick said, "and two fellows came in and tied up me and the cook, and they said they were going to kill you."

It sounded silly when he said it. Ole Andreson said nothing.

"They put us out in the kitchen," Nick went on. "They were going to shoot you when you came in to supper."

Ole Andreson looked at the wall and did not say anything.

"George thought I better come and tell you about it."

"There isn't anything I can do about it," Ole Andreson said.

"I'll tell you what they were like."

"I don't want to know what they were like," Ole Andreson said. He looked at the wall. "Thanks for coming to tell me about it."

"That's all right."

Nick looked at the big man lying on the bed.

"Don't you want me to go and see the police?"

"No," Ole Andreson said. "That wouldn't do any good."

"Isn't there something I could do?"

"No. There ain't anything to do."

"Maybe it was just a bluff."

"No. It ain't just a bluff."

Ole Andreson rolled over toward the wall.

"The only thing is," he said, talking toward the wall, "I just can't make up my mind to go out. I been in here all day."

"Couldn't you get out of town?"

"No," Ole Andreson said. "I'm through with all that running around."

He looked at the wall.

"There ain't anything to do now."

"Couldn't you fix it up some way?"

"No. I got in wrong." He talked in the same flat voice. "There ain't anything to do. After a while I'll make up my mind to go out."

"I better go back and see George," Nick said.

"So long," said Ole Andreson. He did not look toward Nick. "Thanks for coming around."

Nick went out. As he shut the door he saw Ole Andreson with all his clothes on, lying on the bed looking at the wall.

"He's been in his room all day," the landlady said down-stairs. "I guess he don't feel well. I said to him: 'Mr. Andreson, you ought to go out and take a walk on a nice fall day like this,' but he didn't feel like it."

"He doesn't want to go out."

"I'm sorry he don't feel well," the woman said. "He's an awfully nice man. He was in the ring, you know."

"I know it."

"You'd never know it except from the way his face is," the woman said. They stood talking just inside the street door. "He's just as gentle."

"Well, good-night, Mrs. Hirsch," Nick said.

"I'm not Mrs. Hirsch," the woman said. "She owns the place. I just look after it for her. I'm Mrs. Bell."

"Well, good-night, Mrs. Bell," Nick said.

"Good-night," the woman said.

Nick walked up the dark street to the corner under the arc-light, and then along the car-tracks to Henry's eating-house. George was inside, back of the counter. "Did you see Ole?"

"Yes," said Nick. "He's in his room and he won't go out."

The cook opened the door from the kitchen when he heard Nick's voice.

"I don't even listen to it," he said and shut the door.

"Did you tell him about it?" George asked.

"Sure. I told him but he knows what it's all about."

"What's he going to do?"

"Nothing."

"They'll kill him."

"I guess they will."

"He must have got mixed up in something in Chicago."

"I guess so," said Nick.

"It's a hell of a thing."

"It's an awful thing," Nick said.

They did not say anything. George reached down for a towel and wiped the counter.

"I wonder what he did?" Nick said.

"Double-crossed somebody. That's what they kill them for."

"I'm going to get out of this town," Nick said.

"Yes," said George. "That's a good thing to do."

"I can't stand to think about him waiting in the room and knowing he's going to get it. It's too damned awful."

"Well," said George, "you better not think about it."

ANALYSIS

Like the stories we have considered above, "The Killers" is an initiation story, a story dealing with growing up—that is, it is concerned with the emotional problems of a character who suddenly, by means of a crisis situation, learns something important about life of which he has been heretofore unaware. Like the others, too, "The Killers" is a story which should be considered on two levels. On the thematic level it concerns itself with a statement about the basic

nature of human existence and about man's relationship to his universe. On the emotional and story level it is concerned with the feelings of a person who suddenly discovers the basic nature of his existence.

The story, however, presents an unprepared reader with difficulties which "The Leader of the People" or "The Garden Party" does not. It is these difficulties which have prompted readers to see the story merely as a gangster story which never comes off, or as Ole Andreson's story with an anticlimax tacked on, or as a study of four reactions to crime or evil.

It is not our purpose here to analyze "The Killers," as we analyzed "The Leader of the People." Let us, however, clear away two of the difficulties which get between the reader and the story's meaning or point.

The first of these is the objectivity of the story. We can best define this term by reference to stories we have already read. If you consider the ten stories above for a moment, you will realize that one characteristic which differentiates all ten from "The Killers" is that in each of these stories the reader was, from the start, taken into the mind and feelings of one character in the story and that the whole story was seen through this focal character's eyes. To put this in more technical language, these stories were subjective—written in terms of a single character's feelings and attitudes. But Hemingway's approach to his story is different; he approaches it as a journalist approaches a news story, from a focal point somewhere outside each of his characters.

This approach is perhaps the basic obstacle to an immediate understanding of the direction and point of "The Killers." In "The Leader of the People" we knew after a single paragraph that the story was Jody's; and knowing this, we could instinctively concentrate on the theme of the story—what Steinbeck considers the most important aspect of growing up—and on the emotional reaction of Jody to the lesson he learns. But in initial readings of "The Killers," we must first clarify something more fundamental—we must decide whose story it is. Once we decide this, we are in a position to discover the story's theme and to consider its emotional direction.

Now if Hemingway's approach to his material gives us no clue to the story's protagonist, perhaps we can decide on other bases. Perhaps the first thing we notice about the story is that it is divided into four scenes. If we examine each of these scenes, we note that one

character is common to each of them, Nick Adams. The ending further reveals that Nick is the only character in the story who changes as a result of the incident; George, Sam, Ole, and the two gangsters come out of the story unchanged, relatively unaffected. In other words, to only one character involved, Nick, is the story a genuine crisis. We cannot say this even about Ole, the other character most affected, for Ole knows his fate and is resigned to it.

Beyond this, we can expect "The Killers" to follow the pattern of "The Leader of the People" and "The Garden Party." It exists, first, on two levels. At its core is a theme, and like the themes of the other two stories in this group, it is about the meaning of life and man's place in his universe. On the second level, the story considers the emotional reaction of a boy, Nick Adams, when he is introduced for the first time to the meaning of human existence. The following questions are designed to enable you to consider the story on each of these levels. Questions 1 through 6 deal with the story's theme; questions 7 through 14 deal with the emotional crisis which Nick experiences in the story.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Scene one gives us the precise relationship of the killers to Ole Andreson. What exactly is that relationship? Why is Ole going to die? Do we know that he deserves death? What is the attitude of the killers toward their job?

2. After a single reading of "The Killers," you may be tempted to say that the theme of the story is "Crime does not pay." Consider, however, this possible meaning against the following questions:

a. When George asks, "What you going to do with us afterward?" Max says, "That's one of those things you never know at the time." Has this any conceivable relationship to Ole's comment, "I got in wrong"? Could George and Nick be killed as a result of this chance incident? If so, could Ole's death be a result of the same *kind* of chance situation?

b. Does Hemingway anywhere indicate that the killers will ever be caught and punished for Ole's murder?

c. Does Hemingway anywhere say specifically that Ole had committed a crime, or that he deserved to die, even on the basis of a gang code? Can we depend on George's guess as to the rea-

son for Ole's predicament? Are there indications in the story that Ole is not a criminal at all?

3. We have noted in the discussion on "The Killers" above that the total meaning of the story rests upon (a) a central situation—the relationship of the gangsters to Ole—which is in turn symbolic of the place of every man in this world, and (b) the attitude toward and understanding of Ole, George, Sam, and Nick toward this central situation. We have also pointed out that the characters in this story are graded—the gradation being determined here (as it was in "The Garden Party") by the relative depths of understanding, on the part of the various characters, of the meaning and implication of the central situation. In terms of this consider the following questions:

a. What is Sam's attitude toward, and understanding of, the situation? On the basis of this, what seems to be his formula for living? Is Sam comparable to a great many people you know? How?

b. Why does George argue with the gangsters, while Nick does not?

c. What is the significance of Max's constantly referring to George as "bright boy"? Is George a "bright boy" to the killers? If so, in exactly what respect?

d. Though this is Nick's story, George dominates the first scene. Why? What does George have to contribute, in the presentation of the central situation, which Nick could not contribute?

e. What does George's question, "What are you going to kill Ole Andreson for?" and his later comment, "Double-crossed somebody. That's what they kill them for," reveal about his conception of both the central situation and life? Does Hemingway see life in terms of cause and effect, as George does? Or do these questions reveal that George's understanding of the implications of the story's situation is incomplete?

f. What does George's question, "What you going to do with us afterward?" reveal about his attitude toward the situation? Who else in the story might ask such a question? Contrast George's attitude here with Nick's final attitude, as revealed in the last lines of the story. What is the difference?

g. Why does Max say that George is a nice boy and that he likes him? Would Max have said this about any other character in the story? If not, why not?

h. What is the ironical double meaning of Al's final comment to George—"So long, bright boy, you got a lot of luck." (This comment has an obvious literal meaning; it also has a secondary ironical meaning which is revealed in the final lines of the story and which will be clear if you contrast what happens to George in the story with what happens to Nick.)

i. Compare George's explanation of the reason for the murder to Ole's explanation. What does this reveal about George's understanding of the nature of life?

j. When Nick tells Ole to get out of town, what does Ole answer? When Nick says he is going to get out of town, what does George answer? What does this reveal about George's understanding of the situation?

k. At the opening of the story, Nick is innocent whereas George is a "bright boy." Who understands more about the total nature and meaning of the situation at the end of the story, George or Nick? Why?

1. What is Ole Andreson's attitude toward his predicament? If Nick can be said to be the uninitiated character in the story, in what respects can Ole be said to be the completely initiated one?

4. On the basis of your discussion of the above questions, can you now summarize in a paragraph or two the theme of "The Killers"? That is, what, according to the story, is the nature, meaning, and point of life, according to Hemingway? Your summary should consider (a) the exact nature of the central situation, (b) Ole's attitude toward the situation, and (c) George's and Sam's attitude toward the situation.

5. The Ole Andreson of this story presents us with the "Hemingway" man. Can you define this type of man?

6. How is Hemingway's style related to his theme? Consider, for example, the first descriptive passage, with its short sentences, its lack of subordination, its reliance upon nouns and verbs instead of adjectives and metaphors. Can you see any relationship between this "objective," impersonal style and the theme of "The Killers"?

7. What is Nick's first impression of and reaction to the gangsters?

How does it differ from George's first reaction? Why? Do the killers seem *real* to him—a part of the normal, routine life to which he has been accustomed? Does Nick *want* to believe in the killers?

8. Comment on Nick's attempt to swagger off the towel in his mouth. Is this a new stage in his initiation? If so, how and why?

9. What does Nick learn about life from Ole?

10. What does the scene with Mrs. Bell contribute to the total emotional effect of the story? What do her comments about Ole contribute to the meaning of the story?

n. At the end of the story, how much does Nick understand about the total implications of what has happened to him? Does he understand as completely as Ole does? Does he understand more about what has happened than George does? Why or why not?

12. Why is Nick so horrified, while George is able to pass the incident off with "You better not think about it." Can his statement, "I can't stand to think about him waiting in the room and knowing he's going to get it" be taken literally, as the whole reason for his horror? That is, is this horror impersonal, simply a feeling for someone else? Or is it partly selfish? What, perhaps, does Nick realize about his own life as a result of this incident?

13. In terms of Nick, this story can be said to contain five stages: stage one in the first scene, stage two at the end of the first scene, stage three in the scene with Ole, stage four in the scene with Mrs. Bell, and stage five in the final scene with George. Nick comes to each scene with illusions about life which are stripped from him in the course of the given scene; in other words, being presented with reality in the first scene, Nick goes through the story trying to kid himself about the exact and awful nature of that reality. Examine each of these five stages, pointing out what illusions Nick tries to hang onto in each one and in what way these illusions are taken away from him.

14. One might summarize the meaning of this story thus: Everything in life is a drug except reality, which is unbearable. Why?

Part V

The Approach to Theme

AT THIS POINT in your consideration of the short story, with twelve stories to your credit, you have probably become increasingly aware of a number of things about a story. In each story studied, you have considered matters of plot unity and conflict, of character motivation, consistency, plausibility, and of emotional effect and effectiveness. You have begun to see not only the essential nature of a story's theme but you have discovered, too, how theme evolves from a set of given characters in a given situation. Finally, you have, in the section just completed, seen that a story's theme, like its characters or its plot, springs directly from an author's experience, observation, and thought about life, and that characters, action, emotion, and meaning in a given story differ from these elements in all other stories to the extent that the writer of the story differs from all other writers.

As you have moved from one story to another, you have also come to see a number of other things. You have seen that a story like "The Killers" is more complex, demands more from a reader, than one like "The Most Dangerous Game." The editors of this book hope you have discovered as well that the demands made on you in "The Killers" are not without some reward; that Hemingway's story gives you more which will illuminate your own existence than a story like "The Most Dangerous Game." To put this more briefly, we hope that for you, as for us, Hemingway's story is a better story than Connell's.

At any rate, you have probably by this time begun to see why the stories in Part IV of this book demand more from you, the reader, than the stories in Part I. Your study and discussion of these stories

have probably shown you that these demands exist because these later stories are a great deal more complex than those you read at the beginning of this course. They are more complex in many ways. For one thing, the characters are more complicated people, people with contradictory and often very subtle, rather than obvious and simple, drives and desires; Laura of "The Garden Party" or Jody of "The Leader of the People" is a far more complex, more *rounded* human being than is Rainsford of "The Most Dangerous Game." For another thing, you have noticed that as stories increase in complexity, plots become more and more subordinated to character, emotional effect, and theme.

If you have observed this, you have perhaps observed one further thing: that the stories in this volume have come more and more to have as their core a theme, a meaning, a comment on the nature of life in general. If you compare again "The Most Dangerous Game" with "The Garden Party," you will observe that the *essential* difference between these stories is not a difference in plot or character but a difference in the amount the story has to tell you about *your* life. In other words, Connell is primarily concerned with a specific set of characters in a specific set of circumstances, while Katherine Mansfield is instead concerned with *using* characters and situation in order to make a comment on man's existence in general. In the one, in short, a writer is giving us a story for the sake of a story; in the other he is using a story to give us a generalization about life or to state a problem which concerns us all.

Now on the basis of the stories read in Part IV, you have also probably noted the basic characteristics of a good theme in a good story. You have not only observed that the theme of a story is an integral part of that story and rests firmly upon characterization, action, and emotion; you have also noted certain other things which were suggested in the introduction to Part II above. You have noticed, for example, that a story's theme is not necessarily a moral or ethical assertion about life; it may, rather, be an examination of our world or existence or nature, as it is in "The Leader of the People," or it may be simply the presentation of a problem about life, a question, as it is in "The Garden Party."

You have also noted that for the serious writer, theme is *sgne-*

thing more than the pat and simple statement of a moral or ethical axiom to which people commonly subscribe; you have observed that for a writer like Hemingway or Katherine Mansfield, the consideration of man's existence is a very complex matter which demands some very complex consideration. Hence the modification, the irony, the consideration and reconsideration which is a basic characteristic of the themes which you have just considered in Part IV. To these writers life is too difficult and complex a matter to be treated by such oversimplified and stock themes as "Crime does not pay" or "True love never runs smooth." Life demands some hard, clear, and critical consideration by a mature intellect and deserves something other than a simple, pat, borrowed, and accepted answer.

The stories which follow are chosen and grouped to illustrate one final, basic characteristic of theme. In the stories in Part IV—indeed, in the stories throughout this book—you have noted that theme is woven into that story, that it comes naturally out of character and situation. There is, as we have suggested elsewhere in this book, a reason for this. A story, to begin with, is a story, not a moral essay; its appeal rests mainly on the fact that it is, first, a story. More important, the fiction writer usually rests his thematic case on an emotional rather than an intellectual appeal, and for this reason he must rely chiefly on character and situation in order to put across what he has to say. This is basically why reading for theme is more difficult than reading for character, plot, or even emotion. Even in the story in which theme is the main consideration of the writer, that theme is in various ways subordinated to, woven through, character and situation. To put this in another way, theme in fiction is usually implied rather than stated.

The stories which follow, then, are intended to show some of the basic methods used in fiction to examine and clarify a theme. The first six stories illustrate, on a more complex level, the two basic elements in stories upon which theme rests: plot and character; the next three consider two less important and less frequently used approaches to theme. The four approaches considered below do not attempt to exhaust all of the methods by which the writer of fiction approaches the problems or meaning of existence and experience, nor can it be said that all of the stories below are theme stories rather

than plot or character stories. But most of the stories which you will read after you have completed this course will use one or more of the approaches below to arrive at theme; and they will further reveal that those which may be considered good are stories which thoughtfully consider and carefully present an honest, mature theme, even when their emphasis would appear to be on plot or character or emotion.

A. Theme and Plot

At this point in your study of the short story, you have gotten one basic conception of the intent, nature, and effect of fiction; you have become aware of the very close and often complex relationship between the various elements in a story and you have begun to see a little more clearly what is meant by the term *fictional unity*.

You have also become aware of the increasing emphasis in the stories you have read on that fictional element which we call *theme*, and of the various ways in which a story's theme is related to its other elements. You have discovered, for example, that a story usually exists on two levels—that it is at once a *story*, involving specific characters in a specific crisis situation, and a writer's consideration and analysis of the conditions or nature or problems or implications of his world and yours. You have seen in a few stories that a good theme does not necessarily equal a good story, and that, conversely, a story which exists primarily as story is in many ways inferior to the one which exists for something else as well. You have seen how stories which disregard basic matters of character motivation or plot unity fall apart on the thematic level as well. Finally, you have come to see the indirect, dramatic approach which writers take to elucidate a theme, and you have come to understand the reasons for this approach.

If you now understand all this, you have also probably gotten rid of certain common misconceptions of what *reading* a story means; you have come to understand that intensive reading involves more than diagramming the rising action, climax, and denouement of a story, or that it means something other than classifying a story as a theme or plot or character story. At the same time, however, the increasing emphasis on theme in this book may have merely led you to

substitute one set of misconceptions for another; for thus far the implication has been that the *basic* concern of the good short story is with theme. To say this is, of course, to oversimplify the intent of the writer just as "The Double-Dyed Deceiver" oversimplifies—indeed, falsifies—one aspect of man's existence. For the fact is that a fiction writer is not primarily interested in theme; he is equally concerned with *all* the elements in his story. Indeed, if he is exclusively preoccupied with one story element as against another, he will probably write stories which are in all respects imperfectly conceived.

The fact is—and it should be clarified here—that a story is concerned with doing a great many things at once. Even the writer who seems to be primarily occupied with a theme is trying to do a great deal more than merely illustrate a moral about human existence by means of a set of characters in a specific situation. To put this in another way, no story has really been understood until it has been read as character study, as an emotional revelation, as a logically related series of incidents, and as a work of art which has something to say about human life in general. If this book has thus far suggested something other than this, it is because its editors know that theme is more commonly disregarded and less frequently understood than any other element in fiction.

With this in mind, let us turn now to a brief examination of the first, and perhaps the most common, approach to theme—the approach through plot. We can use as a springboard to our discussion two stories which we have already read—"The Most Dangerous Game" and "The Price of the Head." You will recall that your discussion of the first of these stories was almost exclusively concerned with the incidents or action of the story, and that on the basis of this discussion you came to some general conclusions about the nature of an effective plot. Somewhat later you read "The Price of the Head," and on first reading you noticed that superficially the two stories were very similar: they were each adventure stories, they were each set in a foreign and exotic land, and the incidents of each were exciting, physical, and often violent. But in one respect the stories were not similar, and the dissimilarity existed because "The Price of the Head" said something over and beyond what it had to say about Pellett or Karaki specifically. "The Most Dangerous

Game" is about as pure an example of a story which is *nothing more than a story* as one can get; it does not even say, exactly, that animals, like men, know the meaning of fear. But "The Price of the Head" says something in addition to story; it concerns itself with the exploration of a set of ethical or moral values as well as with a story; it says that for all men life is worthless unless that life means self-respect, courage, self-reliance. In short, while the one story has a theme, the other does not.

Now if you consider for a moment the method by which "The Price of the Head" arrives at this theme, you will have a simple example of plot used as an approach to theme. In your discussion of "The Price of the Head" you noted that the theme of the story rested on a large number of complex and interrelated factors. It rested, most obviously, on the ending of the story, where you discovered that the whole direction of the story was not concerned with the safe completion of the voyage but rather with the new relationship between Karaki and Pellett which was established after the voyage was over. You saw, too, that the story's meaning rested as much on the character of Pellett as on what happened in the story. And you saw that what happened in the story was not significant in itself, but only in its relationship to the ending and in what it revealed about the changes which took place in the story. From all this you might, in fact, deduce a simple formula which could read The nature of the characters (characterization) plus what they do (plot) plus what happens to them as a result of their actions (ending) plus why they do what they do (motivation) equals the theme of a story.

Now the important thing to note about this formula is what it reveals not only about the relationship between a story's plot and theme but also about the basic nature of any good short story. For one thing, it shows that even in a very simple story the total meaning or effect depends upon not one factor but several—on character and details of setting and theme and emotion as well as on plot. For this reason there is a kind of absurdity in trying to classify a short story as a plot story or a theme story or a setting story. A story is a unit in which, finally, all elements are necessary regardless of whether or not they seem to receive equal emphasis. For another, this formula illustrates the fact that though all the elements in a story point to a

theme, this does not mean that theme is its primary concern, and to suggest this is to disregard its total intent. Finally, it reveals that ultimately a simple element in a piece of fiction cannot be separated and discussed except in its relationship to all the other elements in that story.

This last statement is important. As a story becomes more complex, each element in that story comes more and more to depend on and to exist for all the other elements. For this reason a story's theme comes to be something quite other than a simple maxim which you may express in a sentence or a paragraph; it tends to get further and further away from the pat oversimplification of the nature of life which we find in "slick" stories. At the same time, a story's plot comes to be used, not for its own sake, but to reveal the nature of its characters, to modify and qualify as well as to state its theme, and to help transmit its emotion, all at once.

It is in these terms that a story like the one which follows should be discussed. Superficially, "The Murder on Jefferson Street" will seem to be similar to "The Most Dangerous Game" or "The Price of the Head"; all three stories have action, suspense, violence, even, perhaps, a certain amount of melodrama. In short, on first reading, "The Murder on Jefferson Street" will appear to be another plot story. But careful study will reveal some differences. In the first place, it will be immediately apparent that the story has some social comment in it. Moreover, a careful reading will reveal a very close relationship between the action and the characters, and the emotional effect in the story will appear, even after a single reading, to be stronger than the effect in the other two stories. Finally, a detailed study of the story will reveal a theme which is so closely related to its other elements that though it may perhaps be paraphrased, it cannot be stated except in terms of the story as a whole.

The Murder on Jefferson Street

by DOROTHY CANFIELD

WITH ITS LOW, bungalow-style, stucco cottages, and its few high old-fashioned clapboarded houses, Jefferson Street looked like any side street in the less expensive part of any American large-town, small-city. And it was like any one of them. Like all collections of human habitations everywhere, its roofs sheltered complex and unstable beings, perilously feeling their way, step by step, along the knife-edge narrow path of equilibrium that winds across the morasses and clings to the precipitous cliffs of life.

Mrs. Benson, the slender, middle-aged well-bred widow who had moved to Jefferson Street because it was cheap, was the only one of them—as yet—whose foot had slipped too far from that path for recovery. With her every breath since her husband's death, she had slid down towards that gray limbo of indifference in which all things look alike. She was lost and she knew it; but as she fell, she grasped at anything that could hold her for a little longer; till her daughter grew up. At fourteen, Helen, plain, virtuous, intelligent, charmless, needed all the help she could get, if she were to have even a small share of the world's satisfaction.

Although Mrs. Benson went through the normal maneuvers of life, speaking, smiling, asking and answering questions, her secret aloofness from what other people prized was, of course, obscurely felt by the people around her. It was both felt and feared by the Warders, who were her next-door neighbors. It was one of the many things that made them feel insecure in Jefferson Street life. They felt everything, feared everything, started back at the snapping of a twig, all their senses strained like those of nervous explorers cautiously advancing, hand on cocked trigger, into an unknown jungle. For

they were undertaking a hazardous feat compared to which hunting big game or living among hostile savages is sport for children. They were moving from one social class to the one above it.

Their family (as far as Jefferson Street knew it) was made up of Bert Warder, his wife, their daughter Imogene and a brother Don, employed in a bank in Huntsville. But this presentable floe, visible above the white-collar surface was the smallest part of the tribe. Below it was a great substructure, sunk deep in the ocean of manual work—overallled uncles who were factory-hands, drab, stringy-necked aunts who "worked out," brothers who were garage mechanics, sisters who sold over the counters of ten-cent stores. Only Bert and his bank-clerk brother Don sat at desks with pens in their hands. Bert like most of the men who lived on Jefferson Street, was an employee of the great Stott McDevitt Electric Company. His desk there felt to him like a pedestal. His bungalow-home was another. To the occasional Packard car which, trying to locate a dressmaker or a trained nurse, sometimes purred into it and rolled noiselessly out, Jefferson Street looked plebeian and small-employeeish enough. For Bert Warder and his wife, brought up in tenement houses in a black brutally industrial city, Jefferson Street was patrician with its small lawns, its shade trees, its occasional flowerbeds, above all, its leisure-class tennis courts on the two vacant lots at the end. They could hardly believe that Bert's night-school-educated brains had lifted them to such a height. The watchful tips of their antennae soon told them that in the class into which they were transferring themselves it was considered no notable feat to live in a home with a yard, so they took care to speak of the street as other people did, with amused condescension for its humbleness; but in reality they all three worshipped it, admired, feared and tried to imitate its inhabitants, lived in dread that something from their past might cast them out from it, and did what we all do, passionately collected their neighbors' weak points as potential ammunition with which to resist attacks on their own. They would have fought to the death against a threat to their social standing on the street—as indeed they did, quite literally, when they felt themselves so threatened.

Tautly on the lookout as they were, they naturally felt that Mrs. Benson's preoccupied good manners might be intended as a reflec-

tion on their own, and suspected that the Tuttles (neighbors on the other side) looked down on them and on Jefferson Street. There was nothing definite in Francis and Mary Tuttle around which this suspicion could crystallize. It was everything. In their every contact with the Tuttles, the Warders uneasily felt the need to make an effort towards more ease, pleasantness, reticence and quietness than was natural to them. It was fatiguing. And they were never sure they had quite caught the new tune.

Yet, as a matter of fact, the Tuttles did not look down on Jefferson Street but were as glad to live there as the Warders. And, exactly like the Warders, had escaped to it from a life they shuddered to look back on. It was true, as Bert Warder's quiveringly suspicious nose for class differences told him, that both Francis and Mary, his wife, had been brought up in a house grander than any Bert had ever set foot in, and that Francis' youth (which he mentioned as little as Bert mentioned his) had been spent not with hired girls and factory hands but with senators and bank presidents. But his past had something else in it—misery and failure, and a period of total black eclipse such as the vigorous Bert had never dreamed of. Francis thought of his past as seldom as possible. Till Mary had dragged him up out of the morass of self-contempt in which he lay, already half drowned, and set his feet beside hers on the knife-edge narrow path of equilibrium, he had taken for granted that his failure in life was inevitable, was because he was an all-around misfit. Living with her he had begun to hope that perhaps it was only his family he did not fit. He said—he thought—"family." What he meant was "brother." Away from Roger there might be a place for him in the world, after all, he began to hope.

When Mary thought of that past, as wretched for her as for Francis, it was to Francis' mother, not his brothers, she cried, "Shame on you! Shame!" His mother had long been dead but no tombstone could hide her from Mary's wrath. In the old bad days when both sons were little boys, and the mother's favoritism was at its maddest worst, people used to say, if they noticed Francis at all, "It's hard on an ordinary boy, and rather a weakling at that, to have such a successful older brother. Doesn't give him a chance, really." But Mary knew that Roger was not the one to blame for the tragedy of their re-

lation. She had thought him stub-fingered and tiresome, the sort of successful person who bores sensitive and intelligent ones; but living as she did—mouselike invisible poor relative—close to both of them, she had always known that Roger felt wistful and clumsy beside Francis' accurate Tightness of taste, and that he had even a dim divination of Francis' exquisite undeveloped gift. No, part of Roger's exasperating Tightness was that he had never accepted his mother's over-valuation. The older brother had steadily tried to be friendly; but Francis' mother had early conditioned the younger to see in any friendliness from anyone only a contemptuous pity for his own ineptitude. "You, *you!*" cried Mary ragingly to the woman in her grave. "Before your little poet-son could walk alone, you had shut him into the black vault with your stupid admiration of Roger's commonplace successes, your stupid notion that Francis' fineness was weakness. And every year you added another padlock to the door. What strange hateful mania possessed you, you wicked woman with your mean perverted bullying. . . ." Whenever another bitter adjective came into her mind she said all this and more to Francis' dead mother, ending triumphantly, "But / know what he is and I've always known—a poet, a spirit so fine and true that just to breathe the air with him lifts an ordinary human being to nobility! I, the little poor young cousin-drudge you never noticed, I married a broken man, and he's a whole man now—or will be soon. I've given him children who adore him, *who depend on him!* And I depend on him. He earns their living and mine. He's escaped from the role of defeated weakling you bullied him into. He creates happiness and knows it! He's coming to life. And every day I bury *you* a little deeper, thank God!"

Never a word of this did she say to Francis. He did not recognize personal resentment as one of the permissible elements in life. Not in his life. It belonged in a lower, meaner world than his. Mary Kad climbed through the keyhole of his vault, had triumphantly thrown open the door and led him out to happiness, without letting him hear a single reproach to his mother or brother at which his magnanimity could take fright. She knew magnanimity to be the air he must breathe or die. It was part of what she adored in him, part of what she loved in the world he shared with her. But she did not practise it in

her own thoughts. Francis, she knew would have cut his hand off before he would have admitted even to himself that the smallest part of his passionate delight in the twins came from the knowledge that Roger's brilliant marriage was childless, and that he had—at last—something that Roger envied. She felt no such scruples. Hugging her babies to her, she often reveled, unabashed, in happy savagery, "You dumb conspicuous go-getter, you haven't anything like *this* in your expensive empty house!" Sometimes in reaction from the loftiness of Francis' ideals she thought, "Why can't he *be* unfair like anybody, and hate Roger, even if Roger's not to blame? It's nature. Who but Francis could feel guilty—not over *being* unfair, but over the mere temptation to be not angelically just. It'd do him good to let himself go."

But she did not believe this. "He couldn't let himself go into unfairness like just anybody," she thought, "for he's not just anybody. He's a poet with a poet's fineness of fiber. And about the only civilized being on the globe."

So there was Jefferson Street; its low bungalows, its awkward high older houses with their jigsaw ornamentation filled with people who day by day, set one foot before the other along the knife-edge narrow path that ran—for the Warders across a treacherous black bog, for the Tuttles along the face of a cliff with crashing breakers below, for the others here and there, high and low, as Fate decreed. Nothing happened. Mrs. Benson was the only one who had lost the path. And she sank but slowly towards her final fall. Three years went by. Her daughter was a Senior, getting high marks; unnoticed by the boys. Bert Warder had held his job, not yet realizing that he would never do more than hold it, would never get any higher; only beginning to feel aggrieved because other men were stepped up over his head. He had also, with what sweating pains and secret study nobody would know, learned to play tennis without betraying that he had never before held a racket in his hand. Imogene Warder had passed her examinations—well, nearly all—and was, with some conditions, a Senior in the high school, intensively noticed by a certain kind of boy. Francis Tuttle had not only held his job and had had two raises in salary, but had learned to grow roses.

His June garden now made him catch his breath. And he had written a little shy and beautiful poetry. Poetry not verse. "Give me three years more," cried Mary his wife to Fate. "Give me only *two* more, and he'll be safe." The exquisite happiness Francis gave her and gave their children even softened her heart towards his mother. Once she thought— just once!—"Why, perhaps she was a victim too. Someone may have hurt her in childhood as she hurt Francis, hurt her desperately, so that her will to live was all warped into the impulse to hurt back."

Yes, just once, Mary had a moment of divination and guessed that the will to hurt comes by subterranean ways from pain and fear not from malignancy.

It was but a flash. A partial guess, so weak and new-born a beginning of understanding, that it had no more than an instant's universal life before Mary, frightened by a glimpse at the vicious circle of the human generations, seized it and made it personal, "Oh, yes—horrors!—of course if Francis were still sick with that self-hating Roger-obsession, he couldn't help making the children wretched with it, one way or another. And when they grew up, they would pass it on to *their* children____"

She looked across the room at Francis and the twins, wrestling together on the couch, wildly, happily, breathlessly laughing, and thought contentedly, "Well, there's *one* misery that won't be handed on. His hurt is all but healed."

Leaning on her sword she stood, negligently smiling, at the gate of the garden where Francis grew poetry and roses, from which she had walled his demon out.

And then, one day four years after the Warders had moved to Jefferson Street, Fate unheeding Mary's appeal for only a little longer respite, rode in on the bicycle of the evening newspaper boy, flinging up on each front porch the usual hard-twisted roll of trivial and ugly news. But this time, among the ugly items was a headlined statement about the arrest of one Donald Warder in Huntsville. He had been stealing from the bank he worked for, it seemed; had been

playing the races; spending money on fancy women; he would probably get a long term in the penitentiary.

When Bert Warder walked across his front porch on his way home from the office that April afternoon, he was wondering resentfully why dumb-bells like Frankie Tuttle got one raise after another, while he with three times Frankie's pep just barely held his own, with frequent callings-down. "But I can beat hell out of him at tennis, anyhow." He applied his tried-and-true old remedy to his soreness and felt the pain abating. The evening paper was still lying in front of the screen door. He stooped, picked it up, glanced at the headlines.

Although the news took him so by surprise as to leave him stunned, his body acted as bodies do when left to themselves, in obedience to the nature of the soul dwelling in them. He rushed into the house, shut the front door, locked it and jerked down the shades of the front windows. His wife and daughter stared at him surprised. "Look here! Look here!" he said in a strangled voice, and beckoned them to read the headlines.

They read the news together, dropped the paper, looked at each other in despair. The same thought was in them all—if only they need never open that door, if only they could leave town that night, never again be seen by anybody on Jefferson Street. For they knew that as they stood there, all their neighbors up and down the street were opening screen doors, taking in the paper. And, knowing what their own exclamations would have been, had those headlines referred to someone else's brother, they cowered before the gloating, zestful comments they could almost literally hear, "Say, that must be Bert Warder's brother, Don. What-do-you-know-about-that? Well, *well*—maybe we'll have a little less kidding from Bert about our Harvey's being suspended from high school." "Why, look here, I see in the paper where Bert Warder's brother is jailed for stealing. What kind of low-down folks are they anyhow? And Bert so high and mighty about your mother's being divorced."

Imogene drowned out the twanging of these poisoned arrows by a sudden outcry, "I can't *ever* go back to school. Those mean kids'll just razz me to death. Helen Benson's so jealous of me about the

boys, she'll be tickled pink to have something terrible like this on me. Oh, I think Uncle Don ought to be *shot!*"

Her father and mother too had been thinking that Don deserved to be shot for wrecking their lives. For of course they could not run away from this disgrace. Of course they must, and the very next morning appear before their neighbors with a break in their armor far worse than anybody's. Harvey Starr's suspension from high school, Joe Crosby's not getting his raise, Mary Seabury's divorced mother, Frankie Tuttle's weak tennis, Helen Benson's unattractiveness to boys—they had been held up by the Warders as shields against possible criticism of slips in their manners. But against the positive disgrace of a brother in the penitentiary! And of course, now everybody would find out about their folks—the aunt who was somebody's hired girl, the old grandmother who couldn't write her name. All that would be in the newspapers, now "If I had Don Warder here, I'd . . ." thought his sister-in-law vindictively. But Don of course was in jail. "Safe in jail!" thought his brother bitterly. "He won't have to walk into an office tomorrow morning, and all the mornings, and face a bunch of guys that'll. . . ." Like his wife, his mind was full of foreseen descriptions by newspaper reporters of his illiterate tenement-house relatives. He held the newspaper up to go on reading it. It rattled in his shaking hands. Imogene flung herself on her mother's shoulder, sobbing, "Mamma, you *got* to send me to boarding school. Every kid in school will be picking on me."

Behind the newspaper her father gave a choked roar of rage. Lowering the sheet, he showed a congested face. His jaws were set. "Boarding school! More likely you'll have to get out of high school and go to work." They looked at him, too stunned to ask what he meant. Still speaking between clenched teeth he told them, "Our savings were in Don's bank and I see in the paper here where it says the bank's on the rocks because of the money he stole."

With a wringing motion of his hands as if they had a neck between them, he crushed the paper, flung it to the floor, and turned on his weeping wife and daughter as if he would like to wring their necks too. "What's the good of standing there hollering?" he shouted at them. "Haven't you got any guts? Don't take it lying down like that! Stand up to them! Get back at them before they begin!"

He tramped into the next room and they heard him locking doors and windows.

It was true, just as the Warders thought, that the neighbors began to talk about them as soon as the headlines were read. Helen Benson had taken her mother over to the Tuttle's garden to look at the newly opened tulips. Mrs. Tuttle, newspaper in hand, came out of their shabby tall old house, read out the news to them and they all said how hard it was on the Warders. "Oh, I bet there's some mistake," said Francis Tuttle. "The paper just says he's accused of it. There's no proof he's done it, you notice. I remember Don Warder very well, the time he came to visit Bert, last summer. He's not that kind at all. I bet when they get to the bottom of it that they'll find somebody's double-crossed him. Maybe one of the other men in the bank. I'm going to tell Bert Warder I bet that's what happened, the first time I see him." Thinking intently of the accused man's probable innocence, he was absent-mindedly fingering his sandy hair which, he had noticed for the first time that morning, had begun to thin a little.

Mrs. Benson said, "It'll be a terrible blow to the Warders. We must be sure to show our sympathy for them. Helen, it'd be nice if you could think of something specially nice to do for Imogene." She had by now slipped so far from the narrow path trod by those who still cared what happened, that this like all news was no more than a murmur in her ears. But, that Helen might learn what is correct, she brought out the right formula in the right voice.

"Yes, indeed," said Mary Tuttle, in her warm eager way. "People's friends ought to stand close around them when trouble comes."

Mrs. Murray across the street, seeing the four of them standing close together, not looking at the flowers, knew what they were talking about and came over to say compassionately, "I could cry when I think of poor Emma Warder! She'll take this hard."

Helen Benson was awed by her first contact with drama. "My! Imogene must be feeling simply terrible," she said. "I wonder if she wouldn't like to be Vice President of our class. I'd just as soon resign. Mother, how would it be if I went right up now to the Warders and told Imogene? . . ."

But Helen's mother said, her sorrow salt in her heart, "No, when people have had a blow it's better to leave them to themselves a little, at first. Don't you think so, Mrs. Tuttle?"

Mary, annoyed to see Francis once more passed over as if he were not present, said resolutely in a formula she often used, "Yes, that is what my husband always advises in such cases, and I have great confidence in his judgment."

But Francis had turned away. How like Mary it was to try even in little things to make it up to him for being a nonentity! But sometimes he thought she but pointed out the fact that he was. A little nettled, as any man might be (no, considerably more than a man who had had in his past no nightmare nervous collapse), he walked along in the twilight towards the house. On the other side of Mary's wall his exiled demon kept pace with him, trying hard to reach him with old dark associations of ideas, thinking longingly how easy it would be to tear open that nearly healed wound if only these passing relapses could be prolonged. He succeeded in starting a familiar train of thought in Francis' mind, like a brackish taste in his mouth. "And now to grow bald!" he meditated moodily. "What Bert Warder calls my 'moth-eaten' look will be complete." His fingers strayed up to his head again to explore the thinning hair. Deep under the healthy scar-tissue forming over his inner wound, an old pulse of pain began to throb. Roger was getting bald too, he remembered, but of course baldness gave Roger dignity and authority, would actually add to his prestige. Francis, bald, would drop to a lower insignificance. "To him that hath, and from him that hath not—the motto of my life," thought Francis. His demon's eyes glittered redly in hope.

But Mary had built her wall high and strong. And inside its safe protection Francis' roses had struck down deep roots. The gardener came to himself with a smile at his absurdity that sent his demon scurrying away into outer darkness.

"Good gosh, only a thin place in my hair, and seeing myself bald a'ready!" he thought, amused. It had been through that mental habit as through a secret back door, he reflected, that many a dose of poison had been smuggled into his life. He stooped to straighten a drooping tulip. As he stood up, the evening star shone brightly pale

in the eastern sky. The inner eye of his intelligence focused itself to a finer accuracy: the world stood before him in its true, reassuring proportions. "Suppose I do get bald—bald as an egg—what of it!" he thought; and, loose, at ease, forgot himself to admire a young pear tree, its myriad swelling buds proclaiming with pride that, mere humble living cellulose that it was, its roots had found the universal source of growth. "And all amid them stood The Tree of Life," thought Francis, his eyes deeply on the miracle.

"Da-d-d-dy," came cautiously from the sleeping porch. The bars of the railing there were high and set close together because of the dangerous three-story drop to the cement-floored basement entrance below, but Francis could make out the twins in their pajamas like little bears in a cage. "How about a sto-o-ory?" they called down.

"With you in a sec," called Francis, running into the house.

The twins rushed out on the landing to meet him, hopping, twittering, and as he snatched them up, planting loud kisses on his cheeks, his ears, his nose. "Praise be to God who gave me life!" sang Francis' heart as he had never dreamed it could. On the swelling tide of this joy, this thankfulness, he rode up with a surge to the highest point—but one—of his long struggle with himself. Quite effortlessly, quite naturally, he thought, "Too bad that Roger's wife can never give him children," and went warm with delight that he had wished his brother well.

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Francis had meant to tell Bert Warder when he next saw him that he was sure Don had never stolen a cent, that somebody had double-crossed him. But the next time he saw Warder, he did not tell him that or anything else.

The morning after the newspapers had announced the arrest of Bert's brother, Francis stepped out to the border along his front-yard path to get some tulips for Mary to take to Emma Warder, Bert's wife. But there was something so beautiful on the first one he cut that he stood still to look at it, marveling, forgetting the errand his sympathy had sent him on. Dew-drops clung to the flower, every tiny globe a magic mirror reflecting all the visible universe. Francis

smiled dreamily down on the extravagance of this beauty. At first he remembered with amusement that he was the man who only last night had thought life hard to bear because his hair was getting thin. Then he forgot himself in contemplation of the divine playfulness that shrinks the great far blueness of the sky, the nearby intricacy of trees, immeasurable space itself, to ornament the white perfection of a flower. The doors of his heart swung softly open, as they do when a poem knocks and asks to be written.

Another door opened, the door of the next house. Through it—because he must—Bert Warder came resolutely out from the safety of his home to face the arena full of enemies waiting to spring upon him. The odds were against him now. He knew that. But he was no coward. He was no man to take things lying down. He was worn with sleeplessness, and half sick with dread of this first impact with a world echoing to his disgrace. But he did not lose his head. He remembered the plan for defense he had worked out in the long dark; he tried to keep clearly in mind the old rule of warfare that the way to head off attack is to attack first. But would he be able to carry out this plan? Cornered by Fate as he was, how could he reach anyone with a first thrust? He had no hope that he could, no hope at all; but he bared his teeth savagely with the desperation of the trapped, and would not give up. The instinct of self-preservation, feeling him appeal as if for his very life, responded with a wild rush of its inordinate stimulants to action. His eyes fell on Frankie Tuttle in the garden next door. He was mooning over a flower he held in one hand, while the other hand in a mechanical gesture drew up the sandy hair over a spot at the top of his head. When a man's hand does that without his realizing it, he fears baldness. The instinct of self-preservation as it can when driven hard by fear, rose to genius, and showed the endangered man how to strike, in all safety, a first blow to ward off the attack he could not parry. He took off his hat, put his hand up to his head and walked rapidly along the sidewalk towards the avenue, keeping his eyes on Frankie.

When Francis, his heart still unguardedly opened to its very depths by ecstasy, looked up from his tulip, he saw Bert Warder passing by on his way to the trolley, holding his hat in one hand. With the other he was ostentatiously patting and ruffling his abundant dark hair in

uncouth caricature of Francis' unconscious fumble. As their eyes met, Bert let fly his arrow with all his might. His words were but trivial and a little common, but his panic tipped them well with the poison of the wish to hurt, and he put his back into the bending of his bow, his broad beefy back. Long before the meaning of the vapid pleasantries had penetrated to Francis' mind, the malignity of its intention was quivering deep in his opened, softened heart. "That's the way to do it, Frankie!" called Bert in a loud coarse tone, his fingers leaping about grotesquely in his hair, "You've got a clearing up there. Scratch 'em up into it where you can get at 'em. Scratch 'em up into the clearing."

For a nightmare second, Francis, like a man who dreams he sees a friend run on him sword in hand, felt not pain so much as a wild incredulity. His eyes widened, his dumbfounded face was blank, his upraised arm and fumbling fingers froze foolishly where they were. From his confusion a gleam of light shone into the other's darkness. The constriction around Bert's heart loosened. It might really work then, the system of attacking first. He'd sure knocked old Frankie cold, his first try. No man who looked like that, could collect his wits for taunts about jail-bird brothers. After the hours of helpless dread that lay back of Bert, his relief was exquisite. And the hope it gave! Hope! He might, after all, be able to defend himself. Drinking in greedily Francis' stunned expression and grotesque attitude, he burst into a yelling haw! haw! of triumph and clutching hope to his breast, ran on courageously to where a fellow-worker stood waiting for the trolley.

By that time the meaning of his words reached Francis' mind. He snatched his hand down from his thinning hair with a betraying jerk. Through the quiet morning air Bert's voice came, loudly repeating his joke to Joe Crosby, who remarked, turning back to look at Francis, "Why, I never noticed he has a bald spot." The trolley roared along the tracks and carried the two men away to the office where Francis was at once to follow them.

By the end of that day everybody over in the Stott McDevitt works and out on Jefferson Street knew that the Warders didn't want to have anything said to them about this trouble. "Some folks take trouble that way," said their neighbors with sympathy.

So, since that was the way the Warders took it, nobody did say anything about it to them. And since it was never mentioned nobody knew exactly what was happening. People naturally took for granted that Bert's first thought had been of his brother's innocence, and that like Joe Crosby at the time of his sister's divorce, he was spending his last cent to pay defending lawyers. Since his face grew steadily more haggardly anxious, they supposed that his efforts were all in vain. They sympathized silently, and read without comment day after day the abbreviated accounts of his brother's trial in the local newspapers.

For they were both brief and colorless. Huntsville was far away in another state; one more revelation of the doings of a dishonest bank employee was hardly news; the reporters apparently found Don too obscure a thief to be interesting. No revelations about a grubby working-class family were ever printed. But the Warders saw in every newspaper mention of Don's trail plenty of other material for malicious satisfaction on the part of their neighbors. When finally Don was found guilty and sentenced to fifteen years in prison Bert Warder said wildly to his wife, "Nobody need tell *me* what they're saying to each other. By God! I'd like to knock the words down their dirty throats." Drunk first with shame and then with anger—for two weeks after Don's conviction, the bank did fail and the Warders did lose their savings—he had a drunken man's glowering readiness to take offense at nothing. He snarled and hit out in response to harmless greetings; he started every conversation with an unprovoked verbal aggression; he protested every decision made against him at the North Side Tennis Club—as Jefferson Street people called the two vacant-lot courts; he took every happening in the office as flagrant and unfair discrimination against him. His neighbors, his fellow-workers knew that his snarls were cries of pain, and for a time—a short time—said to each other tolerantly, "Poor old Bert, no wonder he's got a grouch." But they had tempers of their own, grievances of their own, their tolerance soon wore thin, his unprovoked attacks began to strike sparks. Two could play as well as one, they reminded him forcibly, at being offensively personal. He was not the only one who knew how to give a nasty dig. Nobody of course dreamed of sinking so low as to throw his brother up to him, Don now in stripes behind prison bars. In fact that story

soon passed out of their minds. They had seen Don only once or twice. They were full of their own affairs, their own secret troubles and hidden disgraces. They did not mention the convicted thief, or remember him. But the convict's brother had not forgotten. He imagined in the turn of every exasperated retort a reminder that they had something on him, a threat that he would hear a thing or two about jail-birds if he went too far. So he did not go too far—with them. Every rough rejoinder to a brutal sally from him frightened him into choking down his ill-nature. A sort of approximate balance was found. After a week or so, a Jefferson Street maxim ran, "Anybody can get along with Bert Warder—all you got to do is to tell him to go to hell once in so often."

But there was one among them foolishly unable to return evil for evil. Or to defend himself from boorishness by being boorish. And Bert's first handful of mud had told him where he could fling more without having it flung back on him. Mary, annoyed to have Bert's ragging increasingly center on Francis, used to think, "If Francis only had more vanity! He'd get mad then at teasing instead of feeling ashamed that he's bothered by it; and he'd defend himself." But she was wrong. Against the blackguardism of the wish to cause pain, Francis now as in his youth could devise no defense that he was willing to use. The others on Jefferson Street and in the office snatched up whatever weapon came to hand, dirty or not. If a hit below the belt was what reached Bert's sensibilities most sharply, all right—sure—they'd hit below the belt—why not? But to Francis a choice between committing an ignoble act or suffering from one, was no choice at all. For him only one of those two alternatives was conceivable.

When in an idiotic pleasantry that became threadbare that summer, Bert came suddenly behind him, blew hard on the thinning spot in Francis' hair, rattling off with a noisy laugh, "Let-the-air-blow-on-the-head-the-hair-will-grow-on-the-head," Francis only jerked away in a gesture of nervous annoyance, and then grinned apologetically for feeling sore. He was incapable of hitting back as the others did, with a jibe about Bert's pendulous paunch any mention of which, it was an open secret, made him wince, or about his big flat feet, or his bulging eyes, or his occasional bad grammar. He could not

understand the idea the men around him had that hurting Bert Warder's feelings eased their own. Rather the contrary, it seemed to him. To find a festering wound in Bert's life and to press on it hard with a word well chosen for its power to cause him pain—how could that do anything but make a bad matter worse? A good deal worse. For Bert's uncouth tormentings caused him only discomfort and annoyance. But it would be shame, as at a real disgrace, which he would feel, to spy upon another's unhealed sores and dash his fist into the one that looked as though it would hurt the most. From his shadowed childhood on, Francis Tuttle had never understood why, with all the unavoidable pain in the world, anyone could wish to add to it.

So he could do no more than try to hide under an apologetic grin the annoyance he could not help feeling when week after week Bert rang the changes about his looking moth-eaten, twitted him with his poor tennis, his mistakes in gardening, his inability to carry a tune. He even managed a grin, though a faint and weary one over a new stunt of Bert's which emerged in June, a strenuous imitation of Francis' tennis serve, winding up with grotesquely strenuous contortions to deliver at the end a ball of a lamentable young-ladyish feebleness.

But it was his watchful demon, not he, who grinned, when Bert in a chance remark, stumbled on one of the two secrets in Francis' life he was ashamed of. This was the lesser secret, the one he had thought he had quite outgrown. One Saturday afternoon in June, at the end of some doubles, as they were pulling on their sweaters, Bert Warder chanced to comment on the election of his daughter Imogene to be Vice President of her class in the high school. ". . . right over the head of Helen Benson, I understand. She's all right, Helen is, but kind o' slow. No S. A. as the boys say." The other men all knew that Helen had resigned to make place for the Warder girl and had insisted on her election. A self-conscious silence fell on the group. Sensitive to silences as a sick man to draughts, Bert went hot and cold with his usual reflex of panic—were they thinking that because Imogene was a convict's niece—he backed into his corner and bared his teeth.

But Joe Crosby thought of something to turn the conversation. "I never heard that sex appeal is what swings elections," he said.

The casual quality of the remark blew away Bert's suspicion. But his nerves had been shaken. They needed an outlet. A safe one. His eyes fell on Francis Tuttle. "Sure, S. A. is what settles elections!" he cried at random, giving Francis a great dig in the ribs. "That's why our own Valentino gets elected to all the fat offices in town."

Francis was astonished to feel a sharp twinge from old bitterness. He had not then, not even yet, left behind the boyish chagrin over all those elections in school, in college, when Roger again and again had been chosen to any office he would accept, and Roger's dead loss of a brother had never been so much as thought of. It was absurd that he still cared anything about that. But an involuntary quiver had passed over his face, just one. It was enough for his tormentor. "Why for fair! Frankie, there's more truth than poetry in what I say. You never do get elected to anything, do you? Were you *ever*?"

This was the time of course, for Francis to tell him to mind his own damn business. But he could never tell anybody that, and now could think of nothing but a sorry shame that he felt even a last throb of that trivial adolescent hurt. He kept his eyes on the racket he was putting into its case; he fumbled with its fastenings; he was silent. He felt diminished and looked it.

As half-asphyxiated lungs strain joyfully to draw in a life-giving gush of fresh air, Bert felt his own painfully diminished self expanding in the other's discomfort. What suffocating man would hold his hand from the one window he can open? "Poor old Frankie!" he cried gloatingly. "Never had no luck with 'lections. Let's 'lect him to something right now. I nominate him to be Honorary Fly-Swatter to the Ladies' Aid Society. Haw! Haw!"

As they walked down the street together, he composed variations on this new theme. Mary, coming out to meet Francis, heard his horselaugh, heard him as he turned in at his front walk bawl out, "I nominate Mr. Francis Tuttle to be scorekeeper in the One-legged Men's Athletic Meet. Who will second my motion?"

"What's he talking about?" she asked.

Francis answered, "Oh, nothing."

Sitting that evening over her accounts, Mary chanced to glance up at Francis, reading, and was startled to see an old shadow on his face. He wore the shrunken look that had always frightened her. She

had not seen it for a long time now. His relapses in the last years had come seldom and were short; but they still made her almost as miserable as he. Adding up a total and transferring it to the next page she thought, "It is like an old tubercular lesion. Doctors tell you that even when they are healed—or almost—they feel strains that are nothing to normal tissue." Looking down fixedly at her column of figures but not seeing it, she fell for the hundredth time into a puzzled wonder at the inexplicable difference between what people feel about bodily and mental sickness. "If it had been a temporary breakdown in a normal lung, acquired in childhood by direct infection from the outside, now almost but not quite healed—why, we'd have told everybody about it, sure of their sympathy. We'd have given it as the natural explanation for the things Francis isn't quite well enough to do yet. There'd have been nothing to hide. Everybody would be interested, and sort of proud and encouraged when Francis recovered. But because it's a temporary breakdown of a normal personality he's recovering from—and yet that was forced on a sensitive mind by a direct infection from the outside as much as any disease germ!—we have to hide it as though it were a disgrace. We can't even talk it over together, and plan what's best to do."

More than by anything else, she was worn by the need to appear unconscious of what was the center of her thoughts. Now, for instance, to be forced to cast about in the dark for a possible explanation of the recurrence on Francis' face of that old look of sickness. Not even to be sure she was not imagining it. What strain could have come into their safe Jefferson Street refuge that was just the same now as ever? Nothing had happened there to change anything. She did give one fleeting thought to Bert Warder's joshing. But he had always been a boor. And anyhow, he was only teasing. Teasing. The word brought up recollections of child play. And child play was always unimportant. The thought reassured her. She began to emerge from her concentration, set her pen down to the paper again, added 23 to 44, and thought in the phrase she had heard her elders let drop so often, "Oh, teasing's nothing." She shot a sidelong look at Francis again. He was reading. His face looked quiet. Yes, she must have been mistaken. It could be no recurrence of his old trouble, vague and dimmed as that was now. Perhaps his tennis had tired him. Pres-

ently the idea occurred to her that he might have a real worry, a present one, something at the office perhaps. No matter how bad that was, it would be less dangerous.

IV

She was right. It was a present worry. About a real danger. But not in the office. In his past, close to the foolish weakness uncovered by Bert's random thrust lay his other secret—the base and bad one. The two were woven together by a thousand connecting nerves. Bert's hammering on one had set the other a-quiver. Suppose—he thought, horrified, that some day, with a reflex reaction like this, some involuntary quiver of his face should betray his feeling about Roger. That he had such a secret to hide was his shame. That Mary might learn it, was his terror. Greathearted as she was, she would never go on sharing life with him if she knew of his mean jealousy of Roger—fiercely suppressed, always festering in the dark hollow of his heart. He thought, as he had a thousand times in his boyhood, that there could be no depravity so low as this vicious ill-will towards his unconscious, blameless brother. He told himself once again that he was cheating Mary—he knew why she overlooked his personal insignificance, his poverty—it was because she had the illusion that he was true-hearted, above baseness. If she should learn that he was capable of this obscene resentment of the kind and generous Roger's superiority—she would turn away from him forever. Was there any real difference—no, there was not—between such a feeling towards a brother and the up-raised arm of Cain?

But Mary was looking at him! She had lifted her eyes from her account book! He had not seen when. How long had she been watching him? A man with a guilty secret is always terrified to be watched. Had she guessed? Had she read this thought in his face? He froze. And waited.

But Mary smiled. The room shone. The golden light around him brought Francis with a start out of his nightmare.

"Why, you've been asleep," said Mary.

"Yes, I must have dropped off for a moment." He thought he had been having a bad dream. What a relief to be waked up!

Before he lay down to sleep that night, he stepped over to the

twins' little cribs. Through the high railing of the sleeping porch the barred moonlight shone on their round faces, bland in sleep. How safe they looked. And it was he who made them safe, their father. His heart grew great with love.

But after he was in bed Mary heard him draw the long sighing breath of disheartenment. "What is it, dear?" she murmured. He did not answer. Probably he was already asleep, she thought.

He was awake. His sigh had been of disheartenment. He had perceived that his love for his little boys was tarnished and sullied by satisfaction in his brother's childlessness.

The tide that had been sweeping in so strongly, had begun to ebb.

The two vacant-lot tennis courts had never been so busy as that summer. Bert Warder made them the center of Jefferson Street life as much as he could. For there he knew success. By concentrating fiercely on his game, he had made himself one of the best players, and looked forward all through his uneasy days to the hour with his racket at the end, which was almost his only respite from misery. His big unused working man's body grunted with satisfaction in the hard physical effort and the copious sweat: the strain of his fixed idea relaxed in a momentary forgetfulness of Don in jail: and his perpetual doubt of his equality with those about him fell with the ravening zest of starvation on the chance to inflict defeat.

He steered clear cunningly of the two or three men who could beat him. And naturally played a good deal with Frankie Tuttle. They did not work in the same department of Stott McDevitt, but he scarcely let a day go by without hunting up Francis, inviting him to play, and saying facetiously that he did hope *this* time he might get by Francis' cannon-ball serve and maybe score a few points against him: promising if he did, to campaign for Frankie's election to be town dog-catcher, or chief reader-aloud at the Sewing Society. Day by day he scored more points.

Mary went up to watch the play once, and afterwards said, "See here, Francis, why don't you give up tennis for the rest of the summer? You're wearing yourself out." But the turn of her phrase, the quality of her voice showed Francis how pitiful he looked on the courts, going to pieces under Bert's ragging, trotting about, broken-

kneed, like a futile old woman, unstrung, unable to command even his usual modestly competent strokes. If he stopped playing now after such exhibitions of feebleness there would be no limit to the joshing he would get at Bert's hands.

And by this time Bert's joshing did not so much annoy as frighten him. He was terrified at the thought that another chance lunge in the dark might lay open to Bert's rough handling the secret shame he was trying to leave behind. Bert had, so far, never twitted him with Roger, but at any moment he might try that line; certainly would if he guessed that to be a sore point. Francis' nerves tautened in vigilance if he even caught sight of Bert from afar. He seemed to feel Roger in the air, whenever Bert was present.

He was right in feeling that Roger's name was often in Bert's mind. The contrast between Francis' brother, distinguished, wealthy, well-known, and his disgraced convict brother was one of the sorest of Bert's stripes, the worst of all his envies. Glaring across the net at Francis, going forlornly and hopelessly through the complicated wind-up for his serve, he often thought, (as he called out in his witty way, "Play ball, bald head,") "There's one sure thing, 'bo . . . you'll never know from *me* I ever heard of that big stiff!"

Mary was rather troubled by the way Francis seemed to feel the heat that summer. But the hot weather would soon be gone. And wasn't he growing thinner? She'd have to start the evening hot chocolate and crackers again. He didn't seem to have the interest in his garden of other summers. Perhaps only that he hadn't much time left over from tennis. He hadn't written a line of poetry for weeks. But of course the wind of poetry blew fitfully. Was he enjoying the twins as much as he did? Or was that only a fancy of hers?

It was no fancy of hers. Coming in to his children after his daily defeat in tennis, worn out with standing guard over his threatened secret, it was soon borne in on him that he had been in a fool's paradise. Now, while his little sons were babies, yes of course, they were his, as other men's children were theirs. But they grew so fast. Over and over he lived helplessly through in imagination as if it had already happened, how they would turn from him. They would soon naturally be asked to visit their Uncle Roger. They could not but be struck by the difference between the two homes. They would begin

to compare their father with his brother. And then they would see how their father always took a back seat, never was consulted, never elected to any office, had no influence. As they grew, they would note people's surprise that a Senator—Roger would probably be a Senator by that time—had such a queer singed-cat of a brother. . . . "And now," Francis often thought, his fingers fumbling with his thinning hair, "Now a mangy singed-cat."

Twenty times a day it seemed to him, he was startled to find that without his knowing it, he was nervously drawing his hair up over the crown of his head.

He was even more startled to discover that he was not the only one to notice this involuntary reflex. "Have you hurt the top of your head lately, Mr. Tuttle?" Mrs. Benson once asked him. He was shocked and turned on her such a darkening face that she hurriedly excused herself, "I just noticed that you often put your hand up to it."

He snatched down his hand—to his amazement it was once more lifted to his head—and told her shortly, "No. I'm all right." As he moved away a strange thought came to him, one that soon became familiar by repetition. "It would be better if all the hair on my head would come out. And have it over with!" Sometimes he imagined for an instant between sleep and waking that this had happened. And it was a relief. He was sickened to find that he could not control himself even in such a little matter as fumbling with that thin place. How could he hope to hide his secret vice? Every time he found his fingers in his hair he thought anew, disheartened at his own weakness, that he would never be quick enough to hide what would come leaping up to his eyes at a mention of Roger.

v

But until now he had had Mary. As long as Mary was there . . .

Then early in August a tragic telegram took Mary away for a time. Her delicate sister, now a young wife, was lying at the point of death, her baby prematurely born. "Come at once. Florence calling for you," the telegram read. She telephoned the news to Francis who looked up the hour of the next train for her and hurried to draw the money from the savings bank to cover her expenses. Mary, wild with sorrow and alarm, began to pack, interrupted herself to run over to ask

Mrs. Benson to keep a neighborly eye on Francis while she was away, tried to think what clothes the twins would need, stopped to telephone the cleaning woman about getting Francis' meals, stood still in the middle of the floor and wrung her hands. When Francis came with the money, he was startled to see her so distraught. "If it were only time for my vacation, so I could go along to take care of the twins," he said.

"Oh, if you only could be there to take care of *me!*" cried poor Mary, weeping on his shoulder. "I'm scared to death to go by myself. I don't know how to face *anything* without you now!"

The memory of this cry of Mary's, the thought of her need for him, Mary's real and actual need for *him* hung like incense around Francis as he stood on the station platform that evening looking after the train from which the twins' handkerchiefs still fluttered. It was a sweetness in the night air as he let himself into the empty house. He was breathing it in as he fell asleep, his arm on the pillow sacred to Mary's dear head. Mary had not yet wholly gone.

The next day, the first day since his marriage that he had wakened alone, he arrived early at the office. To his surprise Bert Warder was at a desk farther down the same room, among the apprentices. Francis wondered if this meant that Bert had been definitely put out of the drafting room. There had been some gossip about his mistakes there. Bert's eyes were roving about unhappily. He saw the surprise in Francis' glance. "You, damn you, with your rich brother and your pull! Of course you get on!" he thought, savage over the injustice of the world. To say something he called out foolishly, "Hey there, Francis, I got special orders to report here to keep the air blowing through your clearing." As Francis took out the papers from his drawer he heard Bert's loud unmodulated voice explaining the joke about "the clearing." "Have I got to go all through that again?" thought Francis shrugging his shoulders wearily, But the men near Bert thought the joke a flat one, found Bert's noise about it tiresome, and took no pains to conceal their impression. Smarting, humiliated, apprehensive, resentful, Bert drew glumly back into himself, waiting bodefully for a chance to pay Francis out for his rebuff.

At lunch he went out of his way in the cafeteria to sit at the same

table with Francis, ostentatiously familiar with him and after work he let trolley after trolley go by the corner where he waited till Francis arrived. Knowing that he had been punished for being too fresh, he was impelled by the fatality that hangs over people who have struck a false note, to strike it yet more loudly. Francis had never found him harder to endure. As they walked up Jefferson Street together, he said peremptorily, "Run on in and get your tennis things on, Frankie. Well have a set before supper. Maybe if I try *hard* I can score a point or two on you."

"It's gosh-awful hot for tennis," protested Francis.

Bert's heavy eyebrows lifted ironically over his bulging eyes, he began a certain menacing one-sided smile which was the introduction to his worst joshing. It was uglier than usual, ominous and threatening. There was but one threat that Francis feared. It came instantly into his mind. He lost his head, "This is the time' he is going to bring Roger up—and I have not yet thought what to say or how to look!" and said in a hurried panic, "All right, all right. Yes, let's play. It may do us good."

A couple of hours later he came in. He had lost one love set after another to Bert. Too tired to bathe and change, he sank down in a chair. The cold supper that was to be left for him every evening by Mary's cleaning woman, faced him on the table. After a time he ate a little of it, and went stiffly to bed. But for a long time not to sleep. Out of the darkness white balls hurtled towards him. Every time he began to doze, he saw one like a bullet, driving straight towards his eyes, and starting to one side to avoid it woke up to find himself sweating, his heart beating fast, all his muscles taut.

The cleaning woman, come in early by Mary's instructions to get Mr. Tuttle's breakfast told him, "You don't look so good, Mr. Tuttle."

"It was hot last night," he told her pushing his uneaten breakfast away.

It was hot all that day too. But in spite of it he lingered in the furnace-like office till the 5:20 trolley. To no avail. As soon as he stepped off the trolley Bert and a couple of others shouted at him to come and make a fourth at doubles. They played set after set, shift-

ing partners in all the possible combinations. But defeat always came to the side that Francis was on. He could have told them that beforehand, he thought, playing more and more feebly.

When he went home he found two letters waiting for him in the hot shut-up living room. One from Mary. One from Roger. What could Roger be writing for? Looking at that letter with apprehension he opened Mary's. The twins were well, she wrote, her sister had recognized her but was not expected to live. The rest was love. ". . . take care of yourself, darling, *darling!* I miss you so! I need you, dearest. I love you. I love you." A murmur as from Mary's voice rose faintly from the paper. But died away in the silence coldly breathed out from the letter he had not read. He sat a long time looking at it, forgetting his dinner. But it had to be read. He tore it open.

Roger wrote to give Francis the news everybody was to see in the newspaper the next day, that through a new business combine, he was now one of the Vice Presidents of the Stott McDevitt Company, as well as of his own. "We'll see to it that this means some well-deserved advancement for you too, Francis, old man," wrote Roger pleasantly. His letters were always kind. "It'll be fine to see more of you and Mary. We may even decide to become neighbors of yours. Nothing holds us here. And I certainly would enjoy getting acquainted with my splendid little nephews."

The darkness fell slowly around Francis holding the letter in a clutch he could not relax. He had not eaten since noon. His old inner wound opened slowly, gaping here and there, and began to bleed. No, no, he told himself shamed to the heart, it was nothing so clean and wholesome as bleeding; it was the drip of pus from a foul old ulcer. Well, a man was a leper, who could feel nothing but mortal sickness over his own brother's success.

The blackness deepened. Out of it, one after another, there hurtled towards him bullet-like revelations of his own pitiful abjectness. He had always known he was a dub at business, a dub at tennis, a dub at life—everybody's inferior in everything! But till now he had hoped he might at least grow into a harmless dub. But he was not even that. He was incurably vicious, with the mean vice of feebleness. The beast in his heart would not die, starve it though he might. It snarled and gnashed its teeth over every new triumph of Roger's and sprang up

from its lair, rattling its chain in sordid hope every time a faint shadow came over Roger's life. He would rather die, oh, infinitely rather die than have Mary learn that her husband could not kill that hope, tighten his hold as he might around its filthy throat.

Through the darkness a voice in a loud snarl came to Francis' ears, "He'll never have any children. And I have two sons." Francis leaped to his feet. Who was there in the dark with him? He thought he was alone. He snapped on a light and looked wildly around the empty room. He was alone.

Had *he* said that? Or had he only thought it so fiercely that it rang in his ears like a cry? His knees shook. Suppose Mary had been there? Suppose Bert Warder had heard him? Why, he was likely to betray himself wholly at any moment, even without the dreaded mention of Roger's name. How it would be mentioned tomorrow at the office, after everyone had seen the announcement in the morning paper! And he who could control his voice no more than his fingers—he found them again fumbling involuntarily at the crown of his head!

He turned off the light, undressed and sat down on the edge of his bed to think, to plan, to prepare himself for tomorrow's ordeal. Everyone would speak of Roger to him, not Bert only, everybody. And he had only this one night in which to find the right look, the right intonations, the right answers.

Yet when it happened he was somehow equal to it. Tense and careful as a man handling a bomb, he thought he had come through safely. Everybody had said the proper thing about what good luck it was to have his brother one of the Company's Vice Presidents, and he had made the proper answers. At least they had sounded all right when he said them. Why did he still have this terrified uneasiness? Then he realized that his apprehension came from the fact that Bert Warder alone had not said a word to him. He, alone of all the men, had only nodded with a sardonic smile, and sat down silently to work. Francis' heart gave a frightened leap. Bert knew something. Somehow he had found out. Perhaps spying on him from a distance as he had doggedly answered the congratulations of the other men Bert had seen through the mask he had tried to keep closely clamped over his face.

All that morning Bert stuck closely to his desk. But Francis knew that he was not thinking of his work. As the hot morning went on, and Bert said nothing, did not so much as look at him, Francis was surer and surer that somehow he knew. But how could he have found out?

A few moments before lunch time Bert took his hat and without a word went out by himself. He was not at the cafeteria at all. In the alarm over this inexplicable variation from routine Francis suddenly knew how Bert had found out. He had been standing outside the open windows last night listening in the dark, and had heard that cry of evil joy in Roger's childlessness. Yes, of course, that was what had happened.

All that afternoon Francis covertly watched Bert. It was strange how easy it was to watch him without seeming to. Even when his back was squarely turned, he could see Bert continually leaving his desk to go from one man to another, whispering in their ears. And then not knowing that Francis could see them even though his back was turned, the listener would stare at him, nodding, nodding, his head with pursed-up lips, as Bert went on whispering, whispering, telling about the shameful secret he had heard as he stood listening in the dark.

Through the breach in Mary's wall the demon had stepped softly in, bringing blackness with him.

VI

Bert said nothing about tennis that day and went home early. Francis got off the trolley at Jefferson Street alone. Forgetting to look in the mailbox he let himself in to the unaired empty house. He did not go about to open windows. He sat down heavily, alarmed to feel his legs shaking under him. He could not afford to be agitated. He must collect himself. His only hope lay in not losing his head. The situation was grave. Bert might even now be coming up the walk to ... He looked out to reassure himself, and saw not Bert, but a shining limousine drawing up in front of the house.

Before he knew that he had recognized it was Roger's, his trembling legs had carried him in a wild rush of panic to the back of the house. The locked kitchen door halted him. If he went out there he

would be seen. Where could he hide? Glaring around, he saw the closet where the mops and cleaning-cloths were kept. He flung himself into it. He was just in time. He had no more than drawn the door shut when the front doorbell rang, and it came to him sickeningly that he could not remember whether he had locked the front door when he came in. He had not breathed till now, when, his lungs almost collapsing, he gasped deeply and drew in to his last capillary the stench from the dirt on the damp mops, decomposing in the heat. The bell rang again. The noise found out his hiding place so accurately that for an instant he felt he was discovered, and gave up hope. He tightened his clutch on the doorknob. Even if they found him out he would hold the door shut, no matter how they pulled on it. He braced himself. A long silence. Had they stepped into the house? He tried to listen. The drumming of his pulse was the only sound. He stood rigid, clutching the doorknob to him, breathing the fetid air deeply in and out of his lungs. Presently from the street the sound of a starting motor came dimly through the closed door.

He waited a long time before he ventured to come out. This might be a trap to make him think they had gone. If he opened the door he might see someone's cold contemptuous eyes fixed on the door, waiting for him. But when he finally did cautiously turn the knob and look out, the kitchen was empty. He tiptoed to the front door, found he had locked it, that he had been safe all the time.

And then, coming to himself for a moment's respite he turned so faint in a revulsion of feeling that he could not stand. What in God's name had he been doing? But was it *possible*! It was so remote from anything he wished that he thought for an instant he must have dreamed it. He, Francis, had had no intention of hiding from Roger! Why should he? There was no reason. Suppose Mary had been there? What possible reason could he have given her?

The respite was over . . . *suppose someone had seen him!* A cold sweat drenched him. Someone had seen him, of course. Everyone! They all must have known what he had done. Everyone on the street must have seen him leave the trolley and go into the house. They all knew Roger by sight. They must all have been looking from their windows, saying to each other, "But he's there. I saw him go in just now." Perhaps they had gone out to the street to tell Roger that.

Tomorrow they would say to him, suspicious eyes boring into his, "Why in the world didn't you let your brother in yesterday?" What could he say?

He wrung his hands. "What can I say? What can I say?" Then he thought of a way out. It was simple. He could say he had gone at once to sleep, that he had not heard the bell. He would hurry up to the sleeping porch now and lie down so that if anyone came in he would be found there, his eyes closed. He raced up the stairs and flung himself down on the bed, clenching his eyelids shut. It was essential that he should seem to be asleep. Then he remembered that nobody could come in because the doors were locked. He opened his eyes. He tried to get up.

But he was by now exhausted. He fell back, his wide open eyes facing a new danger. He imagined Bert Warder asking him the next morning, "What were you up to yesterday that you didn't want your brother to catch you at?" He must think of an answer to that question. Perhaps if he went over it all now in anticipation, question and answer, he might be able to ... Suppose Bert said suddenly, "What did you get into the mop-closet for yesterday, when your brother . . ."

Oh, horror! He had forgotten to keep his eyes shut to prove to people who came in to spy on him that he really had been asleep when Roger rang the bell. He shut them hard. Then slowly remembered, no, no, that was not necessary. The front door was locked. No one could come in. He opened them again and stared out through the high railing of the sleeping porch.

He had been trying to think what he could answer Bert Warder tomorrow. But how could he hope to control his face to hide his secret when he had no control over his fingers—he snatched his fumbling hand down from his head—over his body—he felt himself cowering again in front of the foul-smelling mop. His desperate thoughts of how to ward off tomorrow's danger were cut short by a sudden cold divination of the present peril. Danger was stealthily closing in on him now, this instant. He felt it creeping up on him from behind. He had known what that danger was. He tried wildly to remember. Oh, yes. He was to keep his eyes closed so that people would think him asleep. He had forgotten that. He shut them

tightly, and weak with relief, felt that he had been just in time.

He opened them in the morning, rose and under the cleaning woman's eyes went through the motions of eating breakfast. He and Bert happened to walk into the office together. He was incapable of speech, all his vitality concentrated on being on his guard. Bert looked pale and out of sorts and said he hadn't been feeling very well yesterday. But he was all right today, he said, goggling his eyes, "And how about some tennis?" Francis saw through this trick instantly. He knew Bert was lying, and why he was lying ... to throw Francis off his guard. His plan was to wait till Francis was exhausted at the end of the tennis that afternoon and then suddenly to shoot his question like one of his cannon-ball serves . . . "*Why didn't you let your brother in yesterday?*" Yes, it would come to him like one of those fiercely driven balls he could not return.

All day he tried to invent a way out of the trap laid for him. But it was not till he was on the trolley with Bert that his inspiration came to him. The ride home was triumphal. He told Bert with a happy smile that he was going to change his clothes for tennis, and ran into the empty house. He stepped lightly, exultantly into the kitchen and putting all his weight against it, tipped the heavy refrigerator to one side. As it toppled he stooped, still smiling, and held his right hand under it.

VII

But of course the bandaged hand that could not hold a racket could not hold a pen or run a typewriter either. When he went to the office, he was sent home on sick leave. This pleased him. It meant he could lie on the bed all day, his eyes tightly shut to prevent the discovery that threatened him, that threatened Mary through him. The moment he opened them—as he must if he went downstairs to eat—Mary was in danger again, might at any moment be dragged in the filth of knowing what kind of man her husband was. But he had grown very clever in thinking of ways to protect Mary from that discovery. "I seem to be very sleepy," he said cunningly to the cleaning woman. "The doctor who took care of my hand told me the accident might have that effect and wanted me to sleep as much as I could.

Just keep some food on a tray for me, will you, outside the door. When I wake up I will eat it."

After this he need not open his eyes. He could lie, hour after hour, reveling in the pain of his mangled hand, glorious anguish with which he was buying security for Mary. He could, waiting till black night, grope his way to the bathroom, find scissors and razor blades by feel, and use them without looking. Without opening those tightly shut eyelids he could find the food left for him on the tray, and empty it out in the corner of his closet so that the cleaning woman would think he ate it. Mostly he lay rigidly still, as still as if he were in his coffin. Now that there was no reason to raise his hand to his head his arms lay quiet at his side. What a heavenly rest! He was resting almost as well as if he were dead. And Mary was as safe as if he were dead. He was very tired, but infinitely proud of knowing how to protect Mary.

Sometimes his tense eyelids relaxed and he really slept. That was the best. Oh, that was the best . . .

viii

Since he no longer knew whether it were night or day he could not judge of time. How long had he lain there keeping Mary safe? A day ... a week ... a year? The silence of the empty house seemed to be broken by voices. The cleaning woman's. And—could it be—it sounded like Mary's! It *couldn't* be Mary's, could it, come back into danger when he was so sure he had made her safe? Not *Mary!* This must be a ruse of his enemies to frighten him into opening his eyes.

He sat up in bed, staring into the red blackness of his closed lids. Horrified, he strained his ears and recognized the children's voices. And that was Mary's step in the hall downstairs. His heart beat in time with it as with no other. Mary had come back, walking straight into mortal peril.

Once more he had failed. He had not saved her after all. For a moment he was undone with defeat, and trembling from head to foot sat dumb with stupid panic.

He heard the dear remembered step start up the stairs. With an

effort greater than any in all his life, he summoned his soul to rise on the wings of love and be strong. And saw how even now it was not too late. Even now, though Mary's dear step was mounting the stairs, unsuspecting . . . Now, now was the time to play the man, once for all.

He flung himself on his love for Mary, and with one beat of its mighty wings it bore him beyond Destiny that thought to have him vanquished. Weak he might be—his love, immortal and divine, made him, at the last, mightier than Fate.

IX

Only after the excitement of the clearing of Don's name was all over, when the Warders were on the train going home from their exhausting week in Huntsville did they begin to understand all that the proving of Don's innocence meant to them. Their days in Huntsville after the melodramatic discovery of the real thief, were so crammed with raw emotion they had been bewildered. They had passed without a pause from their first incredulous excitement to incredulous joy and then indignant sympathy for their brother with all those months of undeserved wretchedness back of him. What a nightmare they had all lived through, they said over and over to each other. They had wept together, and the tears had washed the poison out of their wounds so that now, in the train on their way home, they were faint in the sweet weakness of convalescence. Bert's heart that had been crushed shut by shame and fear, softened, opened and let him out from the bitter desolation of self-pity. His imagination that had been smothered under the consciousness of disgrace drew breath again. He forgot what he had suffered; his thoughts were for his brother. "Poor Don!" he said over and over. "Poor *Don!*" After what he had lived through, it was like dying and going to heaven, to feel love and compassion. He was proud with a noble and new pride that the loss of all his savings weighed as nothing with him compared to his brother's vindication.

The news had been in the newspapers. With headlines. Everybody must have read it. The Warders almost expected a congratulating

delegation of neighbors to meet them at the station. But when they climbed heavily down from the dusty train and saw that the platform was empty, they thought at once that it was only uneducated working-class people who made a fuss in public, and laid the lesson humbly to heart.

There was no one to be seen on Jefferson Street when they stepped from the trolley at the home corner. They set their suitcases down with a long breath, to look. There was their street! It was theirs, with its genteel lawns, its ornamental useless flower-gardens, its dignified park-like shade trees. There it stood brooding dreamily in the blue summer twilight, and welcomed them back.

"I'll carry the bags, both of them," said Bert to his wife, chivalrously. They trudged along towards their home, their own home, redeemed, shining, safe. They belonged here, they thought, with deep content. They were accepted by these refined people who took lawns and trees and flowers for granted. Their purged hearts swelled with thankfulness, with friendliness, with good resolutions. They must be worthy of their good fortune.

As they approached the Benson house they saw that Helen was standing on the front porch, looking at the newspaper. What a nice girl Helen was, they thought fondly. Imogene called, "Ooh-hoo, Nellie!" and skipped up the front walk. Stricken by Helen's face she fell back, shocked. Oh . . . why . . . what's the *matter*?"

Two or three short sentences were all Helen had to say. Her news whining ominously like a loaded shell, flew over her listeners' blanched faces, not exploding till long after it had passed.

They stood like stocks, stupidly listening to the sound of the words they could not understand. Then Bert said in a flat voice, "Not Frankie Tuttle! You didn't say it was *Frantic Tuttle*!" He took the newspaper from Helen's hand. Through the brooding summer twilight the headlines shrieked.

JEFFERSON STREET MAN GOES SUDDENLY INSANE LEAPS FROM THIRD STORY TO DEATH

The paper fell from his hand.

"This very morning," said Helen.

"That deep cement-covered entrance to the basement," began Mrs.

Benson. "Right over the high railing around the sleeping porch. Mary had come home—you knew she'd been away with a sick sister—and she j just started up the stairs."

The Warders, stunned, sank down on their suitcases. Bert's mouth hung slackly open.

Joe Crosby come over from across the street. His lips twitched. His eyes were red. He shook Bert's hand without a word. The Warders had been but bludgeoned into stupefaction by the headlines. They had not believed them. But this silence told them what had happened. Mrs. Warder and Imogene began to cry. A film came over Bert's bulging eyes. He got out his handkerchief, blew his nose, and took his hat off, holding it on his knee and looking fixedly down at it.

After a time when they could, they asked the usual questions. And had the usual answers. No imaginable explanation. His accounts in perfect order. His health all right—he'd hurt his hand of course, but that was not serious; the doctor said it was healing without any sign of infection. And everything going extra well with him, seems though—his brother just made Vice President of the company, the luckiest kind of a break, his brother thinking the world and all of him—came right over the minute he heard of this and took Mary and the children back. To make their home with him. Always. Said he'd always wanted children in his home. No, everything in the business end of his life was fine, couldn't be better. His brother kept saying there wasn't anything he wouldn't have done for him. And no trouble at home, Lord *no*! He and Mary were the happiest couple on the street. Suspicious of their good faith, Bert said it seemed as if there *must* have been some warning. "No, there wasn't. He was just exactly the same as ever, the last time anybody saw him. He'd hurt his hand, you know—was that before you went to Huntsville? No, I guess it was afterwards—and that kept him away from the office for a while. It must have been while he was at home with that, that he . . ."

Bert Warder was shocked at a glimpsed possibility of unneighborly neglect. "For the Lord's sake, hadn't anybody gone in to see that he was all right?" he asked sternly.

Mrs. Benson defended herself hastily, "Oh, yes, yes. Before she left

Mary had asked me to look after him, and I went over there every day. Sometimes twice. But the cleaning woman always said he was asleep. She told me the doctor had given him something to deaden the pain in his hand and make him drowsy."

Joe Crosby confirmed this. "Yes, every time I went in too, he was asleep. I went clear up to his room, several times. The shades were pulled down and it was dark. But I could see he was asleep all right." He answered the stubborn question in the other's face. "Yes, I know, Bert, I felt just the way you do, as if we might have done *something*, if we'd been any good. But you know there isn't anything *anybody* can do when it's a case of . . ." he drew in a long breath before he could pronounce the word, "it was just plain insanity, Bert."

"Frankie wasn't insane!" rapped out Bert, indignant. "He was a *swell* fellow!"

Joe lowered his voice and with a dark shamed intonation and yet with a certain relish of the enormity he was reporting, said, "Bert, when they picked up his body they found he'd shaved his head. All over. Every spear of hair shaved off. Down to the skin. The way you shave your face."

This did stagger the questioner. He said feebly, "You don't say . . . ! Good gosh, his *head*! Why, what in the ... what ever would make anybody do *that*?" and fell back into his stockish uncomprehending blankness.

Mrs. Benson murmured an explanation, "The doctors told his brother that's one of the signs of religious mania—the tonsure, you know. They told his brother that sometimes insane . . ."

"Oh, they make me tired!" cried Joe Crosby in angry sorrow. "They don't know anything about it. Why don't they keep still!"

Bert Warder agreed sadly, "I guess nobody knows anything about what causes insanity."

It came over him that this was no waking nightmare, was fact. But he could not admit it as fact. "It just don't seem *possible* to me!" he told them, his voice breaking grotesquely in his pain. "Why, Frankie and me ... why, I never *had* a better pal than Frankie Tuttle!"

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Compare the handling of plot in "The Murder on Jefferson Street" to that in "The Most Dangerous Game" or "The Price of the Head." In what respects is the handling similar? In what respects different?

2. The main plot line of "The Murder on Jefferson Street" is Francis Tuttle's progress toward insanity. Trace this line, from the point where Francis Tuttle first thinks of his baldness (Section II). What methods does Dorothy Canfield use to make this movement plausible? To give it interest pull? What devices has she used to make Tuttle's insanity at once terrible and pathetic? (Consider, for example, the roots of the insanity.)

3. Compare "The Murder on Jefferson Street" to "The Most Dangerous Game." To "The Lovely Leave." In what respects is it similar to each? In what respects different? Would you call it a "plot" story? (Discuss the reliance of the story upon events.) A "character" story? (Discuss the relationship of the characters to the plot; is it closer than it was in "The Most Dangerous Game" or "The Price of the Head," and if so, why?) Does the story, in fact, have a single emphasis? If not, what conclusions can you draw about the nature of a "quality" story (which this is) and the nature of a "pulp" (which "The Most Dangerous Game" is)?

4. Dorothy Canfield introduces her character by a kind of summary, rather than dramatically, as Shaw or Hemingway do. Is this convincing? Effective? If so, why? (Compare her method of establishing character to Maupassant's.) Explain why this method of introducing character is "right" for this particular story.

5. Discuss the relationship of the characters in "The Murder on Jefferson Street" to the plot. In what sense are the characters individuals? In what sense are they universal types? What bearing does this have on the meaning of the story?

6. Most "plot" stories have a "hero" and a "villain." Does this story? (That is, is Francis Tuttle a hero type, or Bert Warder a villain type?) If not, why not? (How does Tuttle differ from Rainsford or Pellett or even Tarloff, and how does Bert Warder differ from Zaroff or Rusk?) If this story has neither hero nor villain in the strict-

est sense of the word, what bearing does this fact have on the story's meaning?

7. Each of the two main characters in "The Murder on Jefferson Street" suffers from an "inferiority complex." How do their reactions to their environment differ? What light does this shed on the story's theme?

8. Compare the actual reaction of people to the news of Don Warder's arrest to Bert's idea of what their reaction is. Are both the actual and the imagined reactions plausible? If so, why? Compare the reactions here to the reactions to the news of Francis's suicide. Is there any basic difference? If so, define it. What bearing does this difference have on the meaning of the story? On its effect?

9. In our consideration of earlier stories in this book, we have commented on an author's use of coincidence in order to effect the direction or ending of a story. "The Murder on Jefferson Street" contains a great deal of coincidence: the indictment and subsequent clearing of Don Warder, the promotion of Roger Tuttle, the fortuitous trip of Mary Tuttle, even the possible implications of many of Bert Warder's comments to Francis Tuttle. Does this use of coincidence make the story implausible? Does the author prepare us for it? If so, where and how? Is the coincidence basic to the theme of the story? If so, why?

10. What comment does this story make on the American business man? On the poet in America? On the American in general? On people in general?

11. Does the emphasis in this story on trivia—on Bert's pride in his tennis, Francis' sensitiveness about his bald spot, etc.—make the story more or less plausible? More or less effective? Why?

12. This story probably contains more irony than any other in this book. (For example, why is it ironical that the events center about a street like Jefferson Street?) Find and discuss as many examples as you can of irony in the story. Why is the irony basic to the story's theme? To its emotional effect? To its characterization?

13. "The Murder on Jefferson Street" comments on, in a way condemns, a set of values by which most people live in a competitive society. Is there implied in the story any alternate set of values by which Dorothy Canfield thinks men *ought* to live? If so, define it.

What devices does she use to clarify these values? (Note, particularly, Section II of the story.)

14. Compare Dorothy Canfield's presentation of her story material to Hemingway's. Explain why, in terms of her *stori* and theme, Dorothy Canfield uses a "subjective" approach (that is, not only gets into the minds of her characters, but also intrudes her own comments, as author, on her material).

15. Most writers employ, in a short story, a "single" point of view—that is, they present their story through the eyes of one, and only one, character in that story. Why does Dorothy Canfield employ a multiple point of view? Is it necessary, in terms of her story, her characters, and, particularly, her theme? If so, why?

16. Dorothy Canfield uses the word "fate" frequently throughout this story. What specifically does she mean by the term? Does she imply that man is a victim of circumstances over which he has no control? Is there any irony in her use of the term? Would Hemingway and Dorothy Canfield agree on a definition of the term? Would you gather that Dorothy Canfield believes (a) that man is a creature of circumstance over which he has no control? (b) that he is a creature whose destiny is shaped primarily by his environment? or (c) that he can be the master of his own fate if he wills it?

17. What part do the minor characters (Mrs. Benson, Imogene, Helen, Joe Crosby, etc.) play in the story? Is their function chiefly a plot function, a character function, or a theme function?

18. Could this story have taken place anywhere but on a street like Jefferson Street? If not, does this mean that the theme is limited to a given segment of humanity?

19. Comment on Bert Warder's "I guess nobody knows anything about what causes insanity." Do you think that Dorothy Canfield intends this to be taken literally? Discuss.

20. Taking into account Dorothy Canfield's story, her characters, her intended or achieved emotional effect, her irony and contrast, and her own comments on her story material, prepare a paraphrase of the theme of "The Murder on Jefferson Street" (this will by no means be as brief as a paraphrase of the theme of "The Price of the Head," for example). Try to include in this all the modifications which her story makes of her general theme. Disregarding story

interest, characterization, or emotional effect, in which form is the theme more effective or complete or "true"? Why? Does the fact that her theme is implied, rather than stated, make it more or less universal than your paraphrase? If more so, why? On the basis of this comparison, what can you conclude as to the nature of theme in the serious or "quality" short story?

B. Theme and Character

In your discussion of stories thus far, you have probably become increasingly aware of the importance of character in a story; you have noticed again and again that neither plot nor emotional effect nor meaning in a story can be discussed *except* in terms of the nature of the characters involved in that story. In at least one story you have seen what happens to the total effectiveness or validity of a piece of fiction in which basic matters of character motivation or plausibility or consistency are overlooked; and in many others you have seen how much a story depends upon its people. In one sense at least you now understand that any story, since it is always about people, is a character story before it is any other kind of story; this explains why it is that it is relatively easy to find stories in which practically nothing happens but almost impossible to find any, even very inferior ones, in which practically nothing is known about its characters. Because this is true, and because the meaning of any story is inevitably in terms of people (or of animals or objects which have been assigned human traits), it is easy to understand why the writer's most frequent approach to theme is through character.

Now in any consideration of a story which is at once concerned with theme and with characterization, two things should be kept in mind. One has been stated earlier in this book; it is that a story is neither an essay nor a character sketch nor a synopsis, but is rather a *story*, a fictional unit which depends for its validity upon not one but all of its elements. Hence, even in the story in which theme seems to be the writer's chief concern, the basic principles of characterization which we have examined elsewhere in this book cannot be ignored. Before a writer can afford to do anything else, he must consider the nature and drives and traits of his people; he must see to it that his characters are *revealed*, that they are believable, that their actions are logical in terms of their established traits—that, in short, they are plausible, consistent, and adequately motivated. On this basic matter will rest the validity of whatever else a story may attempt.

Now this is a matter of considering people in stories *as people*, as specific individuals placed in a specific set of circumstances. But in a

story which is concerned with theme as well as with character, there must occur, at various points in a story, a transference from the *specific* to the *general*, from the people in the story to the people in the reader's world; in some way a Fitzsimmons must become something other than the individual Fitzsimmons, must become any man who finds himself in a conflict because of the incompatibility of his personal ethical values and his practical and selfish world. This transference is possible, of course, because all human beings have certain instincts, desires, motives, and values in common, but nevertheless the transference does not just happen; it is *made* to happen. And it is important to understand the general way in which this is brought about before turning to the stories which follow these comments.

We must first realize that as themes vary, characters vary with them. This often involves more than merely a change in dominant or subordinate traits; it often involves a change in the writer's handling of his characters as well. What this may mean can perhaps be illustrated by reference to two stories already read. In the story "Ida M'Toy" we have, obviously, an *individualized* character; Ida is a *specific* character with *specific* traits, appearance, and values, and if we consider the story's intent and theme, we can see that this individualization is right in terms of the story. But Nick in "The Killers" is not individualized; the writer makes no attempt to give us any knowledge of or insight into Nick's personal habits or individual thoughts; he remains for us almost any kid in almost any lunchroom in America. But again if we consider the theme and intent of "The Killers," we can see that Nick is equally right for this particular story.

To put this in general terms, different themes demand different approaches to character, different kinds of characterization. One story may need an individualized character; a second may require a typical character; a third may turn its people into abstractions—not real people at all, but symbols. Thus, intelligent analysis of the relationship between a story's character and a theme requires not only consideration of its people *as people*, with personal, individual, psychological traits and drives and values, but consideration as well of the kind of characterization demanded by the theme of the story.

The Girl

by MERIDEL LE SUEUR

SHE WAS GOING the inland route because she had been twice on the coast route. She asked three times at the automobile club how far it was through the Tehachapi Mountains, and she had the route marked on the map in red pencil. The car was running like a T, the garage man told her. All her dresses were back from the cleaners, and there remained only the lace collar to sew on her black crepe so that they would be all ready when she got to San Francisco. She had read up on the history of the mountains and listed all the Indian tribes and marked the route of the Friars from the Sacramento Valley. She was glad now that Clara Robbins, the "Math." teacher, was not going with her. She liked to be alone, to have everything just the way she wanted it, exactly.

There was nothing she wanted changed. It was a remarkable pleasure to have everything just right, to get into her neat fine-looking little roadster, start out in the fine morning, with her map tucked into the seat, every road marked. She was lucky too, how lucky she was. She had her place secure at Central "-High," teaching history. On September 18, she knew she would be coming back to the same room, to teach the same course in history. It was a great pleasure. Driving along, she could see her lean face in the windshield. She couldn't help but think that she had no double chin, and her pride rode in her, a lean thing. She saw herself erect, a little caustic and severe, and the neat turn-over collar of her little blue suit. Her real lone self. This was what she wanted. Nothing messy. She had got herself up in the world. This was the first summer she had not taken a summer course, and she felt a little guilty; but she had had a good summer just being lazy, and now she was going to San Francisco to see her sister and would come back two days before

school opened. She had thought in the spring that her skin was getting that papyrus look so many teachers had, and she had a little tired droop to her shoulders and was a little bit too thin. It was fine to be thin but not too thin. Now she looked better, brown, and she had got the habit of a little eye shadow, a little dry rouge, and just a touch of lipstick. It was really becoming.

Yes, everything was ideal.

But before long she was sorry she had come through the Tehachapi Mountains. Why hadn't someone told her they were like that? They did her in. Frightening. Mile after mile in the intense September heat, through fierce mountains of sand, and bare gleaming rock faces jutting sheer from the road, Her eyes burned, her throat was parched, and there was mile after mile of lonely road without a service station and not a soul passing. She wished, after all, that Miss Robbins had come with her. It would have been nice to be able to say, "What an interesting formation, Miss Robbins! We really should make sketches of it, so we could look up the geological facts \When we get back." Everything would have seemed normal then.

She drove slowly through the hot yellow swells, around the firm curves; and the yellow light shone far off in the tawny valleys, where black mares, delicate haunched, grazed, flesh shining as the sun struck off them. The sun beat down like a golden body about to take form on the road ahead of her. She drove very slowly, and something began to loosen in her, and her eyes seemed to dilate and darken as she looked into the fold upon fold of earth flesh lying clear to the horizon. She saw she was not making what is called "good time." In fact, she was making very bad time.

She had been driving five hours. She looked at her wrist watch and decided she would stop, even if it was only eleven-thirty, and have lunch. So when she saw a little service station far down, tucked into the great folds of dun hill, she was glad. Her car crept closer circling out of sight of it and then circling back until her aching eyes could read the sign—Half Way Station—and she drew up to the side and stopped. Her skin felt as if it were shrivelling on her bone. She saw a man—or was it a boy?—with a pack, standing by the gas pump probably waiting to catch a ride; she wouldn't pick him up, that was certain. These hills were certainly forsaken.

She went in at the door marked Ladies. The tiny cubicle comforted her. She opened her vanity case and took out some tissue, made little pads and put them over her eyes. But still all she could see was those terrifying great mounds of the earth and the sun thrusting down like arrows. What a ghastly country! Why hadn't someone told her? It was barbarous of the automobile club to let her come through this country. She couldn't think of one tribe of Indians.

She really felt a kind of fright and stayed there a long time, and then she got a fright for fear she had left her keys in the car and with that boy out there—she could see his sharp piercing glance out of his brown face—and she had to go pouncing all through her bag, and at last she found them, of all places, in her coin purse and she always put them into the breast pocket of her suit. She did think people were nuisances who had to go looking in all their pockets for keys. Habit was an excellent thing and saved nobody knew how much time.

But at last she drew a deep breath, opened the door onto the vast terrible bright needles of light, and there she saw through the heavy down pouring curtain the boy still standing there exactly as he had been standing before, half leaning, looking from under his black brows. He looked like a dark stroke in the terrible light, and he seemed to be still looking at her. She fumbled the collar at her throat, brushed off the front of her skirt, and went into the lunch room.

"My, it's certainly hot," she said to the thin man behind the counter. She felt strange hearing her voice issue from her.

"It is," said the proprietor, "but a little cooler in here." He was a thin shrewd man.

She sat down in the booth. "Yes," she said, and saw that the boy had followed her in and sat down on the stool at the lunch counter, but he seemed to still be looking at her. He looked as if he had been roasted, slowly turned on a spit until he seemed glowing, like phosphorus, as if the sun were in him, and his black eyes were a little bloodshot as if the whites had been burned, and his broad chest fell down easily to his hips as he ground out a cigarette with his heel. The thin man brought her a glass of water. "What will you have,

ma'am?" he said with respect. "I'll have a lettuce sandwich," she said. "I'm afraid we ain't got any proper lettuce ma'am," he said bowing a little. "We can't get it fresh out here. We have peanut butter, sliced tongue—" "All right," she said quickly, "peanut butter and, well, a glass of beer." She felt that the boy was somehow laughing at her. She felt angry.

"This the first time you been in these parts?" called out the thin man from behind the counter. "Yes," she said, and her own voice sounded small to her. "It is." The boy at the counter turned his head, still with it lowered, so that his eyes looked up at her even though she was sitting down in the booth, and a soft charge went through her, frightening. She felt herself bridling, and she said in a loud cool voice: "This is a very interesting country. Do you know anything about the formation of these curious rocks that jut out of the hills?—they are so bare and then suddenly this rock—"

Was she imagining it only, that the boy seemed to smile and shifted his weight?

"No'm," said the thin man, drawing the beer, "I can't say I ever thought about it." She felt as if something passed between the two men, and it made her angry, as if they were subtly laughing at her. "I know it's hard to grow anything here, unless you got a deep well," he said.

"Oh, I can imagine," she sang out too loud; she felt her voice ringing like metal. The boy seemed not to be touched by what she was saying, but he attended curiously to every word, standing silent but alert like a horse standing at a fence waiting for something. So she began to tell the lunch room proprietor the history of the country, and he seemed amazed but not impressed. It made her feel vindicated somehow. Still the boy drooped alert on the stool, his half face turned towards her, his huge burned ear springing from his head. She stayed half an hour and so cut her time still further, but she felt much better and thought she would make up for it. She got up and paid her bill. "I'll send you a book about the Indians," she said to the thin man.

He smiled, "That will be very nice," he said. "Thank you, I'm sure," and the two men looked at each other again, and she was amazed at the anger that gushed like a sudden fountain in her

breast. She sailed out and got into the car. The thin man came after her. "Oh, by the way," he said, "the lad in there has had an awful time this morning catching a ride. He's got to get up to the bridge, about fifty miles." She felt they were putting something over on her. "I'll vouch for him," the thin man said. "He lives here, and I know his folks now for eighteen years. He's been to the harvest fields, and it would be something for him to ride with an educated lady like you," he added cunningly. The boy came out and was smiling at her now very eagerly. "Now they want something," she thought, and she was suddenly amazed to find out that she despised men and always had.

"I don't like to drive with a strange man," she said, stubborn.

"Oh, this boy is harmless," the thin man said, and that look passed between the two of them again. "I can vouch for him—good as gold his family is. I thought maybe anyhow you might give him a mite of education on the way." A pure glint of malice came into the thin man's eyes that frightened her. He hates me, too, she thought. Men like that hate women with brains.

"All right," she said, "get in."

"Get right in there," the thin man said. "It's only a piece."

The boy rose towards her, and she drew away, and he sat down in a great odor of milk and hay, right beside her, stifling. Without speaking she threw the car in, and they plunged up the bald brow of the hill and began to climb slowly. The sun was in the central sky, and the heat fell vertically. She wouldn't look at him and wished she could get out her handkerchief—such a nauseating odor of sweat and something like buttermilk. She couldn't help but be conscious of the side of his overall leg beside her and his big shoes, and she felt he never took his eyes off her, like some awful bird—and that curious little smile on his mouth as if he knew something about her that she didn't know herself. She knew without looking that he was bending his head towards her with that curious awful little glimmer of a smile.

He said in a soft cajoling voice, "It's pretty hot, and it's nice of you to take me. I had a hard time."

It disarmed her. She felt sorry for him, wanting to be helpful. She always wanted to help men, do something for them, and then really

underneath she could hate them. "Oh," she said, "that was all right. You know one hates to pick up just anyone."

"Sure enough," he said. "I heard in Colorado a fellow got killed."

"Yes," she said, but she was on her guard. His words seemed to mean nothing to him. He was like the heat, in a drowse. "My, you must have been in the sun," she said.

"Yes," he said, "I've been as far as Kansas—looking for work."

"The conditions are pretty bad," she said.

"There ain't no work," he said simply.

"Oh," she said, "that's too bad," and felt awkward and inane. He seemed in such a sun-warmed ease, his legs stretching down. He had his coat in his arms and his shirtsleeves were torn off, showing his huge roasted arms. She could see the huge turn of the muscles of his arms, out of the corner of her eye.

They went climbing in gear up that naked mountain, and it began to affect her curiously. The earth seemed to turn on the bone rich and shining, the great mounds burning in the sun, the great golden body, hard and robust, and the sun striking hot and dazzling.

"These mountains," she began to tell him, "are thousands of years old."

"Yeah," he said looking at her sharply, "I'll bet." He lounged down beside her. "I'm sleepy," he said. "I slept on a bench in L. A. las' night." She felt he was moving slowly towards her as if about to touch her leg. She sat as far over as she could, but she felt him looking at her, taking something for granted.

"Yes," she said, "it would be an interesting study, these mountains."

He didn't answer and threw her into confusion. He lounged down, looking up at her. She drew her skirt sharply down over her leg. Something became very alert in her, and she could tell what he was doing without looking at him.

They didn't stop again. The country looked the same every minute. They rose on that vast naked curve into the blue sky, and dropped into the crevasse and rose again on the same curve. Lines and angles, and bare earth curves, tawny and rolling in the heat. She thought she was going a little mad and longed to see a tree or a house.

"I could go on to San Francisco with you," he said and she could feel her heart suddenly in her.

"Why would you do that?" she said drawing away, one hand at her throat.

"Why shouldn't I?" he said insolently. "It would be kind of nice for both of us," he was smiling that insolent knowing smile. She didn't know how to answer. If she took him seriously it would implicate her, and if she didn't it might also. "It would be kind of nice now, wouldn't it?" he said again with his curious soft impudence. "Wouldn't it?"

"Why, of course, I'm going to San Francisco anyway," she said evasively.

"Oh sure," he said, "I know that. But it isn't so hot going alone. And we get along, don't we?" He didn't move, but his voice drove into her.

"Why, I don't know," she said coldly, "I'm only taking you to the bridge."

He gave a little grunt and put his cap on his head, pulling the beak over his eyes which only concentrated his awful power. She pulled her blouse up over her shoulders. She had never noticed before that it fell so low in front. She felt terribly. And to her horror he went on talking to her softly.

"You wouldn't kid me, would you? You know I like you, I like you. You're pretty."

She couldn't say a word. She felt her throat beating. He was making love to her just as if she was any common slut. She felt her throat beating and swelling.

He kept on his soft drowsy talk, "The times is sure hard." His words seemed to be very tiny falling from the enormous glow of his presence, wonderful, as if he had been turned naked, roasted in the sun. You could smell his sunburnt flesh. And you could smell the earth turning on its spit under the mighty sun. If only he were not so near; the car threw them close together, and she tried to go easy around the curves so that his big body would not lounge down upon her like a mountain. She couldn't remember when she had been so close to a man. It was as frightening as some great earth cata-

clysm. She prided herself on knowing men. She was their equal in every way, she knew that.

If only she could see something familiar, then she could get back her normal feelings about men. She felt as if she were in a nightmare.

"I worked when I was twenty," he went on softly. "Made good money, blew it in on Saturday night. Made big money when I was twenty—Jesus, I've got something to look forward to, haven't I."

She sat over as far as she could. "Where did you work?" she managed to say. She prided herself on always getting information about people. They talked about Roosevelt and the New Deal. She always had strong views, but for the first time in her life she felt as if what she was saying was no good, like talking when some gigantic happening is silently going on. She didn't know what was happening, but she felt that every moment he won, was slowly overcoming her, and that her talk gave him a chance silently to overcome her. She was frightened as if they were about to crack up in a fearful accident. She relaxed on the seat, and the heat stroked down her body. She wished she wasn't driving a car. The great body of the earth seemed to touch her, and she began looking where the shadows were beginning to stroke down the sides of the mounds as if she might sleep there for a little while. An awful desire to sleep drugged her, as if she hadn't slept for years and years. She felt warm and furred and dangerously drugged.

It was as if a little rocket exploded in front of her face when he said, "Let's don't talk about that," and he leaned closer than he had. "Let's talk about you." She could see suddenly his whole face thrust to her, the gleaming strong teeth, the roasted young cheeks, and he had long single whiskers growing out like a mandarin. She laughed a little. "Who do you think I am?" she asked nervously. "Why, I guess you're a pretty good-looking girl," he said. "You look pretty good to me." She bridled at this common language, as if she were nothing but any girl you pick up anywhere.

"Why, I'm a school teacher," she cried.

He didn't seem surprised. "O.K.," he said, laughing into her face.

"Why, I could almost be your mother," she cried.

"Aw, that's a new one," he said, and he put his great hand straight on her arm. "Never heard of a girl wanting to make out she was old before."

She had an awful desire to make him say more; she was frightened. Swift thoughts, habitual thoughts, came into her head, and they seemed like frail things that the heat pounded down. Was it because they were so far out in these strange, rising, mounded hills?

"Are those cigarettes?" he said pointing to the pocket beside her. "Let's stop and have a smoke."

"Oh no," she cried, "I haven't time. I'm behind now. I've got to make up a lot of time."

"O.K.," he said. "We can smoke here."

"All right," she said, handing him the package. "You keep the package."

"All right," he said and took one out and put the package into his pocket.

The sun moved to her side and fell on her shoulder and breast and arm. It was as if all her blood sprang warm out of her. The sun moved slowly and fell along her whole side.

"Oh," he said, "I know you like me."

"How do you know?" she said offended, trying to see the road. She felt fatuous indulging in this adolescent conversation. She let her skirt slip up a little. She knew she had good legs, tapering down swiftly to her ankles. But he didn't seem actually to be looking at her; a heat came out of his great lax body and enveloped her. He seemed warmly to include her, close to himself.

"What kind of a wheel is that?" he said and put his large thick hand beside her own small one on the wheel. "Oh, it turns easy," he said. "I haven't driven a car since I left home. A good car is a pretty sweet thing," he said, and leaned over and began to fondle the gadgets on the front, and she looked fascinated at his huge wrist joint covered with golden hair bleached in the sun. She had to look and saw that his hair was black on his skull but also burnt around the edges. Looking at him she met his gaze and felt her face flush.

They fell down the valley, yellow as a dream. The hills lifted themselves out on the edge of the light. The great animal flesh

jointed mountains wrought a craving in her. There was not a tree, not a growth, just the bare swelling rondures of the mountains, the yellow hot swells, as if they were lifting and being driven through an ossified torrent.

The Tehachapis rolled before them, with only their sharp primeval glint, warm and fierce. They didn't say anything about that in the books. She felt suddenly as if she had missed everything. She should say something more to her classes. Suppose she should say—"The Tehachapi Mountains have warmed and bloomed for a thousand years." After all, why not? This was the true information.

She stopped the car. She turned and looked directly at him. "What is your name?" she asked.

Puzzled, he leaned towards her, that tender warm glint on his face. "Thorn Beason," he said. The hot light seemed to fall around them like rain.

"Listen," he said gripping her hands, twisting them a little, "Let's get out. Wouldn't it be swell to lie down over there in the hills. Look there's a shadow just over there. It's cool in those shadows if you dig down a little—"

She saw his wrists, his giant breast, his knees, and behind him the tawny form and heat of the great earth woman, basking yellow and plump in the sun, her cliffs, her joints gleaming yellow rock, her ribs, her sides warm and full. The rocks that skirted the road glistened like bone, a sheer precipice and dazzle of rock, frightening and splendid, like the sheer precipice of his breast looming towards her so that she could feel the heat come from him and envelop her like fire, and she felt she was falling swiftly down the sides of him, and for the first time in her life she felt the sheer sides of her own body dropping swift and fleet down to her dreaming feet, and an ache, like lightning piercing stone, struck into her between the breasts.

She let her head fall over their hands and pulled back from him in hard resistance. She could not go to his breast that welcomed her—All my delicacy, my purity, she thought. He will not see me. I must not change. I must not change. The tears came to her eyes, and at the same time a canker of self-loathing, terrible, festered in her.

The moment had passed. He withdrew from her. "O.K.," he said.

"You don't need to be scared. Only if you wanted to. O.K. Let's go. You can make up your time. We're only about a half hour from the bridge where I blow."

She began driving very fast, very well. He withdrew completely from her, just waiting to get out. It hurt her, as if there had been before her some sumptuous feast she had been unable to partake of, the lush passional day, the wheaty boy, some wonderful, wonderful fruit.

"I'll swan," he said. "There's old Magill going with a load of melons. Hi!" he shouted.

She wished he was gone already. She wildly began thinking what she could say to him. She thought she would say, casually—"Well, good luck." She felt easier knowing what she was going to say. She stopped the car. He got out and stood by the car. She wanted to do something for him. She really would have liked to give him something. She thought she would buy him a melon. "How much are they?" she said nodding towards the melons and hunting for her pocketbook. He ran over. "You pick out a good one," she called after him.

He came back with a large one with yellow crevasses. His strong talons curved around it, and he kept pressing it, leaving a dent which swelled out after his fingers. He held up the great melon with its half-moon partitions, grading golden towards the sun. She fumbled with her purse to pay for it, and suddenly she saw that he was holding it towards her, that he was giving it to her, and she was ashamed and held the quarter she had taken out, in her hand. He was smiling at her as if he felt sad for her. She smiled foolishly and sat pressing her wet hands together.

"Well, good-bye," he said. "And good luck."

"Good-bye," she said. Now she could not say good luck. He had beat her to it. Why should he wish her good luck when she had it? . . .

He turned and ran towards the wagon, climbed in and did not look back. She drove around the curve, stopped, turned down the mirror and looked at her face. She felt like a stick and looked like a witch. Now she was safe—safe. She would never never change, pure and inviolate forever; and she began to cry.

After five minutes she saw a car rounding the mountain to her right. It would pass her soon. She got out her whiskbroom, brushed her suit, brushed off the seat where he had sat, opened the back window to air out the smell of buttermilk and hay, started the car and drove to San Francisco because that was where she was going.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Consider carefully the first three paragraphs of "The Girl." What character traits of the girl are revealed here? In what order are these traits introduced and why?

2. The basic conflict of "The Girl" is internal, not external. How is this made clear in the first five or six paragraphs? How is it emphasized throughout the story?

3. In terms of both the theme and the conflict, why is the boy the right character to pose against the girl? Would a more refined or educated male have been as attractive to her at this particular moment? If not, why not? Would the situation ever have come about with a different kind of man in the story? Is the boy a symbol? If so, of what? What connection is there between the boy and the sun?

4. Examine at each focal point in this story the motivation of the girl. Is it sound? Clear? Logical? Does the stronger drive in the girl win? Are the two forces in her character and the external forces in the story balanced?

5. In what sense is the ending ironical?

6. Point out and define the various symbols used throughout the story—the sun, the earth, etc. Are these symbols used for any purpose other than to make clear and concrete the theme of the story? (Do they, for example, aid in characterization? In heightening the dramatic conflict? In providing irony? If so, how?)

7. What is the theme of the story? Considering the story's direction, characterization, symbolism, and theme, would you describe it as basically a plot, a character, or a theme story? Why?

Old Red

by CAROLINE GORDON

WHEN THE door had closed behind his daughter, Mister Maury went to the window and stood a few moments looking out. The roses that had grown in a riot all along that side of the fence had died or been cleared away, but the sun lay across the garden in the same level lances of light that he remembered. He turned back into the room. The shadows had gathered until it was nearly all in gloom. The top of his minnow bucket just emerging from the duffel bag glinted in the last rays of the sun. He stood looking down at his traps all gathered neatly in a heap at the foot of the bed. He would leave them like that. Even if they came in here sweeping and cleaning up—it was only in hotels that a man was master of his own room—even if they came in here cleaning up, he would tell them to leave all his things exactly as they were. It was reassuring to see them all there together, ready to be taken up in the hand, to be carried down and put into a car, to be driven off to some railroad station at a moment's notice.

As he moved toward the door, he spoke aloud, a habit that was growing on him:

"Anyhow, I won't stay but a week. . . . I ain't going to stay but a week, no matter what they say. . . ."

Downstairs in the dining room they were already gathered at the supper table, his white-haired, shrunken mother-in-law, his tall sister-in-law who had the proud carriage of the head, the aquiline nose, but not the spirit of his dead wife, his lean, blond new son-in-law, his black-eyed daughter who, but that she was thin, looked so much like him, all of them gathered there waiting for him, Alexander Maury. It occurred to him that this was the first time he had sat

down in the bosom of the family for some years. They were always writing saying that he must make a visit this summer or certainly next fall. ". . . all had a happy Christmas together but missed you. . . ." They had even made the pretext that he ought to come up to inspect his new son-in-law. As if he hadn't always known exactly the kind of young man Sarah would marry! What was the boy's name? Stephen, yes, Stephen. He must be sure and remember that.

He sat down, and shaking out his napkin spread it over his capacious paunch and tucked it well up under his chin in the way his wife had never allowed him to do. He let his eyes rove over the table and released a long sigh.

"Hot batter bread," he said, "and ham. Merry Point ham. I sure am glad to taste them one more time before I die."

The old lady was sending the little Negro girl scurrying back to the kitchen for a hot plate of batter bread. He pushed aside the cold plate and waited. She had bridled when he spoke of the batter bread and a faint flush had dawned on her withered cheeks. Vain she had always been as a peacock, of her housekeeping, her children, the animals on her place, anything that belonged to her. And she went on, even at her advanced age, making her batter bread, smoking her hams according to that old recipe she was so proud of; but who came here now to this old house to eat or to praise?

He helped himself to a generous slice of batter bread, buttered it, took the first mouthful and chewed it slowly. He shook his head.

"There ain't anything like it," he said. "Theie ain't anything else like it in this world."

His dark eye roving the table fell on his son-in-law. "You like batter bread?" he inquired.

Stephen nodded, smiling. Mister Maury, still masticating slowly, regarded his face, measured the space between the eyes—his favorite test for man, horse, or dog. Yes, there was room enough for sense between the eyes. But how young the boy looked! And infected already with the fatal germ, the *cacoethes scribendi*. Well, their children would probably escape. It was like certain diseases of the eye, skipped every other generation. His own father had had it badly all his life. He could see him now sitting at the head of the table spouting his own poetry—or Shakespeare's—while the children watched

the preserve dish to see if it was going around. He, Aleck Maury, had been lucky to be born in the generation he had. He had escaped that at least. A few translations from Heine in his courting days, a few fragments from the Greek, but no, he had kept clear of that on the whole. . . .

The eyes of his sister-in-law were fixed on him. She was smiling faintly. "You don't look much like dying, Aleck. Florida must agree with you."

The old lady spoke from the head of the table. "I can't see what you do with yourself all winter long. Doesn't time hang heavy on your hands?"

Time, he thought, time! They were always mouthing the word and what did they know about it? Nothing in God's world! He saw time suddenly, a dull, leaden-colored fabric depending from the old lady's hands, from the hands of all of them, a blanket that they pulled about, now this way, now that, trying to cover up their nakedness. Or they would cast it on the ground and creep in among the folds, finding one day a little more tightly rolled than another, but all of it everywhere the same dull gray substance. But time was a banner that whipped before him always in the wind. He stood on tiptoe to catch at the bright folds, to strain them to his bosom. They were bright and glittering. But they whipped by so fast and were whipping always ever faster. The tears came into his eyes. Where, for instance, had this year gone? He could swear he had not wasted a minute of it, for no man living, he thought, knew better how to make each day a pleasure to him. Not a minute wasted and yet here it was already May! If he lived to the Biblical three score and ten, which was all he ever allowed himself in his calculations, he had before him only nine more Mays. Only nine more Mays out of all eternity, and they wanted him to waste one of them sitting on the front porch at Merry Point!

The butter plate which had seemed to swim in a glittering mist was coming solidly to rest upon the white tablecloth. He winked his eyes rapidly and laying down his knife and fork squared himself about in his chair to address his mother-in-law:

"Well, ma'am, you know I'm a man that always likes to be learning something. Now this year I learned how to smell out fish." He

glanced around the table, holding his head high and allowing his well-cut nostrils to flutter slightly with his indrawn breaths. "Yes, sir," he said, "I'm probably the only white man in this country knows how to smell out feesh."

There was a discreet smile on the faces of the others. Sarah was laughing outright. "Did you have to learn how or did it just come to you?" she asked.

"I learned it from an old nigger woman," her father said. He shook his head reminiscently. "It's wonderful how much you can learn from niggers. But you have to know how to handle them. I was half the winter wooing that old Fanny. . . ."

He waited until their laughter had died down. "We used to start off every morning from the same little cove and we'd drift in there together at night. I noticed how she always brought in a good string, so I says to her, 'Fanny, you just lemme go 'long with you/ But she wouldn't have nothing to do with me. I saw she was going to be a hard nut to crack, but I kept right on. Finally I began giving her presents. . . ."

Laura was regarding him fixedly, a queer look on her face.

"What sort of presents did you give her, Aleck?"

He made his tones hearty in answer. "I give her a fine string of fish one day and I gave her fifty cents. And finally I made her a present of a Barlow knife. That was when she broke down. She took me with her that morning. . . ."

"Could she really smell fish?" the old lady asked curiously.

"You ought to 'a' seen her," Mister Maury said. "She'd sail over that lake like a hound on the scent. She'd row right along and then all of a sudden she'd stop rowing." He bent over, wrinkling his nose and peering into the depths of imaginary water. "'Thar they are, White Folks, thar they are. Cain't you smell 'em?' "

Stephen was leaning forward, eyeing his father-in-law intently. "Could you?" he asked.

"I got so I could smell feesh," Mister Maury told him. "I could smell out the feesh, but I couldn't tell which kind they were. Now Fanny could row over a bed and tell just by the smell whether it was bass or bream. But she'd been at it all her life." He paused, sighing. "You can't just pick these things up. You have to give yourself to

them. Who was it said 'Genius is an infinite capacity for taking pains'?"

Sarah was rising briskly. Her eyes sought her husband's across the table. She was still laughing. "Sir Izaak Walton," she said, "we'd better go in the other room. Mandy wants to clear the table."

The two older ladies remained in the dining room. Mister Maury walked across the hall to the sitting room, accompanied by Steve and Sarah. He lowered himself cautiously into the most solid-looking of the rocking chairs that were drawn up around the fire. Steve was standing on the hearthrug, back to the fire, gazing abstractedly off across the room.

Mister Maury glanced up at him curiously. "What are you thinking about, feller?" he asked.

Steve looked down. He smiled, but his gaze was still contemplative. "I was thinking about the sonnet," he said, "in the form in which it first came to England."

Mister Maury shook his head. "Wyatt and Surrey," he said. "Hey, nonny, nonny. . . . You'll have hardening of the liver long before you're my age." He looked past Steve's shoulder at the picture that hung over the mantel shelf: Cupid and Psyche holding between them a fluttering veil and running along a rocky path toward the beholder. "Old Merry Point," he said; "it don't change much, does it?"

He settled himself more solidly in his chair. His mind veered from the old house to his own wanderings in brighter places. He regarded his daughter and son-in-law affably.

"Yes, sir," he said, "this winter in Florida was valuable to me just for the acquaintances I made. Take my friend, Jim Barbee. Just to live in the same hotel with that man is an education." He paused, smiling reminiscently into the fire. "I'll never forget the first time I saw him. He came up to me there in the lobby of the hotel. Trofessor Maury!" he says, 'You been hearin' about me for twenty years and I been hearin' about you for twenty years. And now we've done met!'"

Sarah had sat down in the little rocking chair by the fire. She leaned toward him now, laughing. "They ought to have put down a cloth of gold for the meeting," she said.

Mister Maury shook his head. "Nature does that in Florida," he said. "I knew right off the reel it was him. There were half a dozen men standing around. I made 'em witness. 'Jim Barbee,' I says, 'Jim Barbee of Maysville or I'll eat my hat!'"

"Why is he so famous?" Sarah asked.

Mister Maury took out his knife and cut a slice from a plug of tobacco. When he had offered a slice to his son-in-law and it had been refused, he put the plug back in his pocket. "He's a man of imagination," he said slowly. "There ain't many in this world."

He took a small tin box out of his pocket and set it *on* the little table that held the lamp. Removing the top he tilted the box so that they could see its contents: an artificial lure, a bug with a dark body and a red, bulbous head, a hook protruding from what might be considered its vitals.

"Look at her," he said, "ain't she a killer?"

Sarah leaned forward to look and Steve, still standing on the hearthrug, bent above them. The three heads ringed the light.

Mister Maury disregarded Sarah and addressed himself to Steve. "She takes nine strips of rind," he said, "nine strips just thick enough." He marked off the width of the strips with his two fingers on the table, then picking up the lure and cupping it in his palm he moved it back and forth quickly so that the painted eyes caught the light.

"Look at her," he said, "look at the wicked way she sets forward."

Sarah was poking at the lure with the tip of her finger.

"Wanton," she said, "simply wanton. What docs he call her?"

"This is his Devil Bug," Mister Maury said. "He's the only man in this country makes it. I myself had the idea thirty years ago and let it slip by me the way I do with so many of my ideas." He sighed, then elevating his tremendous bulk slightly above the table level and continuing to hold Steve with his gaze he produced from his coat pocket the oilskin book that held his flies. He spread it open on the table and began to turn the pages. His eyes sought his son-in-law's as his hand paused before a gray, rather draggled-looking lure.

"Old Speck," he said. "I've had that fly for twenty years. I reckon she's taken five hundred pounds of fish in her day. . . ."

The fire burned lower. A fiery coal rolled from the grate and fell

onto the hearthrug. Sarah scooped it up with a shovel and threw it among the ashes. In the circle of the lamplight the two men still bent over the table looking at the flies. Steve was absorbed in them but he spoke seldom. It was her father's voice that rising and falling filled the room. He talked a great deal, but he had a beautiful speaking voice. He was telling Steve now about Little West Fork, the first stream ever he put a fly in. "My first love," he kept calling it. It sounded rather pretty, she thought, in his mellow voice. "My first love . . ."

11

When Mister Maury came downstairs the next morning the dining room was empty except for his daughter, Sarah, who sat dawdling over a cup of coffee and a cigarette. Mister Maury sat down opposite her. To the little Negro girl who presented herself at his elbow he outlined his wants briefly. "A cup of coffee and some hot batter bread just like we had last night." He turned to his daughter. "Where's Steve?"

"He's working," she said, "he was up at eight and he's been working ever since."

Mister Maury accepted the cup of coffee from the little girl, poured half of it into his saucer, set it aside to cool. "Ain't it wonderful," he said, "the way a man can sit down and work day after day? When I think of all the work I've done in my time. . . . Can he work every morning?"

"He sits down at his desk every morning," she said, "but of course he gets more done some mornings than others."

Mister Maury picked up his saucer, found the coffee cool enough for his taste. He sipped it slowly, looking out of the window. His mind was already busy with his day's program. No water—no running water—nearer than West Fork three miles away. He couldn't drive a car and Steve was going to be busy writing all morning. There was nothing for it but a pond. The Willow Sink. It was not much but it was better than nothing. He pushed his chair back and rose.

"Well," he said, "I'd better be starting."

When he came downstairs with his rod a few minutes later the

hall was still full of the sound of measured typing. Sarah sat in the dining room in the same position in which he had left her, smoking. Mister Maury paused in the doorway while he slung his canvas bag over his shoulders. "How you ever going to get anything done if you don't take advantage of the morning hours?" he asked. He glanced at the door opposite as if it had been the entrance to a sick chamber.

"What's he writing about?" he inquired in a whisper.

"It's an essay on John Skelton."

Mister Maury looked out at the new green leaves framed in the doorway. "John Skelton," he said. "God Almighty!"

He went through the hall and stepped down off the porch onto the ground that was still moist with spring rains. As he crossed the lower yard he looked up into the branches of the maples. Yes, the leaves were full grown already even on the late trees. The year, how swiftly, how steadily it advanced! He had come to the far corner of the yard. Grown up it was in pokeberry shoots and honeysuckle, but there was a place to get through. The top strand of wire had been pulled down and fastened to the others with a ragged piece of rope. He rested his weight on his good leg and swung himself over onto the game one. It gave him a good, sharp twinge when he came down on it. It was getting worse all the time, that leg, but on the other hand he was learning better all the time how to handle it. His mind flew back to a dark, startled moment, that day when the cramp first came on him. He had been sitting still in the boat all day long and that evening when he had stood up to get out his leg had failed him utterly. He had pitched forward among the reeds, had lain there a second, face downwards, before it came to him what had happened. With the realization came a sharp picture of his faraway youth: Uncle Quent lowering himself ponderously out of the saddle after a hard day's hunting had fallen forward in exactly the same way, into a knot of yowling little Negroes. He had got up and cursed them all out of the lot. It had scared the old boy to death, coming down like that. The black dog he had had on his shoulder all that fall. But he himself had never lost one day's fishing on account of his leg. He had known from the start how to handle it. It meant simply that he was slowed down that much. It hadn't really made much

difference in fishing. He didn't do as much wading but he got around just about as well on the whole. Hunting, of course, had had to go. You couldn't walk all day shooting birds, dragging a game leg. He had just given it up right off the reel, though it was a shame when a man was as good a shot as he was. That day he was out with Tom Kensington last November, the only day he got out during the season. Nine shots he'd had and he'd bagged nine birds. Yes, it was a shame. But a man couldn't do everything. He had to limit himself _____

He was up over the little rise now. The field slanted straight down before him to where the pond lay, silver in the morning sun. A Negro cabin was perched halfway up the opposite slope. A woman was hanging out washing on a line stretched between two trees. From the open doorway little Negroes spilled down the path toward the pond. Mister Maury surveyed the scene, spoke aloud:

"Ain't it funny now? Niggers always live in the good places."

He stopped under a wild cherry tree to light his pipe. It had been hot crossing the field, but the sunlight here was agreeably tempered by the branches. And that pond down there was fringed with willows. His eyes sought the bright disk of the water, then rose to where the smoke from the cabin chimney lay in a soft plume along the crest of the hill.

When he stooped to pick up his rod again it was with a feeling of sudden, keen elation. An image had risen in his memory, an image that was familiar but came to him infrequently of late and that only in moments of elation: the wide field in front of his uncle's old house in Albemarle, on one side the dark line of undergrowth that marked the Rivanna River, on the other the blue of Peters' Mountain. They would be waiting there in that broad plain when they had the first sight of the fox. On that little rise by the river, loping steadily, not yet alarmed. The sun would glint on his bright coat, on his quick-turning head as he dove into the dark of the woods. There would be hullabaloo after that and shouting and riding. Sometimes there was the tailing of the fox—that time old Whisky was brought home on a mattress! All of that to come afterward, but none of it ever like that first sight of the fox there on the broad plain between the river and the mountain.

There was one fox, they grew to know him in time, to call him affectionately by name. Old Red it was who showed himself always like that there on the crest of the hill. "There he goes, the damn' impudent scoundrel!" . . . Uncle Quent would shout and slap his thigh and yell himself hoarse at Whisky and Mag and the pups, but they would have already settled to their work. They knew his course, every turn of it by heart. Through the woods and then down across the fields again to the river. Their hope was always to cut him off before he could circle back to the mountain. If he got in there among those old field pines it was all up. But he always made it. Lost 'em every time and then dodged through to his hole in Pinnacle Rock. . . . A smart fox, Old Red. . . .

He descended the slope and paused in the shade of a clump of willows. The little Negroes who squatted, dabbling in the water, watched him out of round eyes as he unslung his canvas bag and laid it on a stump. He looked down at them gravely.

"D'you ever see a white man that could conjure?" he asked.

The oldest boy laid the brick he was fashioning out of mud down on a plank. He ran the tip of his tongue over his lower lip to moisten it before he spoke. "Naw suh."

"I'm the man," Mister Maury told him. "You chillun better quit that playin' and dig me some worms."

He drew his rod out of the case, jointed it up and laid it down on a stump. Taking out his book of flies he turned the pages, considering. "Silver Spinner," he said aloud. "They ought to take that . . . in May. Naw, I'll just give Old Speck a chance. It's a long time now since we had her out."

The little Negroes had risen and were stepping quietly off along the path toward the cabin, the two little boys hand in hand, the little girl following, the baby astride her hip. They were pausing now before a dilapidated building that might long ago have been a hen-house. Mister Maury shouted at them. "Look under them old boards. That's the place for worms." The biggest boy was turning around. His treble "Yassuh" quavered over the water. Then their voices died away. There was no sound except the light turning of the willow boughs in the wind.

Mister Maury walked along the bank, rod in hand, humming:

"Bangum's gone to the wild boar's den . . . *Bangum's* gone to the wild boar's den . . ." He stopped where a white, peeled log protruded six or seven feet into the water. The pond made a little turn here. Two lines of willows curving in framed the whole surface of the water. He stepped out squarely upon the log, still humming. The line rose smoothly, soared against the blue and curved sweetly back upon the still water. His quick ear caught the little whish that the fly made when it clove the surface, his eye followed the tiny ripples of its flight. He cast again, leaning a little backward as he did sometimes when the mood was on him. Again and again his line soared out over the water. His eye rested now and then on his wrist. He noted with detachment the expert play of the muscles, admired each time the accuracy of his aim. It occurred to him that it was four days now since he had wet a line. Four days. One whole day packing up, parts of two days on the train and yesterday wasted sitting there on that front porch with the family. But the abstinence had done him good. He had never cast better than he was casting this morning.

There was a rustling along the bank, a glimpse of blue through the trees. Mister Maury leaned forward and peered around the clump of willows. A hundred yards away Steve, hatless, in an old blue shirt and khaki pants, stood jointing up a rod.

Mister Maury backed off his log and advanced along the path. He called out cheerfully, "Well, feller, do any good?"

Steve looked up. His face had lightened for a moment, but the abstracted expression stole over it again when he spoke. "Oh, I fiddled with it," he said, "all morning, but I didn't do much good."

Mister Maury nodded sympathetically. "*Minerva invita erat*," he said; "you can do nothing unless Minerva perches on the rooftree. Why, I been castin' here all morning and not a strike. But there's a boat tied up over on the other side. What say we get in it and just drift around?" He paused, looked at the rod Steve had finished jointing up. "I brought another rod along," he said. "You want to use it?"

Steve shook his head. "I'm used to this one."

An expression of relief came over Mister Maury's face. "That's right," he said, "a man always does better with his own rod."

The boat was only a quarter full of water. They heaved her over

and dumped it out, then dragged her down to the bank. The little Negroes had come up, bringing a can of worms. Mister Maury threw them each a nickel and set the can in the bottom of the boat. "I always like to have a few worms handy," he told Steve, "ever since I was a boy." He lowered himself ponderously into the bow and Steve pushed off and dropped down behind him.

The little Negroes still stood on the bank staring. When the boat was a little distance out on the water the boldest of them spoke: "Yo reckon 'at ole jawnboat going to hold you up, Cap'm?"

Mister Maury turned his head to call over his shoulder. "Go 'way, boy, ain't I done tole you I's a conjure?"

The boat dipped ominously. Steve changed his position a little and she settled to the water. Sitting well forward Mister Maury made graceful casts, now to this side, now to that. Steve, in the stem, made occasional casts, but he laid his rod down every now and then to paddle, though there was really no use in it. The boat drifted, well enough with the wind. At the end of half an hour seven sizable bass lay on the bottom of the boat. Mister Maury had caught five of them. He reflected that perhaps he really ought to change places with Steve. The man in the bow certainly had the best chance at the fish. "But no," he thought, "it don't make any difference. He don't hardly know where he is now."

He stole a glance over his shoulder at the young man's serious, abstracted face. It was like that of a person submerged. Steve seemed to float up to the surface every now and then, his expression would lighten, he would make some observation that showed he knew where he was, then he would sink again. If you asked him a question he answered punctiliously, two minutes later. Poor boy, dead to the world and would probably be that way the rest of his life! A pang of pity shot through Mister Maury, and on the heels of it a gust of that black fear that occasionally shook him. It was he, not Steve, that was the queer one! The world was full of people like this boy, all of them walking around with their heads so full of this and that they hardly knew where they were going. There was hardly anybody—there was *nobody* really in the whole world like him. . . .

Steve, coming out of his abstraction, spoke politely. He had heard

that Mister Maury was a fine shot. Did he like to fish better than hunt?

Mister Maury reflected. "Well," he said, "they's something about a covey of birds rising up in front of you . . . they's something. And a good dog. Now they ain't anything in this world that I like better than a good bird dog." He stopped and sighed. "A man has got to come to himself early in life if he's going to amount to anything. Now I was smart, even as a boy. I could look around me and see all the men of my family, Uncle Jeems, Uncle Quent, my father, every one of 'em weighed two hundred by the time he was fifty. You get as heavy on your feet as all that and you can't do any good shooting. But a man can fish as long as he lives. . . . Why, one place I stayed last summer there was an old man ninety years old had himself carried down to the river every morning. . . . Yes, sir, a man can fish as long as he can get down to the water's edge. . . ."

There was a little plop to the right. He turned just in time to see the fish flash out of the water. He watched Steve take it off the hook and drop it on top of the pile in the bottom of the boat. Eight bass that made and two bream. The old lady would be pleased. "Aleck always catches me fish," she'd say.

The boat glided on over the still water. There was no wind at all now. The willows that fringed the bank might have been cut out of paper. The plume of smoke hung perfectly horizontal over the roof of the Negro cabin. Mister Maury watched it stream out in little eddies and disappear into the bright blue.

He spoke softly: "Ain't it wonderful . . . ain't it wonderful now that a man of my gifts can content himself a whole morning on this here little old pond?"

III

Mister Maury woke with a start. He realized that he had been sleeping on his left side again. A bad idea. It always gave him palpitations of the heart. It must be that that had waked him up. He had gone to sleep almost immediately after his head hit the pillow. He rolled over, cautiously, as he always did since that bed in Leesburg

had given down with him, and lying flat on his back stared at the opposite wall.

The moon rose late. It must be at its height now. That patch of light was so brilliant he could almost discern the pattern of the wall paper. It hung there, wavering, bitten by the shadows into a semblance of a human figure, a man striding with bent head and swinging arms. All the shadows in the room seemed to be moving toward him. The protruding corner of the washstand was an arrow aimed at his heart, the clumsy old-fashioned dresser was a giant towering above him.

They had put him to sleep in this same room the night after his wife died. In the summer it had been, too, in June, and there must have been a full moon, for the same giant shadows had struggled there with the same towering monsters. It would be like that here on this wall every full moon, for the pieces of iurniture would never change their position, had never been changed, probably, since the house was built.

He turned back on his side. The wall before him was dark, but he knew every flower in the pattern of the wall paper, interlacing pink roses with thrusting up between every third cluster the enormous, spreading fronds of ferns. The wall paper in the room across the hall was like that too. The old lady slept there, and in the room next to his own, Laura, his sister-in-law, and in the east bedroom downstairs the young couple. He and Mary had slept there when they were first married, when they were the young couple in the house.

He tried to remember Mary as she must have looked the clay he first saw her, the day he arrived from Virginia to open his school in the old office that used to stand there in the corner of the yard. He could see Mister Allard plainly, sitting there under the sugar tree with his chair tilted back, could discern the old lady—young she had been then!—hospitably poised in the doorway, could hear her voice: "Well, here are two of your pupils to start with. . . ." He remembered Laura, a shy child of nine hiding her face in her mother's skirts, but Mary was only a shadow in the dark hall. He could not even remember how her voice had sounded. "Professor Maury," she would have said and her mother would have corrected her with "Cousin Aleck. . . ."

That day a year later when she was getting off her horse at the stile blocks. . . . She had turned as she walked across the lawn to look back at him. Her white sunbonnet had fallen back on her shoulders, her eyes meeting his had been wide and startled. He had gone *on* and had hitched both the horses before he leaped over the stile to join her. But he had known in that moment that she was the woman he was going to have. He could not remember all the rest of it, only that moment stood out. He had won her. She had become his wife, but the woman he had won was not the woman he had sought. It was as if he had had her only in that moment there on the lawn. As if she had paused there only for that one moment, and was ever after retreating before him down a devious, a dark way that he would never have chosen.

The death of the first baby had been the start of it, of course. It had been a relief when she took so definitely to religion. Before that there had been those sudden, unaccountable forays out of some dark lurking place that she had. Guerrilla warfare and trying to the nerves, but that had been only at the first. For many years they had been two enemies contending in the open. . . . Toward the last she had taken mightily to prayer. He would wake often to find her kneeling by the side of the bed in the dark. It had gone on for years. She had never given up hope. . . .

Ah, a stout-hearted one, Mary! She had never given up hope of changing him, of making him over into the man she thought he ought to be. Time and again she almost had him. And there were long periods, of course, during which he had been worn down by the conflict, one spring when he himself said, when she had told all the neighbors that he was too old now to go fishing any more. . . . But he had made a comeback. She had had to resort to stratagem. His lips curved in a smile, remembering the trick.

It had come over him suddenly, a general lassitude, an odd faintness in the mornings, the time when his spirits ordinarily were always at their highest. He had sat there looking out of the window at the woods glistening with spring rain; he had not even taken his gun down to shoot a squirrel.

Remembering Uncle Quent's last days, he had been alarmed, had decided finally that he must tell her so that they might begin prep-

arations for the future—he had shuddered at the thought of eventual confinement, perhaps in some institution. She had looked up from her sewing, unable to repress a smile.

"You think it's your mind, Aleck. . . . It's coffee. . . . I've been giving you a coffee substitute every morning. . . ."

They had laughed together over her cleverness. He had not gone back to coffee, but the lassitude had worn off. She had gone back to the attack with redoubled vigor. In the afternoons she would stand on the porch calling after him as he slipped down to the creek, "Now, don't stay long enough to get that cramp. You remember how you suffered last time. . . ." He would have forgotten all about the cramp until that moment, but it would hang over him then through the whole afternoon's sport, and it would descend upon him inevitably when he left the river and started for the house.

Yes, he thought with pride. She was wearing him down—he didn't believe there was a man living who could withstand her a lifetime!—she was wearing him down and would have had him in another few months, another year certainly. But she had been struck down just as victory was in her grasp. The paralysis had come on her in the night. It was as if a curtain had descended, dividing their life sharply into two parts. In the bewildered year and a half that followed he had found himself forlornly trying to reconstruct the Mary he had known. The pressure she had so constantly exerted upon him had become for him a part of her personality. This new, calm Mary was not the woman he had loved all these years. She had lain there—heroically they all said—waiting for death. And lying there, waiting, all her faculties engaged now in defensive warfare, she had raised as it were her lifelong siege; she had lost interest in his comings and goings, had once even, encouraged him to go out for an afternoon's sport. He felt a rush of warm pity. Poor Mary! She must have realized toward the last that she had wasted herself in conflict; she had spent her arms and her strength against an inglorious foe when all the time the real, the invincible adversary waited. . . .

He turned over on his back again. The moonlight was waning, the contending shadows paler now and retreating toward the door. From across the hall came the sound of long, sibilant breaths, end-

ing each one on a little upward groan. The old lady . . . she would maintain till her dying day that she did not snore. He fancied that he could hear from the next room Laura's light, regular breathing, and downstairs were the young couple asleep in each other's arms. . . .

All of them quiet and relaxed now, but they had been lively enough at dinner time! It had started with the talk about Aunt Sally Crenflew's funeral Tuesday. Living as he had for some years away from women of his family he had forgotten the need to be cautious. He had spoken up before he thought:

"But that's the day Steve and I were going to Barker's Mill. . . ."

Sarah had cried out at the idea. "Barker's Mill!" she had said, "right on the Crenflew land . . . well, if not on the very farm in the very next field." It would be a scandal if he, Professor Maury, known by everybody to be in the neighborhood, could not spare one afternoon, one insignificant summer afternoon from his fishing long enough to attend the funeral of his cousin, the cousin of all of them, the oldest lady in the whole family connection. . . .

She had got him rattled; he had fallen back upon technicalities:

"I'm not a Crenflew. I'm a Maury. Aunt Sally Crenflew is no more kin to me than a catfish. . . ."

An unlucky crack, that about the catfish. Glancing around the table he had caught the same look in every eye. He had felt a gust of the same fright that had shaken him there on the pond. That look! Sooner or later you met it in every human eye. The thing was to be up and ready, ready to run for your life at a moment's notice. Yes, it had always been like that. It always would be. His fear of them was shot through suddenly with contempt. It was as if Mary was there laughing at them with him. *She* knew that none of them could have survived what he had survived, could have paid the price for freedom that he had paid. . . .

Sarah had come to a full stop. He had to say something. He shook his head:

"You think we just go fishing to have a good time. The boy and I hold high converse on that pond. . . . I'm starved for intellectual companionship, I tell you. In Florida I never see anybody but niggers. . . ."

They had all laughed out at that. "As if you didn't *prefer* the society of niggers," Sarah said scornfully.

The old lady had been moved to anecdote:

"I remember when Aleck first came out here from Virginia, Cousin Sophy said: 'Professor Maury is so well educated. Now Cousin Cave Maynor is dead, who is there in this neighborhood for him to associate with?' 'Well,' I said, 'I don't know about that. He seems perfectly satisfied now with Ben Hooser. They're oil to the creek together every evening soon as school is out.'"

Ben Hooser. . . . He could see now the wrinkled face, overlaid with that ashy pallor of the aged Negro, the shrewd, smiling eyes, the pendulous lower lip that dropping away showed always some of the rotten teeth. A fine nigger, Ben, and on to a lot of tricks, the only man really that he'd ever cared to take fishing with him. . . .

But the first real friend of his bosom had been old Uncle Teague, back in Virginia. Once a week, or more likely every ten days, he fed the hounds on the carcass of a calf that had had time to get pretty high. They would drive the spring wagon out into the lot, he, a boy of ten, beside Uncle Teague on the driver's seat. The hounds would come in a great rush and rear their slobbering jowls against the wagon wheels. Uncle Teague would wield his whip, chuckling while he threw the first hunk of meat to Old Mag, his favorite.

"Dey goin' run on dis," he'd say, "dey goin' run like a shadow. . . ."

He shifted his position again, cautiously. People, he thought . . . people . . . so bone ignorant, all of them. Not one person in a thousand realized that a fox hound remains at heart a wild beast and must kill and gorge, and then when he is ravenous kill and gorge again. . . . Or that the channel cat is a night feeder. . . . Or . . . his daughter had told him once that he ought to set all his knowledges down in a book. "Why?" he had asked. "So everybody else can know as much as I do?"

If he allowed his mind to get active, really active, he would never get any sleep. He was fighting an inclination now to get up and find a cigarette. He relaxed again upon his pillows, deliberately summoned pictures up before his mind's eye. Landscapes—and streams. He observed their outlines, watched one flow into another. The Black

River into West Fork, that in turn into Spring Creek and Spring Creek into the Withlicoochee. Then they were all flowing together, merging into one broad plain. He watched it take form slowly: the wide field in front of Hawkwood, the Rivanna River on one side, on the other Peters' Mountain. They would be waiting there till the fox showed himself on that little rise by the river. The young men would hold back till Uncle Quent had wheeled Old Filly, then they would all be off pell-mell across the plain. He himself would be mounted on Jonesboro. Blind as a bat, but she would take anything you put her at. That first thicket on the edge of the woods. They would break there, one half of them going around, the other half streaking it through the woods. He was always of those going around to try to cut the fox off on the other side. No, he was down off his horse. He was coursing with the fox. He could hear the sharp, pointed feet padding on the dead leaves, see the quick head turned now and then over the shoulder.

The trees kept flashing by, one black trunk after another. And now it was a ragged mountain field and the sage grass running before them in waves to where a narrow stream curved in between the ridges. The fox's feet were light in the water. He ran steadily, head down. The hounds' baying was louder now. Old Mag knew the trick. She had stopped to give tongue by the big rock, and now they had all leaped the gulch and were scrambling up through the pines. But the fox's feet were already hard on the mountain path. He ran slowly now, past the big boulder, past the blasted pine to where the shadow of the Pinnacle Rock was black across the path. He ran on and the shadow rose and swayed to meet him. Its cool touch was on his hot tongue, his heaving flanks. He had slipped in under it. He was sinking down, panting, in black dark, on moist earth while the hounds' baying filled the bowl of the valley and reverberated from the mountainside.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

I. The introduction (Part I) of "Old Red" not only establishes the situation, characters, and basic conflict of the story but prepares the basis for the story's theme. Explain the purpose of the following details and discuss their relationship to the rest of the story:

- a. The reference at the table to Mr. Maury's wife.
- b. Mr. Maury's comments on the food.
- c. Mr. Maury's thoughts about his mother-in-law (particularly her vanity about her housekeeping).
- d. His opinion of Stephen.
- e. His thoughts about the nature of Time.
- f. His comments on Jim Barbee (compare his attitude toward Jim with his opinion of the family).

2. What does fishing mean to Mr. Maury? Is it a sport? An avocation? A vocation? How does it differ from the "work" of the rest of the family? What is the family's attitude toward his fishing? Why? What are Mr. Maury's values in life? What values do the rest of the family hold?

3. Comment on Mr. Maury's opinion of Negroes.

4. Section one of "Old Red" is mainly devoted to characterization and to setting in motion the story's conflict. Section two lays the groundwork for the theme of the story by pointing up and clarifying Mr. Maury's values in life and his relationship to his world. Explain what each scene in this section reveals about Mr. Maury's way of life and about his world. What irony can you find in this section? How does it help to clarify the meaning of the story?

5. Why is any characterization of Mr. Maury's wife saved until Section Three of the story? In what respect is Mary a symbol, not an individualized person? What is she a symbol of?

6. Why may Mr. Maury's refusal to go to the funeral be considered the climax of "Old Red"? Why does he refuse to go?

7. What does "Old Red" symbolize in this story? Why does Mr. Maury identify himself with the fox? How does this identification explain the story? Where and how was it prepared for earlier in the story?

8. Discuss the place of each character—the mother-in-law, Sarah, Stephen, and Mary—in the story. What is their relationship to the plot of the story? Are they consistent, plausible, adequately motivated? What is their relationship to the theme?

9. Is Mr. Maury an individual, a type, or a symbol? Why? Compare Caroline Gordon's handling of character to that of Meridel Le Sueur. What is the difference between Mr. Maury, considered as a kind of character, and "the girl"? Is the difference justified by the different themes of these two stories? If so, why?

The New Dress

by VIRGINIA WOOLF

MABEL HAD her first serious suspicion that something was wrong as she took her cloak off and Mrs. Barnet, while handing her the mirror and touching the brushes and thus drawing her attention, perhaps rather markedly, to all the appliances for tidying and improving hair, complexion, clothes, which existed on the dressing table, confirmed the suspicion—that it was not right, not quite right, which growing stronger as she went upstairs and springing at her with conviction as she greeted Clarissa Dalloway, she went straight to the far end of the room, to a shaded corner where a looking-glass hung and looked. No! It was not right. And at once the misery which she always tried to hide, the profound dissatisfaction—the sense she had had, ever since she was a child, of being inferior to other people—set upon her, relentlessly, remorselessly, with an intensity which she could not beat off, as she would when she woke at night at home, by reading Borrow or Scott; for, oh, these men, oh, these women, all were thinking—"What's Mabel wearing? What a fright she looks! What a hideous new dress!"—their eyelids flickering as they came up and then their lids shutting rather tight. It was her own appalling inadequacy; her cowardice; her mean, water-sprinkled blood that depressed her. And at once the whole of the room where, for ever so many hours, she had planned with the little dressmaker how it was to go, seemed sordid, repulsive; and her own drawing-room so shabby, and herself, going out, puffed up with vanity as she touched the letters on the hall table and said: "How dull!" to show off—all this now seemed unutterably silly, paltry, and provincial. All this had been absolutely destroyed, shown up, exploded, the moment she came into Mrs. Dalloway's drawing-room.

What she had thought that evening when, sitting over the teacups, Mrs. Dalloway's invitation came, was that, of course, she could not be fashionable. It was absurd to pretend to even—fashion meant cut, meant style, meant thirty guineas at least—but why not be original? Why not be herself, anyhow? And, getting up, she had taken that old fashion book of her mother's, a Paris fashion book of the time of the Empire, and had thought how much prettier, more dignified, and more womanly, they were then, and so set herself—oh, it was foolish—trying to be like them, pluming herself in fact upon being modest and old-fashioned and very charming, giving herself up, no doubt about it, to an orgy of self-love which deserved to be chastised, and so rigged herself out like this.

But she dared not look in the glass. She could not face the whole horror—the pale yellow, idiotically old-fashioned silk dress with its long skirt and its high sleeves and its waist and all the things that looked so charming in the fashion book, but not on her, not among all these ordinary people. She felt like a dressmaker's dummy standing there for young people to stick pins into.

"But, my dear, it's perfectly charming!" Rose Shaw said, looking her up and down with that little satirical pucker of the lips which she expected—Rose herself being dressed in the height of the fashion, precisely like everybody else, always.

"We are all like flies trying to crawl over the edge of the saucer," Mabel thought, and repeated the phrase as if she were crossing herself, as if she were trying to find some spell to annul this pain, to make this agony endurable. Tags of Shakespeare, lines from books she had read ages ago, suddenly came to her when she was in agony, and she repeated them over and over again. "Flies trying to crawl," she repeated. If she could say that over often enough and make herself see the flies, she would become numb, chill, frozen, dumb. Now she could see flies crawling slowly out of a saucer of milk with their wings stuck together; and she strained and strained (standing in front of the looking-glass, listening to Rose Shaw) to make herself see Rose Shaw and all the other people there as flies, trying to hoist themselves out of something, or into something, meagre, insignificant, toiling flies. But she could not see them like that, not other people. She saw herself like that—she was a fly, but the others were

dragonflies, butterflies, beautiful insects, dancing, fluttering, skimming, while she alone dragged herself up out of the saucer. (Envy and spite, the most detestable of the vices, were her chief faults.)

"I feel like some dowdy, decrepit, horribly dingy old fly," she said, making Robert Haydon stop just to hear her say that, just to reassure herself by furbishing up a poor weak-kneed phrase and so showing how detached she was, how witty, that she did not feel in the least out of anything. And, of course, Robert Haydon answered something quite polite, quite insincere, which she saw through instantly, and said to herself, directly he went (again from some book), "Lies, lies, lies!" For a party makes things either much more real or much less real, she thought; she saw in a flash to the bottom of Robert Haydon's heart; she saw through everything. She saw the truth. This was true, this drawing-room, this self, and the other false. Miss Milan's little work-room was really terribly hot, stuffy, sordid. It smelt of clothes and cabbage cooking; and yet, when Miss Milan put the glass in her hand, and she looked at herself with the dress on, finished, an extraordinary bliss shot through her heart. Suffused with light, she sprang into existence. Rid of cares and wrinkles, what she had dreamed of herself was there—a beautiful woman. Just for a second (she had not dared look longer, Miss Milan wanted to know about the length of the skirt), there looked at her, framed in the scrolloping mahogany, a grey-white, mysteriously smiling, charming girl, the core of herself, the soul of herself; and it was not vanity only, not only self-love that made her think it good, tender, and true. Miss Milan said that the skirt could not well be longer; if anything the skirt, said Miss Milan, puckering her forehead, considering with all her wits about her, must be shorter; and she felt, suddenly, honestly, full of love for Miss Milan, much, much fonder of Miss Milan than of anyone in the whole world, and could have cried for pity that she should be crawling on the floor with her mouth full of pins and her face red and her eyes bulging—that one human being should be doing this for another, and she saw them all as human beings merely, and herself going off to her party, and Miss Milan pulling the cover over the canary's cage, or letting him pick a hemp-seed from between her lips, and the thought of it, of this side of human nature and its patience and its endurance and its being

content with such miserable, scanty, sordid, little pleasures filled her eyes with tears.

And now the whole thing had vanished. The dress, the room, the love, the pity, the scrolloping looking-glass, and the canary's cage—all had vanished, and here she was in a corner of Mrs. Dalloway's drawing-room, suffering tortures, woken wide awake to reality.

But it was all so paltry, weak-blooded, and petty-minded to care so much at her age with two children, to be still so utterly dependent on people's opinions and not have principles or convictions, not to be able to say as other people did, "There's Shakespeare! There's death! We're all weevils in a captain's biscuit"—or whatever it was that people did say.

She faced herself straight in the glass; she pecked at her left shoulder; she issued out into the room, as if spears were thrown at her yellow dress from all sides. But instead of looking fierce or tragic, as Rose Shaw would have done—Rose would have looked like Boadicea—she looked foolish and self-conscious and simpered like a schoolgirl and slouched across the room, positively slinking, as if she were a beaten mongrel, and looked at a picture, an engraving. As if one went to a party to look at a picture! Everybody knew why she did it—it was from shame, from humiliation.

"Now the fly's in the saucer," she said to herself, "right in the middle, and can't get out, and the milk," she thought, rigidly staring at the picture, "is sticking its wings together."

"It's so old-fashioned," she said to Charles Burt, making him stop (which by itself he hated) on his way to talk to someone else.

She meant, or she tried to make herself think that she meant, that it was the picture and not her dress, that was old-fashioned. And one word of praise, one word of affection from Charles would have made all the difference to her at the moment. If he had only said, "Mabel, you're looking charming tonight!" it would have changed her life. But then she ought to have been truthful and direct. Charles said nothing of the kind, of course. He was malice itself. He always saw through one, especially if one were feeling particularly mean, paltry, or feeble-minded.

"Mabel's got a new dress!" he said, and the poor fly was absolutely

shoved into the middle of the saucer. Really, he would like her to drown, she believed. He had no heart, no fundamental kindness, only a veneer of friendliness. Miss Milan was much more real, much kinder. If only one could feel that and stick to it, always. "Why," she asked herself—replying to Charles much too pertly, letting him see that she was out of temper, or "ruffled" as he called it ("Rather ruffled?" he said and went on to laugh at her with some woman over there)—"Why," she asked herself, "can't I feel one thing always, feel quite sure that Miss Milan is right, and Charles wrong and stick to it, feel sure about the canary and pity and love and not be whipped all round in a second by coming into a room full of people?" It was her odious, weak, vacillating character again, always giving at the critical moment and not being seriously interested in conchology, etymology, botany, archeology, cutting up potatoes and watching them fructify like Mary Dennis, like Violet Searle.

Then Mrs. Holman, seeing her standing there, bore down upon her. Of course a thing like a dress was beneath Mrs. Holman's notice, with her family always tumbling downstairs or having the scarlet fever. Could Mabel tell her if Elmthorpe was ever let for August and September? Oh, it was a conversation that bored her unutterably!—it made her furious to be treated like a house agent or a messenger boy, to be made use of. Not to have value, that was it, she thought, trying to grasp something hard, something real, while she tried to answer sensibly about the bathroom and the south aspect and the hot water to the top of the house; and all the time she could see little bits of her yellow dress in the round looking-glass which made them all the size of boot-buttons or tadpoles; and it was amazing to think how much humiliation and agony and self-loathing and effort and passionate ups and downs of feeling were contained in a thing the size of a threepenny bit. And what was still odder, this thing, this Mabel Waring, was separate, quite disconnected; and though Mrs. Holman (the black button) was leaning forward and telling her how her eldest boy had strained his heart running, she could see her, too, quite detached in the looking-glass, and it was impossible that the black dot, leaning forward, gesticulating, should make the yellow dot, sitting solitary, self-

centred, feel what the black dot was feeling, yet they pretended. "So impossible to keep boys quiet"—that was the kind of thing one said.

And Mrs. Holman, who could never get enough sympathy and snatched what little there was greedily, as if it were her right (but she deserved much more for there was her little girl who had come down this morning with a swollen kneejoint), took this miserable offering and looked at it suspiciously, grudgingly, as if it were a halfpenny when it ought to have been a pound and put it away in her purse, must put up with it, mean and miserly though it was, times being hard, so very hard; and on she went, creaking, injured Mrs. Holman, about the girl with the swollen joints. Ah, it was tragic, this greed, this clamour of human beings, like a row of cormorants, barking and flapping their wings for sympathy—it was tragic, could one have felt it and not merely pretended to feel it!

But in her yellow dress tonight she could not wring out one drop more; she wanted it all, all for herself. She knew (she kept on looking into the glass, dipping into that dreadfully showing-up blue pool) that she was condemned, despised, left like this in a backwater, because of her being like this—a feeble, vacillating creature; and it seemed to her that the yellow dress was a penance which she had deserved, and if she had been dressed like Rose Shaw, in lovely, clinging green with a ruffle of swansdown, she would have deserved that; and she thought that there was no escape for her—none whatever. But it was not her fault altogether, after all. It was being one of a family of ten; never having money enough, always skimping and paring; and her mother carrying great cans, and the linoleum worn on the stair edges, and one sordid little domestic tragedy after another—nothing catastrophic, the sheep farm failing, but not utterly; her eldest brother marrying beneath him but not very much—there was no romance, nothing extreme about them all. They petered out respectably in seaside resorts; every watering-place had one of her aunts even now asleep in some lodging with the front windows not quite facing the sea. That was so like them—they had to squint at things always. And she had done the same—she was just like her aunts. For all her dreams of living in India, married to some hero like Sir Henry Lawrence, some empire builder (still the sight of a native

in a turban filled her with romance), she had failed utterly. She had married Hubert, with his safe, permanent underling's job in the Law Courts, and they managed tolerably in a smallish house, without proper maids, and hash when she was alone or just bread and butter, but now and then—Mrs. Holman was off, thinking her the most dried-up, unsympathetic twig she had ever met, absurdly dressed, too, and would tell everyone about Mabel's fantastic appearance—now and then, thought Mabel Waring, left alone on the blue sofa, punching the cushion in order to look occupied, for she would not join Charles Burt and Rose Shaw, chattering like magpies and perhaps laughing at her by the fireplace—now and then, there did come to her delicious moments, reading the other night in bed, for instance, or down by the sea on the sand in the sun, at Easter—let her recall it—a great tuft of pale sand-grass, standing all twisted like a shock of spears against the sky, which was blue like a smooth china egg, so firm, so hard, and then the melody of the waves—"Hush, hush," they said, and the children's shouts paddling—yes, it was a divine moment, and there she lay, she felt, in the hand of the Goddess who was the world; rather a hard-hearted, but very beautiful Goddess, a little lamb laid on the altar (one did think these silly things, and it didn't matter so long as one never said them). And also with Hubert sometimes she had quite unexpectedly—carving the mutton for Sunday lunch, for no reason, opening a letter, coming into a room—divine moments, when she said to herself (for she would never say this to anybody else), "This is it. This has happened. This is it!" And the other way about it was equally surprising—that is, when everything was arranged—music, weather, holidays, every reason for happiness was there—then nothing happened at all. One wasn't happy. It was flat, just flat, that was all.

Her wretched self again, no doubt! She had always been a fretful, weak, unsatisfactory mother, a wobbly wife, lolling about in a kind of twilight existence with nothing very clear or very bold, or more one thing than another, like all her brothers and sisters, except perhaps Herbert—they were all the same poor water-veined creatures who did nothing. Then in the midst of this creeping, crawling life suddenly she was on the crest of a wave. That wretched fly—where had she read the story that kept coming into her mind about the fly

and the saucer?—struggled out. Yes, she had those moments. But now that she was forty, they might come more and more seldom. By degrees she would cease to struggle any more. But that was deplorable! That was not to be endured! That made her feel ashamed of herself!

She would go to the London Library tomorrow. She would find some wonderful, helpful, astonishing book, quite by chance, a book by a clergyman, by an American no one had ever heard of; or she would walk down the strand and drop, accidentally, into a hall where a miner was telling about the life in the pit, and suddenly she would become a new person. She would be absolutely transformed. She would wear a uniform; she would be called Sister Somebody; she would never give a thought to clothes again. And forever after she would be perfectly clear about Charles Burt and Miss Milan and this room and that room; and it would be always, day after day, as if she were lying in the sun or carving the mutton. It would be it!

So she got up from the blue sofa, and the yellow button in the looking-glass got up too, and she waved her hand to Charles and Rose to show them she did not depend on them one scrap, and the yellow button moved out of the looking-glass, and all the spears were gathered into her breast as she walked towards Mrs. Dalloway and said, "Good night."

"But it's too early to go," said Mrs. Dalloway, who was always so charming.

"I'm afraid I must," said Mabel Waring. "But," she added in her weak, wobbly voice which only sounded ridiculous when she tried to strengthen it, "I have enjoyed myself enormously."

"I have enjoyed myself," she said to Mr. Dalloway, whom she met on the stairs.

"Lies, lies, lies!" she said to herself, going downstairs, and "Right in the saucer!" she said to herself as she thanked Mrs. Barnet for helping her and wrapped herself, round and round and round, in the Chinese cloak she had worn these twenty years.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Through what device do we learn what we need to know about Mabel's past history?

2. Mabel's family background is summed up by the suggestion that they have rooms at the seashore which, however, do not face the sea. What is the significance of this in terms of Mabel's problem in the story?

3. Do you believe that Mabel's dress is out of date or otherwise laughable? If not, why does everybody in the story act as if it were? Or do they?

4. In the story the element of time is confused: that is, within a single sentence we have combinations of the past, present, and future. Why does Virginia Woolf use this method? What relationship does this have to the problem of the story?

5. What is the significance of the "fly in the saucer"?

6. From whose point of view is the story being told? Is the world which we see in the story the objective world of reality or is it merely described from a single point of vantage? Pick out passages in the story that you think probably took place and passages which you think were only imagined. (You may find examples of both in single paragraphs, even sentences.)

7. Do you think that Mabel is accepted in the society in which she is moving, or is she merely a woman who is trying to gain admittance to a group which rejects her? Consider in your answer her friends, her history, the people she meets.

8. At the end of the party Mabel leaves and gets into her old coat. She feels comfortable once again, even though the coat is not new or stylish. Why does this old coat give her a sense of security which her new dress did not?

9. We share throughout the story the extreme discomfort which Mabel feels. Do you think the people at the party were aware of her feelings? If they were not, does this mean that they were simply insensitive people?

10. What do you think the theme of the story is? Is it merely a lesson about what happens when a woman tries to live above her means? Is it perceptive in what it tells us about human nature? About society?

11. Do you feel that you know Mabel extraordinarily well at the end of the story? If so, what do you know about her? What is the nature of the insight which Virginia Woolf gives us of Mabel's character? Is it sensitive or broad or subtle? Explain, with examples.

Rain

by W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM

IT WAS nearly bed-time and when they awoke next morning land would be in sight. Dr. Macphail lit his pipe and, leaning over the rail, searched the heavens for the Southern Cross. After two years at the front and a wound that had taken longer to heal than it should, he was glad to settle down quietly at Apia for twelve months at least, and he felt already better for the journey. Since some of the passengers were leaving the ship next day at Pago-Pago they had had a little dance that evening and in his ears hammered still the harsh notes of the mechanical piano. But the deck was quiet at last. A little way off! he saw his wife in a long chair talking with the Davidsons, and he strolled over to her. When he sat down under the light and took off his hat you saw that he had very red hair, with a bald patch on the crown, and the red, freckled skin which accompanies red hair; he was a man of forty, thin, with a pinched face, precise and rather pedantic; and he spoke with a Scots accent in a very low, quiet voice.

Between the Macphails and the Davidsons, who were missionaries, there had arisen the intimacy of shipboard, which is due to propinquity rather than to any community of taste. Their chief tie was the disapproval they shared of the men who spent their days and nights in the smoking-room playing poker or bridge and drinking. Mrs. Macphail was not a little flattered to think that she and her husband were the only people on board with whom the Davidsons were willing to associate, and even the doctor, shy but no fool, half unconsciously acknowledged the compliment. It was only because he was of an argumentative mind that in their cabin at night he permitted himself to carp.

"Mrs. Davidson was saying she didn't know how they'd have got through the journey if it hadn't been for us," said Mrs. Macphail, as she neatly brushed out her transformation. "She said we were really the only people on the ship they cared to know."

"I shouldn't have thought a missionary was such a big bug that he could afford to put on frills."

"It's not frills. I quite understand what she means. It wouldn't have been very nice for the Davidsons to have to mix with all that rough lot in the smoking-room."

"The founder of their religion wasn't so exclusive," said Dr. Macphail with a chuckle.

"I've asked you over and over again not to joke about religion," answered his wife. "I shouldn't like to have a nature like yours, Alec. You never look for the best in people."

He gave her a sidelong glance with his pale, blue eyes, but did not reply. After many years of married life he had learned that it was more conducive to peace to leave his wife with the last word. He was undressed before she was, and climbing into the upper bunk he settled down to read himself to sleep.

When he came on deck next morning they were close to land. He looked at it with greedy eyes. There was a thin strip of silver beach rising quickly to hills covered to the top with luxuriant vegetation. The coconut trees, thick and green, came nearly to the water's edge, and among them you saw the grass houses of the Samoans; and here and there, gleaming white, a little church. Mrs. Davidson came and stood beside him. She was dressed in black and wore round her neck a gold chain, from which dangled a small cross. She was a little woman, with brown, dull hair very elaborately arranged, and she had prominent blue eyes behind invisible *pince-nez*. Her face was long, like a sheep's, but she gave no impression of foolishness, rather of extreme alertness; she had the quick movements of a bird. The most remarkable thing about her was her voice, high, metallic, and without inflection; it fell on the ear with a hard monotony, irritating to the nerves like the pitiless clamour of the pneumatic drill.

"This must seem like home to you," said Dr. Macphail, with his thin, difficult smile.

"Ours are low islands, you know, not like these. Coral. These are

volcanic. We've got another ten days¹ journey to reach them."

"In these parts that's almost like being in the next street at home," said Dr. Macphail facetiously.

"Well, that's rather an exaggerated way of putting it, but one does look at distances differently in the South Seas. So far you're right."

Dr. Macphail sighed faintly.

"I'm glad we're not stationed here," she went on. "They say this is a terribly difficult place to work in. The steamers' touching makes the people unsettled; and then there's the naval station; that's bad for the natives. In our district we don't have difficulties like that to contend with. There are one or two traders, of course, but we take care to make them behave, and if they don't we make the place so hot for them they're glad to go."

Fixing the glasses on her nose she looked at the green island with a ruthless stare.

"It's almost a hopeless task for the missionaries here. I can never be sufficiently thankful to God that we are at least spared that." fc

Davidson's district consisted of a group of islands to the North of Samoa; they were widely separated and he had frequently to go long distances by canoe. At these times his wife remained at their headquarters and managed the mission. Dr. Macphail felt his heart sink when he considered the efficiency with which she certainly managed it. She spoke of the depravity of the natives in a voice which nothing could hush, but with a vehemently unctuous horror. Her sense of delicacy was singular. Early in their acquaintance she had said to him:

"You know, their marriage customs when we first settled in the islands were so shocking that I couldn't possibly describe them to you. But I'll tell Mrs. Macphail and she'll tell you."

Then he had seen his wife and Mrs. Davidson, their deck-chairs close together, in earnest conversation for about two hours. As he walked past them backwards and forwards for the sake of exercise, he had heard Mrs. Davidson's agitated whisper, like the distant flow of a mountain torrent, and he saw by his wife's open mouth and pale face that she was enjoying an alarming experience. At night in their cabin she repeated to him with bated breath all she had heard.

"Well, what did I say to you?" cried Mrs. Davidson, exultant,

next morning. "Did you ever hear anything more dreadful? You don't wonder that I couldn't tell you myself, do you? Even though you are a doctor."

Mrs. Davidson scanned his face. She had a dramatic eagerness to see that she had achieved the desired effect.

"Can you wonder that when we first went there our hearts sank? You'll hardly believe me when I tell you it was impossible to find a single good girl in any of the villages."

She used the word *good* in a severely technical manner.

"Mr. Davidson and I talked it over, and we made up our minds the first thing to do was to put down the dancing. The natives were crazy about dancing."

"I was not averse to it myself when I was a young man," said Dr. Macphail.

"I guessed as much when I heard you ask Mrs. Macphail to have a turn with you last night. I don't think there's any real harm if a man dances with his wife, but I was relieved that she wouldn't. Under the circumstances I thought it better that we should keep ourselves to ourselves."

"Under what circumstances?"

Mrs. Davidson gave him a quick look through her *pince-nez*, but did not answer his question.

"But among white people it's not quite the same," she went on, "though I must say I agree with Mr. Davidson, who says he can't understand how a husband can stand by and see his wife in another man's arms, and as far as I'm concerned I've never danced a step since I married. But the native dancing is quite another matter. It's not only immoral in itself, but it distinctly leads to immorality. However, I'm thankful to God that we stamped it out, and I don't think I'm wrong in saying that no one has danced in our district for eight years."

But now they came to the mouth of the harbour and Mrs. Macphail joined them. The ship turned sharply and steamed slowly in. It was a great landlocked harbour big enough to hold a fleet of battle-ships; and all around it rose, high and steep, the green hills. Near the entrance, getting such breeze as blew from the sea, stood the governor's house in a garden. The Stars and Stripes dangled languidly

from a flagstaff. They passed two or three trim bungalows, and a tennis court, and then they came to the quay with its warehouses. Mrs. Davidson pointed out the schooner, moored two or three hundred yards from the side, which was to take them to Apia. There was a crowd of eager, noisy, and good-humoured natives come from all parts of the island, some from curiosity, others to barter with the travellers on their way to Sydney; and they brought pineapples and huge bunches of bananas, *tapa* cloths, necklaces of shells or sharks' teeth, kava-bowls, and models of war canoes. American sailors, neat and trim, clean-shaven and frank of face, sauntered among them, and there was a little group of officials. While their luggage was being landed the Macphails and Mrs. Davidson watched the crowd. Dr. Macphail looked at the yaws from which most of the children and the young boys seemed to suffer, disfiguring sores like torpid ulcers, and his professional eyes glistened when he saw for the first time in his experience cases of elephantiasis, men going about with a huge, heavy arm or dragging along a grossly disfigured leg. Men and women wore the *lava-lava*.

"It's a very indecent costume," said Mrs. Davidson. "Mr. Davidson thinks it should be prohibited by law. How can you expect people to be moral when they wear nothing but a strip of red cotton round their loins?"

"It's suitable enough to the climate," said the doctor, wiping the sweat off his head.

Now that they were on land the heat, though it was so early in the morning, was already oppressive. Closed in by its hills, not a breath of air came in to Pago-Pago.

"In our islands," Mrs. Davidson went on in her high-pitched tones, "we've practically eradicated the *lava-lava*. A few old men still continue to wear it, but that's all. The women have all taken to the Mother Hubbard, and the men wear trousers and singlets. At the very beginning of our stay Mr. Davidson said in one of his reports: the inhabitants of these islands will never be thoroughly Christianized till every boy of more than ten years is made to wear a pair of trousers."

But Mrs. Davidson had given two or three of her bird-like glances

at heavy grey clouds that came floating over the mouth of the harbour. A few drops began to fall.

"We'd better take shelter," she said.

They made their way with all the crowd to a great shed of corrugated iron, and the rain began to fall in torrents. They stood there for some time and then were joined by Mr. Davidson. He had been polite enough to the Macphails during the journey, but he had not his wife's sociability, and had spent much of his time reading. He was a silent, rather sullen man, and you felt that his affability was a duty that he imposed upon himself Christianly; he was by nature reserved and even morose. His appearance was singular. He was very tall and thin, with long limbs loosely jointed; hollow cheeks and curiously high cheek bones; he had so cadaverous an air that it surprised you to notice how full and sensual were his lips. He wore his hair very long. His dark eyes, set deep in their sockets, were large and tragic; and his hands with their big, long fingers, were finely shaped; they gave him a look of great strength. But the most striking thing about him was the feeling he gave you of suppressed fire. It was impressive and vaguely troubling. He was not a man with whom any intimacy was possible.

He brought now unwelcome news. There was an epidemic of measles, a serious and often fatal disease among the Kanakas, on the island, and a case had developed among the crew of the schooner which was to take them on their journey. The sick man had been brought ashore and put in hospital on the quarantine station, but telegraphic instructions had been sent from Apia to say that the schooner would not be allowed to enter the harbour till it was certain no other member of the crew was affected.

"It means we shall have to stay here for ten days at least."

"But I'm urgently needed at Apia," said Dr. Macphail.

"That can't be helped. If no more cases develop on board, the schooner will be allowed to sail with white passengers, but all native traffic is prohibited for three months."

"Is there a hotel here?" asked Mrs. Macphail.

Davidson gave a low chuckle.

"There's not."

"What shall we do then?"

"I've been talking to the governor. There's a trader along the front who has rooms that he rents, and my proposition is that as soon as the rain lets up we should go along there and see what we can do. Don't expect comfort. You've just got to be thankful if we get a bed to sleep on and a roof over our heads."

But the rain showed no sign of stopping, and at length with umbrellas and waterproofs they set out. There was no town, but merely a group of official buildings, a store or two, and at the back, among the coconut trees and plantains, a few native dwellings. The house they sought was about five minutes' walk from the wharf. It was a frame house of two storeys, with broad verandahs on both floors and a roof of corrugated iron. The owner was a half-caste named Horn, with a native wife surrounded by little brown children, and on the ground-floor he had a store where he sold canned goods and cottons. The rooms he showed them were almost bare of furniture. In the Macphails' there was nothing but a poor, worn bed with a ragged mosquito net, a rickety chair, and a wash-stand. They looked round with dismay. The rain poured down without ceasing.

"I'm not going to unpack more than we actually need," said Mrs. Macphail.

Mrs. Davidson came into the room as she was unlocking a port-manteau. She was very brisk and alert. The cheerless surroundings had no effect on her.

"If you'll take my advice you'll get a needle and cotton and start right in to mend the mosquito net," she said, "or you'll not be able to get a wink of sleep to-night."

"Will they be very bad?" asked Dr. Macphail.

"This is the season for them. When you're asked to a party at Government House at Apia you'll notice that all the ladies are given a pillowslip to put their—their lower extremities in."

"I wish the rain would stop for a moment," said Mrs. Macphail. "I could try to make the place comfortable with more heart if the sun were shining."

"Oh, if you wait for that, you'll wait a long time, Pago-Pago is about the rainiest place in the Pacific. You see, the hills, and that bay,

they attract the water, and one expects rain at this time of year anyway."

She looked from Macphail to his wife, standing helplessly in different parts of the room, like lost souls, and she pursed her lips. She saw that she must take them in hand. Feckless people like that made her impatient, but her hands itched to put everything in the order which came so naturally to her.

"Here, you give me a needle and cotton and I'll mend that net of yours, while you go on with your unpacking. Dinner's at one. Dr. Macphail, you'd better go down to the wharf and see that your heavy luggage has been put in a dry place. You know what these natives are, they're quite capable of storing it where the rain will beat in on it all the time."

The doctor put on his waterproof again and went downstairs. At the door Mr. Horn was standing in conversation with the quartermaster of the ship they had just arrived in and a second-class passenger whom Dr. Macphail had seen several times on board. The quartermaster, a little, shrivelled man, extremely dirty, nodded to him as he passed.

"This is a bad job about the measles, doc," he said. "I see you've fixed yourself up already."

Dr. Macphail thought he was rather familiar, but he was a timid man and he did not take offence easily.

"Yes, we've got a room upstairs."

"Miss Thompson was sailing with you to Apia, so I've brought her along here."

The quartermaster pointed with his thumb to the woman standing by his side. She was twenty-seven perhaps, plump, and in a coarse fashion pretty. She wore a white dress and a large white hat. Her fat calves in white cotton stockings bulged over the top of long white boots in glace kid. She gave Macphail an ingratiating smile.

"The feller's tryin' to soak me a dollar and a half a day for the meanest sized room," she said in a hoarse voice.

"I tell you she's a friend of mine, Jo," said the quartermaster. "She can't pay more than a dollar, and you've sure got to take her for that."

The trader was fat and smooth and quietly smiling.

"Well, if you put it like that, Mr. Swan, I'll see what I can do about it. I'll talk to Mrs. Horn and if we think we can make a reduction we will."

"Don't try to pull that stuff with me," said Miss Thompson. "We'll settle this right now. You get a dollar a day for the room and not one bean more."

Dr. Macphail smiled. He admired the effrontery with which she bargained. He was the sort of man who always paid what he was asked. He preferred to be over-charged than to haggle. The trader sighed.

"Well, to oblige Mr. Swan I'll take it."

"That's the goods," said Miss Thompson. "Conic right in and have a shot of hooch. I've got some real good ryc in that grip if you'll bring it along, Mr. Swan. You come along too, doctor."

"Oh, I don't think I will, thank you," he answered. "I'm just going down to see that our luggage is all right."

He stepped out into the rain. It swept in from the opening of the harbour in sheets and the opposite shore was all blurred. He passed two or three natives clad in nothing but the *lava-lava*, with huge umbrellas over them. They walked finely, with leisurely movements, very upright; and they smiled and greeted him in a strange tongue as they went by.

It was nearly dinner-time when he got back, and their meal was laid in the trader's parlour. It was a room designed not to live in but for purposes of prestige, and it had a musty, melancholy air. A suite of stamped plush was arranged neatly round the walls, and from the middle of the ceiling, protected from the flies by yellow tissue paper, hung a gilt chandelier. Davidson did not come.

"I know he went to call on the governor," said Mrs. Davidson, "and I guess he's kept him to dinner."

A little native girl brought them a dish of Hamburger steak, and after a while the trader came up to see that they had everything they wanted.

"I see we have a fellow lodger, Mr. Horn," said Dr. Macphail.

"She's taken a room, that's all," answered the trader. "She's getting her own board."

He looked at the two ladies with an obsequious air.

"I put her downstairs so she shouldn't be in the way. She won't be any trouble to you."

"Is it someone who was on the boat?" asked Mrs. Macphail.

"Yes, ma'am, she was in the second cabin. She was going to Apia. She has a position as cashier waiting for her."

"Oh!"

When the trader was gone Macphail said:

"I shouldn't think she'd find it exactly cheerful having her meals in her room."

"If she was in the second cabin I guess she'd rather," answered Mrs. Davidson. "I don't exactly know who it can be."

"I happened to be there when the quartermaster brought her along. Her name's Thompson."

"It's not the woman who was dancing with the quartermaster last night?" asked Mrs. Davidson.

"That's who it must be," said Mrs. Macphail. "I wondered at the time what she was. She looked rather fast to me."

"Not good style at all," said Mrs. Davidson.

They began to talk of other things, and after dinner, tired with their early rise, they separated and slept. When they awoke, though the sky was still grey and the clouds hung low, it was not raining and they went for a walk on the high road which the Americans had built along the bay.

On their return they found that Davidson had just come in.

"We may be here for a fortnight," he said irritably. "I've argued it o't with the governor, but he says there is nothing to be done."

"Mr. Davidson's just longing to get back to his work," said his wife, with an anxious glance at him.

"We've been away for a year," he said, walking up and down the verandah. "The mission has been in charge of native missionaries and I'm terribly nervous that they've let things slide. They're good men, I'm not saying a word against them, God-fearing, devout, and truly Christian men—their Christianity would put many so-called Christians at home to the blush—but they're pitifully lacking in energy. They can make a stand once, they can make a stand twice,

but they can't make a stand all the time. If you leave a mission in charge of a native missionary, no matter how trustworthy he seems, in course of time you'll find he's let abuses creep in."

Mr. Davidson stood still. With his tall, spare form, and his great eyes flashing out of his pale face, he was an impressive figure. His sincerity was obvious in the fire of his gestures and in his deep, ringing voice.

"I expect to have my work cut out for me. I shall act and I shall act promptly. If the tree is rotten it shall be cut down and cast into the flames."

And in the evening after the high tea which was their last meal, while they sat in the stiff parlour, the ladies working and Dr. Macphail smoking his pipe, the missionary told them of his work in the islands.

"When we went there they had no sense of sin at all," he said. "They broke the commandments one after the other and never knew they were doing wrong. And I think that was the most difficult part of my work, to instil into the natives the sense of sin."

The Macphails knew already that Davidson had worked in the Solomons for five years before he met his wife. She had been a missionary in China, and they had become acquainted in Boston, where they were both spending part of their leave to attend a missionary congress. On their marriage they had been appointed to the islands in which they had laboured ever since.

In the course of all the conversations they had had with Mr. Davidson one thing had shone out clearly and that was the man's unflinching courage. He was a medical missionary, and he was liable to be called at any time to one or other of the islands in the group. Even the whaleboat is not so very safe a conveyance in the stormy Pacific of the wet season, but often he would be sent for in a canoe, and then the danger was great. In cases of illness or accident he never hesitated. A dozen times he had spent the whole night baling for his life, and more than once Mrs. Davidson had given him up for lost.

"I'd beg him not to go sometimes," she said, "or at least to wait till the weather was more settled, but he'd never listen. He's obstinate, and when he's once made up his mind, nothing can move him."

"How can I ask the natives to put their trust in the Lord if I am

afraid to do so myself?" cried Davidson. "And I'm not, I'm not. They know that if they send for me in their trouble I'll come if it's humanly possible. And do you think the Lord is going to abandon me when I am on his business? The wind blows at his bidding and the waves toss and rage at his word."

Dr. Macphail was a timid man. He had never been able to get used to the hurtling of the shells over the trenches, and when he was operating in an advanced dressing-station the sweat poured from his brow and dimmed his spectacles in the effort he made to control his unsteady hand. He shuddered a little as he looked at the missionary.

"I wish I could say that I've never been afraid," he said.

"I wish you could say that you believed in God," retorted the other.

But for some reason, that evening the missionary's thoughts travelled back to the early days he and his wife had spent on the islands.

"Sometimes Mrs. Davidson and I would look at one another and the tears would stream down our cheeks. We worked without ceasing, day and night, and we seemed to make no progress. I don't know what I should have done without her then. When I felt my heart sink, when I was very near despair, she gave me courage and hope."

Mrs. Davidson looked down at her work, and a slight colour rose to her thin cheeks. Her hands trembled a little. She did not trust herself to speak.

"We had no one to help us. We were alone, thousands of miles from any of our own people, surrounded by darkness. When I was broken and weary she would put her work aside and take the Bible and read to me till peace came and settled upon me like sleep upon the eyelids of a child, and when at last she closed the book she'd say: 'We'll save them in spite of themselves.' And I felt strong again in the Lord, and I answered: Tes, with God's help I'll save them. I must save them."

He came over to the table and stood in front of it as though it were a lectern.

"You see, they were so naturally depraved that they couldn't be brought to see their wickedness. We had to make sins out of what

they thought were natural actions. We had to make it a sin, not only to commit adultery and to lie and thief, but to expose their bodies, and to dance and not to come to church. I made it a sin for a girl to show her bosom and a sin for a man not to wear trousers."

"How?" asked Dr. Macphail, not without surprise.

"I instituted fines. Obviously the only way to make people realise that an action is sinful is to punish them if they commit it. I fined them if they didn't come to church, and I fined them if they danced. I fined them if they were improperly dressed. I had a tariff, and every sin had to be paid for either in money or work. And at last I made them understand."

"But did they never refuse to pay?"

"How could they?" asked the missionary.

"It would be a brave man who tried to stand up against Mr. Davidson," said his wife, tightening her lips.

Dr. Macphail looked at Davidson with troubled eyes. What he heard shocked him, but he hesitated to express his disapproval.

"You must remember that in the last resort I could expel them from their church membership."

"Did they mind that?"

Davidson smiled a little and gently rubbed his hands.

"They couldn't sell their copra. When the men fished they got no share of the catch. It meant something very like starvation. Yes, they minded quite a lot."

"Tell him about Fred Ohlson," said Mrs. Davidson.

The missionary fixed his fiery eyes on Dr. Macphail.

"Fred Ohlson was a Danish trader who had been in the islands a good many years. He was a pretty rich man as traders go and he wasn't very pleased when we came. You see, he'd had things very much his own way. He paid the natives what he liked for their copra, and he paid in goods and whiskey. He had a native wife, but he was flagrantly unfaithful to her. He was a drunkard. I gave him a chance to mend his ways, but he wouldn't take it. He laughed at me."

Davidson's voice fell to a deep bass as he said the last words, and he was silent for a minute or two. The silence was heavy with menace.

"In two years he was a ruined man. He'd lost everything he'd saved in a quarter of a century. I broke him, and at last he was forced to come to me like a beggar and beseech me to give him a passage back to Sydney."

"I wish you could have seen him when he came to see Mr. Davidson," said the missionary's wife. "He had been a fine, powerful man, with a lot of fat on him, and he had a great big voice, but now he was half the size, and he was shaking all over. He'd suddenly become an old man."

With abstracted gaze Davidson looked out into the night. The rain was falling again.

Suddenly from below came a sound, and Davidson turned and looked questioningly at his wife. It was the sound of a gramophone, harsh and loud, wheezing out a syncopated tune.

"What's that?" he asked.

Mrs. Davidson fixed her *pince-nez* more firmly on her nose.

"One of the second-class passengers has a room in the house. I guess it comes from there."

They listened in silence, and presently they heard the sound of dancing. Then the music stopped, and they heard the popping of corks and voices raised in animated conversation.

"I daresay she's giving a farewell party to her friends on board," said Dr. Macphail. "The ship sails at twelve, doesn't it?"

Davidson made no remark, but he looked at his watch.

"Are you ready?" he asked his wife.

She got up and folded her work.

"Yes, I guess I am," she answered.

"It's early to go to bed yet, isn't it?" said the doctor.

"We have a good deal of reading to do," explained Mrs. Davidson. "Wherever we are, we read a chapter of the Bible before retiring for the night and we study it with the commentaries, you know, and discuss it thoroughly. It's a wonderful training for the mind."

The two couples bade one another good night. Dr. and Mrs. Macphail were left alone. For two or three minutes they did not speak.

"I think I'll go and fetch the cards," the doctor said at last.

Mrs. Macphail looked at him doubtfully. Her conversation with the Davidsons had left her a little uneasy, but she did not like to say

that she thought they had better not play cards when the Davidsons might come in at any moment. Dr. Macphail brought them and she watched him, though with a vague sense of guilt, while he laid out his patience. Below the sound of revelry continued.

It was fine enough next day, and the Macphails, condemned to spend a fortnight of idleness at Pago-Pago, set about making the best of things. They went down to the quay and got out of their boxes a number of books. The doctor called on the chief surgeon of the naval hospital and went round the beds with him. They left cards on the governor. They passed Miss Thompson on the road. The doctor took off his hat, and she gave him a "Good morning, do," in a loud, cheerful voice. She was dressed as on the day before, in a white frock, and her shiny white boots with their high heels, her fat legs bulging over the tops of them, were strange things on that exotic scene.

"I don't think she's very suitably dressed, I must say," said Mrs. Macphail. "She looks extremely common to me."

When they got back to their house, she was on the verandah playing with one of the trader's dark children.

"Say a word to her," Dr. Macphail whispered to his wife. "She's all alone here, and it seems rather unkind to ignore her."

Mrs. Macphail was shy, but she was in the habit of doing what her husband bade her.

"I think we're fellow lodgers here," she said, rather foolishly.

"Terrible, ain't it, bein' cooped up in a one-horse burg like this?" answered Miss Thompson. "And they tell me I'm lucky to have gotten a room. I don't see myself livin' in a native house, and that's what some have to do. I don't know why they don't have a hotel."

They exchanged a few more words. Miss Thompson, loud-voiced and garrulous, was evidently quite willing to gossip, but Mrs. Macphail had a poor stock of small talk and presently she said:

"Well, I think we must go upstairs."

In the evening when they sat down to their high-tea Davidson on coming in said:

"I see that woman downstairs has a couple of sailors sitting there. I wonder how she's gotten acquainted with them."

"She can't be very particular," said Mrs. Davidson.

They were all rather tired after the idle, aimless day.

"If there's going to be a fortnight of this I don't know what we shall feel like at the end of it," said Dr. Macphail.

"The only thing to do is to portion out the day to different activities," answered the missionary. "I shall set aside a certain number of hours to study and a certain number to exercise, rain or shine—in the wet season you can't afford to pay any attention to the rain—and a certain number to recreation."

Dr. Macphail looked at his companion with misgiving. Davidson's programme oppressed him. They were eating Hamburger steak again. It seemed the only dish the cook knew how to make. Then below the gramophone began. Davidson started nervously when he heard it, but said nothing. Men's voices floated up. Miss Thompson's guests were joining in a well-known song and presently they heard her voice too, hoarse and loud. There was a good deal of shouting and laughing. The four people upstairs, trying to make conversation, listened despite themselves to the clink of glasses and the scrape of chairs. More people had evidently come. Miss Thompson was giving a party.

"I wonder how she gets them all in," said Mrs. Macphail, suddenly breaking into a medical conversation between the missionary and her husband.

It showed whither her thoughts were wandering. The twitch of Davidson's face proved that, though he spoke of scientific things, his mind was busy in the same direction. Suddenly, while the doctor was giving some experience of practice on the Flanders front, rather prosily, he sprang to his feet with a cry.

"What's the matter, Alfred?" asked Mrs. Davidson.

"Of course! It never occurred to me. She's out of Iwelei."

"She can't be."

"She came on board at Honolulu. It's obvious. And she's carrying on her trade here. Here."

He uttered the last word with a passion of indignation.

"What's Iwelei?" asked Mrs. Macphail.

He turned his gloomy eyes on her and his voice trembled with horror.

"The plague spot of Honolulu. The Red Light district. It was a blot on our civilisation."

Iwelei was on the edge of the city. You went down side streets by the harbour, in the darkness, across a rickety bridge, till you came to a deserted road, all ruts and holes, and then suddenly you came out into the light. There was parking room for motors on each side of the road, and there were saloons, tawdry and bright, each one noisy with its mechanical piano, and there 'were barbers' shops and tobacconists. There was a stir in the air and a sense of expectant gaiety. You turned down a narrow alley, either to the right or to the left, for the road divided Iwelei into two parts, and you found yourself in the district. There were rows of little bungalows, trim and neatly painted in green, and the pathway between them was broad and straight. It was laid out like a garden-city. In its respectable regularity, its order and spruceness, it gave an impression of sardonic horror; for never can the search for love have been so systematised and ordered. The pathways were lit by a rare lamp, but they would have been dark except for the lights that came from the open windows of the bungalows. Men wandered about, looking at the women who sat at their windows, reading or sewing, for the most part taking no notice of the passers-by; and like the women they were of all nationalities. There were Americans, sailors from the ships in port, enlisted men off the gunboats, sombrely drunk, and soldiers from the regiments, white and black, quartered on the island; there were Japanese, walking in twos and threes; Hawaiians, Chinese in long robes, and Filipinos in preposterous hats. They were silent and as it were oppressed. Desire is sad.

"It was the most crying scandal of the Pacific," exclaimed Davidson vehemently. "The missionaries had been agitating against it for years, and at last the local press took it up. The police refused to stir. You know their argument. They say that vice is inevitable and consequently the best thing is to localise and control it. The truth is, they were paid. Paid. They were paid by the saloon-keepers, paid by the bullies, paid by the women themselves. At last they were forced to move."

"I read about it in the papers that came on board in Honolulu," said Dr. Macphail.

"Iwelei, with its sin and shame, ceased to exist on the very day we

arrived. The whole population was brought before the justices. I don't know why I didn't understand at once what that woman was."

"Now you come to speak of it," said Mrs. Macphail, "I remember seeing her come on board only a few minutes before the boat sailed. I remember thinking at the time she was cutting it rather fine."

"How dare she come here!" cried Davidson indignantly. "I'm not going to allow it."

He strode towards the door.

"What are you going to do?" asked Macphail.

"What do you expect me to do? I'm going to stop it. I'm not going to have this house turned into—into . . ."

He sought for a word that should not offend the ladies' ears. His eyes were flashing and his pale face was paler still in his emotion.

"It sounds as though there were three or four men down there," said the doctor. "Don't you think it's rather rash to go in just now?"

The missionary gave him a contemptuous look and without a word flung out of the room.

"You know Mr. Davidson very little if you think the fear of personal danger can stop him in the performance of his duty," said his wife.

She sat with her hands nervously clasped, a spot of colour on her high cheek bones, listening to what was about to happen below. They all listened. They heard him clatter down the wooden stairs and throw open the door. The singing stopped suddenly, but the gramophone continued to bray out its vulgar tune. They heard Davidson's voice and then the noise of something heavy falling. The music stopped. He had hurled the gramophone on the floor. Then again they heard Davidson's voice, they could not make out the words, then Miss Thompson's, loud and shrill, then a confused clamour as though several people were shouting together at the top of their lungs. Mrs. Davidson gave a little gasp, and she clenched her hands more tightly. Dr. Macphail looked uncertainly from her to his wife. He did not want to go down, but he wondered if they expected him to. Then there was something that sounded like a scuffle. The noise now was more distinct. It might be that Davidson was be-

ing thrown out of the room. The door was slammed. There was a moment's silence and they heard Davidson come up the stairs again. He went to his room.

"I think I'll go to him," said Mrs. Davidson.

She got up and went out.

"If you want me, just call," said Mrs. Macphail, and then when the other was gone: "I hope he isn't hurt."

"Why couldn't he mind his own business?" said Dr. Macphail.

They sat in silence for a minute or two and then they both started, for the gramophone began to play once more, defiantly, and mocking voices shouted hoarsely the words of an obscene song.

Next day Mrs. Davidson was pale and tired. She complained of headache, and she looked old and wizened. She told Mrs. Macphail that the missionary had not slept at all; he had passed the night in a state of frightful agitation and at five had got up and gone out. A glass of beer had been thrown over him and his clothes were stained and stinking. But a sombre fire glowed in Mrs. Davidson's eyes when she spoke of Miss Thompson.

"She'll bitterly rue the day when she flouted Mr. Davidson," she said. "Mr. Davidson has a wonderful heart and no one who is in trouble has ever gone to him without being comforted, but he has no mercy for sin, and when his righteous wrath is excited he's terrible."

"Why, what will he do?" asked Mrs. Macphail.

"I don't know, but I wouldn't stand in that creature's shoes for anything in the world."

Mrs. Macphail shuddered. There was something positively alarming in the triumphant assurance of the little woman's manner. They were going out together that morning, and they went down the stairs side by side. Miss Thompson's door was open, and they saw her in a bedraggled dressing-gown, cooking something in a chafing-dish.

"Good morning," she called. "Is Mr. Davidson better this morning?"

They passed her in silence, with their noses in the air, as if she did not exist. They flushed, however, when she burst into a shout of derisive laughter. Mrs. Davidson turned on her suddenly.

"Don't you dare to speak to me," she screamed. "If you insult me I shall have you turned out of here."

"Say, did I ask Mr. Davidson to visit with me?"

"Don't answer her," whispered Mrs. Macphail hurriedly.

They walked on till they were out of earshot.

"She's brazen, brazen," burst from Mrs. Davidson.

Her anger almost suffocated her.

And on their way home they met her strolling towards the quay. She had all her finery on. Her great white hat with its vulgar, showy flowers was an affront. She called out cheerily to them as she went by, and a couple of American sailors who were standing there grinned as the ladies set their faces to an icy stare. They got in just before the rain began to fall again.

"I guess she'll get her fine clothes spoilt," said Mrs. Davidson with a bitter sneer.

Davidson did not come in till they were half way through dinner. He was wet through, but he would not change. He sat, moiose and silent, refusing to eat more than a mouthful, and he stared at the slanting rain. When Mrs. Davidson told him of their two encounters with Miss Thompson he did not answer. His deepening frown alone showed that he had heard.

"Don't you think we ought to make Mr. Horn turn her out of here?" asked Mrs. Davidson, "We can't allow her to insult us."

"There doesn't seem to be any other place for her to go," said Macphail.

"She can live with one of the natives."

"In weather like this a native hut must be a rather uncomfortable place to live in."

"I lived in one for years," said the missionary.

When the little native girl brought in the fried bananas which formed the sweet they had every day, Davidson turned to her.

"Ask Miss Thompson when it would be convenient for me to see her," he said.

The girl nodded shyly and went out.

"What do you want to see her for, Alfred?" asked his wife.

"It's my duty to see her. I won't act till I've given her every chance."

"You don't know what she is. She'll insult you."

"Let her insult me. Let her spit on me. She has an immortal soul, and I must do all that is in my power to save it."*

Mrs. Davidson's ears rang still with the harlot's mocking laughter. "She's gone too far."

"Too far for the mercy of God?" His eyes lit up suddenly and his voice grew mellow and soft. "Never. The sinner may be deeper in sin than the depth of hell itself, but the love of the Lord Jesus can reach him still."

The girl came back with the message.

"Miss Thompson's compliments and as long as Rev. Davidson don't come in business hours she'll be glad to see him any time."

The party received it in stony silence, and Dr. Macphail quickly effaced from his lips the smile which had come upon them. He knew his wife would be vexed with him if he found Miss Thompson's effrontery amusing.

They finished the meal in silence. When it was over the two ladies got up and took their work. Mrs. Macphail was making another of the innumerable comforters which she had turned out since the beginning of the war, and the doctor lit his pipe. But Davidson remained in his chair and with abstracted eyes stared at the table. At last he got up and without a word went out of the room. They heard him go down and they heard Miss Thompson's defiant "Come in" when he knocked at the door. He remained with her for an hour. And Dr. Macphail watched the rain. It was beginning to get on his nerves. It was not like our soft English rain that drops gently on the earth; it was unmerciful and somehow terrible; you felt in it the malignancy of the primitive powers of nature. It did not pour, it flowed. It was like a deluge from heaven, and it rattled on the roof of corrugated iron with a steady persistence that was maddening. It seemed to have a fury of its own. And sometimes you felt that you must scream if it did not stop, and then suddenly you felt powerless, as though your bones had suddenly become soft; and you were miserable and hopeless.

Macphail turned his head when the missionary came back. The two women looked up.

"I've given her every chance. I have exhorted her to repent. She is an evil woman."

He paused, and Dr. Macphail saw his eyes darken and his pale face grow hard and stern.

"Now I shall take the whips with which the Lord Jesus drove the usurers and the money changers out of the Temple of the Most High."

He walked up and down the room. His mouth was close set, and his black brows were frowning.

"If she fled to the uttermost parts of the earth I should pursue her."

With a sudden movement he turned round and strode out of the room. They heard him go downstairs again.

"What is he going to do?" asked Mrs. Macphail.

"I don't know." Mrs. Davidson took off her *pince-nez* and wiped them. "When he is on the Lord's work I never ask him questions."

She sighed a little.

"What is the matter?"

"He'll wear himself *out*. He doesn't know what it is to spare himself."

Dr. Macphail learnt the first results of the missionary's activity from the half-caste trader in whose house they lodged. He stopped the doctor when he passed the store and came out to speak to him on the stoop. His fat face was worried.

"The Rev. Davidson has been at me for letting Miss Thompson have a room here," he said, "but I didn't know what she was when I rented it to her. When people come and ask if I can rent them a room all I want to know is if they've the money to pay for it. And she paid me for hers a week in advance."

Dr. Macphail did not want to commit himself.

"When all's said and done it's your house. We're very much obliged to you for taking us in at all."

Horn looked at him doubtfully. He was not certain yet how definitely Macphail stood on the missionary's side.

"The missionaries are in with one another," he said, hesitatingly. "If they get it in for a trader he may just as well shut up his store and quit."

"Did he want you to turn her out?"

"No, he said so long as she behaved herself he couldn't ask me to do that. He said he wanted to be just to me. I promised she shouldn't have no more visitors. I've just been and told her."

"How did she take it?"

"She gave me Hell."

The trader squirmed in his old ducks. He had found Miss Thompson a rough customer.

"Oh, well, I daresay she'll get out. I don't suppose she wants to stay here if she can't have anyone in."

"There's nowhere she can go, only a native house, and no native'll take her now, not now that the missionaries have got their knife in her."

Dr. Macphail looked at the falling rain.

"Well, I don't suppose it's any good waiting for it to clear up."

In the evening when they sat in the parlour Davidson talked to them of his early days at college. He had had no means and had worked his way through by doing odd jobs during the vacations. There was silence downstairs. Miss Thompson was sitting in her little room alone. But suddenly the gramophone began to play. She had set it on in defiance, to cheat her loneliness, but there was no one to sing, and it had a melancholy note. It was like a cry for help. Davidson took no notice. He was in the middle of a long anecdote and without change of expression went on. The gramophone continued. Miss Thompson put on one reel after another. It looked as though the silence of the night were getting on her nerves. It was breathless and sultry. When the Macphails went to bed they could not sleep. They lay side by side with their eyes wide open, listening to the cruel singing of the mosquitoes outside their curtain.

"What's that?" whispered Mrs. Macphail at last.

They heard a voice, Davidson's voice, through the wooden partition. It went on with a monotonous, earnest insistence. He was praying aloud. He was praying for the soul of Miss Thompson.

Two or three days went by. Now when they passed Miss Thompson on the road she did not greet them with ironic cordiality or smile; she passed with her nose in the air, a sulky look on her painted face, frowning, as though she did not see them. The trader

told Macphail that she had tried to get lodging elsewhere, but had failed. In the evening she played through the various reels of her gramophone, but the pretence of mirth was obvious now. The rag-time had a cracked, heart-broken rhythm as though it were a one-step of despair. When she began to play on Sunday Davidson sent Horn to beg her to stop at once since it was the Lord's day. The reel was taken off and the house was silent except for the steady pattering of the rain on the iron roof.

"I think she's getting a bit worked up," said the trader next day to Macphail. "She don't know what Mr. Davidson's up to and it makes her scared."

Macphail had caught a glimpse of her that morning and it struck him that her arrogant expression had changed. There was in her face a hunted look. The half-caste gave him a side-long glance.

"I suppose you don't know what Mr. Davidson is doing about it?" he hazarded.

"No, I don't."

It was singular that Horn should ask him that question, for he also had the idea that the missionary was mysteriously at work. He had an impression that he was weaving a net around the woman, carefully, systematically, and suddenly, when everything was ready would pull the strings tight.

"He told me to tell her," said the trader, "that if at any time she wanted him she only had to send and he'd come."

"What did she say when you told her that?"

"She didn't say nothing. I didn't stop. I just said what he said I was to and then I beat it. I thought she might be going to start weepin'."

"I have no doubt the loneliness is getting on her nerves," said the doctor. "And the rain—that's enough to make anyone jumpy," he continued irritably. "Doesn't it ever stop in this confounded place?"

"It goes on pretty steady in the rainy season. We have three hundred inches in the year. You see, it's the shape of the bay. It seems to attract the rain from all over the Pacific."

"Damn the shape of the bay," said the doctor.

He scratched his mosquito bites. He felt very short-tempered. When the rain stopped and the sun shone, it was like a hothouse,

seething, humid, sultry, breathless, and you had a strange feeling that everything was growing with a savage violence. The natives, blithe and childlike by reputation, seemed then, with their tattooing and their dyed hair, to have something sinister in their appearance; and when they pattered along at your heels with their naked feet you looked back instinctively. You felt they might at any moment come behind you swiftly and thrust a long knife between your shoulder blades. You could not tell what dark thoughts lurked behind their wide-set eyes. They had a little the look of ancient Egyptians painted on a temple wall, and there was about them the terror of what is immeasurably old.

The missionary came and went. He was busy, but the Macphails did not know what he was doing. Horn told the doctor that he saw the governor every day, and once Davidson mentioned him.

"He looks as if he had plenty of determination," he said, "but when you come down to brass tacks he has no backbone."

"I suppose that means he won't do exactly what you want," suggested the doctor facetiously.

The missionary did not smile.

"I want him to do what's right. It shouldn't be necessary to persuade a man to do that."

"But there may be differences of opinion about what is right."

"If a man had a gangrenous foot would you have patience with anyone who hesitated to amputate it?"

"Gangrene is a matter of fact."

"And Evil?"

What Davidson had done soon appeared. The four of them had just finished their midday meal, and they had not yet separated for the siesta which the heat imposed on the ladies and on the doctor. Davidson had little patience with the slothful habit. The door was suddenly flung open and Miss Thompson came in. She looked round the room and then went up to Davidson.

"You low-down skunk, what have you been saying about me to the governor?"

She was spluttering with rage. There was a moment's pause. Then the missionary drew forward a chair.

"Won't you be seated, Miss Thompson? I've been hoping to have another talk with you."

"You poor low-life bastard."

She burst into a torrent of insult, foul and insolent. Davidson kept his grave eyes on her.

"I'm indifferent to the abuse you think fit to heap on me, Miss Thompson," he said, "but I must beg you to remember that ladies are present."

Tears by now were struggling with her anger. Her face was red and swollen as though she were choking.

"What has happened?" asked Dr. Macphail.

"A feller's just been in here and he says I gotter beat it on the next boat."

Was there a gleam in the missionary's eyes? His face remained impassive.

"You could hardly expect the governor to let you stay here under the circumstances."

"You done it," she shrieked. "You can't kid me. You done it."

"I don't want to deceive you. I urged the governor to take the only possible step consistent with his obligations."

"Why couldn't you leave me be? I wasn't doin' you no harm."

"You may be sure that if you had I should be the last man to resent it."

"Do you think I want to stay on in this poor imitation of a burg? I don't look no busher, do I?"

"In that case I don't see what cause of complaint you have," he answered.

She gave an inarticulate cry of rage and flung out of the room. There was a short silence.

"It's a relief to know that the governor has acted at last," said Davidson finally. "He's a weak man and he shilly-shallied. He said she was only here for a fortnight anyway, and if she went on to Apia that was under British jurisdiction and had nothing to do with him."

The missionary sprang to his feet and strode across the room.

"It's terrible the way the men who are in authority seek to evade their responsibility. They speak as though evil that was out of sight

ceased to be evil. The very existence of that woman is a scandal and it does not help matters to shift it to another of the islands. In the end I had to speak straight from the shoulder.*

Davidson's brow lowered, and he protruded his firm chin. He looked fierce and determined.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Our mission is not entirely without influence at Washington. I pointed out to the governor that it wouldn't do him any good if there was a complaint about the way he managed things here."

"When has she got to go?" asked the doctor, after a pause.

"The San Francisco boat is due here from Sydney next Tuesday. She's to sail on that."

That was in five days' time. It was next day, when he was coming back from the hospital where for want of something better to do Macphail spent most of his mornings, that the half-caste stopped him as he was going upstairs.

"Excuse me, Dr. Macphail, Miss Thompson's sick. Will you have a look at her?"

"Certainly."

Horn led him to her room. She was sitting in a chair idly, neither reading nor sewing, staring in front of her. She wore her white dress and the large hat with the flowers on it. Macphail noticed that her skin was yellow and muddy under her powder, and her eyes were heavy.

"I'm sorry to hear you're not well," he said.

"Oh, I ain't sick really. I just said that, because I just had to see you. I've got to clear on a boat that's going to 'Frisco."

She looked at him and he saw that her eyes were suddenly startled. She opened and clenched her hands spasmodically. The trader stood at the door, listening.

"So I understand," said the doctor.

She gave a little gulp.

"I guess it ain't very convenient for me to go to 'Frisco just now. I went to see the governor yesterday afternoon, but I couldn't get to him. I saw the secretary, and he told me I'd got to take that boat and that was all there was to it. I just had to see the governor, so I waited outside his house this morning, and when he come out I

spoke to him. He didn't want to speak to me, I'll say, but I wouldn't let him shake me off, and at last he said he hadn't no objection to my staying here till the next boat to Sydney if the Rev. Davidson will stand for it."

She stopped and looked at Dr. Macphail anxiously.

"I don't know exactly what I can do," he said.

"Well, I thought maybe you wouldn't mind asking him. I swear to God I won't start anything here if he'll just only let me stay. I won't go out of the house if that'll suit him. It's no more'n a fortnight."

"I'll ask him."

"He won't stand for it," said Horn. "He'll have you out on Tuesday, so you may as well make up your mind to it."

"Tell him I can get work in Sydney, straight stuff, I mean. 'Taint asking very much."

"I'll do what I can."

"And come and tell me right away, will you? I can't set down to a thing till I get the dope one way or the other."

It was not an errand that much pleased the doctor, and, characteristically perhaps, he went about it indirectly. He told his wife what Miss Thompson had said to him and asked her to speak to Mrs. Davidson. The missionary's attitude seemed rather arbitrary and it could do no harm if the girl were allowed to stay in Pago-Pago another fortnight. But he was not prepared for the result of his diplomacy. The missionary came to him straightway.

"Mrs. Davidson tells me that Thompson has been speaking to you."

Dr. Macphail, thus directly tackled, had the shy man's resentment at being forced out into the open. He felt his temper rising, and he flushed.

"I don't see that it can make any difference if she goes to Sydney rather than to San Francisco, and so long as she promises to behave while she's here it's dashed hard to persecute her."

The missionary fixed him with his stern eyes.

"Why is she unwilling to go back to San Francisco?"

"I didn't enquire," answered the doctor with some asperity. "And I think one does better to mind one's own business."

Perhaps it was not a very tactful answer.

"The governor has ordered her to be deported by the first boat that leaves the island. He's only done his duty and I will not interfere. Her presence is a peril here."

"I think you're very harsh and tyrannical."

The two ladies looked up at the doctor with some alarm, but they need not have feared a quarrel, for the missionary smiled gently.

"I'm terribly sorry you should think that of me, Dr. Macphail. Believe me, my heart bleeds for that unfortunate woman, but I'm only trying to do my duty."

The doctor made no answer. He looked out of the window sullenly. For once it was not raining and across the bay you saw nestling among the trees the huts of a native village.

"I think I'll take advantage of the rain stopping to go out," he said.

"Please don't bear me malice because I can't accede to your wish," said Davidson, with a melancholy smile. "I respect you very much, doctor, and I should be sorry if you thought ill of me."

"I have no doubt you have a sufficiently good opinion of yourself to bear mine with equanimity," he retorted.

"That's one on me," chuckled Davidson.

When Dr. Macphail, vexed with himself because he had been uncivil to no purpose, went downstairs, Miss Thompson was waiting for him with her door ajar.

"Well," she said, "have you spoken to him?"

"Yes, I'm sorry, he won't do anything," he answered, not looking at her in his embarrassment.

But then he gave her a quick glance, for a sob broke from her. He saw that her face was white with fear. It gave him a shock of dismay. And suddenly he had an idea.

"But don't give up hope yet. I think it's a shame the way they're treating you and I'm going to see the governor myself."

"Now?"

He nodded. Her face brightened.

"Say, that's real good of you. I'm sure he'll let me stay if you speak for me. I just won't do a thing I didn't ought all the time I'm here."

Dr. Macphail hardly knew why he had made up his mind to appeal to the governor. He was perfectly indifferent to Miss Thomp-

son's affairs, but the missionary had irritated him, and with him temper was a smouldering thing. He found the governor at home. He was a large, handsome man, a sailor, with a grey toothbrush moustache; and he wore a spotless uniform of white drill.

"I've come to see you about a woman who's lodging in the same house as we are," he said. "Her name's Thompson."

"I guess I've heard nearly enough about her, Dr. Macphail," said the governor, smiling. "I've given her the order to get out next Tuesday and that's all I can do."

"I wanted to ask you if you couldn't stretch a point and let her stay here till the boat comes in from San Francisco so that she can go to Sydney. I will guarantee her good behavior."

The governor continued to smile, but his eyes grew small and serious.

"I'd be very glad to oblige you, Dr. Macphail, but I've given the order and it must stand."

The doctor put the case as reasonably as he could, but now the governor ceased to smile at all. He listened sullenly, with averted gaze. Macphail saw that he was making no impression.

"I'm sorry to cause any lady inconvenience, but she'll have to sail on Tuesday and that's all there is to it."

"But what difference can it make?"

"Pardon me, doctor, but I don't feel called upon to explain my official actions except to the proper authorities."

Macphail looked at him shrewdly. He remembered Davidson's hint that he had used threats, and in the governor's attitude he read a singular embarrassment.

"Davidson's a damned busybody," he said hotly.

"Between ourselves, Dr. Macphail, I don't say that I have formed a very favorable opinion of Mr. Davidson, but I am bound to confess that he was within his rights in pointing out to me the danger that the presence of a woman of Miss Thompson's character was to a place like this where a number of enlisted men are stationed among a native population."

He got up and Dr. Macphail was obliged to do so too.

"I must ask you to excuse me. I have an engagement. Please give my respects to Mrs. Macphail."

The doctor left him crest-fallen. He knew that Miss Thompson would be waiting for him, and unwilling to tell her himself that he had failed, he went into the house by the back door and sneaked up the stairs as though he had something to hide.

At supper he was silent and ill-at-ease, but the missionary was jovial and animated. Dr. Macphail thought his eyes rested on him now and then with triumphant good-humour. It struck him suddenly that Davidson knew of his visit to the governor and of its ill success. But how on earth could he have heard of it? There was something sinister about the power of that man. After supper he saw Horn on the verandah and, as though to have a casual word with him, went out.

"She wants to know if you've seen the governor," the trader whispered.

"Yes. He wouldn't do anything. I'm awfully sorry, I can't do anything more."

"I knew he wouldn't. They daren't go against the missionaries."

"What are you talking about?" said Davidson affably, coming out to join them.

"I was just saying there was no chance of your getting over to Apia for at least another week," said the trader glibly.

He left them, and the two men returned into the parlour. Mr. Davidson devoted one hour after each meal to recreation. Presently a timid knock was heard at the door.

"Come in," said Mrs. Davidson, in her sharp voice.

The door was not opened. She got up and opened it. They saw Miss Thompson standing at the threshold. But the change in her appearance was extraordinary. This was no longer the flaunting hussy who had jeered at them in the road, but a broken, frightened woman. Her hair, as a rule so elaborately arranged, was tumbling untidily over her neck. She wore bedroom slippers and a skirt and blouse. They were unfresh and bedraggled. She stood at the door with the tears streaming down her face and did not dare to enter.

"What do you want?" said Mrs. Davidson harshly.

"May I speak to Mr. Davidson?" she said in a choking voice.

The missionary rose and went towards her.

"Come right in, Miss Thompson," he said in cordial tones. "What can I do for you?"

She entered the room.

"Say, I'm sorry for what I said to you the other day an' for—for everythin' else. I guess I was a bit lit up. I beg pardon."

"Oh, it was nothing. I guess my back's broad enough to bear a few hard words."

She stepped towards him with a movement that was horribly cringing.

"You've got me beat. I'm all in. You won't make me go back to 'Frisco?"

His genial manner vanished and his voice grew on a sudden hard and stern.

"Why don't you want to go back there?"

She cowered before him.

"I guess my people live there. I don't want them to see me like this. I'll go anywhere else you say."

"Why don't you want to go back to San Francisco?"

"I've told you."

He leaned forward, staring at her, and his great, shining eyes seemed to try to bore into her soul. He gave a sudden gasp.

"The penitentiary."

She screamed, and then she fell at his feet, clasping his legs.

"Don't send me back there. I swear to you before God I'll be a good woman. I'll give all this up."

She burst into a torrent of confused supplication and the tears coursed down her painted cheeks. He leaned over her and, lifting her face, forced her to look at him.

"Is that it, the penitentiary?"

"I beat it before they could get me," she gasped. "If the bulls grab me it's three years for mine."

He let go his hold of her and she fell in a heap on the floor, sobbing bitterly. Dr. Macphail stood up.

"This alters the whole filing," he said. "You can't make her go back when you know this. Give her another chance. She wants to turn over a new leaf."

"I'm going to give her the finest chance she's ever had. If she repents let her accept her punishment."

She misunderstood the words and looked up. There was a gleam of hope in her heavy eyes.

"You'll let me go?"

"No. You shall sail for San Francisco on Tuesday."

She gave a groan of horror and then burst into low, hoarse shrieks which sounded hardly human, and she beat her head passionately on the ground. Dr. Macphail sprang to her and lifted her up.

"Come on, you mustn't do that. You'd better go to your room and lie down. I'll get you something."

He raised her to her feet and partly dragging her, partly carrying her, got her downstairs. He was furious with Mrs. Davidson and with his wife because they made no effort to help. The half-caste was standing on the landing and with his assistance he managed to get her on the bed. She was moaning and crying. She was almost insensible. He gave her a hypodermic injection. He was hot and exhausted when he went upstairs again.

"I've got her to lie down."

The two women and Davidson were in the same positions as when he had left them. They could not have moved or spoken since he went.

"I was waiting for you," said Davidson, in a strange, distant voice. "I want you all to pray with me for the soul of our erring sister."

He took the Bible off a shelf, and sat down at the table at which they had supped. It had not been cleared, and he pushed the tea-pot out of the way. In a powerful voice, resonant and deep, he read to them the chapter in which is narrated the meeting of Jesus Christ with the woman taken in adultery.

"Now kneel with me and let us pray for the soul of our dear sister, Sadie Thompson."

He burst into a long, passionate prayer in which he implored God to have mercy on the sinful woman. Mrs. Macphail and Mrs. Davidson knelt with covered eyes. The doctor, taken by surprise, awkward and sheepish, knelt too. The missionary's prayer had a savage eloquence. He was extraordinarily moved, and as he spoke the tears

ran down his cheeks. Outside, the pitiless rain fell, fell steadily, with a fierce malignity that was all too human.

At last he stopped. He paused for a moment and said:

"We will now repeat the Lord's prayer."

They said it and then, following him, they rose from their knees. Mrs. Davidson's face was pale and restful. She was comforted and at peace, but the Macphails felt suddenly bashful. They did not know which way to look.

"I'll just go down and see how she is," said Dr. Macphail.

When he knocked at her door it was opened for him by Horn. Miss Thompson was in a rocking-chair, sobbing quietly.

"What are you doing there?" exclaimed Macphail. "I told you to lie down."

"I can't lie down. I want to see Mr. Davidson."

"My poor child, what do you think is the good of it? You'll never move him."

"He said he'd come if I sent for him."

Macphail motioned to the trader.

"Go and fetch him."

He waited with her in silence while the trader went upstairs. Davidson came in.

"Excuse me for asking you to come here," she said, looking at him sombrely.

"I was expecting you to send for me. I knew the Lord would answer my prayer."

They stared at one another for a moment and then she looked away. She kept her eyes averted when she spoke.

"I've been a bad woman. I want to repent."

"Thank God! thank God! He has heard our prayers."

He turned to the two men.

"Leave me alone with her. Tell Mrs. Davidson that our prayers have been answered."

They went out and closed the door behind them.

"Gee whizz," said the trader.

That night Dr. Macphail could not get to sleep till late, and when he heard the missionary come upstairs he looked at his watch. It was

two o'clock. But even then he did not go to bed at once, for through the wooden partition that separated their rooms he heard him praying aloud, till he himself, exhausted, fell asleep.

When he saw him next morning he was surprised at his appearance. He was paler than ever, tired, but his eyes shone with an inhuman fire. It looked as though he were filled with an overwhelming joy.

"I want you to go down presently and see Sadie," he said, "I can't hope that her body is better, but her soul—her soul is transformed."

The doctor was feeling wan and nervous.

"You were with her very late last night," he said.

"Yes, she couldn't bear to have me leave her,"

"You look as pleased as Punch," the doctor said irritably.

Davidson's eyes shone with ecstasy.

"A great mercy has been vouchsafed me. Last night I was privileged to bring a lost soul to the loving arms of Jesus."

Miss Thompson was again in the rocking-chair. The bed had not been made. The room was in disorder. She had not troubled to dress herself, but wore a dirty dressing-gown, and her hair was tied in a sluttish knot. She had given her face a dab with a wet towel, but it was all swollen and creased with crying. She looked a drab.

She raised her eyes dully when the doctor came in. She was cowed and broken.

"Where's Mr. Davidson?" she asked.

"He'll come presently if you want him," answered Macphail acidly. "I came here to see how you were."

"Oh, I guess I'm O.K. You needn't worry about that."

"Have you had anything to eat?"

"Horn brought me some coffee."

She looked anxiously at the door.

"D'you think he'll come down soon? I feel as if it wasn't so terrible when he's with me."

"Are you still going on Tuesday?"

"Yes, he says I've got to go. Please tell him to come right along. You can't do me any good. He's the only one as can help me now."

"Very well," said Dr. Macphail.

During the next three days the missionary spent almost all his time with Sadie Thompson. He joined the others only to have his meals. Dr. Macphail noticed that he hardly ate.

"He's wearing himself out," said Mrs. Davidson pitifully. "He'll have a breakdown if he doesn't take care, but he won't spare himself."

She herself was white and pale. She told Mrs. Macphail that she had no sleep. When the missionary came upstairs from Miss Thompson he prayed till he was exhausted, but even then he did not sleep for long. After an hour or two he got up and dressed himself, and went for a tramp along the bay. He had strange dreams.

"This morning he told me that he'd been dreaming about the mountains of Nebraska," said Mrs. Davidson.

"That's curious," said Dr. Macphail.

He remembered seeing them from the windows of the train when he crossed America. They were like huge molehills, rounded and smooth, and they rose from the plain abruptly. Dr. Macphail remembered how it struck him that they were like a woman's breasts.

Davidson's restlessness was intolerable even to himself. But he was buoyed up by a wonderful exhilaration. He was tearing out by the roots the last vestiges of sin that lurked in the hidden corners of that poor woman's heart. He read with her and prayed with her.

"It's wonderful," he said to them one day at supper. "It's a true rebirth. Her soul, which was black as night, is now pure and white like the new-fallen snow. I am humble and afraid. Her remorse for all her sins is beautiful. I am not worthy to touch the hem of her garment."

"Have you the heart to send her back to San Francisco?" said the doctor. "Three years in an American prison. I should have thought you might have saved her from that?"

"Ah, but don't you see? It's necessary. Do you think my heart doesn't bleed for her? I love her as I love my wife and my sister. All the time that she is in prison I shall suffer all the pain that she suffers."

"Bunkum," cried the doctor impatiently.

"You don't understand because you're blind. She's sinned, and she must suffer. I know what she'll endure. She'll be starved and tor-

tured and humiliated. I want her to accept the punishment of man as a sacrifice to God. I want her to accept it joyfully. She has an opportunity which is offered to very few of us. God is very good and very merciful."

Davidson's voice trembled with excitement. He could hardly articulate the words that tumbled passionately from his lips.

"All day I pray with her and when I leave her I pray again, I pray with all my might and main, so that Jesus may grant her this great mercy. I want to put in her heart the passionate desire to be punished so that at the end, even if I offered to let her go, she would refuse. I want her to feel that the bitter punishment of prison is the thank-offering that she places at the feet of our Blessed Lord, who gave his life for her."

The days passed slowly. The whole household, intent on the wretched, tortured woman downstairs, lived in a state of unnatural excitement. She was like a victim that was being prepared for the savage rites of a bloody idolatry. Her terror numbed her. She could not bear to let Davidson out of her sight; it was only when he was with her that she had courage, and she hung upon him with a slavish dependence. She cried a great deal, and she read the Bible, and prayed. Sometimes she was exhausted and apathetic. Then she did indeed look forward to her ordeal, for it seemed to offer an escape, direct and concrete, from the anguish she was enduring. She could not bear much longer the vagtie terrors which now assailed her. With her sins she had put aside all personal vanity, and she slopped about her room, unkempt and dishevelled, in her tawdry dressing-gown. She had not taken off her night-dress for four days, nor put on stockings. Her room was littered and untidy. Meanwhile the rain fell with a cruel persistence. You felt that the heavens must at last be empty of water, but still it poured down, straight and heavy, with a maddening iteration, on the iron roof. Everything was damp and clammy. There was mildew on the walls and on the boots that stood on the floor. Through the sleepless nights the mosquitoes droned their angry chant.

"If it would only stop raining for a single day it wouldn't be so bad," said Dr. Macphail.

They all looked forward to the Tuesday when the boat for San

Francisco was to arrive from Sydney. The strain was intolerable. So far as Dr. Macphail was concerned, his pity and his resentment were alike extinguished by his desire to be rid of the unfortunate woman. The inevitable must be accepted. He felt he would breathe more freely when the ship had sailed. Sadie Thompson was to be escorted on board by a clerk in the governor's office. This person called on the Monday evening and told Miss Thompson to be prepared at eleven in the morning. Davidson was with her.

"I'll see that everything is ready. I mean to come on board with her myself."

Miss Thompson did not speak.

When Dr. Macphail blew out his candle and crawled cautiously under his mosquito curtains, he gave a sigh of relief.

"Well, thank God that's over. By this time to-morrow she'll be gone."

"Mrs. Davidson will be glad too. She says he's wearing himself to a shadow," said Mrs. Macphail. "She's a different woman."

"Who?"

"Sadie. I should never have thought it possible. It makes one humble."

Dr. Macphail did not answer, and presently he fell asleep. He was tired out, and he slept more soundly than usual.

He was awakened in the morning by a hand placed on his arm, and, starting up, saw Horn by the side of his bed. The trader put his finger on his mouth to prevent any exclamation from Dr. Macphail and beckoned to him to come. As a rule he wore shabby ducks, but now he was barefoot and wore only the *lava-lava* of the natives. He looked suddenly savage, and Dr. Macphail, getting out of bed, saw that he was heavily tattooed. Horn made him a sign to come on to the verandah. Dr. Macphail got out of bed and followed the trader out.

"Don't make a noise," he whispered. "You're wanted. Put on a coat and some shoes. Quick."

Dr. Macphail's first thought was that something had happened to Miss Thompson.

"What is it? Shall I bring my instruments?"

"Hurry, please, hurry."

Dr. Macphail crept back into the bedroom, put on a waterproof over his pyjamas, and a pair of rubber-soled shoes. He rejoined the trader, and together they tiptoed down the stairs. The door leading out to the road was open and at it were standing half a dozen natives.

"What is it?" repeated the doctor.

"Come along with me," said Horn.

He walked out and the doctor followed him. The natives came after them in a little bunch. They crossed the road and came on to the beach. The doctor saw a group of natives standing round some object at the water's edge. They hurried along, a couple of dozen yards perhaps, and the natives opened out as the doctor came up. The trader pushed him forward. Then he saw, lying half in the water and half out, a dreadful object, the body of Davidson. Dr. Macphail bent down—he was not a man to lose his head in an emergency—and turned the body over. The throat was cut from ear to ear, and in the right hand was still the razor with which the deed was done.

"He's quite cold," said the doctor. "He must have been dead some time."

"One of the boys saw him lying there on his way to work just now and came and told me. Do you think he did it himself?"

"Yes. Someone ought to go for the police."

Horn said something in the native tongue, and two youths started off.

"We must leave him here till they come," said the doctor.

"They mustn't take him into my house. I won't have him in my house."

"You'll do what the authorities say," replied the doctor sharply. "In point of fact I expect they'll take him to the mortuary."

They stood waiting where they were. The trader took a cigarette from a fold in his *lava-lava* and gave one to Dr. Macphail. They smoked while they stared at the corpse. Dr. Macphail could not understand.

"Why do you think he did it?" asked Horn.

The doctor shrugged his shoulders. In a little while native police came along, under the charge of a marine, with a stretcher, and im-

mediately afterwards a couple of naval officers and a naval doctor. They managed everything in a businesslike manner.

"What about the wife?" said one of the officers.

"Now that you've come I'll go back to the house and get some things on. I'll see that it's broken to her. She'd better not see him till he's been fixed up a little."

"I guess that's right," said the naval doctor.

When Dr. Macphail went back he found his wife nearly dressed.

"Mrs. Davidson's in a dreadful state about her husband," she said to him as soon as he appeared. "He hasn't been to bed all night. She heard him leave Miss Thompson's room at two, but he went out. If he's been walking about since then he'll be absolutely dead."

Dr. Macphail told her what had happened and asked her to break the news to Mrs. Davidson.

"But why did he do it?" she asked, horror-stricken.

"I don't know."

"But I can't. I can't."

"You must."

She gave him a frightened look and went out. He heard her go into Mrs. Davidson's room. He waited a minute to gather himself together and then began to shave and wash. When he was dressed he sat down on the bed and waited for his wife. At last she came.

"She wants to see him," she said.

"They've taken him to the mortuary. We'd better go down with her. How did she take it?"

"I think she's stunned. She didn't cry. But she's trembling like a leaf."

"We'd better go at once."

When they knocked at her door Mrs. Davidson came out. She was very pale, but dry-eyed. To the doctor she seemed unnaturally composed. No word was exchanged, and they set out in silence down the road. When they arrived at the mortuary Mrs. Davidson spoke.

"Let me go in and see him alone."

They stood aside. A native opened a door for her and closed it behind her. They sat down and waited. One or two white men came and talked to them in undertones. Dr. Macphail told them again behind her. They sat down and waited. One or two white men

came and talked to them in undertones. Dr. Macphail told them again what he knew of the tragedy. At last the door was quietly opened and Mrs. Davidson came out. Silence fell upon them.

"I'm ready to go back now," she said.

Her voice was hard and steady. Dr. Macphail could not understand the look in her eyes. Her pale face was very stern. They walked back slowly, never saying a word, and at last they came round the bend on the other side of which stood their house. Mrs. Davidson gave a gasp, and for a moment they stopped still. An incredible sound assaulted their ears. The gramophone which had been silent for so long was playing, playing ragtime loud and harsh.

"What's that?" cried Mrs. Macphail with horror.

"Let's go on," said Mrs. Davidson.

They walked up the steps and entered the hall. Miss Thompson was standing at her door, chatting with a sailor. A sudden change had taken place in her. She was no longer the cowed drudge of the last days. She was dressed in all her finery, in her white dress, with the high shiny boots over which her fat legs bulged in their cotton stockings; her hair was elaborately arranged; and she wore that enormous hat covered with gaudy flowers. Her face was painted, her eyebrows were boldly black, and her lips were scarlet. She held herself erect. She was the flaunting queen that they had known at first. As they came in she broke into a loud, jeering laugh; and then, when Mrs. Davidson involuntarily stopped, she collected the spittle in her mouth and spat. Mrs. Davidson cowered back, and two red spots rose suddenly to her cheeks. Then, covering her face with her hands, she broke away and ran quickly up the stairs. Dr. Macphail was outraged. He pushed past the woman into her room.

"What the devil are you doing?" he cried. "Stop that damned machine."

He went up to it and tore the record off. She turned on him.

"Say, doc, you can that stuff with me. What the hell are you doin' in my room?"

"What do you mean?" he cried. "What d'you mean?"

She gathered herself together. No one could describe the scorn of her expression or the contemptuous hatred she put into her answer.

"You men! You filthy, dirty pigs! You're all the same, all of you. Pigs! Pigs!"

Dr. Macphail gasped. He understood.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

We can preface the questions on "Rain" which follow by this simple statement: The story is more complex than any story you have yet considered in this volume. On the surface it appears to be a simple, rather direct study of religious fanaticism. But careful study of the story, with all its incidents, its structure, and its ending, will reveal that though fanaticism is its basis, it is not its point.

What the point of "Rain" is should come out in your consideration of the questions below, five of which are concerned with the story's structure, four with its characters, and the remaining six with its meaning. But in preparation for these questions, let us make the following general observations.

The story is concerned with not two people but five—it depends for its meaning and effect not alone upon Davidson and Sadie but upon Mrs. Davidson, Macphail, and the island (which can be considered both a character and a setting) as well. The story, moreover, contains not one but five conflicts, each of which throws light upon the meaning and point of the story as a whole. The central conflict, incidentally, is not between Davidson and Sadie, as we would guess after a single reading. What the central conflict is will be revealed, among other things, by the title of the story and by the ending. We can add that the point of the story is *not* the outcome of the Sadie-Davidson struggle; it is rather an analysis of *why* a man named Davidson committed suicide. The *why*, incidentally, is not a single reason but a complex of reasons, and in this respect the final line of the story is both ironical and misleading. Davidson did not commit suicide solely because he was seduced or tempted by Sadie. He committed suicide for many reasons, at least one of which is more basic than his relations with a prostitute.

Like the stories we have considered above, "Rain" also consists of two levels: a specific character-situation level and a thematic level. Actually, the theme, too, may be subdivided. On one level, the simpler one, "Rain" has something to say about the causes behind and the effects of a particular religious view which we can call

Puritanism. On a second level, the story considers the bases which, according to the author, should furnish the foundation for a healthy and logical standard of human conduct or morality. In this respect the story is both a comment on religion, specifically, and on morality, which may or may not be a religious matter. To put this more concretely (without at the same time offering any of the answers which the reader should be able to discover for himself), "Rain" is basically concerned with morality in terms of the effects of inhibitions on human life.

1. Identify the protagonist and *each* of the antagonists in the story.

2. "Rain" really begins with the introduction of Sadie. What various purposes does the introduction serve? What is the chief device used to maintain interest until the central conflict is reached?

3. The structure of "Rain" is very complex. Discuss the following details of structure:

- a. The introduction of character. Why are the characters introduced in the order they are?

- b. The handling of setting. Where do the descriptive passages come in relation to the dramatic scenes? Examine each descriptive passage, pointing out what aspect or effect of nature is emphasized in each. What other purposes do the descriptive passages serve in addition to marking off units in the story?

4. "Rain" contains not one but four major conflicts and one minor one, with Davidson the focal character in each. Identify each conflict, and point out what each adds to the story. Which of these is the central conflict? (Do not be too quick to assume that the main conflict is between Davidson and Sadie. It isn't.)

5. Show how each important development, including Davidson's final advances to Sadie and his suicide, are prepared for in the introduction to the story (that is, in the part of the story which ends with Sadie's introduction).

6. Davidson, of course, is the protagonist in "Rain," Sadie the chief *physical* antagonist. What purposes do the other characters in the story serve? Discuss the character of each. Are the characters in "Rain" graded, as they were in "The Leader of the People"? If so, on what principle do they seem to be grouped and in what order would you arrange them? (Partly, this order can be determined by the various attitudes toward Sadie or toward the native customs or toward morality in general.)

7. Comment on the story's descriptive passages in their relation to the characters. For example, what is stressed about the island when Macphail is introduced, what is stressed when Mrs. Davidson is introduced, and so on? What does this reveal about the characters of Macphail, Mrs. Macphail, and Mrs. Davidson?

8. On the surface, Davidson seems to be rather a simple characterization, a fanatic motivated by a God complex and a tendency toward sadism. Discuss, however, the following passages, pointing out what aspect of Davidson's motives, character, or desires is revealed in each:

- a. Macphail's comments about Davidson, in the first five pages of the story.
- b. Davidson's first comments about the morals and customs of the natives.
- c. Davidson's arguments with Macphail.
- d. Davidson's attitude toward his wife.
- e. Davidson's motive for ruining Fred Ohlson.
- f. Davidson's attitude toward his native charges, as revealed in his comments about risking his life in storms to aid them.
- g. The various motives Davidson assigns to his persecution of Sadie, together with the implied motives which he does not mention but which Maugham makes clear to us.
- h. The minister's dreams of the Nebraska hills,
- i. Davidson's suicide.

9. We have pointed out that Davidson is the focal point of one minor and four major conflicts in the story. Considering the effect of the rain on him, his attitude toward his wife, his attitude toward native customs, his mixed motives (implied and stated) for his persecution of Sadie, and the reasons for his suicide, what is Davidson's basic conflict? (Consider, especially, that the point of the story is only incidentally the resolution of the Davidson-Sadie conflict; in terms of character and specific incident [not theme] it is primarily a kind of clinical diagnosis and explanation of the suicide of a religious fanatic.) Are the physical or outward conflicts (with Sadie, Macphail, and his environment, as well as the implied or minor conflict with his wife) all simply facets of this central conflict, used to make that conflict concrete and dramatic? If so, why?

10. Part of the thematic core of "Rain" is a matter of religion. Before discussing the story's meaning, therefore, define and discuss the following terms: Puritanism, Christianity, fanaticism. Are Puri-

tanism and Christianity the same thing? (Don't answer this too hastily; consider Christ's attitudes toward worldly pleasure, particularly his comment that the man who lusts in his heart after a woman is guilty of adultery.) If Puritanism is not Christianity, is it part of this religious concept? And what religious principles does Puritanism disregard which Christianity considers?

11. To understand the religious point of this story, we must understand Macphail as well as Davidson. Is Macphail a Christian? If not, what is he? And what is his relation to his fellow men? What sort of world might it be if everyone were a Macphail?

12. According to Davidson, the basic motive behind his acts is love. Is this true; that is, *does* Davidson seem to love his fellow man? Does Macphail? What is the *effect* of Davidson's actions? What is the effect of Macphail's? Can you state the paradox involved in each of these cases? What, finally, is Maugham saying in "Rain" about the cause and the effect of fanaticism?

13. We have pointed out in the introduction that the story's theme, on one level, says something specifically about religion; that on another level it concerns itself with broader aspects of human life and conduct, though morality is still the core of the theme. What the story finally says, thematically, rests upon the symbols in the story and the way they are used. The two major symbols are the rain (plus all other characteristics of the environment which Maugham stresses) and Sadie. What do each of these symbolize? Why is it appropriate that of all the aspects of a tropical environment, Maugham should stress heat and rain? Is it merely that these are the obvious physical aspects of the environment, or has this a relation to his meaning?

14. In terms of the above question, why does Maugham call his story "Rain"? Could he have called the story "Sadie Thompson"? In other words, which symbol in the story, the rain (and all else it implies about the environment) or Sadie, is most basic? What, in short, is the fundamental reason for Davidson's destruction? Why?

15. You are now in a position to summarize the theme of "Rain." It will take you a number of sentences to do so, and your summary should answer the following questions:

- a. What, according to Maugham, must be the basis for a sensible standard of human conduct?
- b. What happens if this basis is disregarded?

c. Considering a and b above, summarize Maugham's religious and moral theories as revealed in "Rain." Is Maugham a Christian? If not, on what grounds does he deny the validity or the wisdom of Christianity? What, in his opinion, constitutes a valid, logical, and healthy human moral standard? Could Maugham, on the basis of this story, be described as a pragmatist?

C. *Symbolism*

We have seen in the stories which we have studied in the earlier part of the book that the ultimate theme of a story comes out of the relationship of the characters to the plot in which they are engaged. Some stories, such as "The Lovely Leave," emphasize the development of character; others such as "The Price of the Head," emphasize plot; still others, such as "Rain," combine both elements. We have seen, then, that there are various levels on which we can understand what the writer is saying in his story. And in terms of this we have come to realize the need for discrimination in our evaluations of theme—to demand not only that there be a theme, but that this theme be important and significant to us.

One of the ways in which an author may express his thoughts is through the use of symbolism. In its simplest form a symbol is something which stands for something else. It may, for example, take the familiar form of a striped red-and-white pole, which *stands for* a barbershop. This pole is not, of course, either a barbershop or a picture of a barbershop, but through custom and general agreement it *symbolizes* a barbershop, and if we are in need of a haircut we should not hesitate a moment to go into a shop displaying such a sign, with perfect confidence that we should find inside a barber and not a tailor or a baker. There are many such symbols in the world around us which serve to tell us various things that we want to know: a skull and crossbones on a medicine bottle symbolizes poison, an octagonal sign on the highway symbolizes a direction to stop. Symbols of this kind often, as in the case of the barber pole, stand for only one idea, but they may stand for a whole complex of ideas, and even feelings. Consider in this regard what is symbolized by the American flag. It not only indicates nationality, but stands for all the many feelings we may have about our country, feelings of

pride, feelings of homesickness if we see the flag when we are far away, feelings of patriotism.

The most common symbols in our lives are, of course, words. In language, through custom and agreement, we have come to attach certain meanings to various sounds which symbolize those meanings for us. The sound "cat" is a symbol for a certain feline domestic pet; the sound "key" is a symbol for a certain class of things with which we open locks. It is important to remember that the word "cat" does not have any inherent relationship to the animal it symbolizes nor is the word "cat" the animal itself; it is merely a symbol which we have come to use in order to make communication easier. Other people use different symbols, and if we wish to converse with a Frenchman, for example, we must learn that the sound he has chosen as a symbol for the animal "cat" is "chat." If we do not use his symbol we will be unable to communicate with him.

A symbol, then, is something which stands for something else. It may be an object, such as a barber pole, or merely a sound, such as any of our words, or it may be a gesture, as when we symbolize our agreement by nodding our heads up and down. We are generally quite sensitive to symbolism in our relationships. Few people would fail to ask of a crying child "What is the matter?" precisely because a flow of tears, which is actually only a function of the physical organism, symbolizes grief or pain and we recognize this in our behavior.

We said at the beginning of this chapter that one of the ways in which an author may express his thought is through the use of symbolism. If our definition of a symbol as something which stands for something else is correct, then the author will be using one thing in place of another. Now authors use words as their medium of expression, and since words are all symbols, we can say that in this sense every written sentence is a symbol. But in this section we are concerned with a somewhat different form of symbolism, in which what takes place in the story, or the people to whom things happen, are symbols for something else.

Consider in this regard the story "The Chink and the Child," which illustrates the point quite clearly. In this story there is a simple plot line, consisting of the story of Battling, Lucy, and the Chinaman. There is also in this story a careful attention to character: Lucy

is developed as a suffering, patient, innocent, and very inexperienced young girl; Battling is shown as a brutal, ruthless, and insensitive man; the Chinaman is described as a sensitive poet, as a man who has a feeling for the beauties of life and whose pleasures are more aesthetic than material. These three characters are followed in the story through a series of episodes which culminate in their deaths. What can we say of this story if we confine ourselves merely to what happens in the printed pages? What can we derive from the story in terms of theme from this particular combination of plot and character? We can perhaps say that it is a story of brutality in which everybody perishes, or perhaps that it shows us that prejudice against the Chinese is false, or perhaps that it exposes the hard realities of slum life. But each of these statements is weak and general—each of them lacks importance—none of them seems precisely to be the most meaningful answer if, indeed, any of them is an answer at all. But suppose, on the other hand, we assign some symbolic values to each of the characters, that is, suppose we understand each of them as *standing for* something else, not another person so much as a general idea, or concept. Battling can be a symbol for insensitive materialism, Lucy for innocence and beauty, the Chinaman for poets and sensitive men of spirit. Now examine what happens to our understanding of the story: Innocence and beauty (which may be found even in squalor) are not only unperceived by the ruthless materialists but are trampled down and beaten into ugliness. The poet, however, the sensitive man of spirit, can recognize and treasure beauty for its own sake (for example, there is no hint of lust or coarseness in the Chinaman's love for Lucy) because his values are those of the spirit and mind rather than of the mundane world. But the materialistic man (Battling) cannot conceive that such people exist because such men assume that the world is like them. When he learns that the poet has befriended the innocent and beautiful little girl he can think only in terms of his own world, where the only relationships between men and women are sexual. Materialism then kills beauty (Battling kills Lucy), but the sensitive poet contrives to bring about Battling's death, so that at the end we can say at least that materialism is killed by its very nature, or that it carries within it the seed of its own destruction, which it brings upon itself without

ever realizing it (Battling dies unaware of what killed him). Such an interpretation casts a new light on the story. From a mere adventure story with perhaps a minor theme, it becomes when understood in this way a consideration upon a universal, human problem. For what is being said in this story has been underlined time and time again in the history of civilization, which has seen mighty empires, built often of stone and metal, crumble to dust while the intangible values of poetry, sensitivity, and beauty have lived on, despite their seeming frailty. The Chinaman is a thin and undersized man compared to the brute Battling, but only in physique.

We can see that in this story each of the characters stands for something else, and all we need do is to make the proper substitution. Each character in the story, and each event or episode in the story, has a one-to-one relationship with a symbolic character and a symbolic event, so that in its entirety the story is in effect duplicated entirely on another level. By "one-to-one relationship" is meant that type of symbolism in which a simple substitution may be made. In "The Chink and the Child" it may be said that the characters stand for ideas in this fashion.

There is another kind of symbolic writing, however, in which throughout the story we learn something of the feelings, states of mind, and attitudes of the characters through the use of various symbols, although these symbols do not stand consistently for a duplicate story on another level. In "Rain" you will recall that Davidson mentions having dreamed of rounded hills in Nebraska which in their shape and form resemble a woman's breasts. These hills are a symbol not so much for a woman's breasts as for the general state of mind of Davidson, who has become preoccupied as a result of his relationship to Sadie Thompson with things of the flesh. Davidson does not realize the nature of the symbolism very clearly, but through this symbolic insight we learn in a sudden flash of understanding what the real problem of the man is, and if we properly understand the symbol we can at that point of the story have a clear inkling of the direction which events are going to take. The same is true in "Mr. Arcularis," in which various symbols for cold, for heartbeats, for impending death, are scattered throughout the story

in such a fashion as to indicate far in advance of the ending that the ending is the only logical possibility.

In essence, the problem of understanding symbolic writing is a part of the problem of being able to apply the specific to the general, of being able to comprehend meaning over and above the obvious. It may seem at first acquaintance to be extremely difficult, but actually the process is not dissimilar to that which we use in arriving at many of our important judgments. We have all had the experience of reading about events and people in the Bible and of learning that it is in the significance of these events and people that their importance to us lies; for in a work like the Bible we are concerned primarily with symbolic stories. In much the same way, we learn quite early in life that certain people may symbolize all that we want to become. We do not really want to be those people, but rather we want to achieve in our own lives what their lives symbolize to us. Thus, the comprehension of symbolic writing involves the ability to generalize, to see in particular people and in particular events something else; to perceive, in other words, what they stand for. There are in symbolic writing many levels of complexity, many degrees of obscurity, but essentially the problem is the same. And it is an especially human problem, for if there is anything which most differentiates man from even the most closely related primates it is this singular and unique ability to act, think, and create in symbolic form. Of symbols is speech itself composed and of symbols the highest artistic expressions of man.

Mr. Arcularis

by CONRAD AIKEN

MR. ARCULARIS stood at the window of his room in the hospital and looked down at the street. There had been a light shower, which had patterned the sidewalks with large drops, but now again the sun was out, blue sky was showing here and there between the swift white clouds, a cold wind was blowing the poplar trees. An itinerant band had stopped before the building and was playing, with violin, harp, and flute, the finale of "Cavalleria Rusticana." Leaning against the window-sill-for he felt extraordinarily weak after his operation—Mr. Arcularis suddenly, listening to the wretched music, felt like crying. He rested the palm of one hand against a cold window pane and stared down at the old man who was blowing the flute, and blinked his eyes. It seemed absurd that he should be so weak, so emotional, so like a child—and especially now that everything was over at last. In spite of all their predictions, in spite, too, of his own dreadful certainty that he was going to die, here he was, as fit as a fiddle—but what a fiddle it was, so out of tune!—with a long life before him. And to begin with, a voyage to England ordered by the doctor. What could be more delightful? Why should he feel sad about it and want to cry like a baby? In a few minutes Harry would arrive with his car to take him to the wharf; in an hour he would be on the sea, in two hours he would see the sunset behind him, where Boston had been, and his new life would be opening before him. It was many years since he had been abroad. June, the best of the year to come—England, France, the Rhine—how ridiculous that he should already be homesick!

There was a light footstep outside the door, a knock, the door opened, and Harry came in.

"Well, old man, I've come to get you. The old bus actually got here. Are you ready? Here, let me take your arm. You're tottering like an octogenarian!"

Mr. Arcularis submitted gratefully, laughing, and they made the journey slowly along the bleak corridor and down the stairs to the entrance hall. Miss Hoyle, his nurse, was there, and the Matron, and the charming little assistant with freckles who had helped to prepare him for the operation. Miss Hoyle put out her hand.

"Good-by, Mr. Arcularis," she said, "and *bon voyage*."

"Good-by, Miss Hoyle, and thank you for everything. You were very kind to me. And I fear I was a nuisance."

The girl with the freckles, too, gave him her hand, smiling. She was very pretty, and it would have been easy to fall in love with her. She reminded him of someone. Who was it? He tried in vain to remember while he said good-by to her and turned to the Matron.

"And not too many latitudes with the young ladies, Mr. Arcularis!" she was saying.

Mr. Arcularis was pleased, flattered, by all this attention to a middle-aged invalid, and felt a joke taking shape in his mind, and no sooner in his mind than on his tongue.

"Oh, no latitudes," he said, laughing. "I'll leave the latitudes to the ship!"

"Oh, come now," said the Matron, "we don't seem to have hurt him much, do we?"

"I think we'll have to operate on him again and *really* cure him," said Miss Hoyle.

He was going down the front steps, between the potted palmetoes, and they all laughed and waved. The wind was cold, very cold for June, and he was glad he had put on his coat. He shivered.

"Damned cold for June!" he said. "Why should it be so cold?"

"East wind," Harry said, arranging the rug over his knees. "Sorry it's an open car, but I believe in fresh air and all that sort of thing. I'll drive slowly. We've got plenty of time."

They coasted gently down the long hill towards Beacon Street, but the road was badly surfaced, and despite Harry's care Mr. Arcularis felt his pain again. He found that he could alleviate it a little by leaning to the right, against the arm-rest, and not breathing

too deeply. But how glorious to be out again! How strange and vivid the world looked! The trees had innumerable green fresh leaves—they were all blowing and shifting and turning and flashing in the wind; drops of rainwater fell downward sparkling; the robins were singing their absurd, delicious little four-noted songs; even the street cars looked unusually bright and beautiful, just as they used to look when he was a child and had wanted above all things to be a motorman. He found himself smiling foolishly at everything, foolishly and weakly, and wanted to say something about it to Harry. It was no use, though—he had no strength, and the mere finding of words would be almost more than he could manage. And even if he should succeed in saying it, he would then most likely burst into tears. He shook his head slowly from side to side.

"Ain't it grand?" he said.

"I'll bet it looks good," said Harry.

"Words fail me."

"You wait till you get out to sea. You'll have a swell time,"

"Oh, swell! ... I hope not. I hope it'll be calm."

"Tut tut."

When they passed the Harvard Club Mr. Arcularis made a slow and somewhat painful effort to turn in his scat and look at it. It might be the last chance to see it for a long time. Why this sentimental longing to stare at it, though? There it was, with the great flag blowing in the wind, the Harvard seal now concealed by the swift folds and now revealed, and there were the windows in the library, where he had spent so many delightful hours reading—Plato, and Kipling, and the Lord knows what—and the balconies from which for so many years he had watched the finish of the Marathon. Old Talbot might be in there now, sleeping with a book on his knee, hoping forlornly to be interrupted by anyone, for anything.

"Good-by to the old club," he said.

"The bar will miss you," said Harry, smiling with friendly irony and looking straight ahead.

"But let there be no moaning," said Mr. Arcularis.

"What's *that* a quotation from?"

" **The Odyssey.** "

In spite of the cold, he was glad of the wind on his face, for it helped to dissipate the feeling of vagueness and dizziness that came over him in a sickening wave from time to time. All of a sudden everything would begin to swim and dissolve, the houses would lean their heads together, he had to close his eyes, and there would be a curious and dreadful humming noise, which at regular intervals rose to a crescendo and then drawlingly subsided again. It was disconcerting. Perhaps he still had a trace of fever. When he got on the ship he would have a glass of whisky. . . . From one of these spells he opened his eyes and found that they were on the ferry, crossing to East Boston. It must have been the ferry's engines that he had heard. From another spell he woke to find himself on the wharf, the car at a standstill beside a pile of yellow packing-cases.

"We're here because we're here because we're here," said Harry.

"Because we're here," added Mr. Arcularis.

He dozed in the car while Harry—and what a good friend Harry was!—attended to all the details. He went and came with tickets and passports and baggage checks and porters. And at last he unwrapped Mr. Arcularis from the rugs and led him up the steep gangplank to the deck, and thence by devious windings to a small cold stateroom with a solitary porthole like the eye of a cyclops.

"Here you are," he said, "and now I've got to go. Did you hear the whistle?"

"No."

"Well, you're half asleep. It's sounded the ail-ashore. Good-by, old fellow, and take care of yourself. Bring me back a spray of edelweiss. And send me a picture post card from the Absolute."

"Will you have it finite or infinite?"

"Oh, infinite. But with your signature on it. Now you'd better turn in for a while and have a nap. Cheerio!"

Mr. Arcularis took his hand and pressed it hard, and once more felt like crying. Absurd! Had he become a child again?

"Good-by," he said.

He sat down in the little wicker chair, with his overcoat still on, closed his eyes, and listened to the humming of the air in the ventilator. Hurried footsteps ran up and down the corridor. The chair was not too comfortable, and his pain began to bother him again, so

he moved, with his coat still on, to the narrow berth and fell asleep. When he woke up, it was dark, and the porthole had been partly opened. He groped for the switch and turned on the light. Then he rang for the steward.

"It's cold in here," he said. "Would you mind closing the port?"

The girl who sat opposite him at dinner was charming. Who was it she reminded him of? Why, of course, the girl at the hospital, the girl with the freckles. Her hair was beautiful, not quite red, not quite gold, nor had it been bobbed; arranged with a sort of graceful untidiness, it made him think of a Melozzo da Forlì angel. Her face was freckled, she had a mouth which was both humorous and voluptuous. And she seemed to be alone.

He frowned at the bill of fare and ordered the thick soup.

"No hors d'œuvres?" asked the steward.

"I think not," said Mr. Arcularis. "They might kill me!"

The steward permitted himself to be amused and deposited the menu card on the table against the water-bottle. His eyebrows were lifted. As he moved away, the girl followed him with her eyes and smiled.

"I'm afraid you shocked him," she said.

"Impossible," said Mr. Arcularis. "These stewards, they're dead souls. How could they be stewards otherwise? And they think they've seen and known everything. They suffer terribly from the *déjà vu*. Personally, I don't blame them."

"It must be a dreadful sort of life."

"It's because they're dead that they accept it."

"Do you think so?"

"I'm sure of it. I'm enough of a dead soul myself to know the signs!"

"Well, I don't know what you mean by that!"

"But nothing mysterious! I'm just out of hospital, after an operation. I was given up for dead. For six months I had given *myself* up for dead. If you've ever been seriously ill you know the feeling. You have a posthumous feeling—a mild, cynical tolerance for everything and everyone. What is there you haven't seen or done or understood? Nothing."

Mr. Arcularis waved his hands and smiled.

"I wish I could understand you," said the girl, "but I've never been ill in my life."

"Never?"

"Never."

"Good God!"

The torrent of the unexpressed and inexpressible paralyzed him and rendered him speechless. He stared at the girl, wondering who she was and then, realizing that he had perhaps stared too fixedly, averted his gaze, gave a little laugh, rolled a pill of bread between his fingers. After a second or two he allowed himself to look at her again and found her smiling.

"Never pay any attention to invalids," he said, "or they'll drag you to the hospital."

She examined him critically, with her head tilted a little to one side, but with friendliness.

"You don't *look* like an invalid," she said.

Mr. Arcularis thought her charming. His pain ceased to bother him, the disagreeable humming disappeared, or rather, it was dissociated from himself and became merely, as it should be, the sound of the ship's engines, and he began to think the voyage was going to be really delightful. The parson on his right passed him the salt.

"I fear you will need this in your soup," he said.

"Thank you. Is it as bad as that?"

The steward, overhearing, was immediately apologetic and solicitous. He explained that on the first day everything was at sixes and sevens. The girl looked up at him and asked him a question.

"Do you think we'll have a good voyage?" she said.

He was passing the hot rolls to the parson, removing the napkins from them with a deprecatory finger.

"Well, madam, I don't like to be a Jeremiah, but—"

"Oh, come," said the parson, "I hope we have no Jeremiahs."

"What do you mean?" said the girl.

Mr. Arcularis ate his soup with gusto—it was nice and hot.

"Well, maybe I shouldn't say it, but there's a corpse on board, going to Ireland; and I never yet knew a voyage with a corpse on board that we didn't have bad weather."

"Why, steward, you're just superstitious! What nonsense."

"That's a very ancient superstition," said Mr. Arcularis. "I've heard it many times. Maybe it's true. Maybe we'll be wrecked. And what does it matter, after all?" He was very bland.

"Then let's be wrecked," said the parson coldly.

Nevertheless, Mr. Arcularis felt a shudder go through him on hearing the steward's remark. A corpse in the hold—a coffin? Perhaps it was true. Perhaps some disaster would befall them. There might be fogs. There might be icebergs. He thought of all the wrecks of which he had read. There was the *Titanic*, which he had read about in the warm newspaper room at the Harvard Club—it had seemed dreadfully real, even there. That band, playing "Nearer My God to Thee" on the after-deck while the ship sank! It was one of the darkest of his memories. And the *Empress of Ireland*—all those poor people trapped in the smoking-room, with only one door between them and life, and that door locked for the night by the deck-steward, and the deck-steward nowhere to be found! He shivered, feeling a draft, and turned to the parson.

"How do these strange delusions arise?" he said.

The parson looked at him searchingly, appraisingly—from chin to forehead, from forehead to chin—and Mr. Arcularis, feeling uncomfortable, straightened his tie.

"From nothing but fear," said the parson. "Nothing on earth but fear."

"How strange!" said the girl.

Mr. Arcularis again looked at her—she had lowered her face—and again tried to think of whom she reminded him. It wasn't only the little freckle-faced girl at the hospital—both of them had reminded him of someone else. Someone far back in his life: remote, beautiful, lovely. But he couldn't think. The meal came to an end, they all rose, the ship's orchestra played a feeble fox-trot, and Mr. Arcularis, once more alone, went to the bar to have his whisky. The room was stuffy, and the ship's engines were both audible and palpable. The humming and throbbing oppressed him, the rhythm seemed to be the rhythm of his own pain, and after a short time he found his way, with slow steps, holding on to the walls in his moments of weakness and dizziness, to his forlorn and white little room.

The port had been—thank God!—closed for the night: it was cold enough anyway. The white and blue ribbons fluttered from the ventilator, the bottle and glasses clicked and clucked as the ship swayed gently to the long, slow motion of the sea. It was all very peculiar—it was all like something he had experienced somewhere before. What was it? Where was it? ... He untied his tie, looking at his face in the glass, and wondered, and from time to time put his hand to his side to hold in the pain. It wasn't at Portsmouth, in his childhood, nor at Salem, nor in the rose-garden at his Aunt Julia's, nor in the schoolroom at Cambridge. It was something very queer, very intimate, very precious. The jackstones, the Sunday-School cards which he had loved when he was a child . . . He fell asleep.

The sense of time was already hopelessly confused. One hour was like another, the sea looked always the same, morning was indistinguishable from afternoon—and was it Tuesday or Wednesday? Mr. Arcularis was sitting in the smoking-room, in his favorite corner, watching the parson teach Miss Dean to play chess. On the deck outside he could see the people passing and repassing in their restless round of the ship. The red jacket went by, then the black hat with the white feather, then the purple scarf, the brown tweed coat, the Bulgarian mustache, the monocle, the Scotch cap with fluttering ribbons, and in no time at all the red jacket again, dipping past the windows with its own peculiar rhythm, followed once more by the black hat and the purple scarf. How odd to reflect on the fixed little orbits of these things—as definite and profound, perhaps, as the orbits of the stars, and as important to God or the Absolute. There was a kind of tyranny in this fixedness, too—to think of it too much made one uncomfortable. He closed his eyes for a moment, to avoid seeing for the fortieth time the Bulgarian mustache and the pursuing monocle. The parson was explaining the movements of knights. Two forward and one to the side. Eight possible moves, always to the opposite color from that on which the piece stands. Two forward and one to the side: Miss Dean repeated the words several times with reflective emphasis. Here, too, was the terrifying fixed curve of the infinite, the creeping curve of logic which at last must become the final signpost at the edge of nothing. After that—

the deluge. The great white light of annihilation. The bright flash of death. . . . Was it merely the sea which made these abstractions so insistent, so intrusive? The mere notion of *orbit* had somehow become extraordinarily naked; and to rid himself of the discomfort and also to forget a little the pain which bothered his side whenever he sat down, he walked slowly and carefully into the writing-room, and examined a pile of superannuated magazines and catalogues of travel. The bright colors amused him, the photographs of remote islands and mountains, savages in sampans or sarongs or both—it was all very far off and delightful, like something in a dream or a fever. But he found that he was too tired to read and was incapable of concentration. Dreams! Yes, that reminded him. That rather alarming business—sleep-walking!

Later in the evening—at what hour he didn't know—he was telling Miss Dean about it, as he had intended to do. They were sitting in deck-chairs on the sheltered side. The sea was black, and there was a cold wind. He wished they had chosen to sit in the lounge.

Miss Dean was extremely pretty—no, beautiful. She looked at him, too, in a very strange and lovely way, with something of inquiry, something of sympathy, something of affection. It seemed as if, between the question and the answer, they had sat thus for a very long time, exchanging an unspoken secret, simply looking at each other quietly and kindly. Had an hour or two passed? And was it at all necessary to speak?

"No," she said, "I never have."

She breathed into the low words a note of interrogation and gave him a slow smile.

"That's the funny part of it. I never had either until last night. Never in my life. I hardly ever even dream. And it really rather frightens me."

"Tell me about it, Mr. Arcularis."

"I dreamed at first that I was walking, alone, in a wide plain covered with snow. It was growing dark, I was very cold, my feet were frozen and numb, and I was lost. I came then to a signpost—at first it seemed to me there was nothing on it. Nothing but ice. Just before it grew finally dark, however, I made out on it the one word 'Polaris.'"

"The Pole Star."

"Yes—and you see, I didn't myself know that. I looked it up only this morning. I suppose I must have seen it somewhere? And of course it rhymes with my name."

"Why, so it does!"

"Anyway, it gave me—in the dream—an awful feeling of despair, and the dream changed. This time, I dreamed I was standing *outside* my stateroom in the little dark corridor, or *cul-de-sac*, and trying to find the door-handle to let myself in. I was in my pajamas, and again I was very cold. And at this point I woke up. . . . The extraordinary thing is that's exactly where I was!"

"Good heavens. How strange!"

"Yes. And now the question is, *where had I been?* I was frightened, when I came to—not unnaturally. For among other things I *did* have, quite definitely, the feeling that I *had been* somewhere. Somewhere where it was very cold. It doesn't sound very proper. Suppose I had been seen!"

"That might have been awkward," said Miss Dean.

"Awkward! It might indeed. It's very singular. I've never done such a thing before. It's this sort of thing that reminds one—rather wholesomely, perhaps, don't you think?"—and Mr. Arcularis gave a nervous little laugh—"how extraordinarily little we know about the workings of our own minds or souls. After all, what *do* we know?"

"Nothing—nothing—nothing—nothing," said Miss Dean slowly.

"*Absolutely* nothing."

Their voices had dropped, and again they were silent; and again they looked at each other gently and sympathetically, as if for the exchange of something unspoken and perhaps unspeakable. Time ceased. The orbit—so it seemed to Mr. Arcularis—once more became pure, became absolute. And once more he found himself wondering who it was that Miss Dean—Clarice Dean—reminded him of. Long ago and far away. Like those pictures of the islands and mountains. The little freckle-faced girl at the hospital was merely, as it were, the stepping-stone, the signpost, or, as in algebra, the "equals" sign. But what was it they both "equalled"? The jackstones came again into his mind and his Aunt Julia's rose-garden—at sunset; but this

was ridiculous. It couldn't be simply that they reminded him of his childhood! And yet why not?

They went into the lounge. The ship's orchestra, in the oval-shaped balcony among faded palms, was playing the finale of "Cavalleria Rusticana," playing it badly.

"Good God!" said Mr. Arcularis, "can't I ever escape from that damned sentimental tune? It's the last thing I heard in America, and the last thing I *want* to hear."

"But don't you like it?"

"As music? No! It moves me too much, but in the wrong way."

"What, exactly, do you mean?"

"Exactly? Nothing. When I heard it at the hospital—when was it?—it made me feel like crying. Three old Italians tootling it in the rain. I suppose, like most people, I'm afraid of my feelings."

"Are they so dangerous?"

"Now then, young woman! Are you pulling my leg?"

The stewards had rolled away the carpets, and the passengers were beginning to dance. Miss Dean accepted the invitation* of a young officer, and Mr. Arcularis watched them with envy. Odd, that last exchange of remarks—very odd; in fact, everything was odd. Was it possible that they were falling in love? Was that what it was all about—all these concealed references and recollections? He had read of such things. But at his age! And with a girl of twenty-two!

After an amused look at his old friend Polaris from the open door on the sheltered side, he went to bed.

The rhythm of the ship's engines was positively a persecution. It gave one no rest, it followed one like the Hound of Heaven, it drove one out into space and across the Milky Way and then back home by way of Betelgeuse. It was cold there, too. Mr. Arcularis, making the round trip by way of Betelgeuse and Polaris, sparkled with frost. He felt like a Christmas tree. Icicles on his fingers and icicles on his toes. He tinkled and spangled in the void, hallooed to the waste echoes, rounded the buoy on the verge of the Unknown, and tacked glitteringly homeward. The wind whistled. He was barefooted. Snowflakes and tinsel blew past him. Next time, by George, he would

go farther still—for altogether it was rather a lark. Forward into the untrodden! as somebody said. Some intrepid explorer of his own backyard, probably, some middle-aged professor with an umbrella: those were the fellows for courage! But give us time, thought Mr. Arcularis, give us time, and we will bring back with us the night-rime of the Obsolute. Or was it Absolute? If only there weren't this perpetual throbbing, this iteration of sound, like a pain, these circles and repetitions of light—the feeling as of everything coiling inward to a center of misery . . .

Suddenly it was dark, and he was lost. He was groping, he touched the cold, white, slippery woodwork with his fingernails, looking for an electric switch. The throbbing, of course, was the throbbing of the ship. But he was almost home—almost home. Another corner to round, a door to be opened, and there he would be. Safe and sound. Safe in his father's home.

It was at this point that he woke up: in the corridor that led to the dining saloon. Such pure terror, such horror, seized him as he had never known. His heart felt as if it would stop beating. His back was towards the dining saloon; apparently he had just come from it. He was in his pajamas. The corridor was dim, all but two lights having been turned out for the night, and—thank God!—deserted. Not a soul, not a sound. He was perhaps fifty yards from his room. With luck he could get to it unseen. Holding tremulously to the rail that ran along the wall, a brown, greasy rail, he began to creep his way forward. He felt very weak, very dizzy, and his thoughts refused to concentrate. Vaguely he remembered Miss Dean—Clarice—and the freckled girl, as if they were one and the same person. But he wasn't in the hospital, he was on the ship. Of course. How absurd. The Great Circle. Here we are, old fellow . . . steady round the corner . . . hold hard to your umbrella . . .

In his room, with the door safely shut behind him, Mr. Arcularis broke into a cold sweat. He had no sooner got into his bunk, shivering, than he heard the night watchman pass.

"But where—" he thought, closing his eyes in agony—"have I been? . . ."

A dreadful idea had occurred to him.

"It's nothing serious—how could it be anything serious? Of course it's nothing serious," said Mr. Arcularis.

"No, it's nothing serious," said the ship's doctor urbanely.

"I knew you'd think so. But just the same—"

"Such a condition is the result of worry," said the doctor. "Are you worried—do you mind telling me—about something? Just try to think."

"Worried?"

Mr. Arcularis knitted his brows. *Was* there something? Some little mosquito of a cloud disappearing into the southwest, the northeast? Some little gnat-song of despair? But no, that was all over. All over.

"Nothing," he said, "nothing whatever."

"It's very strange," said the doctor.

"Strange! I should say so. I've come to sea for a rest, not for a nightmare! What about a bromide?"

"Well, I can give you a bromide, Mr. Arcularis—"

"Then, please, if you don't mind, give me a bromide."

He carried the little phial hopefully to his stateroom, and took a dose at once. He could see the sun through his porthole. It looked northern and pale and small, like a little peppermint, which was only natural enough, for the latitude was changing with every hour. But why was it that doctors were all alike? and all, for that matter, like his father, or that other fellow at the hospital? Smythe, his name was. Doctor Smythe. A nice, dry little fellow, and they said he was a writer. Wrote poetry, or something like that. Poor fellow—disappointed. Like everybody else. Crouched in there, in his cabin, night after night, writing blank verse or something—all about the stars and flowers and love and death; ice and the sea and the infinite; time and tide—well, every man to his own taste.

"But it's nothing serious," said Mr. Arcularis, later, to the parson. "How could it be?"

"Why, of course not, my dear fellow," said the parson, patting his back. "How could it be?"

"I know it isn't and yet I worry about it."

"It would be ridiculous to think it serious," said the parson.

Mr. Arcularis shivered: it was colder than ever. It was said that they were near icebergs. For a few hours in the morning there had

been a fog, and the siren had blown—devastatingly—at three-minute intervals. Icebergs caused fog—he knew that.

"These things always come," said the parson, "from a sense of guilt. You feel guilty about something. I won't be so rude as to inquire what it is. But if you could rid yourself of the sense of guilt—"

And later still, when the sky was pink:

"But is it anything to worry about?" said Miss Dean. "Really?"

"No, I suppose not."

"Then don't worry. We aren't children any longer!"

"Aren't we? I wonder!"

They leaned, shoulders touching, on the deck-rail, and looked at the sea, which was multitudinously incarnadined. Mr. Arcularis scanned the horizon in vain for an iceberg.

"Anyway," he said, "the colder we are the less we feel!"

"I hope that's no reflection on *you*!" said Miss Dean.

"Here . . . feel my hand," said Mr. Arcularis.

"Heaven knows it's cold!"

"It's been to Polaris and back! No wonder."

"Poor thing, poor thing!"

"Warm it."

"May I?"

"You can."

"I'll try."

Laughing, she took his hand between both of hers, one palm under and one palm over, and began rubbing it briskly. The decks were deserted, no one was near them, everyone was dressing for dinner. The sea grew darker, the wind blew colder.

"I wish I could remember who you are," he said.

"And you—who are you?"

"Myself."

"Then perhaps / am yourself."

"Don't be metaphysical!"

"But I *am* metaphysical!"

She laughed, withdrew, pulled the light coat about her shoulders.

The bugle blew the summons for dinner—"The Roast Beef of Old England"—and they walked together along the darkening deck toward the door, from which a shaft of soft light fell across the deck-

rail. As they stepped over the brass door-sill Mr. Arcularis felt the throb of the engines again; he put his hand quickly to his side.

"Auf wiedersehen," he said. "*Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow.*"

Mr. Arcularis was finding it impossible, absolutely impossible, to keep warm. A cold fog surrounded the ship, had done so, it seemed, for days. The sun had all but disappeared, the transition from day to night was almost unnoticeable. The ship, too, seemed scarcely to be moving—it was as if anchored among walls of ice and rime. Monstrous, that merely because it was June, and supposed, therefore, to be warm, the ship's authorities should consider it unnecessary to turn on the heat! By day, he wore his heavy coat and sat shivering in the corner of the smoking-room. His teeth chattered, his hands were blue. By night, he heaped blankets on his bed, closed the porthole's black eye against the sea, and drew the yellow curtains across it, but in vain. Somehow, despite everything, the fog crept in, and the icy fingers touched his throat. The steward, questioned about it, merely said, "Icebergs." Of course—any fool knew that. But how long, in God's name, was it going to last? They surely ought to be past the Grand Banks by this time! And surely it wasn't necessary to sail to England by way of Greenland and Iceland!

Miss Dean—Clarice—was sympathetic.

"It's simply because," she said, "your vitality has been lowered by your illness. You can't expect to be your normal self so soon after an operation! When was your operation, by the way?"

Mr. Arcularis considered. Strange—he couldn't be quite sure. It was all a little vague—his sense of time had disappeared.

"Heaven knows!" he said. "Centuries ago. When I was a tadpole and you were a fish. I should think it must have been at about the time of the Battle of Teutoburg Forest. Or perhaps when I was a Neanderthal man with a club!"

"Are you sure it wasn't farther back still?"

What did she mean by that?

"Not at all. Obviously, we've been on this damned ship for ages—for eras—for aeons. And even on this ship, you must remember, I've had plenty of time, in my nocturnal wanderings, to go several times

to Orion and back. I'm thinking, by the way, of going farther still. There's a nice little star off to the left, as you round Betelgeuse, which looks as if it might be right at the edge. The last outpost of the finite. I think I'll have a look at it and bring you back a frozen rime-feather."

"It would melt when you got it back."

"Oh, no, it wouldn't—not on *this* ship!"

Clarice laughed.

"I wish I could go with you," she said.

"If only you would! If only—"

He broke off his sentence and looked hard at her—how lovely she was, and how desirable! No such woman had ever before come into his life; there had been no one with whom he had at once felt so profound a sympathy and understanding. It was a miracle, simply—a miracle. No need to put his arm around her or to kiss her—delightful as such small vulgarities would be. He had only to look at her, and to feel, gazing into those extraordinary eyes, that she knew him, had always known him. It was as if, indeed, she might be his own soul.

But as he looked thus at her, reflecting, he noticed that she was frowning.

"What is it?" he said.

She shook her head, slowly.

"I don't know."

"Tell me."

"Nothing. It just occurred to me that perhaps you weren't looking quite so well."

Mr. Arcularis was startled. He straightened himself up.

"What nonsense! Of course this pain bothers me—and I feel astonishingly weak—"

"It's more than that—much more than that. Something is worrying you horribly." She paused, and then with an air of challenging him, added, "Tell me, did you?"

Her eyes were suddenly asking him blazingly the question he had been afraid of. He flinched, caught his breath, looked away. But it was no use, as he knew: he would have to tell her. He had known all along that he would have to tell her.

"Clarice," he said—and his voice broke in spite of his effort to control it—"it's killing me, it's ghastly! Yes, I did."

His eyes filled with tears, he saw that her own had done so also. She put her hand on his arm.

"I knew," she said. "I knew. But tell me."

"It's happened twice again—*twice*—and each time I was farther away. The same dream of going round a star, the same terrible coldness and helplessness. That awful whistling curve . . ." He shuddered.

"And when you woke up—" she spoke quietly—"where were you when you woke up? Don't be afraid!"

"The first time I was at the farther end of the dining saloon. I had my hand on the door that leads into the pantry."

"I see. Yes. And the next time?"

Mr. Arcularis wanted to close his eyes in terror—he felt as if he were going mad. His lips moved before he could speak, and when at last he did speak it was in a voice so low as to be almost a whisper.

"I was at the bottom of the stairway that leads down from the pantry to the hold, past the refrigerating-plant. It was dark, and I was crawling on my hands and knees . . . *Crawling on my hands and knees!* . . ."

"Oh!" she said, and again, "Oh!"

He began to tremble violently; he felt the hand on his arm trembling also. And then he watched a look of unmistakable horror come slowly into Clarice's eyes, and a look of understanding, as if she saw . . . She tightened her hold on his arm.

"Do you think . . ." she whispered.

They stared at each other.

"I know," he said. "And so do you . . . Twice more—three times—and I'll be looking down into an empty . . ."

It was then that they first embraced—then, at the edge of the infinite, at the last signpost of the finite. They clung together desperately, forlornly, weeping as they kissed each other, staring hard one moment and closing their eyes the next. Passionately, passionately, she kissed him, as if she were indeed trying to give him her warmth, her life.

"But what nonsense!" she cried, leaning back and holding his

face between her hands, her hands which were wet with his tears.
"What nonsense! It can't be!"

"It is," said Mr. Arcularis slowly.

"But how do you know? . . . How do you know where the—"
For the first time Mr. Arcularis smiled.

"Don't be afraid, darling—you mean the coffin?"

"How could you know where it is?"

"I don't need to," said Mr. Arcularis . . . "I'm already almost there."

Before they separated for the night, in the smoking-room, they had several whisky cocktails.

"We must make it gay!" Mr. Arcularis said. "Above all, we must make it gay. Perhaps even now it will turn out to be nothing but a nightmare from which both of us will wake! And even at the worst, at my present rate of travel, I ought to need two more nights! It's a long way, still, to that little star."

The parson passed them at the door.

"What! turning in so soon?" he said. "I was hoping for a game of chess."

"Yes, both turning in. But tomorrow?"

"Tomorrow, then, Miss Dean! And good-night!"

"Good-night."

They walked once round the deck, then leaned on the railing and stared into the fog. It was thicker and whiter than ever. The ship was moving barely perceptibly, the rhythm of the engines was slower, more subdued and remote, and at regular intervals, mournfully, came the long reverberating cry of the foghorn. The sea was calm, and lapped only very tenderly against the side of the ship, the sound coming up to them clearly, however, because of the profound stillness.

" 'On such a night as this—' " quoted Mr. Arcularis grimly.

" 'On such a night as this—' "

Their voices hung suspended in the night, time ceased for them, for an eternal instant they were happy. When at last they parted it was by tacit agreement on a note of the ridiculous.

"Be a good boy and take your bromide!" she said.

"Yes, mother, I'll take my medicine!"

In his stateroom, he mixed himself a strong potion of bromide, a very strong one, and got into bed. He would have no trouble in falling asleep: he felt more tired, more supremely exhausted, than he had ever been in his life; nor had bed ever seemed so delicious. And that long, magnificent, delirious swoop of dizziness . . . the Great Circle . . . the swift pathway to Arcturus . . .

It was all as before, but infinitely more rapid. Never had Mr. Arcularis achieved such phenomenal, such supernatural, speed. In no time at all he was beyond the moon, shot past the North Star as if it were standing still (which perhaps it was?), swooped in a long, bright curve round the Pleiades, shouted his frosty greetings to Betelgeuse, and was oil to the little blue star which pointed the way to the unknown. Forward into the untrodden! Courage, old man, and hold on to your umbrella! Have you got your garters on? Mind your hat! In no time at all we'll be back to Clarice with the frozen time-feather, the rime-feather, the snowflake of the Absolute, the Obsolete. If only we don't wake . . . if only we needn't wake . . . if only we don't wake in that—in that—time and space . . . somewhere or nowhere . . . cold and dark . . . "Cavalleria Rusticana" sobbing among the palms; if a lonely . . . if only . . . the coffers of the poor—not coffers, not coffers, not coffers. Oh, God, not coffers, but light, delight, supreme white and brightness, and above all whirling lightness, whirling lightness above all—and freezing—freezing—freezing . . .

At this point in the void the surgeon's last effort to save Mr. Arcularis's life had failed. He stood back from the operating table and made a tired gesture with a rubber-gloved hand.

"It's all over," he said. "As I expected."

He looked at Miss Hoyle, whose gaze was downward, at the basin she held. There was a moment's stillness, a pause, a brief flight of unexchanged comment, and then the ordered life of the hospital was resumed.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

i. Does the title of the story have any significance in terms of the total events?

2. Find words, or passages, in the story which symbolize cold. In turn, what does the idea of cold symbolize?

3. What is the significance of the constant engine noise on the ship?

4. Mr. Arcularis feels a greater and greater need for the girl on board ship. Why does he need her? What is her effect upon him? Why does she tend to soothe and comfort him? Is it significant that she is young?

5. How many points of contrast between the girl and Mr. Arcularis can you find?

6. How do you explain the dreams of Mr. Arcularis? The fact that he finds himself in pajamas in the corridor of the ship? The fact that in each dream he seems to fly farther and farther away from the ship?

7. Can you ascribe any symbolic significance to the fact that Mr. Arcularis is taking a sea voyage?

8. The end of the story may have seemed an utter shock to you, a complete surprise. Could there have been any other logical ending? After learning the end of the story, do you find it easier to understand the various symbols in the story? At what point, if any, did you first suspect the true situation? How and why?

9. What is the plot of "Mr. Arcularis"? If what seems to have taken place did not in reality take place, of what does the plot consist?

10. In the progress of the story certain events seem quite sane and normal, others seem fantastic and strange. Choose several examples of each and analyze your original reactions to them. Is the distinction a valid one? How does Aiken maintain the semblance of reality in a story which is not real at all?

The Chink and the Child

by THOMAS BURKE

IT is a tale of love and lovers that they tell in the low-lit Causeway that slinks from West India Dock Road to the dark waste of waters beyond. In Pennyfields, too, you may hear it; and I do not doubt that it is told in far-away Tai-Ping, in Singapore, in Tokio, in Shanghai, and those other gay-lamped haunts of wonder whither the wandering people of Limehouse go and whence they return so casually. It is a tale for tears, and should you hear it in the liliated tongue of the yellow men it would awaken in you all your pity. In our bald speech it must, unhappily, lose its essential fragrance, that quality that will lift an affair of squalor into loftier spheres of passion and imagination, beauty and sorrow. It will sound unconvincing, a little . . . you know . . . the kind of thing that is best forgotten. Perhaps . . .

But listen.

It is Battling Burrows, the lightning welterweight of Shadwell, the box o' tricks, the Tetrarch of the ring, who enters first. Battling Burrows, the pride of Ratcliff, Poplar and Limehouse, and the despair of his manager and backers. For he loved wine, woman and song; and the boxing world held that he couldn't last long on that. There was any amount of money in him for his parasites if only the damned women could be cut out; but again and again would he disappear from his training quarters on the eve of a big fight, to consort with Molly and Dolly, and to drink other things than barley water and lemon juice. Wherefore Chuck Lightfoot, his manager, forced him to fight on any and every occasion while he was good and a money-maker; for at any moment the collapse might come, and

Chuck would be called upon by his creditors to strip off that "shirt" which at every contest he laid upon his man.

Battling was of a type that is too common in the eastern districts of London; a type that upsets all accepted classifications. He wouldn't be classed. He was a curious mixture of athleticism and degeneracy. He could run like a deer, leap like a greyhound, fight like a machine, and drink like a suction-hose. He was a bully; he had the courage of the high hero. He was an open-air sport; he had the vices of a French decadent.

It was one of his love adventures that properly begins this tale; for the girl had come to Battling one night with a recital of terrible happenings, of an angered parent, of a slammed door. ... In her arms was a bundle of white rags. Now Battling, like so many sensualists, was also a sentimentalist. He took that bundle of white rags; he paid the girl money to get into the country; and the bundle of white rags had existed in and about his domicile in Pekin Street, Limehouse, for some eleven years. Her position was nondescript; to the casual observer it would seem that she was Battling's relief punch-ball—an unpleasant post for any human creature to occupy, especially if you are a little girl of twelve, and the place be the one-room household of the lightning welterweight. When Battling was cross with his manager . . . well, it is indefensible to strike your manager or to throw chairs at him, if he is a good manager; but to use a dog-whip on a small child is permissible and quite satisfying; at least, he found it so. On these occasions, then, when very cross with his sparring partners, or over-flushed with victory and juice of the grape, he would flog Lucy. But he was reputed by the boys to be a good fellow. He only whipped the child when he was drunk; and he was only drunk for eight months of the year.

For just over twelve years this bruised little body had crept about Poplar and Limehouse. Always the white face was scarred with red, or black-furrowed with tears; always in her steps and in her look was expectation of dread things. Night after night her sleep was broken by the cheerful Battling's brute voice and violent hands; and terrible were the lessons which life taught her in those few years. Yet, for all the starved face and the transfixed air, there was a lurking beauty about her, a something that called you in the soft

curve of her cheek that cried for kisses and was fed with blows, and in the splendid mournfulness that grew in eyes and lips. The brown hair chimed against the pale face, like the rounding of a verse. The blue cotton frock and the broken shoes could not break the loveliness of her slender figure or the shy grace of her movements as she flitted about the squalid alleys of the docks; though in all that region of wasted life and toil and decay, there was not one that noticed her, until . . .

Now there lived in Chinatown, in one lousy room over Mr. Tai Fu's store in Pennyfields, a wandering yellow man, named Cheng Huan. Cheng Huan was a poet. He did not realise it. He had never been able to understand why he was unpopular; and he died without knowing. But a poet he was, tinged with the materialism of his race, and in his poor listening heart strange echoes would awake of which he himself was barely conscious. He regarded things differently from other sailors; he felt things more passionately, and things which they felt not at all; so he lived alone instead of at one of the lodging-houses. Every evening he would sit at his window and watch the street. Then, a little later, he would take a jolt of opium at the place at the corner of Formosa Street.

He had come to London by devious ways. He had loafed on the Bund at Shanghai. The fateful intervention of a crimp had landed him on a boat. He got to Cardiff, and sojourned in its Chinatown; thence to Liverpool, to Glasgow; thence, by a ticket from the Asiatics' Aid Society, to Limehouse, where he remained for two reasons—because it cost him nothing to live there, and because he was too lazy to find a boat to take him back to Shanghai.

So he would lounge and smoke cheap cigarettes, and sit at his window, from which point he had many times observed the lyrical Lucy. He noticed her casually. Another day, he observed her, not casually. Later, he looked long at her; later still, he began to watch for her and for that strangely provocative something about the toss of the head and the hang of the little blue skirt as it coyly kissed her knee.

Then that beauty which all Limehouse had missed smote Cheng. Straight to his heart it went, and cried itself into his very blood. Thereafter the spirit of poetry broke her blossoms all about his odor-

ous chamber. Nothing was the same. Pennyfields became a happy-lanterned street, and the monotonous fiddle in the house opposite was the music of his fathers. Bits of old song floated through his mind: little sweet verses of *Le Tai-pih*, murmuring of plum blossom, rice-field and stream. Day by day he would moon at his window, or shuffle about the streets, lighting to a flame when Lucy would pass and gravely return his quiet regard; and night after night, too, he would dream of a pale, lily-lovely child.

And now the Fates moved swiftly various pieces on their sinister board, and all that followed happened with a speed and precision that showed direction from higher ways.

It was Wednesday night in Limehouse, and for once clear of mist. Out of the coloured darkness of the Causeway stole the muffled wail of reed instruments, and, though every window was closely shuttered, between the joints shot jets of light and stealthy voices, and you could hear the whisper of slippered feet, and the stuttering steps of the satyr and the sadist. It was to the cafe in the middle of the Causeway, lit by the pallid blue light that is the symbol of China throughout the world, that Cheng Huan came, to take a dish of noodle and some tea. Thence he moved to another house whose stairs ran straight to the street, and above whose doorway a lamp glowed like an evil eye. At this establishment he mostly took his pipe of "chandu" and a brief chat with the keeper of the house, for, although not popular, and very silent, he liked sometimes to be in the presence of his compatriots. Like a figure of a shadowgraph he slid through the door and up the stairs.

The chamber he entered was a bit of the Orient squatting at the portals of the West. It was a well-kept place where one might play a game of fan-tan, or take a shot or so of *li-un*, or purchase other varieties of Oriental delight. It was sunk in a purple dusk, though here and there a lantern stung the glooms. Low couches lay around the walls, and strange men decorated them: Chinese, Japs, Malays, Lascars, with one or two white girls; and sleek, noiseless attendants swam from couch to couch. Away in the far corner sprawled a lank figure in brown shirting, its nerveless fingers curled about the stem of a spent pipe. On one of the lounges a scorbutic nigger sat with a Jewess from Shadwell. Squatting on a table in the centre, beneath

one of the lanterns, was a musician with a reed, blinking upon the company like a sly cat, and making his melody of six repeated notes.

The atmosphere churned. The dirt of years, tobacco of many growings, opium, betel nut, and moist flesh allied themselves in one grand assault against the nostrils.

As Cheng brooded on his insect-ridden cushion, of a sudden the lantern above the musician was caught by the ribbon of his reed. It danced and flung a hazy radiance on a divan in the shadow. He saw—started—half rose. His heart galloped, and the blood pounded in his quiet veins. Then he dropped again, crouched, and stared.

O lily-flowers and plum blossoms! O silver streams and dim-starred skies! O wine and roses, song and laughter! For there, kneeling on a mass of rugs, mazed and big-eyed, but understanding, was Lucy ... his Lucy ... his little maid. Through the dusk she must have felt his intent gaze upon her; for he crouched there, fascinated, staring into the now obscured corner where she knelt.

But the sickness which momentarily gripped him on finding in this place his snowy-breasted pearl passed and gave place to great joy. She was here; he would talk with her. Little English he had, but simple words, those with few gutturals, he had managed to pick up; so he rose, the masterful lover, and, with feline movements, crossed the nightmare chamber to claim his own.

If you wonder how Lucy came to be in this bagnio, the explanation is simple. Battling was in training. He had flogged her that day before starting work; he had then had a few brandies—not many; some eighteen or nineteen—and had locked the door of his room and taken the key. Lucy was, therefore, homeless, and a girl somewhat older than Lucy, so old and so wise, as girls are in that region, saw in her a possible source of revenue. So there they were, and to them appeared Cheng.

From what horrors he saved her that night cannot be told, for her ways were too audaciously childish to hold her long from harm in such a place. What he brought to her was love and death.

For he sat by her. He looked at her—reverently yet passionately. He touched her—wistfully yet eagerly. He locked a finger in her wondrous hair. She did not start away; she did not tremble. She

knew well what she had to be afraid of in that place; but she was not afraid of Cheng. She pierced the mephitic gloom and scanned his face. No, she was not afraid. His yellow hands, his yellow face, his smooth black hair . . . well, he was the first thing that had ever spoken soft words to her; the first thing that had ever laid a hand upon her that was not brutal; the first thing that had deferred in manner towards her as though she, too, had a right to live. She knew his words were sweet, though she did not understand them. Nor can they be set down. Half that he spoke was in village Chinese; the rest in a mangling of English which no distorted spelling could possibly reproduce.

But he drew her back against the cushions and asked her name, and she told him; and he inquired her age, and she told him; and he had then two beautiful words which came easily to his tongue. He repeated them again and again:

"Lucia . . . li'l Lucia. . . . Twelve. . . . Twelve." Musical phrases they were, dropping from his lips, and to the child who heard her name pronounced so lovingly, they were the lost heights of melody. She clung to him, and he to her. She held his strong arm in both of hers as they crouched on the divan, and nestled her cheek against his coat.

Well . . . he took her home to his wretched room.

"Li'l Lucia, come-a-home . . . Lucia."

His heart was on fire. As they slipped out of the noisomeness into the night air and crossed the West India Dock Road into Pennyfields, they passed unnoticed. It was late, for one thing, and for another . . . well, nobody cared particularly. His blood rang with soft music and the solemnity of drums, for surely he had found now what for many years he had sought—his world's one flower. Wanderer he was, from Tuan-tsen to Shanghai, Shanghai to Glasgow . . . Cardiff . . . Liverpool . . . London. He had dreamed often of the women of his native land; perchance one of them should be his flower. Women, indeed, there had been. Swatow . . . he had recollections of certain rose-winged hours in coast cities. At many places to which chance had led him a little bird had perched itself upon his heart, but so lightly and for so brief a while as hardly to be

felt. But now—now he had found her in this alabaster Cockney child. So that he was glad and had great joy of himself and the blue and silver night, and the harsh flares of the Poplar Hippodrome.

You will observe that he had claimed her, but had not asked himself whether she were of an age for love. The white perfection of the child had captivated every sense. It may be that he forgot that he was in London and not in Tuan-tsen. It may be that he did not care. Of that nothing can be told. All that is known is that his love was a pure and holy thing. Of that we may be sure, for his worst enemies have said it.

Slowly, softly they mounted the stairs to his room, and with almost an obeisance he entered and drew her in. A bank of cloud raced to the east and a full moon thrust a sharp sword of light upon them. Silence lay over all Pennyfields. With a bird-like movement, she looked up at him—her face alight, her tiny hands upon his coat—clinging, wondering, trusting. He took her hand and kissed it; repeated the kiss upon her cheek and lip and little bosom; twining his ringers in her hair. Docilely, and echoing the smile of his remon lips in a way that thrilled him almost to laughter, she returned his kisses impetuously, gladly.

He clasped the nestling to him. Bruised, tearful, with the love of life almost thrashed out of her, she had fluttered to him out of the evil night.

"O li'l Lucia!" And he put soft hands upon her, and smoothed her and crooned over her many gracious things in his flowered speech. So they stood in the moonlight, while she told him the story of her father, of her beatings, and starvings, and unhappiness.

"O li'l Lucia. . . . White Blossom. . . . Twelve. . . . Twelve years old!"

As he spoke, the clock above the Milwall Docks shot twelve crashing notes across the night. When the last echo died, he moved to a cupboard, and from it he drew strange things . . . formless masses of blue and gold, magical things of silk, and a vessel that was surely Aladdin's lamp, and a box of spices. He took these robes, and, with tender, reverent fingers, removed from his White Blossom the besmirched rags that covered her, and robed her again, and led her then to the heap of stuff that was his bed, and bestowed her safely.

For himself, he squatted on the floor before her, holding one grubby little hand. There he crouched all night, under the lyric moon, sleepless, watchful; and sweet content was his. He had fallen into an uncomfortable posture, and his muscles ached intolerably. But she slept, and he dared not move nor release her hand lest he should awaken her. Weary and trustful, she slept, knowing that the yellow man was kind and that she might sleep with no fear of a steel hand smashing the delicate structure of her dreams.

In the morning, when she awoke, still wearing her blue and yellow silk, she gave a cry of amazement. Cheng had been about. Many times had he glided up and down the two flights of stairs, and now at last his room was prepared for his princess. It was swept and garnished, and was an apartment worthy a maid who is loved by a poet-prince. There was a bead curtain. There were muslins of pink and white. There were four bowls of flowers, clean, clear flowers to gladden the White Blossom and set off her sharp beauty. And there was a bowl of water, and a sweet lotion for the bruise on her cheek.

When she had risen, her prince ministered to her with rice and egg and tea. Cleansed and robed and calm, she sat before him, perched on the edge of many cushions as on a throne, with all the grace of the child princess in the story. She was a poem. The beauty hidden by neglect and fatigue shone out now more clearly and vividly, and from the head sunning over with curls to the small white feet, now bathed and sandalled, she seemed the living interpretation of a Chinese lyric. And she was his; her sweet self and her prattle, and her bird-like ways were all his own.

Oh, beautifully they loved. For two days he held her. Soft caresses from his yellow hands and long, devout kisses were all their demonstration. Each night he would tend her, as might mother to child; and each night he watched and sometimes slumbered at the foot of her couch.

But now there were those that ran to Battling at his training quarters across the river, with the news that his child had gone with a Chink—a yellow man. And Battling was angry. He discovered parental rights. He discovered indignation. A yellow man after his kid! He'd learn him. Battling did not like men who were not born

in the same great country as himself. Particularly he disliked yellow men. His birth and education in Shadwell had taught him that of all creeping things that creep upon the earth the most insidious is the Oriental in the West. And a yellow man and a child. It was ... as you might say ... so ... kind of ... well, wasn't it? He bel-lowed that it was "unnacherel." The yellor man would go through it. Yeller! It was his supreme condemnation, his final epithet for all conduct of which he disapproved.

There was no doubt that he was extremely annoyed. He went to the Blue Lantern, in what was once Ratcliff Highway, and thumped the bar, and made all his world agree with him. And when they agreed with him he got angrier still. So that when, a few hours later, he climbed through the ropes at the Netherlands to meet Bud Tuffit for ten rounds, it was Bud's fight all the time, and to that bright boy's astonishment he was the victor on points at the end of the ten. Battling slouched out of the ring, still more determined to let the Chink have it where the chicken had the axe. He left the house with two pals and a black man, and a number of really inspired curses from his manager.

On the evening of the third day, then, Cheng slipped sleepily down the stairs to procure more flowers and more rice. The genial Ho Ling, who keeps the Canton store, held him in talk some little while, and he was gone from his room perhaps half-an-hour. Then he glided back, and climbed with happy feet the forty stairs to his temple of wonder.

With a push of a finger he opened the door, and the blood froze on his cheek, the flowers fell from him. The temple was empty and desolate; White Blossom was gone. The muslin hangings were torn down and trampled underfoot. The flowers had been flung from their bowls about the floor, and the bowls lay in fifty fragments. The joss was smashed. The cupboard had been opened. Rice was scattered here and there. The little straight bed had been jumped upon by brute feet. Everything that could be smashed or violated had been so treated, and—horror of all—the blue and yellow silk robe had been rent in pieces, tied in grotesque knots, and slung derisively about the table legs.

I pray devoutly that you may never suffer what Cheng Huan

suffered in that moment. The pangs of death, with no dying; the sickness of the soul which longs to escape and cannot; the imprisoned animal within the breast which struggles madly for a voice and finds none; all the agonies of all the ages—the agonies of every abandoned lover and lost woman, past and to come—all these things were his in that moment.

Then he found voice and gave a great cry, and men from below came up to him; and they told him how the man who boxed had been there with a black man; how he had torn the robes from his child, and dragged her down the stairs by her hair; and how he had shouted aloud for Cheng and had vowed to return and deal separately with him.

Now a terrible dignity came to Cheng, and the soul of his great fathers swept over him. He closed the door against them, and fell prostrate over what had been the resting-place of White Blossom. Those without heard strange sounds as of an animal in its last pains; and it was even so. Cheng was dying. The sacrament of his high and holy passion had been profaned; the last sanctuary of the Oriental—his soul dignity—had been assaulted. The love robes had been torn to ribbons; the veil of his temple cut down. Life was no longer possible; and life without his little lady, his White Blossom, was no longer desirable.

Prostrate he lay for the space of some five minutes. Then, in his face all the pride of accepted destiny, he arose. He drew together the little bed. With reverent hands he took the pieces of blue and yellow silk, kissing them and fondling them and placing them about the pillow. Silently he gathered up the flowers, and the broken earthenware, and burnt some prayer papers and prepared himself for death.

Now it is the custom among those of the sect of Cheng that the dying shall present love-gifts to their enemies; and when he had set all in order, he gathered his brown canvas coat about him, stole from the house, and set out to find Battling Burrows, bearing under the coat his love-gift to Battling. White Blossom he had no hope of finding. He had heard of Burrows many times; and he judged that, now that she was taken from him, never again would he hold those hands or touch that laughing hair. Nor, if he did, could it change

things from what they were. Nothing that was not a dog could live in the face of this sacrilege.

As he came before the house in Pekin Street, where Battling lived, he murmured gracious prayers. Fortunately, it was a night of thick river mist, and through the enveloping velvet none could observe or challenge him. The main door was open, as are all doors in this district. He writhed across the step, and through to the back room, where again the door yielded to a touch.

Darkness. Darkness and silence, and a sense of frightful things. He peered through it. Then he fumbled under his jacket—found a match—struck it. An inch of candle stood on the mantelshelf. He lit it. He looked round. No sign of Burrows, but . . . Almost before he looked he knew what awaited him. But the sense of finality had kindly stunned him; he could suffer nothing more.

On the table lay a dog-whip. In the corner a belt had been flung. Half across the greasy couch lay White Blossom. A few rags of clothing were about her pale, slim body; her hair hung limp as her limbs; her eyes were closed. As Cheng drew nearer and saw the savage red rails that ran across and across the beloved body, he could not scream—he could not think. He dropped beside the couch. He laid gentle hands upon her, and called soft names. She was warm to the touch. The pulse was still.

Softly, oh, so softly, he bent over the little frame that had enclosed his friend-spirit, and his light kisses fell all about her. Then, with the undirected movements of a sleep-walker, he bestowed the rags decently about her, clasped her in strong arms, and crept silently into the night.

From Pekin Street to Pennyfields it is but a turn or two, and again he passed unobserved as he bore his tired bird back to her nest. He laid her upon the bed, and covered the lily limbs with the blue and yellow silks and strewed upon her a few of the trampled flowers. Then, with more kisses and prayers, he crouched beside her.

So, in the ghastly Limehouse morning, they were found—the dead child, and the Chink, kneeling beside her, with a sharp knife gripped in a vice-like hand, its blade far between his ribs.

Meantime, having vented his wrath on his prodigal daughter, Battling, still cross, had returned to the Blue Lantern, and there

he stayed with a brandy tumbler in his fist, forgetful of an appointment at Premierland, whereby he should have been in the ring at ten o'clock sharp. For the space of an hour Chuck Lightfoot was going blasphemously to and fro in Poplar, seeking Battling and not finding him, and murmuring, in tearful tones: "Battling—you dam-manblasted Battling—where are yeh?"

His opponent was in his corner sure enough, but there was no fight. For Battling lurched from the Blue Lantern to Pekin Street. He lurched into his happy home, and he cursed Lucy, and called for her. And finding no matches, he lurched to where he knew the couch should be, and flopped heavily down.

Now it is a peculiarity of the reptile tribe that its members are impatient of being flopped on without warning. So, when Battling flopped, eighteen inches of writhing gristle upreared itself on the couch, and got home on him as Bud Tuffit had done the night before—one to the ear, one to the throat, and another to the forearm.

Battling went down and out.

And he, too, was found in the morning, with Cheng Huan's love-gift coiled about his neck.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Why has the author chosen to use a Chinaman (rather than another Englishman) as the poet in the story?

2. Assuming that the Chinaman represents goodness and sensitivity, how do you account for the fact that he frequents opium dens? How do you explain his coarse and rough background?

3. If you discard the theory that "The Chink and the Child" is designed to expose bad conditions in the slums, why is the story laid in a slum area? In what respects would it lose its effectiveness if the characters lived on a higher economic level?

4. It has been suggested in the introduction to this section that Lucy represents innocence and beauty. Can you think of any other possible symbolic significance for Lucy? For Battling? For the Chinaman?

5. At the end of the story, Battling dies without discovering the cause of his death. What is the significance of this death in ignorance? In what respects would your attitude be different if before dying Battling had understood why he was dying?

6. Apparently the Chinaman has had his revenge when Battling is killed, and Lucy is, of course, beyond help. Why does the Chinaman die?

7. It is said in the story that the Chinaman is in love with Lucy. Is his love the normal love of a man for a woman? What does it lack? What does it have that normal love often lacks? Why is Battling convinced that the love is immoral?

8. Is Lucy presented in simple terms or does the author present her in a particular light? If she is presented in a particular light, what relationship does this have to her significance to the story? Is the reader allowed to form his own judgments throughout the whole story about Battling and the Chinaman?

9. If Battling, Lucy, and the Chinaman are said to stand roughly for brutality, innocence, and sensitivity, are they wholly what they stand for? Can you find any characteristics in Battling that are not brutal, in Lucy that are not innocent, in the Chinaman that are not sensitive? If you can, what does this tell you?

D. *Fantasy*

All the stories which we have thus far read in this course—even "The Chink and the Child" in which the characters are more nearly symbols or abstractions than real people—have had one thing in common: They have used real people and lifelike experiences as a means of achieving their various purposes. But before we end our consideration of the short story, we should consider briefly a second kind of story, that story which is usually called a *fantasy*.

The name which we apply to this kind of story describes it. A *fantasy* is a story in which the common, usual, familiar experiences of human life are disregarded, in which the generally accepted rules or principles of life are repealed, in which we as readers are introduced to an unfamiliar world and human experiences which follow no patterns such as those with which we are familiar. The *fantasy* is the fictional equivalent of non-Euclidian geometry, which substitutes for the facts to which we subscribe certain assumptions which we think of as false or unnatural. In short, the writer of *fantasy* sets aside, for the purposes of his story, those concepts which we have deduced from our observations of life around us.

The instinctive reaction of the reader to the story which transfers him to an unfamiliar world or strange experiences is usually based on his recognition of the relationship between the word *fantasy* and the word *fantastic*. He reads a *fantasy* and he probably says, "This is interesting, I suppose, but it's 'unrealistic,' things like this can't happen; therefore this story doesn't say anything important." It is perhaps natural for us to argue that because a story makes no use of the recognizable world, it therefore has nothing to say about the real world. It should be remembered, however, that the assumption that the shortest distance between two points is a curved line led to important new bases for the planning of air routes, or that the assumption that the sum total of the angles of a triangle were not 180° but 90° or 300° has played a part in the development of radar or the discovery of the principles of nuclear fission. In the same way, a writer's assumption that the real world is something other than the world

which we see may lead to the statement of a theme which can have a very real bearing on our concept of the nature or point of existence.

The intelligent reader, therefore, does not dismiss fantasy because it fails to coincide with his conception of the world. Rather, he approaches fantasy by granting the writer his terms and by proceeding from this point. His analysis of a fantasy usually proceeds from this concession in two directions. First, having granted the writer certain initial concessions, he examines the story in its own terms. Second, he tries to discover the reasons which lie beneath the writer's particular approach to his story material.

The first approach to an analysis or criticism of a fantasy is very similar to our basic approach to a realistic story. We have seen that in a realistic story we first grant the writer an initial concession, which we call a "coincidence," and that we then ask ourselves whether, in terms of the nature of his characters, the incidents in the story have a logical beginning, a conclusive ending, and so on. In a fantasy we employ the same approach. The only difference is in the nature of the concession which we make to the writer. Where in the realistic story we allow the writer a single coincidence, in the fantasy we allow him to "repeal" one natural law and to proceed from this point. And from this point we expect the writer to adhere to the principles of storytelling just as strictly as if he were writing a story about the world with which we are familiar.

We can express this in terms of the writer rather than the reader. The realistic writer approaches a story somewhat in this fashion: Here, he says to himself, is the world as I know it, or one aspect of my world, and here is a particular kind of person in this world. Given this person and a situation which reveals this familiar world, what would this character do, what would happen to him as a result, and what would it all mean? The writer of fantasy begins in almost the same way. Here, he says, is a particular person with this or that set of character traits. Now supposing that the world were not like the familiar world about me: Suppose that there were ghosts or giants in this world, or that horses were the highest form of life, or that one part of man—his soul, say—*should* get separated from another part—his body—and wander off by itself. Given a person like this and given this kind of a world, what would logically happen?

Our first approach to fantasy, then, should parallel our first approach to a realistic story. We should ask and answer certain basic questions which will test the validity of the story *as story*: Are the characters consistent in their actions and reactions? Is there a logical relationship between *who* the characters are and *what* happens in the story? Is the ending satisfactory and logical in terms of the beginning? Is the emotional effect of the story honest?

Our second approach to a fantasy also parallels our approach to a realistic story. We have seen that the events of a story usually add up to some general meaning, that stories have a theme. We have also seen that a writer chooses incidents and characters with a theme in mind, and that out of the relationship between action, character, and emotion in a story we get a meaning. This is as true of fantasy as of realistic fiction. Thus, our second approach should be to look for the meaning behind the story itself and to examine the relationship between the story and the theme.

When we do this, we will probably discover the basic reason for a writer's choosing to write a fantasy rather than a realistic story. If we have now learned that Hemingway chose the incidents and the characters he did in "The Killers" because he wanted, among other things, to show something about life; and if we further realize that the difference in character and incident between "The Killers" and "The Garden Party" exists partially because two writers interpreted the meaning of life differently, we can deduce one reason for a writer's employing fantasy instead of realism. For the writer of fantasy, like any writer, intends, among other things, to say something about life, to interpret his world and yours. If he chooses fantasy as a medium, the chances are that he feels that fantasy will say what he has to say more clearly and effectively than would any other approach. And part of the job of analyzing and critically evaluating a fantasy will, of course, consider whether the writer's assumption seems to be a sound one.

Adam and Eve and Pinch Me"

by A. E. COPPARD

. . . and in the whole of his days, vividly at the end of the afternoon—he repeated it again and again to himself—the kind country spaces had *never* absorbed *quite* so rich a glamour of light, so miraculous a bloom of clarity. He could feel streaming in his own mind, in his hones, the same crystalline brightness that lay upon the land. Thoughts and images went flowing through him as easily and amiably as fish swim in their pools; and as idly, too, for one of his speculations took up the theme of his family name. There was such an agreeable oddness about it, just as there was about all the luminous sky today, that it touched him as just a little remarkable. What *did* such a name connote, signify, or symbolize? It was a rann of a name, but it had euphony! Then again, like the fish, his ambulating fancy flashed into other shallows, and he giggled as he paused, peering at the buds in the brake. Turning back towards his house again he could see, beyond its roofs, the spire of the Church tintured richly as the vane: all round him was a new grandeur upon the grass of the fields, and the spare trees had shadows below that seemed to support them in the manner of a plinth, more real than themselves, and the dykes and any chance heave of the level fields were underlined, as if for special emphasis, with long shades of mysterious blackness.

With a little drift of emotion that had at other times assailed him in the wonder and ecstasy of pure light, Jaffa Codling pushed through the slit in the back hedge and stood within his own garden. The gardener was at work. He could hear the voices of the children

*** Throughout this story, single quotation marks are used in dialogue. This is customary British usage.**

about the lawn at the other side of the house. He was very happy, and the place was beautiful, a fine white many-windowed house rising from a lawn bowered with plots of mould, turreted with shrubs, and overset with a vast walnut tree. This house had deep clean eaves, a roof of faint coloured slates that, after rain, glowed dully, like onyx or jade, under the red chimneys, and half-way up at one end was a balcony set with black balusters. He went to a French window that stood open and stepped into the dining room. There was no-one within, and, on that lonely instant, a strange feeling of emptiness dropped upon him. The clock ticked almost as if it had been caught in some indecent act; the air was dim and troubled after that glory outside. Well, now, he would go up at once to his study and write down for his new book the ideas and images he had accumulated—beautiful rich thoughts they were—during that wonderful afternoon. He went to mount the stairs and he was passed by one of the maids; humming a silly song she brushed past him rudely, but he was an easy-going man—maids were uncatchably tiresome—and reaching the landing he sauntered towards his room. The door stood slightly open and he could hear voices within. He put his hand upon the door ... it would not open any further. What the devil ... he pushed—like the bear in the tale—and he pushed, and he pushed—was there something against it on the other side? He put his shoulder to it ... some wedge must be there, and *that* was extraordinary. Then his whole apprehension was swept up and whirled as by an avalanche—Mildred, his wife, was in there; he could hear her speaking to a man in fair soft tones and the rich phrases that could be used only by a woman yielding a deep affection to him. Codling kept still. Her words burned on his mind and thrilled him as if spoken to himself. There was a movement in the room, then utter silence. He again thrust savagely at the partly open door, but he could not stir it. The silence within continued. He beat upon the door with his fists, crying: 'Mildred, Mildred!' There was no response, but he could hear the rocking arm-chair commence to swing to and fro. Pushing his hand round the edge of the door he tried to thrust his head between the opening. There was not space for this, but he could just peer into the corner of a mirror hung near, and this is what he saw: the chair at one end of its swing, a man sit-

ting in it, and upon one arm of it Mildred, the beloved woman, with her lips upon the man's face, caressing him with her hands. Codling made another effort to get into the room—as vain as it was violent. 'Do you hear me, Mildred?' he shouted. Apparently neither of them heard him; they rocked to and fro while he gazed stupefied. What, in the name of God, . . . What's this . . . was she bewitched . . . were there such things after all as magic, devilry!

He drew back and held himself quite steadily. The chair stopped swaying, and the room grew awfully still. The sharp ticking of the clock in the hall rose upon the house like the tongue of some perfunctory mocker. Couldn't they hear the clock? . . . Couldn't they hear his heart? He had to put his hand upon his heart, for, surely, in that great silence inside there, they would hear its beat, growing so loud now that it seemed almost to stun him! Then in a queer way he found himself reflecting, observing, analysing his own actions and intentions. He found some of them to be just a little spurious, counterfeit. He felt it would be easy, so perfectly easy to flash ill one blast of anger and annihilate the two. He would do nothing of the kind. There was no occasion for it. People didn't really do that sort of thing, or, at least, not with a genuine passion. There was no need for anger. His curiosity was satisfied, quite satisfied, he was certain, he had not the remotest interest in the man. A welter of unexpected thoughts swept upon his mind as he stood there. As a writer of books he was often stimulated by the emotions and impulses of other people, and now his own surprise was beginning to intrigue him, leaving him, O, quite unstirred emotionally, but interesting him profoundly.

He heard the maid come stepping up the stairway again, humming her silly song. He did not want a scene, or to be caught eavesdropping, and so turned quickly to another door. It was locked. He sprang to one beyond it; the handle would not turn. 'Bah! what's up with 'em?' But the girl was now upon him, carrying a tray of coffee things. 'O, Mary!' he exclaimed casually, 'I . . . ' To his astonishment the girl stepped past him as if she did not hear or see him, tapped upon the door of his study, entered, and closed the door behind her. Jaffa Codling then got really angry. 'Hell! were the blasted servants in it!' He dashed to the door again and tore at the handle. It would

not even turn, and, though he wrenched with fury at it, the room was utterly sealed against him. He went away for a chair with which to smash the effrontery of that door. No, he wasn't angry, either with his wife or this fellow—Gilbert, she had called him—who had a strangely familiar aspect as far as he had been able to take it in; but when one's servants . . . faugh!

The door opened and Mary came forth smiling demurely. He was a few yards further along the corridor at that moment. 'Mary!' he shouted, 'leave the door open!' Mary carefully closed it and turned her back on him. He sprang after her with bad words bursting from him as she went towards the stairs and flitted lightly down, humming all the way as if in derision. He leaped downwards after her three steps at a time, but she trotted with amazing swiftness into the kitchen and slammed the door in his face. Codling stood, but kept his hands carefully away from the door, kept them behind him. 'No, no,' he whispered cunningly, 'there's something fiendish about door handles today, I'll go and get a bar, or a butt of timber,' and, jumping out into the garden for some such thing, the miracle happened to him. For it was nothing else than a miracle, the unbelievable, the impossible, simple and laughable if you will, but having as much validity as any miracle can ever invoke. It was simple and laughable because by all the known physical laws he should have collided with his gardener, who happened to pass the window with his wheelbarrow as Codling jumped out on to the path. And it was unbelievable that they should not, and impossible that they *did* not collide; and it was miraculous, because Codling stood for a brief moment in the garden path and the wheelbarrow of Bond, its contents, and Bond himself passed apparently through the figure of Codling as if he were so much air, as if he were not a living breathing man but just a common ghost. There was no impact, just a momentary breathlessness. Codling stood and looked at the retreating figure going on utterly unaware of him. It is interesting to record that Codling's first feelings were mirthful. He giggled. He was jocular. He ran along in front of the gardener, and let him pass through him once more; then after him again; he scrambled into the man's barrow, and was wheeled about by this incomprehensible thick-headed gardener who was dead to all his master's efforts to engage his at-

tention. Presently he dropped the wheelbarrow and went away, leaving Codling to cogitate upon the occurrence. There was no room for doubt, some essential part of him had become detached from the obviously not less vital part. He felt he was essential because he was responding to the experience, he was re-acting in the normal way to normal stimuli, although he happened for the time being to be invisible to his fellows and unable to communicate with them. How had it come about—this queer thing? How could he discover what part of him had cut loose, as it were? There was no question of this being death; death wasn't funny, it wasn't a joke; he had still all his human instincts. You didn't get angry with a faithless wife or joke with a fool of a gardener if you were dead, certainly not! He had realized enough of himself to know he was the usual man of instincts, desires, and prohibitions, complex and contradictory; his family history for a million or two years would have denoted that, not explicitly—obviously impossible—but suggestively. He had found himself doing things he had no desire to do, doing things he had a desire *not* to do, thinking thoughts that had no contiguous meanings, no meanings that could be related to his general experience. At odd times he had been chilled—aye, and even agreeably surprised—at the immense potential evil in himself. But still, this was no mere Jekyll and Hyde affair, that a man and his own ghost should separately inhabit the same world was a horse of quite another colour. The other part of him was alive and active somewhere ... as alive ... as alive . . . yes, as *he* was, but dashed if he knew where! What a lark when they got back to each other and compared notes! In his tales he had brooded over so many imagined personalities, followed in the track of so many psychological enigmas that he *had* felt at times a stranger to himself. What if, after all, that brooding had given him the faculty of projecting this figment of himself into the world of men. Or was he some unrealized latent element of being without its natural integument, doomed now to drift over the ridge of the world for ever. Was it his personality, his spirit? Then how was the dashed thing working? Here was he with the most wonderful happening in human experience, and he couldn't differentiate or disinter things. He was like a new Adam flung into some old Eden.

There was Bond tinkering about with some plants a dozen yards in front of him. Suddenly his three children came round from the other side of the house, the youngest boy leading them, carrying in his hand a small sword which was made, not of steel, but of some more brightly shining material; indeed it seemed at one moment to be of gold, and then again of flame, transmuting everything in its neighbourhood into the likeness of flame, the hair of the little girl Eve, a part of Adam's tunic; and the fingers of the boy Gabriel as he held the sword were like pale tongues of fire. Gabriel, the youngest boy, went up to the gardener and gave the sword into his hands, saying: 'Bond, is this sword any good?' Codling saw the gardener take the weapon and examine it with a careful sort of smile; his great gnarled hands became immediately transparent, the blood could be seen moving diligently about the veins. Codling was so interested in the sight that he did not gather in the gardener's reply. The little boy was dissatisfied and repeated his question, 'No, but Bond, is this sword any good?' Codling rose, and stood by invisible. The three beautiful children were grouped about the great angular figure of the gardener in his soiled clothes, looking up now into his face, and now at the sword, with anxiety in all their puckered eyes. 'Well, Marse Gabriel,' Codling could hear him reply, 'as far as a sword goes, it may be a good un, or it may be a bad un, but, good as it is, it can never be anything but a bad thing.' He then gave it back to them; the boy Adam held the haft of it, and the girl Eve rubbed the blade with curious fingers. The younger boy stood looking up at the gardener with unsatisfied gaze. 'But, Bond, *cant* you say if this sword's any *good*?' Bond turned to his spade and trowels. 'Mebbe the shape of it's wrong, Marse Gabriel, though it seems a pretty handy size.' Saying this he moved off across the lawn. Gabriel turned to his brother and sister and took the sword from them; they all followed after the gardener and once more Gabriel made inquiry: 'Bond, is this sword any *good*?' The gardener again took it and made a few passes in the air like a valiant soldier at exercise. Turning then, he lifted a bright curl from the head of Eve and cut it off with a sweep of the weapon. He held it up to look at it critically and then let it fall to the ground. Codling sneaked behind him and, picking it up, stood stupidly looking at it. 'Mebbe, Marse Gabriel,'

the gardener was saying, 'it ud be better made of steel, but it has a smartish edge on it.' He went to pick up the barrow but Gabriel seized it with a spasm of anger, and cried out: 'No, no, Bond, will you say, just yes or no, Bond, is this sword any *good*?' The gardener stood still, and looked down at the little boy, who repeated his question—'just yes or no, Bond!' 'No, Marse Gabriel!' 'Thank you, Bond,' replied the child with dignity, 'that's all we wanted to know,' and, calling to his mates to follow him, he ran away to the other side of the house.

Codling stared again at the beautiful lock of hair in his hand, and felt himself grow so angry that he picked up a strange looking flowerpot at his feet and hurled it at the retreating gardener. It struck Bond in the middle of the back and, passing clean through him, broke on the wheel of his barrow, but Bond seemed to be quite unaware of this catastrophe. Codling rushed after, and, taking the gardener by the throat, he yelled, 'Damn you, will you tell me what all this means?' But Bond proceeded calmly about his work uivnoticing, carrying his master about as if he were a clinging vapoul, or a scarf hung upon his neck. In a few moments, Codling dropped exhausted to the ground. 'What . . . O Hell . . . what, what am I to do?' he groaned, 'What has happened to me? What shall I *do*? What *can* I do?' He looked at the broken flowerpot. 'Did I invent that?' He pulled out his watch. 'That's a real watch, I hear it ticking, and it's six o'clock.' Was he dead or disembodied or mad? What was this infernal lapse of identity? And who the devil, yes, who was it upstairs with Mildred? He jumped to his feet and hurried to the window; it was shut; to the door, it was fastened; he was powerless to open either. Well! well! this was experimental psychology with a vengeance, and he began to chuckle again. He'd have to write to McDougall about it. Then he turned and saw Bond wheeling across the lawn towards him again. 'Why is that fellow always shoving that infernal green barrow around?' he asked, and, the fit of fury seizing him again, he rushed towards Bond, but, before he reached him, the three children danced into the garden again, crying, with great excitement, 'Bond, O, Bond!' The gardener stopped and set down the terrifying barrow; the children crowded about him, and Gabriel held out another shining thing, asking: 'Bond, is this box any

good?' The gardener took the box and at once his eyes lit up with interest and delight. 'O, Marse Gabriel, where'd ye get it?' 'Bond,' said the boy impatiently, 'is the box any *good*?' 'Any good?' echoed the man, 'Why, Marse Gabriel, Marse Adam, Miss Eve, look yere!' Holding it down in front of them, he lifted the lid from the box and a bright coloured bird flashed out and flew round and round above their heads. 'O,' screamed Gabriel with delight, 'it's a kingfisher!' 'That's what it is,' said Bond, 'a kingfisher!' 'Where?' asked Adam. 'Where?' asked Eve. 'There it flies—round the fountain—see it? see it?' 'No,' said Adam. 'No,' said Eve.

'O, do, do, see it,' cried Gabriel, 'here it comes, it's coming!' and, holding his hands on high, and standing on his toes, the child cried out as happy as the bird which Codling saw flying above them.

'I can't see it,' said Adam.

'Where is it, Gaby?' asked Eve.

'O, you stupids,' cried the boy, '*There* it goes. There it goes . . . there . . . it's gone!'

He stood looking brightly at Bond, who replaced the lid.

'What shall we do now?' he exclaimed eagerly. For reply, the gardener gave the box into his hand, and walked off with the barrow. Gabriel took the box over to the fountain. Codling, unseen, went after him, almost as excited as the boy; Eve and her brother followed. They sat upon the stone tank that held the falling water. It was difficult for the child to unfasten the lid; Codling attempted to help him, but he was powerless. Gabriel looked up into his father's face and smiled. Then he stood up and said to the others:

'Now, *do* watch it this time.'

They all knelt carefully beside the water. He lifted the lid and, behold, a fish like a gold carp, but made wholly of fire, leaped from the box into the fountain. The man saw it dart down into the water, he saw the water bubble up behind it, he heard the hiss that the junction of fire and water produces, and saw a little track of steam follow the bubbles about the tank until the figure of the fish was consumed and disappeared. Gabriel, in ecstasies, turned to his sister with blazing happy eyes, exclaiming:

'There! Evey!'

'What was it?' asked Eve, nonchalantly, 'I didn't see anything.'

'More didn't I,' said Adam.

'Didn't you see that lovely fish?'

'No,' said Adam.

'No,' said Eve.

'O, stupids,' cried Gabriel, 'it went right past the bottom of the water.'

'Let's get a fishin' hook,' said Adam.

'No, no, no,' said Gabriel, replacing the lid of the box. 'O no.'

Jafla Codling had remained on his knees staring at the water so long that, when he looked around him again, the children had gone away. He got up and went to the door, and that was closed; the windows, fastened. He went moodily to a garden bench and sat on it with folded arms. Dusk had begun to fall into the shrubs and trees, the grass to grow dull, the air chill, the sky to muster its gloom. Bond had overturned his barrow, stalled his tools in the lodge, and gone to his home in the village. A curious cat came round the house and surveyed the man who sat chained to his seven-horned dilemma. It grew dark and fearfully silent. Was the world empty now? Some small thing, a snail perhaps, crept among the dead leaves in the hedge, with a sharp, irritating noise. A strange flood of mixed thoughts poured through his mind until at last one idea disentangled itself, and he began thinking with tremendous fixity of little Gabriel. He wondered if he could brood or meditate, or "will" with sufficient power to bring him into the garden again. The child had just vaguely recognized him for a moment at the waterside. He'd try that dodge, telepathy was a mild kind of a trick after so much of the miraculous. If he'd lost his blessed body, at least the part that ate and smoked and talked to Mildred. . . . He stopped as his mind stumbled on a strange recognition. . . . What a joke, of course . . . idiot . . . not to have seen *that*. He stood up in the garden with joy . . . of course, *he* was upstairs with Mildred, it was himself, the other bit of him, that Mildred had been talking to. What a howling fool he'd been.

He found himself concentrating his mind on the purpose of getting the child Gabriel into the garden once more, but it was with a curious mood that he endeavoured to establish this relationship. He could not fix his will into any calm intensity of power, or fixity of

purpose, or pleasurable mental ecstasy. The utmost force seemed to come with a malicious threatening splenetic 'entreaty.' That damned snail in the hedge broke the thread of his meditation; a dog began to bark sturdily from a distant farm; the faculties of his mind became joggled up like a child's picture puzzle, and he brooded unintelligibly upon such things as skating and steam engines, and Elizabethan drama so lapped about with themes like jealousy and chastity. Really now, Shakespeare's Isabella was the most consummate snob in. ... He looked up quickly to his wife's room and saw Gabriel step from the window to the balcony as if he were fearful of being seen. The boy lifted up his hands and placed the bright box on the rail of the balcony. He looked up at the faint stars for a moment or two, and then carefully released the lid of the box. What came out of it and rose into the air appeared to Codling to be just a piece of floating light, but as it soared above the roof he saw it grow to be a little ancient ship, with its hull and fully set sails and its three masts all of faint primrose flame colour. It cleaved through the air, rolling slightly as a ship through the wave, in widening circles above the house, making a curving ascent until it lost the shape of a vessel and became only a moving light hurrying to some sidereal shrine. Codling glanced at the boy on the balcony, but in that brief instant something had happened, the ship had burst like a rocket and released three coloured drops of fire which came falling slowly, leaving beautiful grey furrows of smoke in their track. Gabriel leaned over the rail with outstretched palms, and, catching the green star and the blue one as they drifted down to him, he ran with a rill of laughter back into the house. Codling sprang forward just in time to catch the red star; it lay vividly blasting his own palm for a monstrous second, and then, slipping through, was gone. He stared at the ground, at the balcony, the sky, and then heard an exclamation ... his wife stood at his side.

'Gilbert! How you frightened me!' she cried, 'I thought you were in your room; come along in to dinner.' She took his arm and they walked up the steps into the dining room together. 'Just a moment,' said her husband, turning to the door of the room. His hand was upon the handle, which turned easily in his grasp, and he ran upstairs to his own room. He opened the door. The light was on, the

fire was burning brightly, a smell of cigarette smoke about, pen and paper upon his desk, the Japanese book-knife, the gilt matchbox, everything all right, no one there. He picked up a book from his desk. . . . *Monna Vanna*. His bookplate was in it—*Ex Libris—Gilbert Cannister*. He put it down beside the green dish; two yellow oranges were in the green dish, and two most deliberately green Canadian apples rested by their side. He went to the door and swung it backwards and forwards quite easily. He sat on his desk trying to piece the thing together, glaring at the print and the book-knife and the smart matchbox, until his wife came up behind him exclaiming: 'Come along, Gilbert!'

'Where are the kids, old man?' he asked her, and, before she replied, he had gone along to the nursery. He saw the two cots, his boy in one, his girl in the other. He turned whimsically to Mildred, saying, 'There *are* only two, *are* there?' Such a question did not call for reply, but he confronted her as if expecting some assuring answer. She was staring at him with her bright beautiful eyes.

'Are there?' he repeated.

'How strange you should ask me that now!' she said. . . . 'If you're a very good man . . . perhaps . . .'.

'Mildred!'

She nodded brightly.

He sat down in the rocking chair, but got up again saying to her gently—'We'll call him Gabriel.'

'But, suppose—'

'No, no,' he said, stopping her lovely lips, 'I know all about him.' And he told her a pleasant little tale.

ANALYSIS

Even after a single reading, the plot-character-emotion level of "Adam and Eve and Pinch Me" is probably clear enough. The story narrates an emotional experience—the experience of a man who finds that an essential part of himself has somehow gotten separated from another part. Exactly what this part is is never told us, but the author provides clear leads throughout the story, particularly in the passages in which he himself speculates on what part of himself has

wandered off from the rest of him. Careful consideration of these passages should reveal (a) the *exact* part of the man which has been separated, and (£) the emotional experience which comes with that separation.

On a thematic level, however, "Adam and Eve and Pinch Me" will appear more puzzling. The central problem of understanding the story is the answering of the question, What is the author's reason for writing a story about an experience like this? For even a single hasty reading will suggest that the story is intended to say, beyond the plot-character level, something about the nature of man.

We do not intend here to give you an interpretation of the story—first, because we are not sure that our interpretation is the only possible interpretation of the story; second, because "Adam and Eve and Pinch Me" is a good final test of your ability to read a story intelligently. Let us, however, suggest two basic things which you should consider in your interpretation of the story.

First, we can assume that if the story has a theme, part of that theme rests upon the experience described in the story—upon the nature of the character, the events in the story, and *the emotional changes which occur to the main character*. Hence, our first job is to decide exactly what part of Gilbert Cannister has been separated from the rest of him; and the second is to note carefully what happens to this separated part. We can point out here that this part is not Cannister's whole soul or mind or emotional nature, but it is an important part of his soul or mind. We can also note that though this part is able to feel and perceive things which the whole Gilbert Cannister could not, it is also kept from doing or seeing or feeling or perceiving other things. On the identification of what faculty of Cannister's is separated from the rest of him, and on the relationship which the faculty bears to the whole man, part of the meaning of "Adam and Eve and Pinch Me" depends.

Most of the meaning of the story, however, rests upon symbolism, and to understand it, we must be able to identify the abstract concepts which the symbols in the story replace. The major set of symbols in the story—the names of the three children, the gardener named Bond, the box which seems to refer to Pandora's box, the sword of fire—are all references to the Biblical story of the Garden of Eden or to the Greek mythological explanation for the origin of evil or suffering or sin. It follows, then, that the theme of "Adam and Eve and Pinch Me" is, in some way, concerned with the prob-

lem of "original sin" and man. Closely allied to this set of symbols is a group which consists of a pool of water, a fish, a bird, a ship, a star; if we remember that water is usually a symbol of life, that the fish is the lowest form of life on the Darwinian scale—the form of the human being during the first few weeks after conception—that the bird is a form of animal life which is at once tied to the ground and able to soar into the air (though its flight is limited), that a ship is a means of travel, and that a star is usually a symbol of human aspiration; and if we also remember that out of Pandora's box came not only human suffering but human hope—then we can perhaps assume that this story is also concerned somehow with two directions or aspects of man's existence. Finally, a third set of symbols consists, among other things, of a locked door and Cannister's wife; in his state of separation, Cannister is locked out of somewhere, is unable to get to his wife.

If you remember this, you should be able to explain the basic symbols in the story; if you further relate these symbols to what happens in the story, you should arrive at an understanding of the theme of "Adam and Eve and Pinch Me." It will remain for you to consider the story as a unit, to discuss the validity of the author's method, the relationship of his characters to his plot, his emotional effect, and his theme.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. How does the introduction of "Adam and Eve and Pinch Me" prepare us for the emotional experiences which Gilbert has in the story? What words and ideas particularly express this and prepare us for the emotional effect of this story?

2. What basic experience furnishes the foundation for the plot of the story? If we grant the author his starting point—his question, What *could* or *might* or *would* happen to a man who got separated from himself?—are the rest of the events in the story logical? Consistent? Related to each other? Discuss.

3. What are the character traits of Jaffa Codling? Of Gilbert Cannister? Summarize the conclusions which Jaffa Codling arrives at about himself. Exactly what part or faculty of Gilbert Cannister does Jaffa Codling represent?

4. Trace the various emotional stages which Jaffa Codling goes through. Do they have a logical direction? Do they add up to anything? What do they reveal about Gilbert Cannister?

5. How does the section following Codling's first encounter with the gardener make the total story more plausible? How does it help to explain the meaning of the story?

6. Is the point at which Codling rejoins Gilbert a logical point for the occurrence? If so, why? What does it add to the meaning of the story? (Note that the child Gabriel is the focal point of this incident, and that immediately afterward Gilbert's wife is introduced.)

7. What is the purpose of the description in the last scene? Is the author genuinely trying here to suggest a psychological and "scientific" explanation for the events of the story? If so, what is the effect of the ending of the story?

8. Identify or explain the following symbols:

a. The door which shuts Codling out of the study. What is the significance of the fact that Codling is unable to get to his wife?

b. The name Codling

c. The gardener and the wheelbarrow. (Note that the gardener's name is Bond, that he can't communicate with Codling, and that he opens Gabriel's box.)

d. The names of the children

e. Codling's feeling that he is "a new Adam flung into some old Eden."

f. Codling's (or Cannister's) interest in science, particularly psychology

g. The sword (and Bond's comment, "It can never be anything but a bad thing.")

h. Gabriel's box

i. The kingfisher and the fish (Why can Gabriel, Bond, and Codling see these, when Adam and Eve cannot?)

j. The ship and the star

9. On the basis of your identification of the symbols listed above and the "leads" given you in the comments, paraphrase the meaning of "Adam and Eve and Pinch Me."

Part VI

Stories for Final Analysis

The Gentleman from San Francisco

by IVAN BUNIN

(Translated by A. Yarmolinsky)

"Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city!"—
—Revelation of St. John.

THE GENTLEMAN from San Francisco—neither at Naples nor on Capri could any one recall his name—with his wife and daughter, was on his way to Europe, where he intended to stay for two whole years, solely for the pleasure of it.

He was firmly convinced that he had a full right to a rest, enjoyment, a long comfortable trip, and what not. This conviction had a two-fold reason: first he was rich, and second, despite his fifty-eight years, he was just about to enter the stream of life's pleasures. Until now he had not really lived, but simply existed, to be sure—fairly well, yet putting off his fondest hopes for the future. He toiled unweariedly—the Chinese, whom he imported by thousands for his works, knew full well what it meant,—and finally he saw that he had made much, and that he had nearly come up to the level of those whom he had once taken as a model, and he decided to catch his breath. The class of people to which he belonged was in the habit of beginning its enjoyment of life with a trip to Europe, India, Egypt. He made up his mind to do the same. Of course, it was first of all himself that he desired to reward for the years of toil, but he was also glad for his wife and daughter's sake. His wife was never distinguished by any extraordinary impressionability, but then, all elderly American women are ardent travelers. As for his daughter, a girl of marriageable age, and somewhat sickly,—travel was the very

thing she needed. Not to speak of the benefit to her health, do not happy meetings occur during travels? Abroad, one may chance to sit at the same table with a prince, or examine frescoes side by side with a multi-millionaire.

The itinerary the Gentleman from San Francisco planned out was an extensive one. In December and January he expected to relish the sun of southern Italy, monuments of antiquity, the tarantella, serenades of wandering minstrels, and that which at his age is felt most keenly—the love, not entirely disinterested though, of young Neapolitan girls. The Carnival days he planned to spend at Nice and Monte-Carlo, which at that time of the year is the meeting-place of the choicest society, the society upon which depend all the blessings of civilization: the cut of dress suits, the stability of thrones, the declaration of wars, the prosperity of hotels. Some of these people passionately give themselves over to automobile and boat races, others to roulette, others, again, busy themselves with what is called flirtation, and others shoot pigeons, which soar so beautifully from the dove-cote, hover a while over the emerald lawn, on the background of the forget-me-not colored sea, and then suddenly hit the ground, like little white lumps. Early March he wanted to devote to Florence, and at Easter, to hear the Miserere in Paris. His plans also included Venice, Paris, bull-baiting at Seville, bathing on the British Islands, also Athens, Constantinople, Palestine, Egypt, and even Japan, of course, on the way back. . . . And at first things went very well indeed.

It was the end of November, and all the way to Gibraltar the ship sailed across seas which were either clad by icy darkness or swept by storms carrying wet snow. But there were no accidents, and the vessel did not even roll. The passengers,—all people of consequence—were numerous, and the steamer, the famous "Atlantis," resembled the most expensive European hotel with all improvements; a night refreshment-bar, Oriental baths, even a newspaper of its own. The manner of living was a most aristocratic one; passengers rose early, awakened by the shrill voice of a bugle, filling the corridors at the gloomy hour when the day broke slowly and sulkily over the grayish-green watery desert, which rolled heavily in the fog. After putting on their flannel pajamas, they took coffee, chocolate, cocoa;

they seated themselves in marble baths, went through their exercises, whetting their appetites and increasing their sense of well-being, dressed for the day, and had their breakfast. Till eleven o'clock they were supposed to stroll on the deck, breathing in the chill freshness of the ocean, or they played table-tennis, or other games which arouse the appetite. At eleven o'clock a collation was served consisting of sandwiches and bouillon, after which people read their newspapers, quietly waiting for luncheon, which was more nourishing and varied than the breakfast. The next two hours were given to rest; all the decks were crowded then with steamer chairs, on which the passengers, wrapped in plaids, lay stretched, dozing lazily, or watching the cloudy sky and the foamy-fringed water hillocks flashing beyond the sides of the vessel. At five o'clock, refreshed and gay, they drank strong, fragrant tea; at seven the sound of the bugle announced a dinner of nine courses. . . . Then the Gentleman from San Francisco, rubbing his hands in an onrush of vital energy, hastened to his luxurious state-room to dress.

In the evening, all the decks of the "Atlantis" yawned in the darkness, shone with their innumerable fiery eyes, and a multitude of servants worked with increased feverishness in the kitchens, dish-washing compartments, and wine-cellars. The ocean, which heaved about the sides of the ship, was dreadful, but no one thought of it. All had faith in the controlling power of the captain, a red-headed giant, heavy and very sleepy, who, clad in a uniform with broad golden stripes, looked like a huge idol, and but rarely emerged, for the benefit of the public, from his mysterious retreat. On the fore-castle, the siren gloomily roared or screeched in a fit of mad rage, but few of the diners heard the siren: its hellish voice was covered by the sounds of an excellent string orchestra, which played ceaselessly and exquisitely in a vast hall, decorated with marble and spread with velvety carpets. The hall was flooded with torrents of light, radiated by crystal lustres and gilt chandeliers; it was filled with a throng of bejeweled ladies in low-necked dresses, of men in dinner-coats, graceful waiters, and deferential maitres-d'hotel. One of these,—who accepted wine orders exclusively—wore a chain on his neck like some lord-mayor. The evening dress, and the ideal linen made the Gentleman from San Francisco look very young. Dry-skinned, of

average height, strongly, though irregularly built, glossy with thorough washing and cleaning, and moderately animated, he sat in the golden splendor of this palace. Near him stood a bottle of amber-colored Johannisberg, and goblets of most delicate glass and of varied sizes, surmounted by a frizzled bunch of fresh hyacinths. There was something Mongolian in his yellowish face with its trimmed silvery moustache; his large teeth glimmered with gold fillings, and his strong, bald head had a dull glow, like old ivory. His wife, a big, broad and placid woman, was dressed richly, but in keeping with her age. Complicated, but light, transparent, and innocently immodest was the dress of his daughter, tall and slender, with magnificent hair gracefully combed; her breath was sweet with violet-scented tablets, and she had a number of tiny and most delicate pink dimples near her lips and between her slightly-powdered shoulder blades. . . .

The dinner lasted two whole hours, and was followed by dances in the dancing hall, while the men—the Gentleman from San Francisco among them—made their way to the refreshment bar, where Negroes in red jackets and with eyeballs like shelled hard-boiled eggs, waited on them. There, with their feet on tables, smoking Havana cigars, and drinking themselves purple in the face, they settled the destinies of nations on the basis of the latest political and stock-exchange news. Outside, the ocean tossed up black mountains with a thud; and the snow-storm hissed furiously in the rigging grown heavy with slush; the ship trembled in every limb, struggling with the storm and ploughing with difficulty the shifting and seething mountainous masses that threw far and high their foaming tails; the siren groaned in agony, choked by storm and fog; the watchmen in their towers froze and almost went out of their minds under the superhuman stress of attention. Like the gloomy and sultry mass of the inferno, like its last, ninth circle, was the submerged womb of the steamer, where monstrous furnaces yawned with red-hot open jaws, and emitted deep, hooting sounds, and where the stokers, stripped to the waist, and purple with reflected flames, bathed in their own dirty, acid sweat. And here, in the refreshment-bar, carefree men, with their feet, encased in dancing shoes, on the table, sipped cognac and liqueurs, swam in waves of

spiced smoke, and exchanged subtle remarks, while in the dancing-hall everything sparkled and radiated light, warmth and joy. The couples now turned around in a waltz, now swayed in the tango; and the music, sweetly shameless and sad, persisted in its ceaseless entreaties. . . . There were many persons of note in this magnificent crowd; an ambassador, a dry, modest old man; a great millionaire, shaved, tall, of an indefinite age, who, in his old-fashioned dress-coat, looked like a prelate; also a famous Spanish writer, and an international belle, already slightly faded and of dubious morals. There was also among them a loving pair, exquisite and refined, whom everybody watched with curiosity and who did not conceal their bliss; he danced only with her, sang—with great skill—only to her accompaniment, and they were so charming, so graceful. The captain alone knew that they had been hired by the company at a good salary to play at love, and that they had been sailing now on one, now on another steamer, for quite a long time.

In Gibraltar everybody was gladdened by the sun, and by the weather which was like early Spring. A new passenger appeared aboard the "Atlantis" and aroused everybody's interest. It was the crown-prince of an Asiatic state, who traveled incognito, a small man, very nimble, though looking as if made of wood, broad-faced, narrow-eyed, in gold-rimmed glasses, somewhat disagreeable because of his long moustache, which was sparse like that of a corpse, but otherwise—charming, plain, modest. In the Mediterranean the breath of winter was again felt. The seas were heavy and motley like a peacock's tail and the waves stirred up by the gay gusts of the tramontane, tossed their white crests under a sparkling and perfectly clear sky. Next morning, the sky grew paler and the skyline misty. Land was near. Then Ischia and Capri came in sight, and one could descry, through an opera-glass, Naples, looking like pieces of sugar strewn at the foot of an indistinct dove-colored mass, and above them, a snow-covered chain of distant mountains. The decks were crowded, many ladies and gentlemen put on light-fur-coats; Chinese servants, bandy-legged youths—with pitch black braids down to the heels and with girlish, thick eyelashes,—always quiet and speaking in a whisper, were carrying to the foot of the staircases, plaid wraps, canes, and crocodile-leather valises and handbags. The daughter of

the Gentleman from San Francisco stood near the prince, who, by a happy chance, had been introduced to her the evening before, and feigned to be looking steadily at something far-off, which he was pointing out to her, while he was, at the same time, explaining something, saying something rapidly and quietly. He was so small that he looked like a boy among other men, and he was not handsome at all. And then there was something strange about him; his glasses, derby and coat were most commonplace, but there was something horse-like in the hair of his sparse moustache, and the thin, tanned skin of his flat face looked as though it were somewhat stretched and varnished. But the girl listened to him, and so great was her excitement that she could hardly grasp the meaning of his words, her heart palpitated with incomprehensible rapture and with pride that he was standing and speaking with her and nobody else. Everything about him was different; his dry hands, his clean skin, under which flowed ancient kingly blood, even his light shoes and his European dress, plain, but singularly tidy—everything hid an inexplicable fascination and engendered thoughts of love. And the Gentleman from San Francisco, himself, in a silk-hat, gray leggings, patent leather shoes, kept eyeing the famous beauty who was standing near him, a tall, stately blonde, with eyes painted according to the latest Parisian fashion, and a tiny, bent peeled-off pet-dog, to whom she addressed herself. And the daughter, in a kind of vague perplexity, tried not to notice him.

Like all wealthy Americans he was very liberal when traveling, and believed in the complete sincerity and good-will of those who so painstakingly fed him, served him day and night, anticipating his slightest desire, protected him from dirt and disturbance, hauled things for him, hailed carriers, and delivered his luggage to hotels. So it was everywhere, and it had to be so at Naples. Meanwhile, Naples grew and came nearer. The musicians, with their shining brass instruments had already formed a group on the desk, and all of a sudden deafened everybody with the triumphant sounds of a ragtime march. The giant captain, in his full uniform appeared on the bridge and like a gracious Pagan idol, waved his hands to the passengers,—and it seemed to the Gentleman from San Francisco,—as it did to all the rest,—that for him alone thundered the march, so

greatly loved by proud America, and that him alone did the captain congratulate on the safe arrival. And when the "Atlantis" had finally entered the port and all its many-decked mass leaned against the quay, and the gang-plank began to rattle heavily,—what a crowd of porters, with their assistants, in caps with golden galloons, what a crowd of various boys and husky ragamuffins with pads of colored postal cards attacked the Gentleman from San Francisco, offering their services! With kindly contempt he grinned at these beggars, and, walking towards the automobile of the hotel where the prince might stop, muttered between his teeth, now in English, now in Italian—"Go away! Via . . ."

Immediately, life at Naples began to follow a set routine. Early in the morning breakfast was served in the gloomy dining-room, swept by a wet draught from the open windows looking upon a stony garden, while outside the sky was cloudy and cheerless, and a crowd of guides swarmed at the door of the vestibule. Then came the first smiles of the warm roseate sun, and from the high suspended balcony, a broad vista unfolded itself: Vesuvius, wrapped to its base in radiant morning vapors; the pearly ripple, touched to silver, of the bay, the delicate outline of Capri in the skyline; tiny asses dragging two-wheeled buggies along the soft, sticky embankment, and detachments of little soldiers marching somewhere to the tune of cheerful and defiant music.

Next on the day's program was a slow automobile ride along crowded, narrow, and damp corridors of streets, between high, many-windowed buildings. It was followed by visits to museums, lifelessly clean and lighted evenly and pleasantly, but as though with the dull light cast by snow;—then to churches, cold, smelling of wax, always alike; a majestic entrance, closed by a ponderous, leather curtain, and inside—a vast void, silence, quiet flames of seven-branched candlesticks, sending forth a red glow from where they stood at the farther end, on the bedecked altar,—a lonely, old woman lost among the dark wooden benches, slippery gravestones under the feet, and somebody's "Descent from the Cross," infallibility famous. At one o'clock—luncheon, on the mountain of San-Martius, where at noon the choicest people gathered, and where the daughter of the Gentleman from San Francisco once almost fainted with joy,

because it seemed to her that she saw the Prince in the hall, although she had learned from the newspapers that he had temporarily left for Rome. At five o'clock it was customary to take tea at the hotel, in a smart *salon*, where it was far too warm because of the carpets and the blazing fireplaces; and then came dinner-time—and again did the mighty, commanding voice of the gong resound throughout the building, again did silk rustle and the mirrors reflect files of ladies in low-necked dresses ascending the staircases, and again the splendid palatial dining hall opened with broad hospitality, and again the musicians' jackets formed red patches on the estrade, and the black figures of the waiters swarmed around the maître-d'hôtel, who, with extraordinary skill, poured a thick pink soup into plates. ... As everywhere, the dinner was the crown of the day. People dressed for it as for a wedding, and so abundant was it in food, wines, mineral waters, sweets and fruits, that about eleven o'clock in the evening chamber-maids would carry to all the rooms hot-water bags.

That year, however, December did not happen to be a very propitious one. The doormen were abashed when people spoke to them about the weather, and shrugged their shoulders guiltily, mumbling that they could not recollect such a year, although, to tell the truth, that it was not the first year they mumbled those words, usually adding that "things are terrible everywhere"; that unprecedented showers and storms had broken out on the Riviera, that it was snowing in Athens, that Aetna, too, was all blocked up with snow, and glowed brightly at night, and that tourists were fleeing from Palermo to save themselves from the cold spell. . . .

That winter, the morning sun daily deceived Naples; toward noon the sky would invariably grow gray, and a light rain would begin to fall, growing thicker and duller. Then the palms at the hotel-porch glistened disagreeably like wet tin, the town appeared exceptionally dirty and congested, the museums too monotonous, the cigars of the drivers in their rubber raincoats, which flattened in the wind like wings, intolerably stinking, and the energetic flapping of their whips over their thin-necked nags—obviously false. The shoes of the signors, who cleaned the street-car tracks, were in a frightful state, the women who splashed in the mud, with black hair unpro-

tected from the rain, were ugly and short legged, and the humidity mingled with the foul smell of rotting fish, that came from the foaming sea, -was simply disheartening. And so, early-morning quarrels began to break out between the Gentleman from San Francisco and his wife; and their daughter now grew pale and suffered from headaches, and now became animated, enthusiastic over everything, and at such times was lovely and beautiful. Beautiful were the tender, complex feelings which her meeting with the ungainly man aroused in her,—the man in whose veins flowed unusual blood, for, after all, it does not matter what in particular stirs up a maiden's soul: money, or fame, or nobility of birth. . . . Everybody assured the tourists that it was quite different at Sorrento and on Capri, that lemon-trees were blossoming there, that it was warmer and sunnier there, the morals purer, and the wine less adulterated. And the family from San Francisco decided to set out with all their luggage for Capri. They planned to settle down at Sorrento, but first to visit the island, tread the stones where stood Tiberius's palaces, examine the fabulous wonders of the Blue Grotto, and listen to the bagpipes of Abruzzi, who roam about the island during the whole month preceding Christmas and sing the praises of the Madonna.

On the clay of departure—a very memorable day for the family from San Francisco—the sun did not appear even in the morning. A heavy winter fog covered Vesuvius down to its very base and hung like a gray curtain low over the leaden surge of the sea, hiding it completely at a distance of half a mile. Capri was completely out of sight, as though it had never existed on this earth. And the little steamboat which was making for the island tossed and pitched so fiercely that the family lay prostrated on the sofas in the miserable cabin of the little steamer, with their feet wrapped in plaids and their eyes shut because of their nausea. The older lady suffered, as she thought, most; several times she was overcome with sea-sickness, and it seemed to her then she was dying, but the chambermaid, who repeatedly brought her the basin, and who for many years, in heat and in cold, had been tossing on these waves, ever on the alert, ever kindly to all,—the chambermaid only laughed. The lady's daughter was frightfully pale and kept a slice of lemon between her teeth. Not even the hope of an unexpected meeting with the prince at

Sorrento, where he planned to arrive on Christmas, served to cheer her. The Gentleman from San Francisco, who was lying on his back, dressed in a large overcoat and a big cap, did not loosen his jaws throughout the voyage. His face grew dark, his moustache white, and his head ached heavily; for the last few days, because of the bad weather, he had drunk far too much in the evenings.

And the rain kept on beating against the rattling window panes, and water dripped down from them on the sofas; the howling wind attacked the masts, and sometimes, aided by a heavy sea, it laid the little steamer on its side, and then something below rolled about with a rattle.

While the steamer was anchored at Castellamare and Sorrento, the situation was more cheerful; but even here the ship rolled terribly, and the coast with all its precipices, gardens and pines, with its pink and white hotels and hazy mountains clad in curling verdure, flew up and down as if it were on swings. The rowboats hit against the sides of the steamer, the sailors and the deck passengers shouted at the top of their voices, and somewhere a baby screamed as if it were being crushed to pieces. A wet wind blew through the door, and from a wavering barge flying the flag of the Hotel Royal, an urchin kept on unwearingly shouting "Kgoyal-al! Hotel Kgoyal-al! . . ." inviting tourists. And the Gentleman from San Francisco felt like the old man that he was,—and it was with weariness and animosity that he thought of all these "Royals," "Splendids," "Excelsiors," and of all those greedy bugs, reeking with garlic, who are called Italians. Once, during a stop, having opened his eyes and half-risen from the sofa, he noticed in the shadow of the rock beach a heap of stone huts, miserable, mildewed through and through, huddled close by the water, near boats, rags, tin-boxes, and brown fishing nets,—and as he remembered that this was the very Italy he had come to enjoy, he felt a great despair. . . . Finally, in twilight, the black mass of the island began to grow nearer, as though burrowed through at the base by red fires, the wind grew softer, warmer, more fragrant; from the dock-lanterns huge golden serpents flowed down the tame waves which undulated like black oil. . . . Then, suddenly, the anchor rumbled and fell with a splash into the water, the fierce yells of the boatman filled the air,—and at once everyone's

heart grew easy. The electric lights in the cabin grew more brilliant, and there came a desire to eat, drink, smoke, move. . . . Ten minutes later the family from San Francisco found themselves in a large ferry-boat; fifteen minutes later they trod the stones of the quay, and then seated themselves in a small lighted car, which, with a buzz, started to ascend the slope, while vineyard stakes, half-ruined stone fences, and wet, crooked lemon-trees, in spots shielded by straw sheds, with their glimmering orange-colored fruit and thick glossy foliage, were sliding down past the open car windows. . . . After ram, the earth smells sweetly in Italy, and each of her islands has a fragrance of its own.

The Island of Capri was dark and damp on that evening. But for a while it grew animated and lit up, in spots, as always in the hour of the steamer's arrival. On the top of the hill, at the station of the *junculaire*, there stood already the crowd of those whose duty it was to receive properly the Gentleman from San Francisco. The rest of the tourists hardly deserved any attention. There were a few Russians, who had settled on Capri, untidy, absent-minded people, absorbed in their bookish thoughts, spectacled, bearded, with the collars of their cloth overcoats raised. There was also a company of long-legged, long-necked, round-headed German youths in Tyrolean costume, and with linen bags on their backs, who need no one's services, are everywhere at home, and are by no means liberal in their expenses. The Gentleman from San Francisco, who kept quietly aloof from both the Russians and the Germans, was noticed at once. He and his ladies were hurriedly helped from the car, a man ran before them to show them the way, and they were again surrounded by boys and those thickset Caprean peasant women, who carry on their heads the trucks and valises of wealthy travelers. Their tiny, wooden, foot-stools rapped against the pavement of the small square, which looked almost like an opera square, and over which an electric lantern swung in the damp wind; the gang of urchins whistled like birds and turned somersaults, and as the Gentleman from San Francisco passed among them, it all looked like a stage scene; he went first under some kind of mediaeval archway, beneath houses huddled close together, and then along a steep echoing lane which led to the hotel entrance, flooded with light. At the

left, a palm tree raised its tuft above the flat roofs, and higher up, blue stars burned in the black sky. And again things looked as though it was in honor of the guests from San Francisco that the stony damp little town had awakened on its rocky island in the Mediterranean, that it was they who had made the owner of the hotel so happy and beaming, and that the Chinese gong, which had sounded the call to dinner through all the floors as soon as they entered the lobby, had been waiting only for them.

The owner, an elegant young man, who met the guests with a polite and exquisite bow, for a moment startled the Gentleman from San Francisco. Having caught sight of him, the Gentleman from San Francisco suddenly recollected that on the previous night, among other confused images which disturbed his sleep, he had seen this very man. His vision resembled the hotel keeper to a dot, had the same head, the same hair, shining and scrupulously combed, and wore the same frock-coat with rounded skirts. Amazed, he almost stopped for a while. But as there was not a mustard-seed of what is called mysticism in his heart, his surprise subsided at once; in passing the corridor of the hotel he jestingly told his wife and daughter about this strange coincidence of dream and reality. His daughter alone glanced at him with alarm, longing suddenly compressed her heart, and such a strong feeling of solitude on this strange, dark island seized her that she almost began to cry. But, as usual, she said nothing about her feeling to her father.

A person of high dignity, Rex XVII, who had spent three entire weeks on Capri, had just left the island, and the guests from San Francisco were given the apartments he had occupied. At their disposal was put the most handsome and skillful chambermaid, a Belgian, with a figure rendered slim and firm by her corset, and with a starched cap, shaped like a small, indented crown; and they had the privilege of being served by the most well-appearing and portly footman, a black, fiery-eyed Sicilian, and by the quickest waiter, the small, stout Luigi, who was a fiend at cracking jokes and had changed many places in his life. Then the maître-d'hôtel, a Frenchman, gently rapped at the door of the American gentleman's room. He came to ask whether the gentleman and the ladies would dine, and in case they would, which he did not doubt, to report that there

was to be had that day lobsters, roast beef, asparagus, pheasants, etc., etc.

The floor was still rocking under the Gentleman from San Francisco—so sea-sick had the wretched Italian steamer made him—yet, he slowly, though awkwardly, shut the window which had banged when the maître-d'hôtel entered, and which let in the smell of the distant kitchen and wet flowers in the garden, and answered with slow distinctiveness, that they would dine, that their table must be placed farther away from the door, in the depth of the hall, that they would have local wine and champagne, moderately dry and but slightly cooled. The maître-d'hôtel approved the words of the guest in various intonations, which all meant, however, only one thing; there is and can be no doubt that the desires of the Gentleman from San Francisco are right, and that everything would be carried out, in exact conformity with his words. At last he inclined his head and asked delicately:

"Is that all, sir?"

And having received in reply a slow "Yes," he added that to-day they were going to have the tarantella danced in the vestibule by Carmella and Giuseppe, known to all Italy and to "the entire world of tourists."

"I saw her on post-card pictures," said the Gentleman from San Francisco in a tone of voice which expressed nothing. "And this Giuseppe, is he her husband?"

"Her cousin, sir," answered the maitre-d'hotel.

The Gentleman from San Francisco tarried a little, evidently musing on something, but said nothing, then dismissed him with a nod of his head.

Then he started making preparations, as though for a wedding: he turned on all the electric lamps, and filled the mirrors with reflections of light and the sheen of furniture, and opened trunks; he began to shave and to wash himself, and the sound of his bell was heard every minute in the corridor, crossing with other impatient calls which came from the rooms of his wife and daughter. Luigi, in his red apron, with the ease characteristic of stout people, made funny faces at the chambermaids, who were dashing by with tile buckets in their hands, making them laugh until the tears came. He

rolled head over heels to the door, and, tapping with his knuckles, asked with feigned timidity and with an obsequiousness which he knew how to render idiotic:

"Ha sonata, Signore?" (Did you ring, sir?)

And from behind the door a slow, grating, insultingly polite voice, answered:

"Yes, come in."

What did the Gentleman from San Francisco think and feel on that evening forever memorable to him? It must be said frankly; absolutely nothing exceptional. The trouble is that everything on this earth appears too simple. Even had he felt anything deep in his heart, a premonition that something was going to happen, he would have imagined that it was not going to happen so soon, at least not at once. Besides, as is usually the case just after sea-sickness is over, he was very hungry, and he anticipated with real delight the first spoonful of soup, and the first gulp of wine; therefore, he was performing the habitual process of dressing, in a state of excitement which left no time for reflection.

Having shaved and washed himself, and dexterously put in place a few false teeth, he then, standing before the mirror, moistened and vigorously plastered what was left of his thick pearly-colored hair, close to his tawny-yellow skull. Then he put on, with some effort, a tight-fitting undershirt of cream-colored silk, fitted tight to his strong, aged body with its waist swelling out because of an abundant diet; and he pulled black silk socks and patent-leather dancing shoes on his dry feet with their fallen arches. Squatting down, he set right his black trousers, drawn high by means of silk suspenders, adjusted his snow-white shirt with its bulging front, put the buttons into the shining cuffs, and began the painful process of hunting up the front button under the hard collar. The floor was still swaying under him, the tips of his fingers hurt terribly, the button at times painfully pinched the flabby skin in the depression under his Adam's apple, but he persevered, and finally, with his eyes shining from the effort, his face blue because of the narrow collar which squeezed his neck, he triumphed over the difficulties—and all exhausted, he sat down before the pier-glass, his reflected image repeating itself in all the mirrors.

"It's terrible!" he muttered, lowering his strong, bald head and making no effort to understand what was terrible; then, with a careful and habitual gesture, he examined his short fingers with gouty callosities in the joints, and their large, convex, almond-colored nails, and repeated with conviction, "It's terrible!"

But here the stentorian voice of the second gong sounded throughout the house, as in a heathen temple. And having risen hurriedly, the Gentleman from San Francisco drew his tie more taut and firm around his collar, and pulled together his abdomen by means of a tight waistcoat, put on a dinner-coat, set to rights the cuffs, and for the last time he examined himself in the mirror. . . . This Carmella, tawny as a mulatto, with fiery eyes, in a dazzling dress in which orange-color predominated, must be an extraordinary dancer,—it occurred to him. And cheerfully leaving his room, he walked on the carpet, to his wife's chamber, and asked in a loud tone of voice if they would be long.

"In five minutes, papa!" answered cheerfully and gaily a girlish voice. "I am combing my hair."

"Very well," said the Gentleman from San Francisco.

And thinking of her wonderful hair, streaming on her shoulders, he slowly walked down along corridors and staircases, spread with red velvet carpets,—looking for the library. The servants he met hugged the walls, and he walked by as if not noticing them. An old lady, late for dinner, already bowed with years, with milk-white hair, yet bare-necked, in a light-gray silk dress, hurried at top speed, but she walked in a mincing, funny, hen-like manner, and he easily overtook her. At the glass door of the dining hall where the guests had already gathered and started eating, he stopped before the table crowded with boxes of matches and Egyptian cigarettes, took a great Manilla cigar, and threw three liras on the table. On the winter veranda he glanced into the open window; a stream of soft air came to him from the darkness, the top of the old palm loomed up before him afar-off, with its boughs spread among the stars and looking gigantic, and the distant even noise of the sea reached his ear. In the library-room, snug, quiet, a German in round silver-bowed glasses and with crazy, wondering eyes—stood turning the rustling pages of a newspaper. Having coldly eyed him, the Gentleman from San

Francisco seated himself in a deep leather arm-chair near a lamp under a green hood, put on his pince-nez and twitching his head because of the collar which choked him, hid himself from view behind a newspaper. He glanced at a few headlines, read a few lines about the interminable Balkan war, and turned over the page with an habitual gesture. Suddenly, the lines blazed up with a glassy sheen, the veins of his neck swelled, his eyes bulged out, the pince-nez fell from his nose. . . . He dashed forward, wanted to swallow air—and made a wild, rattling noise; his lower jaw dropped, dropped on his shoulder and began to shake, the shirt-front bulged out,—and the whole body, writhing, the heels catching in the carpet, slowly fell to the floor in a desperate struggle with an invisible foe. . . .

Had not the German been in the library, this frightful accident would have been quickly and adroitly hushed up. The body of the Gentleman from San Francisco would have been rushed away to some far corner—and none of the guests would have known of the occurrence. But the German dashed out of the library with outcries and spread the alarm all over the house. And many rose from their meal, upsetting chairs, others growing pale, ran along the corridors to the library, and the question, asked in many languages, was heard: "What is it? What has happened?" And no one was able to answer it clearly, no one understood anything, for until this very day men still wonder most at death and most absolutely refuse to believe in it. The owner rushed from one guest to another, trying to keep back those who were running and soothe them with hasty assurances, that this was nothing, a mere trifle, a little fainting-spell by which a Gentleman from San Francisco, had been overcome. But no one listened to him, many saw how the footman and waiters tore from the gentleman his tie, collar, waistcoat, the rumpled evening coat, and even—for no visible reason—the dancing shoes from his black silk-covered feet. And he kept on writhing. He obstinately struggled with death, he did not want to yield to the foe that attacked him so unexpectedly and grossly. He shook his head, emitted rattling sounds like one throttled, and turned up his eye-balls like one drunk with wine. When he was hastily brought into Number Forty-three,—the smallest, worst, dampest, and coldest room at the end of the lower corridor,—and stretched on the bed,—his daughter

came running, her hair falling over her shoulders, the skirts of her dressing-gown thrown open, with bare breasts raised by the corset. Then came his wife, big, heavy, almost completely dressed for dinner, her mouth round with terror.

In a quarter of an hour all was again in good trim at the hotel. But the evening was irreparably spoiled. Some tourists returned to the dining-hall and finished their dinner, but they kept silent, and it was obvious that they took the accident as a personal insult, while the owner went from one guest to another, shrugging his shoulders in impotent and appropriate irritation, feeling like one innocently victimized, assuring everyone that he understood perfectly well "how disagreeable this is," and giving his word that he would take all "the measures that are within his power" to do away with the trouble. Yet it was found necessary to cancel the tarantella. The unnecessary electric lamps were put out, most of the guests left for the beer-hall, and it grew so quiet in the hotel that one could distinctly hear the tick-tock of the clock in the lobby, where a lonely parrot babbled something in its expressionless manner, stirring in its cage, and trying to fall asleep with its paw clutching the upper perch in a most absurd manner. The Gentleman from San Francisco lay stretched in a cheap iron bed, under coarse woolen blankets, dimly lighted by a single gas-burner fastened in the ceiling. An ice-bag slid down on his wet, cold forehead. His blue, already lifeless face grew gradually cold; the hoarse, rattling noise which came from his mouth, lighted by the glimmer of the golden fillings, gradually weakened. It was not the Gentleman from San Francisco that was emitting those weird sounds; he was no more,—someone else did it. His wife and daughter, the doctor, the servants were standing and watching him apathetically. Suddenly, that which they expected and feared happened. The rattling sound ceased. And slowly, slowly, in everybody's sight a pallor stole over the face of the dead man, and his features began to grow thinner and more luminous, beautiful with the beauty that he had long shunned and that became him well_____

The proprietor entered. "Gia e morto," whispered the doctor to him. The proprietor shrugged his shoulders indifferently. The older lady, with tears slowly running down her cheeks, approached him

and said timidly that now the deceased must be taken to his room.

"O no, madam," answered the proprietor politely, but without any amiability and not in English, but in French. He was no longer interested in the trifle which the guests from San Francisco could now leave at his cash-office. "This is absolutely impossible," he said, and added in the form of an explanation that he valued this apartment highly, and if he satisfied her desire, this would become known over Capri and the tourists would begin to avoid it.

The girl, who had looked at him strangely, sat down, and with her handkerchief to her mouth, began to cry. Her mother's tears dried up at once, and her face flared up. She raised her tone, began to demand, using her own language and still unable to realize that the respect for her was absolutely gone. The proprietor, with polite dignity, cut her short: "If madam does not like the ways of this hotel, he dare not detain her." And he firmly announced that the corpse must leave the hotel that very day, at dawn, that the police had been informed, that an agent would call immediately and attend to all the necessary formalities. . . . "Is it possible to get on Capri at least a plain coffin?" madam asks. . . . Unfortunately not; by no means, and as for making one, there will be no time. It will be necessary to arrange things some other way. . . . For instance, he gets English soda-water in big, oblong boxes. . . . The partitions could be taken out from such a box. . . .

By night, the whole hotel was asleep. A waiter opened the window in Number 43—it faced a corner of the garden where a consumptive banana-tree grew in the shadow of a high stone wall set with broken glass on the top—turned out the electric light, locked the door, and went away. The deceased remained alone in the darkness. Blue stars looked down at him from the black sky, the cricket in the wall started his melancholy, care-free song. In the dimly lighted corridor two chambermaids were sitting on the window-sill, mending something. Then Luigi came in, in slippared feet, with a heap of clothes on his arm.

"*Pronto?*"—he asked in a stage whisper, as if greatly concerned, directing his eyes toward the terrible door, at the end of the corridor. And waving his free hand in that direction, "*Partenza!*" he cried out in a whisper, as if seeing oft a train,—and the chambermaids,

choking with noiseless laughter, put their heads on each other's shoulders.

Then, stepping softly, he ran to the door, slightly rapped at it, and inclining his ear, asked most obsequiously in a subdued tone of voice:

"Ha sonata, Signore?"

And, squeezing his throat and thrusting his lower jaw forward, he answered himself in a drawling, grating, sad voice, as if from behind the door:

"Yes, come in. . . ."

At dawn, when the window panes in Number Forty-three grew white, and a damp wind rustled in the leaves of the banana-tree, when the pale-blue morning sky rose and stretched over Capri, and the sun, rising from behind the distant mountains of Italy, touched into gold the pure, clearly outlined summit of Monte Solaro, when the masons, who mended the paths for the tourists on the island, went out to their work,—an oblong box was brought to room number forty-three. Soon it grew very heavy and painfully pressed against the knees of the assistant doorman who was conveying it in a one-horse carriage along the white highroad which winded on the slopes, among stone fences and vineyards, all the way down to the seacoast. The driver, a sickly man, with red eyes, in an old short-sleeved coat and in worn-out shoes, had a drunken headache; all night long he had played dice at the eatinghouse—and he kept on flogging his vigorous little horse. According to Sicilian custom, the animal was heavily burdened with decorations: all sorts of bells tinkled on the bridle, which was ornamented with colored woolen fringes; there were bells also on the edge of the high saddle; and a bird's feather, two feet long, stuck in the trimmed crest of the horse, nodded up and down. The driver kept silence: he was depressed by his wrongheadedness and vices, by the fact that last night he had lost in gambling all the copper coins with which his pockets had been full,—neither more nor less than four liras and forty centesimi. But on such a morning, when the air is so fresh, and the sea stretches nearby, and the sky is serene with a morning serenity,—a headache passes rapidly and one becomes carefree again. Besides, the driver was also somewhat cheered by the unexpected earnings which

the Gentleman from San Francisco, who bumped his dead head against the walls of the box behind his back, had brought him. The little steamer, shaped like a great bug, which lay far down, on the tender and brilliant blue, filling to the brim the Neapolitan bay, was blowing the signal of departure,—and the sounds swiftly resounded all over Capri. Every bend of the island, every ridge and stone was seen as distinctly as if there were no air between heaven and earth. Near the quay the driver was overtaken by the head doorman who conducted in an auto the wife and daughter of the Gentleman from San Francisco. Their faces were pale and their eyes sunken with tears and a sleepless night. And in ten minutes the little steamer was again stirring up the water and picking its way toward Sorrento and Castellamare, carrying the American family away from Capri forever. . . . Meanwhile, peace and rest were restored on the island.

Two thousand years ago there had lived on that island a man who became utterly entangled in his own brutal and filthy actions. For some unknown reason he usurped the rule over millions of men and found himself bewildered by the absurdity of this power, while the fear that someone might kill him unawares, made him commit deeds inhuman beyond all measure. And mankind has forever retained his memory, and those who, taken together, now rule the world, as incomprehensibly and, essentially, as cruelly as he did,—come from all the corners of the earth to look at the remnants of the stone house he inhabited, which stands on one of the steepest cliffs of the island. On that wonderful morning the tourists, who had come to Capri for precisely that purpose, were still asleep in the various hotels, but tiny long-eared asses under red saddles were already being led to the hotel entrances. Americans and Germans, men and women, old and young, after having arisen and breakfasted heartily, were to scramble on them, and the old beggar-women of Capri, with sticks in their sinewy hands, were again to run after them along stony, mountainous paths, all the way up to the summit of Monte Tiberia. The dead old man from San Francisco, who had planned to keep the tourists company but who had, instead, only scared them by reminding them of death, was already shipped to Naples, and soothed by this, the travelers slept soundly, and silence reigned over the island. The stores in the little town were still closed, with the exception of the

fish and greens market on the tiny square. Among the plain people who filled it, going about their business, stood idly by, as usual, Lorenzo, a tall old boatman, a carefree reveller and once a handsome man, famous all over Italy, who had many times served as a model for painters. He had brought and already sold—for a song—two big sea-crawfish, which he had caught at night and which were rustling in the apron of Don Cataldo, the cook of the hotel where the family from San Francisco had been lodged,—and now Lorenzo could stand calmly until nightfall, wearing princely airs, showing off his rags, his clay pipe with its long reed mouth-piece, and his red woolen cap, tilted on one ear. Meanwhile, among the precipices of Monte Solare, down the ancient Phoenician road, cut in the rocks in the form of a gigantic staircase, two Abruzzi mountaineers were coming from Anacapri. One carried under his leather mantle a bagpipe, a large goat's skin with two pipes; the other, something in the nature of a wooden flute. They walked, and the entire country, joyous, beautiful, sunny, stretched below them; the rocky shoulders of the island, which lay at their feet, the fabulous blue in which it swam, the shining morning vapors over the sea westward, beneath the dazzling sun, and the wavering masses of Italy's mountains, both near and distant, whose beauty human word is powerless to render. . . . Midway they slowed up. Overshadowing the road stood, in a grotto of the rock wall of Monte Solare, the Holy Virgin, all radiant, bathed in the warmth and the splendor of the sun. The rust of her snow-white plaster-of-Paris vestures and queenly crown was touched into gold, and there were meekness and mercy in her eyes raised toward the heavens, toward the eternal and beatific abode of her thrice-blessed Son. They bared their heads, applied the pipes to their lips, and praises flowed on, candid and humbly-joyous, praises to the sun and the morning, to Her, the Immaculate Intercessor for all who suffer in this evil and beautiful world, and to Him who had been born of her womb in the cavern of Bethlehem, in a hut of lowly shepherds in distant Judea.

As for the body of the dead Gentleman from San Francisco, it was on its way home, to the shores of the New World, where a grave awaited it. Having undergone many humiliations and suffered much human neglect, having wandered about a week from one port

warehouse to another, it finally got on that same famous ship which had brought the family, such a short while ago and with such a pomp, to the Old World. But now he was concealed from the living: in a tar-coated coffin he was lowered deep into the black hold of the steamer. And again did the ship set out on its far sea journey. At night it sailed by the island of Capri, and, for those who watched it from the island, its lights slowly disappearing in the dark sea, it seemed infinitely sad. But there, on the vast steamer, in its lighted halls shining with brilliance and marble, a noisy dancing party was going on, as usual.

On the second and the third night there was again a ball—this time in mid-ocean, during the furious storm sweeping over the ocean, which roared like a funeral mass and rolled up mountainous seas fringed with mourning silvery foam. The Devil, who from the rocks of Gibraltar, the stony gateway of two worlds, watched the ship vanish into night and storm, could hardly distinguish from behind the snow the innumerable fiery eyes of the ship. The Devil was as huge as a cliff, but the ship was even bigger, a many-storied, many-stacked giant, created by the arrogance of the New Man with the old heart. The blizzard battered the ship's rigging and its broad-necked stacks, whitened with snow, but it remained firm, majestic—and terrible. On its uppermost deck, amidst a snowy whirlwind there loomed up in loneliness the cozy, dimly lighted cabin, where, only half awake, the vessel's ponderous pilot reigned over its entire mass, bearing the semblance of a pagan idol. He heard the wailing moans and the furious screeching of the siren, choked by the storm, but the nearness of that which was behind the wall and which in the last account was incomprehensible to him, removed his fears. He was reassured by the thought of the large, armored cabin, which now and then was filled with mysterious rumbling sounds and with the dry creaking of blue fires, flaring up and exploding around a man with a metallic headpiece, who was eagerly catching the indistinct voices of the vessels that hailed him, hundreds of miles away. At the very bottom, in the under-water womb of the "Atlantis" the huge masses of tanks and various other machines, their steel parts shining dully, wheezed with steam and oozed hot water and oil; here was the gigantic kitchen, heated by hellish furnaces, where the

motion of the vessel was being generated; here seethed those forces terrible in their concentration which were transmitted to the keel of the vessel, and into that endless round tunnel, which was lighted by electricity, and looked like a gigantic cannon barrel, where slowly, with a punctuality and certainly that crushes the human soul, a colossal shaft was revolving in its oily nest, like a living monster stretching in its lair. As for the middle part of the "Atlantis," its warm, luxurious cabins, dining-rooms, and halls, they radiated light and joy, were astir with a chattering smartly-dressed crowd, were filled with the fragrance of fresh flowers, and resounded with a string orchestra. And again did the slender supple pair of hired lovers painfully turn and twist and at times clash convulsively amid the splendor of lights, silks, diamonds, and bare feminine shoulders: she—a sinfully modest pretty girl, with lowered eyelashes and an innocent hair-dressing, he—a tall, young man, with black hair, looking as if it were pasted, pale with powder, in most exquisite patent-leather shoes, in a narrow, long-skirted dresscoat,—a beautiful man resembling a leech. And no one knew that this couple had long since been weary of torturing themselves with a feigned beatific torture under the sounds of shamefully-melancholy music; nor did any one know what lay deep, deep, beneath them, on the very bottom of the hold, in the neighborhood of the gloomy and sultry maw of the ship, that heavily struggled with the ocean, the darkness, and the storm. ,

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. What is the significance of the fact that the gentleman from San Francisco remains nameless throughout the story? That he is from San Francisco? That he is an industrialist?

2. What does the Atlantis symbolize? Why is the name at once ironical and appropriate? What purpose does the brief description of life on board the ship serve in the story? What is the suggestion of the description of the ship after dark? What is the captain a symbol of? The dancing couple? The prince?

3. The three major antagonists in this story—nature, the servant or working class, and the Gentleman's own class—are each introduced relatively late in the story. What reasons lie behind the antagonism of

each? Why are these conflicts introduced in the order in which we find them in the story?

4. Explain the significance of the Gentleman's dream of the maitre d'hôtel at Capri.

5. What is the purpose and meaning of the scene between the maitre d'hôtel and the Gentleman's wife immediately after the Gentleman's death? Of the soda-water box used as a casket? Of Luigi's burlesque of the Gentleman at the door of the death room?

6. Why are the decorations of the peasant's donkey discussed at such length? Does this passage refer back to earlier pages in the story? If so, with what implication?

7. The core of the story's theme is to be found in the story of the tyrant and the pilgrimage. Explain its relationship to the rest of the story.

8. The theme of the story is pointed up and finally clarified in the ending. Examine in *detail* and discuss the description of the Gentleman's final voyage home. Then paraphrase the theme of the story.

9. Explain the relationship between the quotation which heads the story and the story itself.

10. Discuss the use and effect of irony in the story.

IT. Contrast Bunin's approach to his story material with Sansom's and Kafka's. What are the basic differences? Are all three stories allegories? If so, which of the three approaches do you consider most effective and why?

The Long Sheet

by WILLIAM SANSOM

HAVE YOU ever wrung dry a wet cloth; wrung it bone-white dry—with only the grip of your fingers and the muscles of your arms? If you have done this, you will understand better the situation of the captives at Device Z when the warders set them the task of the long sheet.

You will remember how, having stretched the cloth between your hands, you begin by twisting one end—holding the other firmly so that the water is corkscrewed from its hiding place. At first the water spurts out easily, but later you will find yourself screwing with both hands in different directions, whitening your knuckles, straining every fiber of your diaphragm—and all to extract the smallest drop of moisture! The muscle of your arm swells like an egg—yet the wet drop remains a pinhead! As you work, the cloth will gradually change from a gray color to the whiteness of dried bone, yet even then the cloth will be wet! Still you will knot your muscles; still you will wrench away at the furtive damp. Then—at last!—you will believe the cloth to be dry . . . but in the next second the tip of a finger will quiver tragically as it touches some cold, hidden veil of damp clinging deep down in the interlaced threads.

Such, then, was the task of the captives.

They were placed in a long steel box of a room with no windows and no doors. The room was some six feet wide and six feet high, but it ran one hundred feet in length. It resembled thus a rectangular tunnel with no entrance and no exit, yet the sensation inside was not really that of a tunnel. For instance, a quantity of light flowed through thick glass panels set at intervals along the ceiling; these

were the skylights, and through these the captives had been dropped into the box. Again, the impression of living in a tunnel was offset by a system of cubicle walls that separated the captives into groups. These cubicle walls were made from the same riveted steel as the main walls: there was no communication from cubicle to cubicle except through a half-foot of space left between the top of the wall and the ceiling. Thus each group of captives occupied, as it were, a small room. There were twenty-two captives. They were grouped in unequal number within four cubicles.

Through the entire length of this system, raised three feet from the ground, passing through the very center of each room, ran a long wound sheet. It was made from coarse white linen bundled into a loose cylinder of cloth some six inches in diameter.

When the captives were first thrown into their cubicles, the long sheet was heavy with water. The warders had soaked the material so thoroughly that in the folds the water had gathered into lakes. The warders then issued their instructions. The captives were to wring the sheet dry. It would not do to wring the sheet to what we would normally call a "dry" state—as of clothes ready for airing. On the contrary—this sheet must be purged of every moisture. It must be wrung as dry as a bone. This, the warders concluded, might take a long time. It might even take months of hard work. In fact, they had taken special care to treat the linen so that it would be durable over a lengthy period. But when the task was finally completed, then the men and women would be granted their freedom. They would be released.

As the grave faces of the warders disappeared and the glass skylights slid shut, the captives smiled for the first time. For months they had lived with the fear of death, they had shrunk in ceaseless apprehension of the terrible devices that awaited them. And now that future had devolved into the wringing of a simple sheet! A long sheet, it was true, but child's play in comparison with what they had expected. Thus they sank to the steel floor in relief. Few laid a hand on the sheet that day.

But after three months the captives began to realize the true extent of their task. By this time each group in each cubicle had wrung the worst water from their section of the sheet. Yet with all their

sweating and straining they could not rid the cloth of its last dampness.

It was apparent that the warders had no intention of presenting them with a simple task. For through vents near the roof, hot steam was injected mechanically into the cubicles as long as daylight lasted. This steam naturally moistened the sheet afresh. The steam was so regulated that it hindered rather than prevented the fulfillment of the wringing. Thus there was always less steam entering than moisture wrung from the sheet at a normal rate of working. The steam injection merely meant that for every ten drops of water wrung seven new drops would settle upon the sheet, so that eventually the captives would still be able to wring the sheet dry. This device of the warders was introduced solely to complicate the task. It seemed that the warders were acting in two ways; daily they encouraged the efforts of the captives with promises of release, but daily they turned on the steam cocks.

In the cubicles the air was thick with steam. It was the air of a laundry, where steam catches in the throat, where it is sometimes difficult to breathe, where the smell of hot, wet cloth sickens the heart. The steel walls sweated. Condensed water trickled in winding trails down the gray plate. Beads of moisture clustered at the rivet heads. The long sheet spattered a few drops into the central gutter in the floor as the captives twisted against time. Both men and women worked half-naked. Since the sheet was positioned three feet from the ground, they were forced to stoop. If they sat at their work, then their arms grew numb in the raised attitude at which they had to be maintained. There was nothing for it but to stoop. In the hot air they sweated, yet they dared not lean over the sheet for fear their sweat should fall on the hungry cloth. Their muscles knotted, their backs cried out as they twisted. The end was far, but there was an end. That meant that there was hope. This knowledge lent fire to the struggling ambition that lived in their human hearts. They worked.

Yet some were not always equal to the task.

ROOM THREE—THOSE WHO SOUGHT OUTSIDE

There were four rooms. Take Room Three. This housed five

people—two married couples and a young Serbian grocer. All five of them wanted freedom. They worked earnestly at their task. That the task was in essence unproductive did not worry them. At least, it would produce their freedom. It was thus artificially productive. These five people set about the problem in a normal businesslike way. Previously, they had been used to habitual hours, a life of steady formula. This they now applied to the new business of wringing. Set hours were allotted to each person. It was as if they commuted regularly from their suburbia (the steel sleeping corner) to the office (the long sheet). They worked in relays, in four-hour stretches throughout the day and night.

However, as I have said, they were not equal to the task. The framework of habit overcame them. Like so many who live within a steady, comfortable routine, they allowed the routine around the work to predominate in importance above the work itself. They arrived at the long sheet punctually, and with consciences thus satisfied, they put insufficient effort into the actual work. Furthermore, when they had fulfilled the routine assiduously for a period, one or the other would congratulate his conscience and really believe that he deserved a "little relaxation," and he would take the afternoon off. Such was the force of his emphasis on obedience to the letter that he was convinced the law would not suffer. Thus the real work of wringing suffered. New moisture crept in where his hands were weak. These people had set about the quest for freedom in the right way, but they were unhappily convinced of their righteousness.

Sometimes one or the other of the couples would lie down together on the sweating steel plates. They would make love as the steam misted their bodies with false perspirations. One of the women became pregnant. Her child was born in the steam box, but, under the influence of Room Three's routine, that child could never be free. The influence, the constriction, and the hopeless task of the parents would keep the child in the steam box for life. The child would never have the chance to learn to wring with effect.

ROOM TWO—THOSE WHO SOUGHT IN AND OUT AND AROUND

In another of the rooms—Room Two—there were five men. Their names and their professions do not matter. It is how they attacked

the long sheet that matters. They attacked it in five different ways.

Here were five individualists, five who were forced by the set of their minds to approach their problems in various ways of their own. Day after day they labored in the hot, damp steel cubicle, each twisting the long cylinder of cloth with different reasonings.

One man had been frightened by a sheet when he was young. On some indefinite day of his childhood, a new nurse had appeared. Her black eyes had burned with a powerful scorn; her small lascivious teeth and huge drooping cheeks had threatened him in the candle-light. On her first day the new nurse had made a little white monster from a white sheet. It had two little heads and a shapeless flowing body. The little heads were sharp, and always bobbing. The nurse had come silently into the night nursery when it was dark. Lighting a candle on the floor behind the end of the bed, she had quietly raised her little white monster so that the boy could just see it above his toes. Then she had begun a strident sing-song crowing, like the harsh crowing of Punch. The boy had awaked to this sound, and had seen the sharp bobbing heads of the little monster.

Now, some thirty years later, the man has forgotten the scene, but somehow his hands cannot touch the long sheet without a great sensation of uneasiness. His hands do not touch the white cloth well. Consequently, he is forever making excuses to avoid working on the sheet. He feigns illness. He offers to clear up the excrement of all the others. He has mutilated his hands. He has attempted to make love with the other four men to avoid the reality of the sheet. Oh, there is no end to the devices the fellow had invented from his sadness! But whatever he does cannot eradicate the awful uneasiness that clouds the far reaches of his mind. At the moment of writing, this man is still in the steel cubicle. He will never be free.

Another of the men in Room Two was a simple quiet fellow. The others took no interest in him, he was too simple a fellow. Yet a most amazing thing—his section of the sheet was white and quite dry. There was a good reason for this. Without any conscious knowledge, without planning and scheming, he had naturally gone at his wringing the good way. He was accustomed to wring sitting astride the cloth. In this position, his legs squeezed at the cloth too. Thus, without questioning, he surrendered his *whole* body to the task. His

heart, too, for he was such a simple fellow. This man's sheet was dry. But the others never even noticed. He was such a simple fellow.

There was one man in Room Two whose *métier* in life had always been the short cut. As previously in business, in love, in all relationships, he attempted to apply the short cut system to the most important task of all—the wringing of the long sheet. He tried out a great many tricks and petty deceptions. He blocked up the pipe through which the guards pumped the steam. The next morning, like a mushroom, another pipe had grown at the side of the first. He tried feigning madness. The warders threw buckets of cold water down through the skylight. Some of this water splashed on to the sheet, destroying a whole month's work. The other men nearly killed him for this. Once he bribed one of the warders to send him a pot of white enamel. With this he painted the sheet white. The enamel dried hard. The sheet seemed dry! But the next day the warders came to chip the enamel off. They punished him with a traveling hose jet. This jet traveled inconsequently about the room. To save the water hitting the sheet, the man had to intercept the jet with his body. He was kept running and jumping and squatting for a whole day—until toward evening he dropped exhausted and rolled into the central gutter. The warders, of course, can never be bribed.

Then there was another man who can best be described as a fumbler. He worked hard and earnestly. He was up at the wringing well before the others, he seldom lay down till long after the skylights were dark and the air cleared of steam. But he fumbled. His mind co-ordinated imperfectly with his body. Although he felt that he concentrated his whole effort, psychic and physical, on the job of wringing—his mind would wander to other things. He never knew that this happened, but his hands did. They stopped wringing, they wrung the wrong way—and the fatal drops of moisture accumulated. He could never understand this. He thought his mind was always on the job. But instead his mind settled too often on matters only near to the job, not the job in essence. For a small instance—his mind might wander to the muscle on his left forearm. He might see that it bulges at a downward screw of the wet linen. He watches this bulge as he works. The bulge then absorbs his interest to such an extent that he makes greater play with this left arm to stimulate fur-

ther the bulge of muscle. In compensation the right arm slackens its effort. The wringing becomes uneven and inefficient. Yet all this time he himself in honesty believes that he is concentrating upon his job. The muscle is, in fact, part of the job. Yet it is only a facet, not the full perspective. He fumbles because he does not see clearly: and to wring dry the long sheet a man must give his whole thought in calm and complete clarity.

The fifth man in Room Two was a good worker: that is, he had found the way to wring effectively, and at times his portion of the sheet was almost dry. But he was perverted. This man liked to wring the sheet almost dry—then stand by and watch the steam settle into the folds once more! He liked to watch the fruits of his labor rot. In this way he freed himself from the task. He freed himself by attaining his object, and then treating it with the scorn he imagined it deserved. He felt himself master of the work—but in reality he never became the master of his true freedom. There was no purity in this man. His freedom was false.

ROOM FOUR—THOSE WHO NEVER SOUGHT AT ALL

Room Number Four housed more captives than the others. Seven people were crowded into this one cell of steam and steel. There were three women, one girl of twelve, and three men. These people seldom did much work. They were a source of great disappointment to the wardens. To these people the effort was not worth eventual freedom. The immensity of the task had long ago disheartened them. Their minds were not big enough to envisage the better future. They had enough. They had their breeding and their food. The state of life held no interest for them. Vaguely, they would have preferred better conditions. But at the cost of toil and thought—no. These people were squalid and small. Their desire for freedom had been killed by a dull acceptance of their impotence. This also became true of the little girl of twelve. She had no alternative but to follow the others.

The warders never played their favorite trick on Room Four, for the simple reason that the trick would have had no effect. The trick was to release into the cells small squadrons of saturated birds. The birds flew into the cells and scattered water from their wings every-

where. The birds flew in all directions and the captives ran wildly here and there in hysterical efforts to trap them before they splashed water onto the sacred sheet. The warders considered that the element of chance implicit in these birds was a healthy innovation. Otherwise, life for the captives would have been too ordered. There must be risk, said the warders. And so from time to time, with no warning, they injected these little wet birds and the captives hastened to protect the purity of their work against the interference of fate. If they could not catch the birds in time, they learnt in this manner how to accept misfortune: and in patience they redoubled their efforts to retrieve the former level of their work.

But into Room Four the birds never flew. The trick would never have affected the inhabitants, who lived at the low ebb of misfortune already. Perhaps the real tragedy of these dispirited people was not their own misfortune, to which they had grown accustomed, but that their slackness had its effect on those whose ambitions were pure and strong. The slackness was contagious. In this way. The sheet was so wet in Room Four that the water seeped through into Room One. And in Room One lived the most successful of all the captives.

ROOM ONE—THOSE WHO SOUGHT INSIDE

There were five of them in cubicle One. Four men and one woman. They were successful no more for their method of wringing than for their attitude toward wringing. At first, when they had been dropped through the skylight, when they saw the long sheet, when they slowly accustomed themselves to the idea of what lay before them, they were profoundly shocked. Unlike the others, they thought death preferable to such senseless and unproductive labor. But they were good people. Soon they saw beyond the apparent drudgery. Soon they had passed through and rejected the various phases experienced and retained by the other rooms. They had known the defeat of Room Four, the individual terrors and escapes of Room Two, the veneer of virtue beneath which the inhabitants of Room Three purred with such alarming satisfaction. No, it was not so very long before these good people saw beyond the apparent and thenceforth set themselves to work with body and soul, gently

but with strength, humbly yet fearlessly, towards the only end of value—freedom.

First, these people said "Unproductive? The long sheet a senseless drudgery? Yes—but why not? In whatever other sphere of labor could we ever have produced ultimately anything? It is not the production that counts, but the life lived in the spirit during production. Production, the tightening of the muscles, the weaving of the hands, the pouring forth of shaped materials—this is only an employment for the nervous body, the dying legacy of the hunter's will to movement. Let the hands weave, but at the same time let the spirit search. Give the long sheet its rightful place—and concentrate on a better understanding of the freedom that is our real object."

At the same time, they saw to it that the sheet was wrung efficiently. They arranged a successful rota system. They tried various methods and positions with their hands. Examining every detail, they selected in every way the best approach. They did not overtax themselves. They did not hurry themselves. They worked with a rhythmic resilience, conserving this energy for the exertion of that. They allowed no extremes. They applied themselves with sincerity and a good will.

Above all they had faith. Their attitude was broad—but led in one direction. Their endeavor was freedom. They feared neither work nor weakness. These things did not exist for them; their existence was a material through which they could achieve, by calm and sensitive understanding, the goal of perfect freedom.

Gradually these people achieved their end. In spite of the steam, in spite of the saturated birds, in spite of the vaporous contagion seeping through from the room of the defeated, in spite of the long hours and the heat and the squared horizon of rusting steel—their spirit prevailed and they achieved the purity they sought. One day, seven years later, the wet gray sheet dawned a bright white—dry as desert ivory, dry as marble dust.

They called up through the skylight to the warders. The grave faces appeared. Coldly the warders regarded the white sheet. There were nods of approbation.

"Freedom?" said the captives.

The guards brought out their great hoses and doused the white sheet sodden gray with a huge pressure of water.

"You already have it," they answered. "Freedom lies in an attitude of the spirit. There is no other freedom." And the skylights silently closed.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. What does the long sheet represent?
2. Why, if the task involves wringing the sheet dry, do the warders keep wetting it?
3. Sum up the various attitudes toward the task of each of the rooms. What does each attitude symbolize?
4. What is the symbolic significances of the wet birds?
5. Who are the warders? What do they represent? Why are the people in the cubicles? Why does none of them challenge the right of the warders to hold them prisoner?
6. In "The Long Sheet" we are concerned with a group of people all of whom are interested in achieving their freedom. What does this freedom represent? What does the life in the cubicles represent?
7. One room has succeeded finally in drying out the sheet and asks for release. Of all the attitudes toward the task, theirs has been the most successful. What is their attitude and what does its success symbolize?
8. Why do the warders not release the successful prisoners? Does this mean that their success was really not success at all and that their attitude is no better than that of the others who did not succeed? They ask for their freedom, but the warders tell them that they already have it. What do the warders mean? In what does freedom consist?
9. This story is an allegory. Discuss its meaning, the philosophy of the author, its significance in terms of modern problems.
10. To what extent does Sansom intrude into the story? That is, do you decide entirely for yourself what each symbol stands for, or does the author tell you, or hint at the solution in any way? Would you have been able to understand all the symbols if the author had not said anything about them? Is this helpful to the story or does it detract?

ii. After finishing "In the Penal Colony," by Franz Kafka, contrast the two stories on the bases of method, style, significance, position of the author in relation to the material, symbolic value, and importance of the allegory to you.

In the Penal Colony

by FRANZ KAFKA

(Translated by Willa and Edwin Muir)

IT'S A REMARKABLE piece of apparatus," said the officer to the explorer and surveyed with a certain air of admiration the apparatus which was after all quite familiar to him. The explorer seemed to have accepted merely out of politeness the Commandant's invitation to witness the execution of a soldier condemned to death for disobedience and insulting behavior to a superior. Nor did the colony itself betray much interest in this execution. At least, in the small sandy valley, a deep hollow surrounded on all sides by naked crags, there was no one present save the officer, the explorer, the condemned man, who was a stupid-looking wide-mouthed creature with bewildered hair and face, and the soldier who held the heavy chain controlling the small chains locked on the prisoner's ankles, wrists and- neck, chains which were themselves attached to each other by communicating links. In any case, the condemned man looked so like a submissive dog that one might have thought he could be left to run free on the surrounding hills and would only need to be whistled for when the execution was due to begin.

The explorer did not much care about the apparatus and walked up and down behind the prisoner with almost visible indifference while the officer made the last adjustments, now creeping beneath the structure, which was bedded deep in the earth, now climbing a ladder to inspect its upper parts. These were tasks that might well have been left to a mechanic, but the officer performed them with great zeal, whether because he was a devoted admirer of the apparatus or because of other reasons the work could be entrusted to

no one else. "Ready now!" he called at last and climbed down from the ladder. He looked uncommonly limp, breathed with his mouth wide open and had tucked two fine ladies' handkerchiefs under the collar of his uniform. "These uniforms are too heavy for the tropics, surely," said the explorer, instead of making some inquiry about the apparatus, as the officer had expected. "Of course," said the officer, washing his oily and greasy hands in a bucket of water that stood ready, "but they mean home to us; we don't want to forget about home. Now just have a look at this machine," he added at once, simultaneously drying his hands on a towel and indicating the apparatus. "Up till now a few things still had to be set by hand, but from this moment it works all by itself." The explorer nodded and followed him. The officer, anxious to secure himself against all contingencies, said: "Things sometimes go wrong, of course; I hope that nothing goes wrong today, but we have to allow for the possibility. The machinery should go on working continuously for twelve hours. But if anything does go wrong it will only be some small matter that can be set right at once."

"Won't you take a seat?" he asked finally, drawing a cane chair out from among a heap of them and offering it to the explorer, who could not refuse it. He was now sitting at the edge of a pit, into which he glanced for a fleeting moment. It was not very deep. On one side of the pit the excavated soil had been piled up in a rampart, on the other side of it stood the apparatus. "I don't know," said the officer, "if the Commandant has already explained this apparatus to you." The explorer waved one hand vaguely; the officer asked for nothing better, since now he could explain the apparatus himself. "This apparatus," he said, taking hold of a crank handle and leaning against it, "was invented by our former Commandant. I assisted at the very earliest experiments and had a share in all the work until its completion. But the credit of inventing it belongs to him alone. Have you ever heard of our former Commandant? No? Well, it isn't saying too much if I tell you that the organization of the whole penal colony is his work. We who were his friends knew even before he died that the organization of the colony was so perfect that his successor, even with a thousand new schemes in his head, would find it impossible to alter anything, at least for many years to come. And

our prophecy has come true; the new Commandant has had to acknowledge its truth. A pity you never met the old Commandant!—But," the officer interrupted himself, "I am rambling on, and here stands his apparatus before us. It consists, as you see, of three parts. In the course of time each of these parts has acquired a kind of popular nickname. The lower one is called the 'Bed,' the upper one the 'Designer,' and this one here in the middle that moves up and down is called the 'Harrow.'" "The Harrow?" asked the explorer. He had not been listening very attentively, the glare of the sun in the shadeless valley was altogether too strong, it was difficult to collect one's thoughts. All the more did he admire the officer, who in spite of his tight-fitting full-dress uniform coat, amply befrogged and weighed down by epaulettes, was pursuing his subject with such enthusiasm and, besides talking, was still tightening a screw here and there with a spanner. As for the soldier, he seemed to be in much the same condition as the explorer. He had wound the prisoner's chain round both his wrists, propped himself on his rifle, let his head hang and was paying no attention to anything. That did not surprise the explorer, for the officer was speaking French, and certainly neither the soldier nor the prisoner understood a word of French. It was all the more remarkable, therefore, that the prisoner was none the less making an effort to follow the officer's explanations. With a kind of drowsy persistence he directed his gaze wherever the officer pointed a finger, and at the interruption of the explorer's question he, too, as well as the officer, looked round.

"Yes, the Harrow," said the officer, "a good name for it. The needles are set in like the teeth of a harrow and the whole thing works something like a harrow, although its action is limited to one place and contrived with much more artistic skill. Anyhow, you'll soon understand it. On the Bed here the condemned man is laid—I'm going to describe the apparatus first before I set it in motion. Then you'll be able to follow the proceedings better. Besides, one of the cog wheels in the Designer is badly worn; it creaks a lot when it's working; you can hardly hear yourself speak; spare parts, unfortunately, are difficult to get here.—Well, here is the Bed, as I told you. It is completely covered with a layer of cotton wool; you'll find out why later. On this cotton wool the condemned man is laid, face

down, quite naked, of course; here are straps for the hands, here for the feet, and here for the neck, to bind him fast. Here at the head of the bed, where the man, as I said, first lays down his face, is this little gag of felt, which can be easily regulated to go straight into his mouth. It is meant to keep him from screaming and biting his tongue. Of course the man is forced to take the felt into his mouth, for otherwise his neck would be broken by the strap." "Is that cotton wool?" asked the explorer, bending forward. "Yes, certainly," said the officer, with a smile, "feel it for yourself." He took the explorer's hand and guided it over the bed. "It's specially prepared cotton wool, that's why it looks so different; I'll tell you presently what it's for." The explorer already felt a dawning interest in the apparatus; he sheltered his eyes from the sun with one hand and gazed up at the structure. It was a huge affair. The Bed and the Designer were of the same size and looked like two dark wooden chests. The Designer hung about two meters above the Bed; each of them was bound at the corners with four rods of brass that almost flashed out rays in the sunlight. Between the chests shuttled the Harrow on a ribbon of steel.

The officer had scarcely noticed the explorer's previous indifference, but he was now well aware of his dawning interest; so he stopped explaining in order to leave a space of time for quiet observation. The condemned man imitated the explorer; since he could not use a hand to shelter his eyes he gazed upwards without shade.

"Well, the man lies down," said the explorer, leaning back in his chair and crossing his legs.

"Yes," said the officer, pushing his cap back a little and passing one hand over his heated face, "now listen! Both the Bed and the Designer have an electric battery each; the Bed needs one for itself, the Designer for the Harrow. As soon as the man is strapped down, the Bed is set in motion. It quivers in minute, very rapid vibrations, both from side to side and up and down. You will have seen similar apparatus in hospitals; but in our Bed the movements are all precisely calculated; you see, they have to correspond very exactly to the movements of the Harrow. And the Harrow is the instrument for the actual execution of the sentence."

"And how does the sentence run?" asked the explorer.

"You don't know that either?" said the officer in amazement, and bit his lips. "Forgive me if my explanations seem rather incoherent. I do beg your pardon. You see, the Commandant always used to do the explaining; but the new Commandant shirks this duty; yet that such an important visitor"—the explorer tried to deprecate the honor with both hands, the officer, however, insisted—"that such an important visitor should not even be told about the kind of sentence we pass is a new development, which—" He was just on the point of using strong language but checked himself and said only: "I was not informed, it is not my fault. In any case, I am certainly the best person to explain our procedure, since I have here"—he patted his breast pocket—"the relevant drawings made by our former Commandant."

"The Commandant's own drawings?" asked the explorer. "Did he combine everything in himself, then? Was he soldier, judge, mechanic, chemist and draughtsman?"

"Indeed he was," said the officer, nodding assent, with a remote, glassy look. Then he inspected his hands critically; they did not seem clean enough to him for touching the drawings; so he went over to the bucket and washed them again. Then he drew out a small leather wallet and said: "Our sentence does not sound severe. Whatever commandment the prisoner has disobeyed is written upon his body by the Harrow. This prisoner, for instance"—the officer indicated the man—"will have written on his body: HONOR THY SUPERIORS!"

The explorer glanced at the man; he stood, as the officer pointed him out, with bent head, apparently listening with all his ears in an effort to catch what was being said. Yet the movement of his blubber lips, closely pressed together, showed clearly that he could not understand a word. Many questions were troubling the explorer, but at the sight of the prisoner he asked only: "Does he know his sentence?" "No," said the officer, eager to go on with his exposition, but the explorer interrupted him: "He doesn't know the sentence that has been passed on him?" "No," said the officer again, pausing a moment as if to let the explorer elaborate his question, and then said: "There would be no point in telling him. He'll learn it on his body." The explorer intended to make no answer, but he felt the

prisoner's gaze turned on him; it seemed to ask if he approved such ongoing. So he bent forward again, having already leaned back in his chair, and put another question: "But surely he knows that he has been sentenced?" "Nor that either," said the officer, smiling at the explorer as if expecting him to make further surprising remarks. "No," said the explorer, wiping his forehead, "then he can't know either whether his defense was effective?" "He has had no chance of putting up a defense," said the officer, turning his eyes away as if speaking to himself and so sparing the explorer the shame of hearing self-evident matters explained. "But he must have had some chance of defending himself," said the explorer, and rose from his seat.

The officer realized that he was in danger of having his exposition of the apparatus held up for a long time; so he went up to the explorer, took him by the arm, waved a hand towards the condemned man, who was standing very straight now that he had so obviously become the center of attention—the soldier had also given the chain a jerk—and said: "This is how the matter stands. I have been appointed judge in this penal colony. Despite my youth. For I was the former Commandant's assistant in all penal matters and know more about the apparatus than anyone. My guiding principle is this: Guilt is never to be doubted. Other courts cannot follow that principle, for they consist of several opinions and have higher courts to scrutinize them. That is not the case here, or at least, it was not the case in the former Commandant's time. The new man has certainly shown some inclination to interfere with my judgments, but so far I have succeeded in fending him off and will go on succeeding. You wanted to have the case explained; it is quite simple, like all of them. A captain reported to me this morning that this man, who had been assigned to him as a servant and sleeps before his door, had been asleep on duty. It is his duty, you see, to get up every time the hour strikes and salute the captain's door. Not an exacting duty, and very necessary, since he has to be a sentry as well as a servant, and must be alert in both functions. Last night the captain wanted to see if the man was doing his duty. He opened the door as the clock struck two and there was his man curled up asleep. He took his riding whip and lashed him across the face. Instead of get-

ting up and begging pardon, the man caught hold of his master's legs, shook him and cried: Throw that whip away or I'll eat you alive.'—That's the evidence. The captain came to me an hour ago, I wrote down his statement and appended the sentente to it. Then I had the man put in chains. That was all quite simple. If I had first called the man before me and interrogated him, things would have got into a confused tangle. He would have told lies, and had I exposed these lies he would have backed them up with more lies, and so on and so forth. As it is, I've got him and I won't let him go.—Is that quite clear now? But we're wasting time, the execution should be beginning and I haven't finished explaining the apparatus yet." He pressed the explorer back into his chair, went up again to the apparatus and began: "As you see, the shape of the Harrow corresponds to the human form; here is the harrow for the torso, here are the harrows for the legs. For the head there is only this one small spike. Is that quite clear?" He bent amiably forward towards the explorer, eager to provide the most comprehensive explanations.

The explorer considered the Harrow with a frown. The explanation of the judicial procedure had not satisfied him. He had to remind himself that this was in any case a penal colony where extraordinary measures were needed and that military discipline must be enforced to the last. He also felt that some hope might be set on the new Commandant, who was apparently of a mind to bring in, although gradually, a new kind of procedure which the officer's narrow mind was incapable of understanding. This train of thought prompted his next question: "Will the Commandant attend the execution?" "It is not certain," said the officer, wincing at the direct question, and his friendly expression darkened. "That is just why we have to lose no time. Much as I dislike it, I shall have to cut my explanations short. But of course tomorrow, when the apparatus has been cleaned—its one drawback is that it gets so messy—I can recapitulate all the details. For the present, then, only the essentials.—When the man lies down on the Bed and it begins to vibrate, the Harrow is lowered onto his body. It regulates itself automatically so that the needles barely touch his skin; once contact is made the steel ribbon stiffens immediately into a rigid band. And then the performance begins. An ignorant onlooker would see no difference

between one punishment and another. The Harrow appears to do its work with uniform regularity. As it quivers, its points pierce the skin of the body which is itself quivering from the vibration of the Bed. So that the actual progress of the sentence can be watched, the Harrow is made of glass. Getting the needles fixed in the glass was a technical problem, but after many experiments we overcame the difficulty. No trouble was too great for us to take, you see. And now anyone can look through the glass and watch the inscription taking form on the body. Wouldn't you care to come a little nearer and have a look at the needles?"

The explorer got up slowly, walked across and bent over the Harrow. "You see," said the officer, "there are two kinds of needles arranged in multiple patterns. Each long needle has a short one beside it. The long needle does the writing, and the short needle sprays a jet of water to wash away the blood and keep the inscription clear. Blood and water together are then conducted here through small runnels into this main runnel and down a waste pipe into the pit." With his finger the officer traced the exact course taken by the blood and water. To make the picture as vivid as possible he held both hands below the outlet of the waste pipe as if to catch the outflow, and when he did this the explorer drew back his head and feeling behind him with one hand sought to return to his chair. To his horror he found that the condemned man too had obeyed the officer's invitation to examine the Harrow at close quarters and had followed him. He had pulled forward the sleepy soldier with the chain and was bending over the glass. One could see that his uncertain eyes were trying to perceive what the two gentlemen had been looking at, but since he had not understood the explanation he could not make head or tail of it. He was peering this way and that way. He kept running his eyes along the glass. The explorer wanted to drive him away, since what he was doing was probably culpable. But the officer firmly restrained the explorer with one hand and with the other took a clod of earth from the rampart and threw it at the soldier. He opened his eyes with a jerk, saw what the condemned man had dared to do, let his rifle fall, dug his heels into the ground, dragged his prisoner back so that he stumbled and fell immediately, and then stood looking down at him, watching him struggling and rattling

in his chains. "Set him on his feet!" yelled the officer, for he noticed that the explorer's attention was being too much distracted by the prisoner. In fact he was even leaning right across the Harrow, without taking any notice of it, intent only on finding out what was happening to the prisoner. "Be careful with him!" cried the officer again. He ran round the apparatus, himself caught the condemned man under the shoulders and with the soldier's help got him up on his feet, which kept slithering from under him.

"Now I know all about it," said the explorer as the officer came back to him. "All except the most important thing," he answered, seizing the explorer's arm and pointing upwards: "In the Designer are all the cogwheels that control the movements of the Harrow, and this machinery is regulated according to the inscription demanded by the sentence. I am still using the guiding plans drawn by the former Commandant. Here they are"—he extracted some sheets from the leather wallet—"but I'm sorry I can't let you handle them, they are my most precious possessions. Just take a seat and I'll hold them in front of you like this, then you'll be able to see everything quite well." He spread out the first sheet of paper. The explorer would have liked to say something appreciative, but all he could see was a labyrinth of lines crossing and re-crossing each other, which covered the paper so thickly that it was difficult to discern the blank spaces between them. "Read it," said the officer. "I can't," said the explorer. "Yet it's clear enough," said the officer. "It's very ingenious," said the explorer evasively, "but I can't make it out." "Yes," said the officer with a laugh, putting the paper away again, "it's no calligraphy for school children. It needs to be studied closely. I'm quite sure that in the end you would understand it too. Of course the script can't be a simple one; it's not supposed to kill a man straight off, but only after an interval of, on an average, twelve hours; the turning point is reckoned to come at the sixth hour. So there have to be lots and lots of flourishes around the actual script; the script itself runs round the body only in a narrow girdle; the rest of the body is reserved for the embellishments. Can you appreciate now the work accomplished by the Harrow and the whole apparatus?—Just watch it!" He ran up the ladder, turned a wheel, called down: "Look out, keep to one side!" and everything started working. If the wheel had

not creaked, it would have been marvelous. The officer, as if surprised by the noise of the wheel, shook his fist at it, then spread out his arms in excuse to the explorer and climbed down rapidly to peer at the working of the machine from below. Something perceptible to no one save himself was still not in order; he clambered up again, did something with both hands in the interior of the Designer, then slid down one of the rods, instead of using the ladder, so as to get down quicker, and with the full force of his lungs, to make himself heard at all in the noise, yelled in the explorer's ear: "Can you follow it? The Harrow is beginning to write; when it finishes the first draft of the inscription on the man's back, the layer of cotton wool begins to roll and slowly turns the body over, to give the Harrow fresh space for writing. Meanwhile the raw part that has been written on lies on the cotton wool, which is specially prepared to staunch the bleeding and so makes all ready for a new deepening of the script. Then these teeth at the edge of the Harrow, as the body turns further round, tear the cotton wool away from the wounds, throw it into the pit, and there is more work for the Harrow. So it keeps on writing deeper and deeper for the whole twelve hours. The first six hours the condemned man stays alive almost as before, he suffers only pain. After two hours the felt gag is taken away, for he has no longer strength to scream. Here, into this electrically heated basin at the head of the bed, some warm rice pap is poured, from which the man, if he feels like it, can take as much as his tongue can lap. Not one of them ever misses the chance. I can remember none, and my experience is extensive. Only about the sixth hour does the man lose all desire to eat. I usually kneel down here at that moment and observe what happens. The man rarely swallows his last mouthful, he only rolls it round his mouth and spits it out into the pit. I have to duck just then or he would spit it in my face. But how quiet he grows at just about the sixth hour! Enlightenment comes to the most dull-witted. It begins around the eyes. From there it radiates. A moment that might tempt one to get under the Harrow oneself. Nothing more happens than that the man begins to understand the inscription, he purses his mouth as if he were listening. You have seen how difficult it is to decipher the script with one's eyes; but our man deciphers it with his wounds. To be sure, that is a hard

task; he needs six hours to accomplish it. By that time the Harrow has pierced him quite through and casts him into the pit, where he pitches down upon the blood and water and the cotton wool. Then the judgment has been fulfilled, and we, the soldier and I, bury him."

The explorer had inclined his ear to the officer and with his hands in his jacket pockets watched the machine at work. The condemned man watched it too, but uncomprehendingly. He bent forward a little and was intent on the moving needles when the soldier, at a sign from the officer, slashed through his shirt and trousers from behind with a knife, so that they fell off; he tried to catch at his falling clothes to cover his nakedness, but the soldier lifted him into the air and shook the last remnants from him. The officer stopped the machine, and in the sudden silence the condemned man was laid under the Harrow. The chains were loosened and the straps fastened on instead; in the first moment that seemed almost a relief to the prisoner. And now the Harrow was adjusted a little lower, since he was a thin man. When the needle points touched him a shudder ran over his skin; while the soldier was busy strapping his right hand, he flung out his left hand blindly; but it happened to be in the direction towards where the explorer was standing. The officer kept watching the explorer sideways, as if seeking to read from his face the impression made on him by the execution, which had been at least cursorily explained to him.

The wrist strap broke; probably the soldier had drawn it too tight. The officer had to intervene, the soldier held up the broken piece of strap to show him. So the officer went over to him and said, his face still turned towards the explorer: "This is a very complex machine, it can't be helped that things are breaking or giving way here and there; but one must not thereby allow oneself to be diverted in one's general judgment. In any case, this strap is easily made good; I shall simply use a chain; the delicacy of the vibrations for the right arm will of course be a little impaired." And while he fastened the chains, he added: "The resources for maintaining the machine are now very much reduced. Under the former Commandant I had free access to a sum of money set aside entirely for this purpose. There was a store, too, in which spare parts were kept for repairs of all

kinds. I confess I have been almost prodigal with them, I mean in the past, not now as the new Commandant pretends, always looking for an excuse to attack our old way of doing things. Now he has taken charge of the machine money himself, and if I send for a new strap they ask for the broken old strap as evidence, and the new strap takes ten days to appear and then is of shoddy material and not much good. But how I am supposed to work the machine without a strap, that's something nobody bothers about."

The explorer thought to himself: It's always a ticklish matter to intervene decisively in other people's affairs. He was neither a member of the penal colony nor a citizen of the state to which it belonged. Were he to denounce this execution or actually try to stop it, they could say to him: You are a foreigner, mind your own business. He could make no answer to that, unless he were to add that he was amazed at himself in this connection, for he traveled only as an observer, with no intention at all of altering other people's methods of administering justice. Yet here he found himself strongly tempted. The injustice of the procedure and the inhumanity of the execution were undeniable. No one could suppose that he had any selfish interest in the matter, for the condemned man was a complete stranger, not a fellow countryman or even at all sympathetic to him. The explorer himself had recommendations from high quarters, had been received here with great courtesy, and the very fact that he had been invited to attend the execution seemed to suggest that his views would be welcome. And this was all the more likely since the Commandant, as he had heard only too plainly, was no upholder of the procedure and maintained an attitude almost of hostility to the officer.

At that moment the explorer heard the officer cry out in rage. He had just, with considerable difficulty, forced the felt gag into the condemned man's mouth when the man in an irresistible access of nausea shut his eyes and vomited. Hastily the officer snatched him away from the gag and tried to hold his head over the pit; but it was too late, the vomit was running all over the machine. "It's all the fault of that Commandant!" cried the officer, senselessly shaking the brass rods in front, "the machine is befouled like a pigsty." With trembling hands he indicated to the explorer what had happened.

"Have I not tried for hours at a time to get the Commandant to understand that the prisoner must fast for a whole day before the execution. But our new, mild doctrine thinks otherwise. The Commandant's ladies stuff the man with sugar candy before he's led off. He has lived on stinking fish his whole life long and now he has to eat sugar candy! But it could still be possible, I should have nothing to say against it, but why won't they get me a new felt gag, which I have been begging for the last three months. How should a man not feel sick when he takes a felt gag into his mouth which more than, a hundred men have already slobbered and gnawed in their dying moments?"

The condemned man had laid his head down and looked peaceful, the soldier was busy trying to clean the machine with the prisoner's shirt. The officer advanced towards the explorer, who in some vague presentiment fell back a pace, but the officer seized him by the hand, and drew him to one side. "I should like to exchange a few words with you in confidence," he said, "may I?" "Of course," said the explorer, and listened with downcast eyes.

"This procedure and method of execution, which you are now having the opportunity to admire, has at the moment no longer any open adherents in our colony. I am its sole advocate, and at the same time the sole advocate of the old Commandant's tradition. I can no longer reckon on any further extension of the method, it takes all my energy to maintain it as it is. During the old Commandant's lifetime the colony was full of his adherents; his strength of conviction I still have in some measure, but not an atom of his power; consequently the adherents have skulked out of sight, there are still many of them but none of them will admit it. If you were to go into the teahouse today, on execution day, and listen to what is being said, you would perhaps hear only ambiguous remarks. These would all be made by adherents, but under the present Commandant and his present doctrines they are of no use to me. And now I ask you: because of this Commandant and the women who influence him, is such a piece of work, the work of a lifetime"—he pointed to the machine—"to perish? Ought one to let that happen? Even if one has only come as a stranger to our island for a few days? But there's no time to lose, an attack of some kind is impending on my function

as judge; conferences are already being held in the Commandant's office from which I am excluded; even your coming here today seems to me a significant move; they are cowards and use you as a screen, you, a stranger.—How different an execution was in the old days! A whole day before the ceremony the valley was packed with people; they all came only to look on; early in the morning the Commandant appeared with his ladies; fanfares roused the whole camp; I reported that everything was in readiness; the assembled company—no high official dared to absent himself—arranged itself round the machine; this pile of cane chairs is a miserable survival from that epoch. The machine was freshly cleaned and glittering, I got new spare parts for almost every execution. Before hundreds of spectators—all of them standing on tiptoe as far as the heights there—the condemned man was laid under the Harrow by the Commandant himself. What is left today for a common soldier to do was then my task, the task of the presiding judge, and was an honor for me. And then the execution began! No discordant noise spoilt the working of the machine. Many did not care to watch it but lay with closed eyes in the sand; they all knew: Now Justice is being done. In the silence one heard nothing but the condemned man's sighs, half muffled by the felt gag. Nowadays the machine can no longer wring from anyone a sigh louder than the felt gag can stifle; but in those days the writing needles let drop an acid fluid, which we're no longer permitted to use. Well, and then came the sixth hour! It was impossible to grant all the requests to be allowed to watch it from near by. The Commandant in his wisdom ordained that the children should have the preference; I, of course, because of my office had the privilege of always being at hand; often enough I would be squatting there with a small child in either arm. How we all absorbed the look of transfiguration on the face of the sufferer, how we bathed our cheeks in the radiance of that justice, achieved at last and fading so quickly! What times these were, my comrade!" The officer had obviously forgotten whom he was addressing; he had embraced the explorer and laid his head on his shoulder. The explorer was deeply embarrassed, impatiently he stared over the officer's head. The soldier had finished his cleaning job and was now pouring rice pap from a pot into the basin. As soon as the condemned man, who seemed to have re-

covered entirely, noticed this action he began to reach for the rice with his tongue. The soldier kept pushing him away, since the rice pap was certainly meant for a later hour, yet it was just as unfitting that the soldier himself should thrust his dirty hands into the basin and eat out of it before the other's avid face.

The officer quickly pulled himself together. "I didn't want to upset you," he said, "I know it is impossible to make those days credible now. Anyhow, the machine is still working and it is still effective in itself. It is effective in itself even though it stands alone in this valley. And the corpse still falls at the last into the pit with an incomprehensibly gentle wafting motion, even although there are no hundreds of people swarming round like flies as formerly. In those days we had to put a strong fence round the pit, it has long since been torn down."

The explorer wanted to withdraw his face from the officer and looked round him at random. The officer thought he was surveying the valley's desolation; so he seized him by the hands, turned him round to meet his eyes, and asked: "Do you realize the shame of it?"

But the explorer said nothing. The officer left him alone for a little; with legs apart, hands on hips, he stood very still, gazing at the ground. Then he smiled encouragingly at the explorer and said: "I was quite near you yesterday when the Commandant gave you the invitation. I heard him giving it. I know the Commandant. I divined at once what he was after. Although he is powerful enough to take measures against me, he doesn't dare to do it yet, but he certainly means to use your verdict against me, the verdict of an illustrious foreigner. He has calculated it carefully: this is your second day on the island, you did not know the old Commandant and his ways, you are conditioned by European ways of thought, perhaps you object on principle to capital punishment in general and to such mechanical instruments of death in particular, besides you will see that the execution has no support from the public, a shabby ceremony—carried out with a machine already somewhat old and worn—now, taking all that into consideration, would it not be likely (so thinks the Commandant) that you might disapprove of my methods? And if you disapprove, you wouldn't conceal the fact (I'm still speaking from the Commandant's point of view), for you are a man to feel

confidence in your own well-tried conclusions. True, you have seen and learned to appreciate the peculiarities of many peoples, and so you would not be likely to take a strong line against our proceedings, as you might do in your own country. But the Commandant has no need of that. A casual, even an unguarded remark will be enough. It doesn't even need to represent what you really think, so long as it can be used speciously to serve his purpose. He will try to prompt you with sly questions, of that I am certain. And his ladies will sit around you and prick up their ears; you might be saying something like this: 'In our country we have a different criminal procedure,' or 'In our country the prisoner is interrogated before he is sentenced,' or 'We haven't used torture since the Middle Ages.' All these statements are as true as they seem natural to you, harmless remarks that pass no judgment on my methods. But how would the Commandant react to them? I can see him, our good Commandant, pushing his chair away immediately and rushing on to the balcony, I can see his ladies streaming out after him, I can hear his voice—the ladies call it a voice of thunder—well, and this is what he says: 'A famous Western investigator, sent out to study criminal procedure in all the countries of the world, has just said that our old tradition of administering justice is inhumane. Such a verdict from such a personality makes it impossible for me to countenance these methods any longer. Therefore from this very day I ordain . . .' and so on. You may want to interpose that you never said any such thing, that you never called my methods inhumane, on the contrary your profound experience leads you to believe they are most humane and most in consonance with human dignity, and you admire the machine greatly—but it will be too late; you won't even get onto the balcony, crowded as it will be with ladies; you may try to draw attention to yourself; you may want to scream out; but a lady's hand will close your lips—and I and the work of the old Commandant will be done for."

The explorer had to suppress a smile; so easy, then, was the task he had felt to be so difficult. He said evasively: "You overestimate my influence; the Commandant has read my letters of recommendation, he knows that I am no expert in criminal procedure. If I were to give an opinion, it would be as a private individual, an opinion no

more influential than that of any ordinary person, and in any case much less influential than that of the Commandant, who, I am given to understand, has very extensive powers in this penal colony. If his attitude to your procedure is as definitely hostile as you believe, then I fear the end of your tradition is at hand, even without any humble assistance from me."

Had it dawned on the officer at last? No, he still did not understand. He shook his head emphatically, glanced briefly round at the condemned man and the soldier, who both flinched away from the rice, came close up to the explorer and without looking at his face but fixing his eye on some spot on his coat said in a lower voice than before: "You don't know the Commandant; you feel yourself—forgive the expression—a kind of outsider so far as all of us are concerned; yet, believe me, your influence cannot be rated too highly. I was simply delighted when I heard that you were to attend the execution all by yourself. The Commandant arranged it to aim a blow at me, but I shall turn it to my advantage. Without being distracted by lying whispers and contemptuous glances—which could not have been avoided had a crowd of people attended the execution—you have heard my explanations, seen the machine and are now in course of watching the execution. You have doubtless already formed your own judgment; if you still have some small uncertainties the sight of the execution will resolve them. And now I make this request to you: help me against the Commandant!"

The explorer would not let him go on. "How could I do that," he cried, "it's quite impossible. I can neither help nor hinder you."

"Yes, you can," the officer said. The explorer saw with a certain apprehension that the officer had clenched his fists. "Yes, you can," repeated the officer, still more insistently. "I have a plan that is bound to succeed. You believe your influence is insufficient. I know that it is sufficient. But even granted that you are right, is it not necessary, for the sake of preserving this tradition, to try even what might prove insufficient? Listen to my plan, then. The first thing necessary for you to carry it out is to be as reticent as possible today regarding your verdict on these proceedings. Unless you are asked a direct question you must say nothing at all; but what you do say must be brief and general; let it be remarked that you would prefer

not to discuss the matter, that you are out of patience with it, that if you are to let yourself go you would use strong language. I don't ask you to tell any lies; by no means; you should only give curt answers, such as: 'Yes, I saw the execution,' or 'Yes, I had it explained to me.' Just that, nothing more. There are grounds enough for any impatience you betray, although not such as will occur to the Commandant. Of course, he will mistake your meaning and interpret it to please himself. That's what my plan depends on. Tomorrow in the Commandant's office there is to be a large conference of all the high administrative officials, the Commandant presiding. Of course the Commandant is the kind of man to have turned these conferences into public spectacles. He has had a gallery built that is always packed with spectators. I am compelled to take part in the conferences, but they make me sick with disgust. Now, whatever happens you will certainly be invited to this conference; if you behave today as I suggest the invitation will become an urgent request. But if for some mysterious reason you're not invited, you'll have to ask for an invitation; there's no doubt of your getting it then. So tomorrow you're sitting in the Commandant's box with the ladies. He keeps looking up to make sure you're there. After various trivial and ridiculous matters, brought in merely to impress the audience—mostly harbor works, nothing but harbor works!—our judicial procedure comes up for discussion too. If the Commandant doesn't introduce it, or not soon enough, I'll see that it's mentioned. I'll stand up and report that today's execution has taken place. Quite briefly, only a statement. Such a statement is not usual, but I shall make it. The Commandant thanks me, as always, with an amiable smile, and then he can't restrain himself, he seizes the excellent opportunity. 'It has just been reported,' he will say, or words to that effect, 'that an execution has taken place. I should like merely to add that this execution was witnessed by the famous explorer who has, as you all know, honored our colony so greatly by his visit to us. His presence at today's session of our conference also contributes to the importance of this occasion. Should we not now ask the famous explorer to give us his verdict on our traditional mode of execution and the procedure that leads up to it?' Of course there is loud applause, general agreement, I am more insistent than anyone. The

Commandant bows to you and says: 'Then in the name of the assembled company, I put the question to you.' And now you advance to the front of the box. Lay your hands where everyone can see them, or the ladies will catch them and press your fingers.—And then at last you can speak out. I don't know how I'm going to endure the tension of waiting for that moment. Don't put any restraint on yourself when you make your speech, publish the truth aloud, lean over the front of the box, shout, yes indeed, shout your verdict, your unshakable conviction, at the Commandant. Yet perhaps you wouldn't care to do that, it's not in keeping with your character, in your country perhaps people do these things differently, well, that's all right too, that will be quite as effective, don't even stand up, just say a few words, even in a whisper, so that only the officials beneath you will hear them, that will be quite enough, you don't even need to mention the lack of public support for the execution, the creaking wheel, the broken strap, the filthy gag of felt, no, I'll take all that upon me, and, believe me, if my indictment doesn't drive him out of the conference hall, it will force him to his knees to make the acknowledgment: Old Commandant, I humble myself before you.—That is my plan; will you help me to carry it out? But of course you are willing, what is more, you must." And the officer seized the explorer by both arms and gazed, breathing heavily, into his face. He had shouted the last sentence so loudly that even the soldier and the condemned man were startled into attending; they had not understood a word but they stopped eating and looked over at the explorer, chewing their previous mouthfuls.

From the very beginning the explorer had no doubt about what answer he must give; in his lifetime he had experienced too much to have any uncertainty here; he was fundamentally honorable and unafraid. And yet now, facing the soldier and the condemned man, he did hesitate, for as long as it took to draw one breath. At last, however, he said, as he had to: "No." The officer blinked several times but did not turn his eyes away. "Would you like me to explain?" asked the explorer. The officer nodded wordlessly. "I do not approve of your procedure," said the explorer then, "even before you took me into your confidence—of course I shall never in any circumstances betray your confidence—I was already wondering whether it would

be my duty to intervene and whether my intervention would have the slightest chance of success. I realized to whom I ought to turn: to the Commandant, of course. You have made that fact even clearer, but without having strengthened my resolution, on the contrary, your sincere conviction has touched me, even though it cannot influence my judgment."

The officer remained mute, turned to the machine, caught hold of a brass rod, and then, leaning back a little, gazed at the Designer as if to assure himself that all was in order. The soldier and the condemned man seemed to have come to some understanding; the condemned man was making signs to the soldier, difficult though his movements were because of the tight straps; the soldier was bending down to him; the condemned man whispered something and the soldier nodded.

The explorer followed the officer and said: "You don't know yet what I mean to do. I shall tell the Commandant what I think of the procedure, certainly, but not at a public conference, only in private; nor shall I stay here long enough to attend any conference; I am going away early tomorrow morning, or at least embarking on my ship."

It did not look as if the officer had been listening. "So you did not find the procedure convincing," he said to himself and smiled, as an old man smiles at childish nonsense and yet pursues his own meditations behind the smile.

"Then the time has come," he said at last, and suddenly looked at the explorer with bright eyes that held some challenge, some appeal for co-operation. "The time for what?" asked the explorer uneasily, but got no answer.

"You are free," said the officer to the condemned man in the native tongue. The man did not believe it at first. "Yes, you are set free," said the officer. For the first time the condemned man's face woke to real animation. Was it true? Was it only a caprice of the officer's, that might change again? Had the foreign explorer begged him off? What was it? One could read these questions on his face. But not for long. Whatever it might be, he wanted to be really free if he might, and he began to struggle so far as the Harrow permitted him.

"You'll burst my straps," cried the officer, "lie still! We'll soon

loosen them." And signing the soldier to help him, he set about doing so. The condemned man laughed wordlessly to himself, now he turned his face left towards the officer, now right towards the soldier, nor did he forget the explorer.

"Draw him out," ordered the officer. Because of the Harrow this had to be done with some care. The condemned man had already torn himself a little in the back through his impatience.

From now on, however, the officer paid hardly any attention to him. He went up to the explorer, pulled out the small leather wallet again, turned over the papers in it, found the one he wanted and showed it to the explorer. "Read it," he said. "I can't," said the explorer, "I told you before that I can't make out these scripts." "Try taking a close look at it," said the officer and came quite near to the explorer so that they might read it together. But when even that proved useless, he outlined the script with his little finger, holding it high above the paper as if the surface dared not be sullied by touch, in order to help the explorer to follow the script in that way. The explorer did make an effort, meaning to please the officer in this respect at least, but he was quite unable to follow. Now the officer began to spell it, letter by letter, and then read out the words. "'BE JUST!' is what is written there," he said, "surely you can read it now." The explorer bent so close to the paper that the officer feared he might touch it and drew it farther away; the explorer made no remark, yet it was clear that he still could not decipher it. "'BE JUST!' is what is written there," said the officer once more. "Maybe," said the explorer, "I am prepared to believe you." "Well, then," said the officer, at least partly satisfied, and climbed up the ladder with the paper; very carefully he laid it inside the Designer and seemed to be changing the disposition of all the cogwheels; it was a troublesome piece of work and must have involved wheels that were extremely small, for sometimes the officer's head vanished altogether from sight inside the Designer, so precisely did he have to regulate the machinery.

The explorer, down below, watched the labor uninterruptedly, his neck grew stiff and his eyes smarted from the glare of sunshine over the sky. The soldier and the condemned man were now busy together. The man's shirt and trousers, which were already lying in

the pit, were fished out by the point of the soldier's bayonet. The shirt was abominably dirty and its owner washed it in the bucket of water. When he put on the shirt and trousers both he and the soldier could not help guffawing, for the garments were of course slit up behind. Perhaps the condemned man felt it incumbent on him to amuse the soldier, he turned round and round in his slashed garments before the soldier, who squatted on the ground beating his knees with mirth. All the same, they presently controlled their mirth out of respect for the gentlemen.

When the officer had at length finished his task aloft, he surveyed the machinery in all its details once more, with a smile, but this time shut the lid of the Designer, which had stayed open till now, climbed down, looked into the pit and then at the condemned man, noting with satisfaction that the clothing had been taken out, then went over to wash his hands in the water bucket, perceived too late that it was disgustingly dirty, was unhappy because he could not wash his hands, in the end thrust them into the sand—this alternative did not please him, but he had to put up with it—then stood upright and began to unbutton his uniform jacket. As he did this, the two ladies' handkerchiefs he had tucked under his collar fell into his hands. "Here are your handkerchiefs," he said, and threw them to the condemned man. And to the explorer he said in explanation: "A gift from the ladies."

In spite of the obvious haste with which he was discarding first his uniform jacket and then all his clothing, he handled each garment with loving care, he even ran his fingers caressingly over the silver lace on the jacket and shook a tassel into place. This loving care was certainly out of keeping with the fact that as soon as he had a garment off he flung it at once with a kind of unwilling jerk into the pit. The last thing left to him was his short sword with the sword belt. He drew it out of the scabbard, broke it, then gathered all together, the bits of the sword, the scabbard and the belt, and flung them so violently down that they clattered into the pit.

Now he stood naked there. The explorer bit his lips and said nothing. He knew very well what was going to happen, but he had no right to obstruct the officer in anything. If the judicial procedure which the officer cherished were really so near its end—possibly as a

result of his own intervention, as to which he felt himself pledged—then the officer was doing the right thing; in his place the explorer would not have acted otherwise.

The soldier and the condemned man did not understand at first what was happening, at first they were not even looking on. The condemned man was gleeful at having got the handkerchiefs back, but he was not allowed to enjoy them for long, since the soldier snatched them with a sudden, unexpected grab. Now the condemned man in turn was trying to twitch them from under the belt where the soldier had tucked them, but the soldier was on his guard. So they were wrestling, half in jest. Only when the officer stood quite naked was their attention caught. The condemned man especially seemed struck with the notion that some great change was impending. What had happened to him was now going to happen to the officer. Perhaps even to the very end. Apparently the foreign explorer had given the order for it. So this was revenge. Although he himself had not suffered to the end, he was to be revenged to the end. A broad, silent grin now appeared on his face and stayed there all the rest of the time.

The officer, however, had turned to the machine. It had been clear enough previously that he understood the machine well, but now it was almost staggering to see how he managed it and how it obeyed him. His hand had only to approach the Harrow for it to rise and sink several times till it was adjusted to the right position for receiving him; he touched only the edge of the Bed and already it was vibrating; the felt gag came to meet his mouth, one could see that the officer was really reluctant to take it but he shrank from it only a moment, soon he submitted and received it. Everything was ready, only the straps hung down at the sides, yet they were obviously unnecessary, the officer did not need to be fastened down. Then the condemned man noticed the loose straps, in his opinion the execution was incomplete unless the straps were buckled, he gestured eagerly to the soldier and they ran together to strap the officer down. The latter had already stretched out one foot to push the lever that started the Designer; he saw the two men coming up; so he drew his foot back and let himself be buckled in. But now he could not reach the lever; neither the soldier nor the condemned man would

be able to find it, and the explorer was determined not to lift a finger. It was not necessary; as soon as the straps were fastened the machine began to work; the Bed vibrated, the needles flickered above the skin, the Harrow rose and fell. The explorer had been staring at it quite a while before he remembered that a wheel in the Designer should have been creaking; but everything was quiet, not even the slightest hum could be heard.

Because it was working so silently the machine simply escaped one's attention. The explorer observed the soldier and the condemned man. The latter was the more animated of the two, everything in the machine interested him, now he was bending down and now stretching up on tiptoe, his forefinger was extended all the time pointing out details to the soldier. This annoyed the explorer. He was resolved to stay till the end, but he could not bear the sight of these two. "Go back home," he said. The soldier would have been willing enough, but the condemned man took the order as a punishment. With clasped hands he implored to be allowed to stay, and when the explorer shook his head and would not relent, he even went down on his knees. The explorer saw that it was no use merely giving orders, he was on the point of going over and driving them away. At that moment he heard a noise above him in the Designer. He looked up. Was that cogwheel going to make trouble after all? But it was something quite different. Slowly the lid of the Designer rose up and then clicked wide open. The teeth of a cogwheel showed themselves and rose higher, soon the whole wheel was visible, it was as if some enormous force were squeezing the Designer so that there was no longer room for the wheel, the wheel moved up till it came to the very edge of the Designer, fell down, rolled along the sand a little on its rim and then lay flat. But a second wheel was already rising after it, followed by many others, large and small and indistinguishably minute, the same thing happened to all of them, at every moment one imagined the Designer must now really be empty, but another complex of numerous wheels was already rising into sight, falling down, trundling along the sand and lying flat. This phenomenon made the condemned man completely forget the explorer's command, the cogwheels fascinated him, he was always trying to catch one and at the same time urging the soldier to help,

but always drew back his hand in alarm, for another wheel always came hopping along which, at least on its first advance, scared him off.

The explorer, on the other hand, felt greatly troubled; the machine was obviously going to pieces; its silent working was a delusion; he had a feeling that he must now stand by the officer, since the officer was no longer able to look after himself. But while the tumbling cogwheels absorbed his whole attention he had forgotten to keep an eye on the rest of the machine; now that the last cogwheel had left the Designer, however, he bent over the Harrow and had a new and still more unpleasant surprise. The Harrow was not writing, it was only jabbing, and the Bed was not turning the body over but only bringing it up quivering against the needles. The explorer wanted to do something, if possible, to bring the whole machine to a standstill, for this was no exquisite torture such as the officer desired, this was plain murder. He stretched out his hands. But at that moment the Harrow rose with the body spitted on it and moved to the side, as it usually did only when the twelfth hour had come, Blood was flowing in a hundred streams, not mingled with water, the water jets too had failed to function. And now the last action failed to fulfil itself, the body did not drop off the long needles, streaming with blood it went on hanging over the pit without falling into it. The Harrow tried to move back to its old position, but as if it had itself noticed that it had not yet got rid of its burden it stuck after all where it was, over the pit. "Come and help!" cried the explorer to the other two, and himself seized the officer's feet. He wanted to push against the feet while the others seized the head from the opposite side and so the officer might be slowly eased off the needles. But the other two could not make up their minds to come; the condemned man actually turned away; the explorer had to go over to them and force them into position at the officer's head. And here, almost against his will, he had to look at the face of the corpse. It was as it had been in life; no sign was visible of the promised redemption; what the others had found in the machine the officer had not found; the lips were firmly pressed together, the eyes were open, with the same expression as in life, the look was calm and convinced, through the forehead went the point of the great iron spike.

As the explorer, with the soldier and the condemned man behind him, reached the first houses of the colony, the soldier pointed to one of them and said: "There is the teahouse."

In the ground floor of the house was a deep, low, cavernous space, its walls and ceiling blackened with smoke. It was open to the road all along its length. Although this teahouse was very little different from the other houses of the colony, which were all very dilapidated, even up to the Commandant's palatial headquarters, it made on the explorer the impression of a historic tradition of some kind, and he felt the power of past days. He went near to it, followed by his companions, right up between the empty tables which stood in the street before it, and breathed the cool, heavy air that came from the interior. "The old man's buried here," said the soldier, "the priest wouldn't let him lie in the churchyard. Nobody knew where to bury him for a while, but in the end they buried him here. The officer never told you about that, for sure, because of course that's what he was most ashamed of. He even tried several times to dig the old man up by night, but he was always chased away." "Where is the grave?" asked the explorer, who found it impossible to believe the soldier. At once both of them, the soldier and the condemned man, ran before him pointing with outstretched hands in the direction where the grave should be. They led the explorer right up to the back wall, where guests were sitting at a few tables. They were apparently dock laborers, strong men with short, glistening, full black beards. None had a jacket, their shirts were torn, they were poor, humble creatures. As the explorer drew near, some of them got up, pressed close to the wall, and stared at him. "It's a foreigner," ran the whisper around him, "he wants to see the grave." They pushed one of the tables aside, and under it there was really a gravestone. It was a simple stone, low enough to be covered by a table. There was an inscription on it in very small letters, the explorer had to kneel down to read it. This was what it said: "Here rests the old Commandant. His adherents, who now must be nameless, have dug this grave and set up this stone. There is a prophecy that after a certain number of years the Commandant will rise again and lead his adherents from this house, to recover the colony. Have faith and wait!" When the explorer had read this and risen to his feet he saw all the bystanders

around him smiling, as if they too had read the inscription, had found it ridiculous and were expecting him to agree with them. The explorer ignored this, distributed a few coins among them, waiting till the table was pushed over the grave again, quitted the teahouse and made for the harbor.

The soldier and the condemned man had found some acquaintances in the teahouse, who detained them. But they must have soon shaken them off, for the explorer was only halfway down the long flight of steps leading to the boats when they came rushing after him. Probably they wanted to force him at the last minute to take them with him. While he was bargaining below with a ferryman to row him to the steamer, the two of them came headlong down the steps, in silence, for they did not dare to shout. But by the time they reached the foot of the steps the explorer was already in the boat, and the ferryman was just casting off from the shore. They could have jumped into the boat, but the explorer lifted a heavy knotted rope from the floor boards, threatened them with it and so kept them from attempting the leap.

ANALYSIS

In form, structure, and language, "In the Penal Colony" is extremely simple, even spare. It is written with a great clarity of language, with an almost total absence of linguistic embroidery. And the story it tells is essentially a simple one, of an execution which went awry. The description of the machine is complete, almost painstaking, so that once we get over our initial horror at the idea of so cruel a system of punishment, we watch what is going on with almost no identification with the prisoner.

Unlike the other stories in this section, "In the Penal Colony" contains no hints of what the symbols represent. They are there, clearly delineated but unexplained. Here and there in the story we feel that we understand, but the evidence is not positive. The story presents the curious paradox of being the simplest, most lucidly written story in the book, and yet by far the most obscure.

We have seen enough to this point to understand what symbols are and how they operate. We have some comprehension of the proc-

ess that is involved, but knowledge of process alone does not always yield answers. And the answer to the meaning of "In the Penal Colony" is not easily discernible, for all the clarity of the style and the sharpness of the images. The problem is up to you, and you will find it a rewarding and interesting problem if you try to bring to bear upon the story all that you have learned so far about reading. There have, of course, been many interpretations of this story, because it lends itself so readily to interpretation, and many of these interpretations are ingenious, intelligent and interesting. They have tended, as has much of the criticism of Kafka, to fall into three major lines of approach, which may be called the social, the religious, and the Freudian.

In general, the social interpretations construe the machine as a symbol for an old, decayed society which no longer has much point but which persists in its forms. The machine breaks down, the plans are obscure, only a few people, like the officer, really care, and when it becomes obvious that the machine is gone for all time, the officer cannot face the world. The religious interpretations, on the other hand, see in the machine a symbol for the old Church, in the officer a symbol of the martyr who dies for his convictions, in the Old Commander a symbol, perhaps, of Christ or of God. As in the first view, the old order has in effect collapsed and no longer really occupies the attention of the world which used to accept it wholeheartedly. This interpretation is closely linked with many facets of Kafka's personality and with much of his other work. The Freudian interpretation, which has many able adherents, tends to see in the story a series of symbols of the subconscious attitudes and desires of man and to interpret the events in terms of psychoanalytical principles. This point of view, which has been competently and carefully explained, is not inconsistent in its own way with the personality of Kafka himself.

You can do best by attempting to understand the story without recourse to the analyses and interpretations of others. Then, when you have come to your own conclusions, the important work that has been done will guide you, clarify the problem, perhaps lead you further than you have gotten by yourself. "In the Penal Colony" represents in this sense a fine example of the work of art which

makes a demand upon the reader that he collaborate with the author in order to make it meaningful. For Kafka wrote the story, and all that remains for us is the story. We cannot any longer ask Kafka what he meant or why he wrote it. What it means to you is the important thing, just as it is with all works of literature. In the absolute sense there is no single right answer. This is not a puzzle which has a solution that you are to find in so many moves. The meaning of this story, like the meaning of all art, is relative to you and your judgment, and consists of what you find in it and of what you think of what you find. There are certain principles and techniques which you may learn, certain experiences which you can use to gain knowledge, but there comes a point where the teacher, or the textbook, cannot teach you more but can only offer to you, for whatever use you care to make of it, what other men have thought. To follow them slavishly is to contribute nothing of yourself to the stream of knowledge and culture. You can learn to fly, but where you fly once you have learned is up to you. If you read with careful discrimination and taste, if you have learned not to be fooled by sentimentality and obvious emotionalism, if you have learned to read with intelligence and care, you have learned about as much as can be taught. Many men of rare understanding have found in this story of Kafka's important and deeply moving thoughts about the nature of the world and the relationship of man to his universe. You will find much in it of value for yourself, but it is not on the surface; it requires that you do what is basic to all progress, that you think.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. In what terms do you understand the fact that formerly the populace used to come to witness executions, but now no longer does?
2. How do you interpret the fact that there is a legend that the Old Commander will return?
3. Why does the officer have difficulty in making out the plans?
4. Consider the behavior of the prisoner. Does he react to his execution with the usual fear? How do you account for his lack of terror? For the curiosity with which he follows the explanations of the workings of the machine?

5. The complexity of the machine lies in its ability to write a message on the back of the condemned. Yet, this writing of the message does not kill the condemned. What is the purpose, then, of having this message written? Is it merely to torture the prisoner by causing him pain? What messages are written on the prisoners' backs? How do they relate to the offenses?

6. The offense of the prisoner in the story is, by our standards, a comparatively mild one. Why do you think he is to be so severely punished? In what does his sin consist? Why is it a sin?

7. The officer is much concerned about the attitude of the explorer. He wants everything to run smoothly for him. Why? What does the explorer represent? What is his attitude toward the machine? Toward the officer?

8. At a certain point in the execution, the condemned is said to understand, that is, when he has "read" the message which the needles have inscribed on his back. What does he understand? Why is this moment of understanding described as an exalted state? Why is it followed by the death blow itself? All of the efforts of the machine and the apparatus are designed to keep the condemned alive to this point. Why?

9. Why does the officer find it hard to get replacement parts for the machine? What does the indifference of the people to the condition of the machine represent?

10. When the machine finally breaks down, why does the officer release the prisoner? Why does he place himself in the machine? What is the significance of his undressing himself first? Why is his death imperfect (in the sense that the machine does a messy job)?

11. Explain the significance of the explorer's attitude at the end of the story.

About the Authors

AIKEN, CONRAD (1889-)

Conrad Aiken was born in Savannah, Georgia, but lived from infancy with an aunt in New Bedford, Massachusetts. He attended Harvard University where he wrote for the *Harvard Monthly* and was his class poet. His *Selected Poems* won a Pulitzer Prize in 1929. Other works by Mr. Aiken include *Bring! Bring! and Other Stones* (1925), *Costumes by Eros* (1934), *King Coffin* (1935), and *Conversations* (1939).

BUNIN, IVAN (1870-)

Ivan Bunin, born of a noble Russian family, was educated in pre-revolutionary Russia. Elected to the Russian Academy in 1909, he won the Academy's highest literary award, the Pushkin prize, in 1913. He worked with reactionary groups during the Revolution, and since his flight in 1918 has lived in Paris and on the Riviera. He was awarded a Nobel prize in 1933. Among his more famous stories are "The Village" (1923), "Mitya's Love" (1926), and "The Elaghin Affair" (1935).

BURKE, THOMAS (1886-)

Thomas Burke was born in London. Orphaned at an early age, he went to work in a commercial office and as assistant to a second-hand bookseller. He sold his first story at the age of sixteen. Burke has written many novels and short stories: *Limehouse Nights* (1916), *A Tea-Shop in Limehouse* (1931), *Night Pieces* (1935) being a few of his short-story collections, while *The Wind and the Rain* (1926), *Warder at Elstree* (1936), and *Abduction* (1939) are some of his novels.

CANFIELD, DOROTHY (Mrs. Dorothea Canfield Fisher) (1879-)

Mrs. Fisher, who writes both as Dorothy Canfield and as Dorothy Canfield Fisher, took her doctorate in Romance Languages at

Columbia in 1905, intending to become a professor of French, but she gave up teaching for writing and home-making. She has had a great interest in education and published her *Montessori Manual* in 1913. Much of her work has been in translating from the French—notably the works of Racine and Corneille. Her first novel was *The Squirrel Cage* in 1912, but perhaps her best book is *The Deepening Stream* (1930). She published a collection of short stories in 1931 under the title *Fables For Parents*.

CHEKHOV, ANTON (1860-1904)

Chekhov studied medicine in Moscow and received his medical degree in 1884, but he practiced little. He spent most of his life in Moscow and in the Crimea. He is famous for his plays, of which *The Sea Gull* (1896), *Uncle Vanya* (1899), and *The Cherry Orchard* (1904) still receive acclaim from theatrical and reading audiences. His short stories tend, as do his plays, to study character in its deeper and more somber forms.

CONNELL, RICHARD (1893-)

Connell was born in Dutchess County, New York, and became a city editor on a Poughkeepsie newspaper when he was only sixteen. At Harvard, from which he was graduated in 1915, he edited the *Daily Crimson and Lampoon*. He was his father's secretary when the latter was in Congress, and he served in the 2yth New York Division in the First World War. He is presently living in California, but he has resided in New York, London, and Paris. His short stories include "Sin of Monsieur Pettipon" (1922), "Variety" (1925), and "Ironies" (1930).

COPPARD, ALFRED EDGAR (1878-)

A. E. Coppard was born in Folkestone, Kent, England. He had little education and went to work at an early age. He was employed as an accountant until 1919, when he became a free-lance writer. He is primarily a poet, even in his stories; he dislikes pretense in literature or life. A few of his many works are: *Adam and Eve and Pinch Me* (1921), *The Field of Mustard* (1926), *Ninepenny Flute* (1937), and *You Never Know, Do You?* (1939).

DE MAUPASSANT, HENRI RENE ALBERT GUY (1850-1893)

Guy de Maupassant is surely one of the greatest short-story writers in the history of French literature. Few have equaled his ability to delineate character in few words, to set the scene in a single deft stroke, to bring characters to vivid life. A protege of Gustave Flaubert, he wrote many novels, notably *Une vie* (1883), *Bel-Ami* (1885), and *Fort comme la mort* (1889), but his fame rests upon his short stories, of which the most famous, aside from "The Necklace," are "Boule de suif" (1880), and "La ficelle." His collections are *La maison Tellier* (1881), *Contes de la Becasse* (1883), and *Contes et nouvelles* (1885).

GORDON, CAROLINE (1895-)

Caroline Gordon was born in Kentucky, of a family of tobacco planters. She was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1932 and won an O. Henry prize in 1934. Other stories she has written include "Penhally" (1931), "Aleck Maury" (1934), "None Shall Look Back" (1937), "The Garden of Adonis" (1937), and "Green Centuries" (1941).

HEMINGWAY, ERNEST (1898-)

Ernest Hemingway was born in a suburb of Chicago. After graduating from high school, he worked for a while on the *Kansas City Star* and held other such jobs as day laborer, sparring partner, farm hand, etc. In the First World War he served with the Italian Arditi, was wounded in action, and was twice decorated by the Italian government. These experiences he drew upon for the writing of *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), a novel which brought him immediate acclaim. He fought in the Spanish Civil War and his experiences were much of the basis for his well-known novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940). During the Second World War he was a magazine correspondent and saw action on many fronts. Outstanding among his many short stories are "Indian Camp" and "The Killers"; his stories have been collected in *The Fifth Column* and *The First Forty-nine Stories*. Hemingway is today acknowledged as one of the greatest of contemporary American authors.

KAFKA, FRANZ (1883-1924)

Although he was born in Prague and lived there most of his life, Franz Kafka was educated and brought up more as a German than as a Czech. He had an excellent education and received his doctorate in jurisprudence in 1906. He has produced works of remarkable sensitivity and sympathy for the problems of man in his environment and in the universe. His great novels are *The Castle* (1930) and *The Trial* (1937). Notable short stories are included in *The Great Wall of China* (1933) and *The Metamorphosis* (1937).

LE SUEUR, MERIDEL (1900-)

Mrs. Le Sueur was born in Murray, Iowa, and has spent most of her life in the midwest. She has been teacher, lecturer, broadcaster, little theater director, and newspaper writer. She has been represented in O'Brien's *Best Short Stories* three times, in 1927, 1932, and 1936, and her stories have been collected in *Salute to Spring* (1940). Her first long book is *North Star Country* (1945).

MANSFIELD, KATHERINE (1888-1923)

Born in New Zealand, Miss Mansfield received her early education in the local schools. Later she attended Queen's College in London, where she became an accomplished 'cellist and contemplated a musical career. During this period she wrote articles, stories, and reviews and ultimately became friendly with John Middleton Murry, to whose papers she was a regular contributor. She and Murry were married in 1913. Her health was always frail and she traveled a good deal seeking a climate that would improve her condition. Her own writing never quite satisfied her and she was most critical of it. Her style is sensitive, lucid and contained. Her major works are *The Garden-Party* (1922), *The Doves Nest* (1923), and *The Aloe* (1930).

MAUGHAM, WILLIAM SOMERSET (1874-)

Son of a British lawyer, William Somerset Maugham was born in Paris. He attended King's School, Canterbury, the University of Heidelberg, and then completed a medical course at St. Thomas' Hospital in London. The work of Maugham is so varied and pro-

lific that it is hardly possible to give more than a small suggestion of it here. He has written plays of great note, such as *The Circle*, novels of which the greatest is probably *Of Human Bondage*, short stories of surprising variety. He is a wonderful craftsman and has a high appreciation of the literary art; he prefers to be considered as a story-teller above all else. His works cover many lands and climates, but perhaps his stories of the Pacific and the East are most characteristic. *Liza Of Lambeth* appeared in 1897, *Of Human Bondage* in 1915, *The Trembling Of A Leaf*, a collection of short stories, in 1921, and his recent novel, *The Razors Edge*, was made into a popular movie.

O. HENRY (1862-1910)

O. Henry was the pen name of Sidney Porter, who was born in Greensboro, North Carolina. He spent his youthful years in Texas as a rancher, clerk, bank teller, bookkeeper, and draughtsman. When he was accused of embezzling funds from the bank where he was employed, he fled to South America. Because of his wife's failing health, he finally returned to Texas, whereupon he was sentenced to a five-year prison term. Before his death of tuberculosis in 1910 he wrote over six hundred short stories, most of which are characterized by careful plot, slangy language, contrived endings. He is perhaps the first really "slick" short-story writer. His stories have been collected in many volumes, among them *Cabbages and Kings* (1904) and *The Four Million* (1906).

PARKER, DOROTHY (1893-)

Dorothy Parker is widely known for her light and witty verse, her conversational sparkle and bon mots, and her mordant short stories. She has a keen insight into people, an ear for the talk around her, a deep penetration which is often masked by a light tone. "Big Blonde" won the O. Henry prize in 1929. Among her better known verse collections are *Enough Rope* (1927) and *Not So Deep as a Well* (1930).

RUSSELL, JOHN (1885-)

John Russell was born in Iowa and attended Northwestern University from 1903 to 1905. In 1908 he was a special correspondent

for the New York *Herald*; he is now in Hollywood where he works as a consultant on South Sea stories. Among his well-known works are *Red Mark* (1919), *Where the Pavement Ends* (1921), and *In Dark Places* (1922).

SANSOM, WILLIAM (1912-)

William Sansom was educated in England and Germany, has travelled extensively in Europe, and has worked in a London bank, a London bar (as a pianist), and on radio programs. His published work includes *Fireman Flower*, *Three*, and *Something Terrible*, *Something Lovely* (all collections of short stories), and *The Equilibriad* and *The Body*, two novels. His work is often symbolical and allegorical; it reveals the strong influence of Kafka and his followers.

SHAW, IRWIN (1913-)

After taking his A.B. at Brooklyn College in 1934, Shaw worked in a cosmetic factory, an installment furniture house, and a drug-store. He also tutored and did some writing of theses. His first great success was the stirring play *Bury the Dead* (1936); this foreshadowed his later preoccupation with social themes. His short stories have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Collier's*, *Story*, and *The Yale Review*, and his latest novel, *The Young Lions*, which grew out of his own war experiences, was an instant success.

STEINBECK, JOHN (1902-)

Born in Salinas, California, of German-Irish stock, Steinbeck's work has almost invariably reflected his native and familiar country. He spent four years at Stanford University studying marine biology, but he did not take a degree. His early work was unsuccessful, and he held a variety of jobs as hod-carrier, reporter on a New York paper, surveyor, fruit-picker, and the like. His outstanding success, which brought him the Pulitzer Prize, was his novel, *The Grapes Of Wrath*. *The Long Valley* (1938) is perhaps his best known collection of stories, and *In Dubious Battle* (1936), *Tortilla Flat* (1935), *Of Mice and Men*, and *The Moon is Down* are among his many other novels.

WELTY, EUDORA (1909-)

Eudora Welty was born in Jackson, Mississippi. She attended the Mississippi State College for Women and received a B. A. degree from the University of Wisconsin in 1929. She has contributed short stories to the *Southern Review*, the *Atlantic Monthly*, and *Harper's Bazaar*. Among her published books are *A Curtain of Green* (1941), *The Robber Bridegroom* (1942), *The Wide Net* (1943), and *Delta Wedding* (1946).

WOOLF, VIRGINIA (1882-1941)

Virginia Woolf was born in London, the daughter of Sir Leslie Stephen. Her work is extremely popular on both sides of the Atlantic. Her style is that of interior, highly sensitive analysis, often close to the "stream-of-consciousness" method; her themes are those of delicate and subtle shades of feeling and are highly personal. She was much influenced in her work by Kafka, Joyce, Bergson, Proust, and Forster. The horrors of the Second World War proved more than she could stand; she committed suicide in 1941. *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Orlando* are the best known of her novels; her literary criticism has recently been issued again in *The Common Reader* and the *Second Common Reader*; and her short stories have been collected in *A Haunted House and Other Stories* (1944).

