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PATTERNS IN WRITING

PATTERNS

A Book of Readings

THE DRYDEN PRESS NEW YORK

*in*WRITING

for College Students

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Preface

We believe that a college course in composition should have three primary aims:

1. to give the student instruction and practice in the art and craft of writing;
2. to provide him opportunity and guidance for intelligent and accurate reading;
3. to enlarge his understanding and improve his power of thought.

No one of these three can be slighted. But paradoxically the first is the most easily overlooked.

We do not believe that technique and technique alone is important. We do not believe that one can study style and ignore content. We know that students must learn both to read well and to write well, and that they are more apt to do both if their minds are stimulated by what they read and by what they write about. The mere setting before a student, however, of material for reading and of subject matter for thinking does not automatically lead him to see that whatever he is reading and thinking about is also a case history in the problem of writing. Hence in compiling this book of readings and in constructing the critical apparatus which follows each selection, we have firmly observed the principle that above all we ought to provide examples of effective writing, and that our primary purpose should be to point out to the student how other authors have solved—or sometimes failed to solve—their particular problems in communication.

Since writing is done at a great many different levels and for a great many different ends, our selections cover a wide range of subject, tone, and degree of stylistic sophistication. The book is divided into seven parts, and within each part except the sixth the selections are arranged in a roughly progressive order according to their complexity in style, structure, and thought. All of them, however, illus-

trate a useful or effective type of writing at some level. They range in style from the direct and utilitarian prose of President Conant to the conscious rhetoric of Winston Churchill; in purpose, from an explanation of the weather to critiques on Olivier's *Hamlet;* in tone, from the sober argument of Walter Lippmann to the tongue-in-cheek needling of Morris Bishop and David L. Cohn. We have tried to keep a judicious balance throughout, but if we must confess any bias, it is in favor of authors who have not only intelligence but wit, whose style is not only clear but sparkling.

The selections have been grouped primarily on the basis of their purpose. Since an author may have several purposes in mind, it is not possible to establish categories that are mutually exclusive and admit of no overlap; but we have placed selections according to what seems to be their dominant aim and attitude. Thus the passages in Part I, EXPERIENCE AND OBSERVATION, are those which attempt to convey to the reader what the author has seen and done, either in his own person or vicariously by observing others. Although this is by no means the simplest kind of writing, it is a good one for students to begin with in their own compositions, since the material is readily at hand within their own experience. Part II, EXPLANATION, contains examples of a number of different kinds of simple exposition. Here the author's intent is to furnish information or instruction, to tell what, how, or why. The third part, EVALUATION, introduces writing which not only expounds but appraises, not only presents information but weighs and judges it and sometimes draws conclusions from it. In the following group, PERSUASION, are those selections wherein the author not only has evaluated his material but is engaged in a more or less determined attempt to persuade others to his way of thinking about it. Part V, RESEARCH, presents two examples of that kind of writing so frequently encountered by the college student because it is so widely used in making available the advances of knowledge in the sciences, the social studies, and the humanities. Here the author has been examining his subject, carefully collecting or discovering facts about it, and drawing inductive conclusions for whose underlying evidence he furnishes accurate documentation.

Parts VI and VII, THE CRAFT OF WRITING and NARRATION, have a different though none the less important relationship to the student's own composition. The first of these contains a number of discussions—in varying moods—of how words and sentences should and should not be used. In the second are eight short stories. Though

only a few students may want to try writing stories themselves, nearly all will profit by seeing how the writer of fiction uses the tools of his craft for a particular effect.

When we suggest that the readings in this book have been chosen primarily for their value as models and examples of writing, we do not mean that the average college writer will be able to produce something exactly like them. We do mean that by looking carefully at these selections, the student can discover what it is that makes writing "good"—that is, efficient in fulfilling its purpose of communicating with the reader and having the desired effect upon him—and can apply these techniques in his own writing according to his own needs and purposes.

To write effectively, to read understandingly, to think fruitfully—these are the skills which the student ought to learn from his college course in composition. And the first, though it cannot really flourish without the other two, is still the most important to remember, because it is the most easily slighted and because as a technical craft it is the hardest to learn. That is why we have so constantly emphasized it. When it is not so emphasized, it tends to slip out of sight and the balance is spoiled. To develop in the college writer all three of these skills together is the task and responsibility of the composition instructor. To provide a set of readings which will make easier the fulfillment of that task and that responsibility has been our aim in this book.

R.B.D.
E.W.L.
G.B.R.

Madison, Wisconsin
March, 1950

Contents

Preface v

Part One. EXPERIENCE AND OBSERVATION 1

PAUL GALLICO	*The Feel*	5
JOHN STEINBECK	*The Turtle*	15
MARK TWAIN	*Cub-Pilot*	18
LINCOLN STEFFENS	*A Miserable, Merry Christmas*	42
CLIFTON FADIMAN	*My Life Is an Open Book*	49
KENNETH ANDLER	*Surveyor in the Woods*	57
ROLLO WALTER BROWN	*"Kitty" of Harvard*	69
CARL L. BECKER	*Frederick Jackson Turner*	82

Part Two. EXPLANATION 99

EDITORS OF "FORTUNE"	*The Machine and the Farm*	103
CHRISTOPHER W. COATES	*The Kick of an Electric Eel*	118
WOLFGANG LANGEWIESCHE	*Winds That Blow Straight Up*	129
NORMAN WARE	*The Industrial Revolution*	143
FREDERICK LEWIS ALLEN	*Crash!*	150
DIXON WECTER	*From Riches to Rags*	166
ALDOUS HUXLEY	*Who Are You?*	186
THOMAS HENRY HUXLEY	*The Method of Scientific Investigation*	203
PAUL A. ZAHL	*Cancer Research: Integrator of the Sciences*	211
LINCOLN BARNETT	*The Universe and Dr. Einstein*	219

Part Three.	EVALUATION	237
EDITORS OF "FORTUNE"	*The Class of '49*	241
RUTH BENEDICT	*Are Families Passé?*	254
PETER F. DRUCKER	*Henry Ford: Success and Failure*	265
GILBERT HIGHET	*The American Student as I See Him*	279
E. B. WHITE	*Here Is New York*	290
RUSSELL LYNES	*Highbrow, Lowbrow, Middlebrow*	309
WINTHROP SARGEANT	*In Defense of the Highbrow*	326
EDITORS OF "LIFE"	*Lana Turner's Fourth and Positively Last Time*	328
LOUIS B. WRIGHT	*A Review of* George Washington: A Biography *by Douglas Southall Freeman*	330
HOWARD MUMFORD JONES	*A Review of* Raintree County *by Ross Lockridge, Jr.*	334
JOHN MASON BROWN	*Olivier's* Hamlet	338
ROBERT HATCH	*Olivier's* Hamlet	344
C. A. LEJEUNE	*"The Bard" Competes with "The Body"*	349
MAXWELL ANDERSON	*The Essence of Tragedy*	356
Part Four.	PERSUASION	365
ANONYMOUS	*Letter to a Seventeen-Year-Old Son*	369
JAMES BRYANT CONANT	*Lowering the Economic Barriers*	378
JOHN MASON BROWN	*The Case Against the Comics*	386
AL CAPP	*The Case for the Comics*	389
DAVID L. COHN	*Moonlight and Poison Ivy*	393
MORRIS BISHOP	*The Last Days of Football*	399
IRWIN EDMAN	*The Next Step*	403
DAVID L. COHN	*Who Will Do the Dirty Work?*	408
JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH	*Is Reading Here to Stay?*	417

GILBERT SELDES	*How Dense Is the Mass?*	421
WINSTON CHURCHILL	*Dunkirk*	433
GERALD W. JOHNSON	*It's the English in Us*	443
WALTER LIPPMANN	*The Indispensable Opposition*	457
EARL DANIELS	*Outline for a Defense of Poetry*	466
VIRGINIA WOOLF	*Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown*	488
Part Five. RESEARCH		509
RALPH M. HOWER	*Early Macy Advertising*	514
M. K. BENNETT	*Population and Food Supply: The Current Scare*	528
Part Six. THE CRAFT OF WRITING		551
JAMES THURBER	*Ladies' and Gentlemen's Guide to Modern English Usage*	554
SAMUEL T. WILLIAMSON	*How to Write Like a Social Scientist*	560
JOHN MASON BROWN	*Pleasant Agony*	566
H. L. MENCKEN	*Scented Words*	572
MORTIMER ADLER	*How to Read a Dictionary*	579
CARL L. BECKER	*Words and Things*	588
ROBERT GORHAM DAVIS	*Logic and Logical Fallacies*	594
Part Seven. NARRATION		607
MARK TWAIN	*A Daring Deed*	611
SAKI (H. H. MUNRO)	*The Open Window*	617
JOHN STEINBECK	*The Leader of the People*	621
JOHN P. MARQUAND	*Children's Page*	636
STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT	*By the Waters of Babylon*	654
SAKI (H. H. MUNRO)	*Tobermory*	667
MARY MCCARTHY	*The Unspoiled Reaction*	675
WARD DORRANCE	*The White Hound*	684
INDEX		699

Part One

Experience and Observation

Contents *Part One*

PAUL GALLICO ..... *The Feel*

JOHN STEINBECK ..... *The Turtle*

MARK TWAIN ..... *Cub-Pilot*

LINCOLN STEFFENS ..... *A Miserable, Merry Christmas*

CLIFTON FADIMAN ..... *My Life Is an Open Book*

KENNETH ANDLER ..... *Surveyor in the Woods*

ROLLO WALTER BROWN ..... *"Kitty" of Harvard*

CARL L. BECKER ..... *Frederick Jackson Turner*

Experience and Observation

We live in a world of ideas only part of the time. During most of our waking hours we are constantly aware of the world of things and people: the world we can see and hear, touch and be a living part of. That is the world we enjoy and worry about the most, the world of—where to eat dinner? which movie to see? how to earn a living? That is the world we chatter about between classes and write about in our letters to friends. From that very real world comes the stuff that makes each of us just a little different from all other individuals in our way of talking and of living in the breakfast-to-breakfast cycle.

Strangely we sometimes close our eyes to that world when we scratch a pen on the paper of a formal assignment. But we write best and most easily when we make use of what we know best and are most spontaneous about. True, little of our writing for academic ends can be composed entirely of our observations and experiences, but what we have seen and lived through can give the color of individuality to any type of writing. Hence it is well to analyze and be able to present observations and experiences for themselves alone. Only in that way can we as writers learn that we have a wealth of detail always available to us.

All but one of the following eight selections are biographical or autobiographical in whole or in part. Each author presents what he himself or some other person has seen and lived through. To do this, he has had to learn—as you must learn—to write only about something observed accurately or remembered intimately. Although the observations are concrete and the experiences have the effect of immediacy, they are placed in a framework which makes them meaningful to the

reader. A perennial subject of satire is the man who cannot stick to the point when telling a story. To stick to his point, each one of these authors has had to decide what items to include and what to omit, where to begin and where to end. By getting his purpose clearly in mind, he has found a definite principle of organization. Otherwise his observations and experiences would have been so many bright stones scattered on an endless beach. A writer must know where he is going and why.

The Feel *

by PAUL GALLICO

A child wandering through a department store with its mother, is admonished over and over again not to touch things. Mother is convinced that the child only does it to annoy or because it is a child, and usually hasn't the vaguest inkling of the fact that Junior is "touching" because he is a a little blotter soaking up information and knowledge, and "feel" is an important adjunct to seeing. Adults are exactly the same, in a measure, as you may ascertain when some new gadget or article is produced for inspection. The average person says: "Here, let me see that," and holds out his hand. He doesn't mean "see," because he is already seeing it. What he means is that he wants to get it into his hands and feel it so as to become better acquainted.

2. As suggested in the foregoing chapter, I do not insist that a curiosity and capacity for feeling sports is necessary to be a successful writer, but it is fairly obvious that a man who has been tapped on the chin with five fingers wrapped up in a leather boxing glove and propelled by the arm of an expert knows more about that particular sensation than one who has not, always provided he has the gift of expressing himself. I once inquired of a heavyweight prizefighter by the name of King Levinsky, in a radio interview, what it felt like to be hit on the chin by Joe Louis, the King having just acquired that experience with rather disastrous results. Levinsky considered the matter for a moment and then reported: "It don't feel like nuttin'," but added that for a long while afterwards he felt as though he were "in a transom."

3. I was always a child who touched things and I have always

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had a tremendous curiosity with regard to sensation. If I knew what playing a game felt like, particularly against or in the company of experts, I was better equipped to write about the playing of it and the problems of the men and women who took part in it. And so, at one time or another, I have tried them all, football, baseball, boxing, riding, shooting, swimming, squash, handball, fencing, driving, flying, both land and sea planes, rowing, canoeing, skiing, riding a bicycle, ice-skating, roller-skating, tennis, golf, archery, basketball, running, both the hundred-yard dash and the mile, the high jump and shot put, badminton, angling, deep-sea, stream-, and surf-casting, billiards and bowling, motorboating and wrestling, besides riding as a passenger with the fastest men on land and water and in the air, to see what it felt like. Most of them I dabbled in as a youngster going through school and college, and others, like piloting a plane, squash, fencing, and skiing, I took up after I was old enough to know better, purely to get the feeling of what they were like.

4 None of these things can I do well, but I never cared about becoming an expert, and besides, there wasn't time. But there is only one way to find out accurately human sensations in a ship two or three thousand feet up when the motor quits, and that is actually to experience that gone feeling at the pit of the stomach and the sharp tingling of the skin from head to foot, followed by a sudden amazing sharpness of vision, clear-sightedness, and coolness that you never knew you possessed as you find the question of life or death completely in your own hands. It is not the "you" that you know, but somebody else, a stranger, who noses the ship down, circles, fastens upon the one best spot to sit down, pushes or pulls buttons to try to get her started again, and finally drops her in, safe and sound. And it is only by such experience that you learn likewise of the sudden weakness that hits you right at the back of the knees after you have climbed out and started to walk around her and that comes close to knocking you flat as for the first time since the engine quit its soothing drone you think of destruction and sudden death.

5 Often my courage has failed me and I have funked completely, such as the time I went up to the top of the thirty-foot Olympic diving-tower at Jones Beach, Long Island, during the competitions, to see what it was like to dive from that height, and wound up crawling away from the edge on hands and knees, dizzy, scared, and a little

sick, but with a wholesome respect for the boys and girls who hurled themselves through the air and down through the tough skin of the water from that awful height. At other times sheer ignorance of what I was getting into has led me into tight spots such as the time I came down the Olympic ski run from the top of the Kreuzeck, six thousand feet above Garmisch-Partenkirchen, after having been on skis but once before in snow and for the rest had no more than a dozen lessons on an indoor artificial slide in a New York department store. At one point my legs, untrained, got so tired that I couldn't stem (brake) any more, and I lost control and went full tilt and all out, down a three-foot twisting path cut out of the side of the mountain, with a two-thousand-foot abyss on the left and the mountain itself on the right. That was probably the most scared I have ever been, and I scare fast and often. I remember giving myself up for lost and wondering how long it would take them to retrieve my body and whether I should be still alive. In the meantime the speed of the descent was increasing. Somehow I was keeping my feet and negotiating turns, how I will never know, until suddenly the narrow patch opened out into a wide, steep stretch of slope with a rise at the other end, and *that* part of the journey was over.

6. By some miracle I got to the bottom of the run uninjured, having made most of the trip down the icy, perpendicular slopes on the flat of my back. It was the thrill and scare of a lifetime, and to date no one has been able to persuade me to try a jump. I know when to stop. After all, I am entitled to rely upon my imagination for something. But when it was all over and I found myself still whole, it was also distinctly worth while to have learned what is required of a ski runner in the breakneck *Abfahrt* or downhill race, or the difficult *slalom.* Five days later, when I climbed laboriously (still on skis) halfway up that Alp and watched the Olympic downhill racers hurtling down the perilous, ice-covered, and nearly perpendicular *Steilhang,* I knew that I was looking at a great group of athletes who, for one thing, did not know the meaning of the word "fear." The slope was studded with small pine trees and rocks, but half of the field gained precious seconds by hitting that slope all out, with complete contempt for disaster rushing up at them at a speed often better than sixty miles an hour. And when an unfortunate Czech skidded off the course at the bottom of the slope and into a pile of rope and got himself snarled up as helpless as a fly in a spider's web, it was a story that I could write from the heart. I had spent ten minutes getting myself untangled after a fall, *without* any

rope to add to the difficulties. It seems that I couldn't find where my left leg ended and one more ski than I had originally donned seemed to be involved somehow. Only a person who has been on those fiendish runners knows the sensation.

7 It all began back in 1922 when I was a cub sports-writer and consumed with more curiosity than was good for my health. I had seen my first professional prizefights and wondered at the curious behavior of men under the stress of blows, the sudden checking and the beginning of a little fall forward after a hard punch, the glazing of the eyes and the loss of locomotor control, the strange actions of men on the canvas after a knockdown as they struggled to regain their senses and arise on legs that seemed to have turned into rubber. I had never been in any bad fist fights as a youngster, though I had taken a little physical punishment in football, but it was not enough to complete the picture. Could one think under those conditions?

8 I had been assigned to my first training-camp coverage, Dempsey's at Saratoga Springs, where he was preparing for his famous fight with Luis Firpo. For days I watched him sag a spar boy with what seemed to be no more than a light cuff on the neck, or pat his face with what looked like no more than a caressing stroke of his arm, and the fellow would come all apart at the seams and collapse in a useless heap, grinning vacuously or twitching strangely. My burning curiosity got the better of prudence and a certain reluctance to expose myself to physical pain. I asked Dempsey to permit me to box a round with him. I had never boxed before, but I was in good physical shape, having just completed a four-year stretch as a galley slave in the Columbia eight-oared shell.

9 When it was over and I escaped through the ropes, shaking, bleeding a little from the mouth, with rosin dust on my pants and a vicious throbbing in my head, I knew all that there was to know about being hit in the prize-ring. It seems that I had gone to an expert for tuition. I knew the sensation of being stalked and pursued by a relentless, truculent professional destroyer whose trade and business it was to injure men. I saw the quick flash of the brown forearm that precedes the stunning shock as a bony, leather-bound fist lands on cheek or mouth. I learned more (partly from photographs of the lesson, viewed afterwards, one of which shows me ducked under a vicious left hook, an act of which I never had the slightest recollection) about instinctive ducking and blocking than I could have in ten years of looking at prizefights, and I learned, too, that as the soldier never hears the bul-

let that kills him, so does the fighter rarely, if ever, see the punch that tumbles blackness over him like a mantle, with a tearing rip as though the roof of his skull were exploding, and robs him of his senses.

[10] There was just that—a ripping in my head and then sudden blackness, and the next thing I knew, I was sitting on the canvas covering of the ring floor with my legs collapsed under me, grinning idiotically. How often since have I seen that same silly, goofy look on the faces of dropped fighters—and understood it. I held onto the floor with both hands, because the ring and the audience outside were making a complete clockwise revolution, came to a stop, and then went back again counter-clockwise. When I struggled to my feet, Jack Kearns, Dempsey's manager, was counting over me, but I neither saw nor heard him and was only conscious that I was in a ridiculous position and that the thing to do was to get up and try to fight back. The floor swayed and rocked beneath me like a fishing dory in an off-shore swell, and it was a welcome respite when Dempsey rushed into a clinch, held me up, and whispered into my ear: "Wrestle around a bit, son, until your head clears." And then it was that I learned what those little love-taps to the back of the neck and the short digs to the ribs can mean to the groggy pugilist more than half knocked out. It is a murderous game, and the fighter who can escape after having been felled by a lethal blow has my admiration. And there, too, I learned that there can be no sweeter sound than the bell that calls a halt to hostilities.

[11] From that afternoon on, also, dated my antipathy for the spectator at prizefights who yells: "Come on, you bum, get up and fight! Oh, you big quitter! Yah yellow, yah yellow!" Yellow, eh? It is all a man can do to get up after being stunned by a blow, much less fight back. But they do it. And how a man is able to muster any further interest in a combat after being floored with a blow to the pit of the stomach will always remain to me a miracle of what the human animal is capable of under stress.

[12] Further experiments were less painful, but equally illuminating. A couple of sets of tennis with Vinnie Richards taught me more about what is required of a top-flight tournament tennis-player than I could have got out of a dozen books or years of reporting tennis matches. It is one thing to sit in a press box and write caustically that Brown played uninspired tennis, or Black's court covering was faulty and that his frequent errors cost him the set. It is quite another to stand across the net at the back of a service court and try to get your racket on a service that is so fast that the ear can hardly detect the interval be-

tween the sound of the server's bat hitting the ball and the ball striking the court. Tournament tennis is a different game from week-end tennis. For one thing, in average tennis, after the first hard service has gone into the net or out, you breathe a sigh of relief, move up closer and wait for the cripple to come floating over. In big-time tennis second service is practically as hard as the first, with an additional twist on the ball.

[13] It is impossible to judge or know anything about the speed of a forehand drive hit by a champion until you have had one fired at you, or, rather, away from you, and you have made an attempt to return it. It is then that you first realize that tennis is played more with the head than with the arms and the legs. The fastest player in the world cannot get to a drive to return it if he hasn't thought correctly, guessed its direction, and anticipated it by a fraction of a second.

[14] There was golf with Bob Jones and Gene Sarazen and Tommy Armour, little Cruickshank and Johnny Farrell, and Diegel and other professionals; and experiments at trying to keep up in the water with Johnny Weissmuller, Helene Madison, and Eleanor Holm, attempts to catch football passes thrown by Benny Friedman. Nobody actually plays golf until he has acquired the technical perfection to be able to hit the ball accurately, high, low, hooked or faded and placed. And nobody knows what real golf is like until he has played around with a professional and seen him play, not the ball, but the course, the roll of the land, the hazards, the wind, and the texture of the greens and the fairways. It looks like showmanship when a top-flight golfer plucks a handful of grass and lets it flutter in the air, or abandons his drive to march two hundred yards down to the green and look over the situation. It isn't. It's golf. The average player never knows or cares whether he is putting with or across the grain of a green. The professional *always* knows. The same average player standing on the tee is concentrated on getting the ball somewhere on the fairway, two hundred yards out. The professional when preparing to drive is actually to all intents and purposes playing his *second* shot. He means to place his drive so as to open up the green for his approach. But you don't find that out until you have played around with them when they are relaxed and not competing, and listen to them talk and plan attacks on holes.

[15] Major-league baseball is one of the most difficult and precise of all games, but you would never know it unless you went down on the field and got close to it and tried it yourself. For instance, the distance

between pitcher and catcher is a matter of twenty paces, but it doesn't seem like enough when you don a catcher's mitt and try to hold a pitcher with the speed of Dizzy Dean or Dazzy Vance. Not even the sponge that catchers wear in the palm of the hand when working with fast-ball pitchers, and the bulky mitt are sufficient to rob the ball of shock and sting that lames your hand unless you know how to ride with the throw and kill some of its speed. The pitcher, standing on his little elevated mound, looms up enormously over you at that short distance, and when he ties himself into a coiled spring preparatory to letting fly, it requires all your self-control not to break and run for safety. And as for the things they can do with a baseball, those major-league pitchers . . . ! One way of finding out is to wander down on the field an hour or so before game-time when there is no pressure on them, pull on the catcher's glove, and try to hold them.

[16] I still remember my complete surprise the first time I tried catching for a real curve-ball pitcher. He was a slim, spidery left-hander of the New York Yankees, many years ago, by the name of Herb Pennock. He called that he was going to throw a fast breaking curve and warned me to expect the ball at least two feet outside the plate. Then he wound up and let it go, and that ball came whistling right down the groove for the center of the plate. A novice, I chose to believe what I saw and not what I heard, and prepared to catch it where it was headed for, a spot which of course it never reached, because just in front of the rubber, it swerved sharply to the right and passed nearly a yard from my glove. I never had a chance to catch it. That way, you learn about the mysterious drop, the ball that sails down the alley chest high but which you must be prepared to catch around your ankles because of the sudden dip it takes at the end of its passage as though someone were pulling it down with a string. Also you find out about the queer fade-away, the slow curve, the fast in- and out-shoots that seem to be timed almost as delicately as shrapnel, to burst, or rather break, just when they will do the most harm—namely, at the moment when the batter is swinging.

[17] Facing a big-league pitcher with a bat on your shoulder and trying to hit his delivery is another vital experience in gaining an understanding of the game about which you are trying to write vividly. It is one thing to sit in the stands and scream at a batsman: "Oh, you bum!" for striking out in a pinch, and another to stand twenty yards from that big pitcher and try to make up your mind in a hundredth of a second whether to hit at the offering or not, where to swing and when,

not to mention worrying about protecting yourself from the consequences of being struck by the ball that seems to be heading straight for your skull at an appalling rate of speed. Because, if you are a big-league player, you cannot very well afford to be gun-shy and duck away in panic from a ball that swerves in the last moment and breaks perfectly over the plate, while the umpire calls: "Strike!" and the fans jeer. Nor can you afford to take a crack on the temple from the ball. Men have died from that. It calls for undreamed-of niceties of nerve and judgment, but you don't find that out until you have stepped to the plate cold a few times during batting practice or in training quarters, with nothing at stake but the acquisition of experience, and see what a fine case of the jumping jitters you get. Later on, when you are writing your story, your imagination, backed by the experience, will be able to supply a picture of what the batter is going through as he stands at the plate in the closing innings of an important game, with two or three men on base, two out, and his team behind in the scoring, and fifty thousand people screaming at him.

[18] The catching and holding of a forward pass for a winning touchdown on a cold, wet day always make a good yarn, but you might get an even better one out of it if you happen to know from experience about the elusive qualities of a hard, soggy, mud-slimed football rifled through the air, as well as something about the exquisite timing, speed, and courage it takes to catch it on a dead run, with two or three 190-pound men reaching for it at the same time or waiting to crash you as soon as your fingers touch it.

[19] Any football coach during a light practice will let you go down the field and try to catch punts, the long, fifty-yard spirals and the tricky, tumbling end-over-enders. Unless you have had some previous experience, you won't hang on to one out of ten, besides knocking your fingers out of joint. But if you have any imagination, thereafter you will know that it calls for more than negligible nerve to judge and hold that ball and even plan to run with it, when there are two husky ends bearing down at full speed, preparing for a head-on tackle.

[20] In 1932 I covered my first set of National Air Races, in Cleveland, and immediately decided that I had to learn how to fly to find out what that felt like. Riding as a passenger isn't flying. Being up there all alone at the controls of a ship is. And at the same time began a series of investigations into the "feel" of the mechanized sports to see what they were all about and the qualities of mentality, nerve, and physique they called for from their participants. These included a ride with

Gar Wood in his latest and fastest speedboat, *Miss America X,* in which for the first time he pulled the throttle wide open on the Detroit River straightaway; a trip with the Indianapolis Speedway driver Cliff Bergere, around the famous brick raceway; and a flip with Lieutenant Al Williams, one time U. S. Schneider Cup race pilot.

[21] I was scared with Wood, who drove me at 127 miles an hour, jounced, shaken, vibrated, choked with fumes from the exhausts, behind which I sat hanging on desperately to the throttle bar, which after a while got too hot to hold. I was on a plank between Wood and his mechanic, Johnson, and thought that my last moment had come. I was still more scared when Cliff Bergere hit 126 on the Indianapolis straightaways in the tiny racing car in which I was hopelessly wedged, and after the first couple of rounds quite resigned to die and convinced that I should. But I think the most scared I have ever been while moving fast was during a ride I took in the cab of a locomotive on the straight, level stretch between Fort Wayne, Indiana, and Chicago, where for a time we hit 90 miles per hour, which of course is no speed at all. But nobody who rides in the comfortable Pullman coaches has any idea of the didoes cut up by a locomotive in a hurry, or the thrill of pelting through a small town, all out and wide open, including the crossing of some thirty or forty frogs and switches, all of which must be set right. But that wasn't sport. That was just plain excitement.

[22] I have never regretted these researches. Now that they are over, there isn't enough money to make me do them again. But they paid me dividends, I figured. During the great Thompson Speed Trophy race for land planes at Cleveland in 1935, Captain Roscoe Turner was some eight or nine miles in the lead in his big golden, low-wing, speed monoplane. Suddenly, coming into the straightaway in front of the grandstands, buzzing along at 280 miles an hour like an angry hornet, a streamer of thick, black smoke burst from the engine cowling and trailed back behind the ship. Turner pulled up immediately, using his forward speed to gain all the altitude possible, turned and got back to the edge of the field, still pouring out that evil black smoke. Then he cut his switch, dipped her nose down, landed with a bounce and a bump, and rolled up to the line in a perfect stop. The crowd gave him a great cheer as he climbed out of the oil-spattered machine, but it was a cheer of sympathy because he had lost the race after having been so far in the lead that had he continued he could not possibly have been overtaken.

23. There was that story, but there was a better one too. Only the pilots on the field, all of them white around the lips and wiping from their faces a sweat not due to the oppressive summer heat, knew that they were looking at a man who from that time on, to use their own expression, was living on borrowed time. It isn't often when a Thompson Trophy racer with a landing speed of around eighty to ninety miles an hour goes haywire in the air, that the pilot is able to climb out of the cockpit and walk away from his machine. From the time of that first burst of smoke until the wheels touched the ground and stayed there, he was a hundred-to-one shot to live. To the initiated, those dreadful moments were laden with suspense and horror. Inside that contraption was a human being who any moment might be burned to a horrible, twisted cinder, or smashed into the ground beyond all recognition, a human being who was cool, gallant, and fighting desperately. Every man and woman on the field who had ever been in trouble in the air was living those awful seconds with him in terror and suspense. I, too, was able to experience it. That is what makes getting the "feel" of things distinctly worth while.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

This selection is a chapter from *Farewell to Sport.* As Paul Gallico tells you here, in 1922 he was a cub sports-writer. From then until 1938, when he published *Farewell to Sport,* he spent most of his time observing and writing about sports events.

1. Does the fact that Gallico alludes to events of the 1920's and 1930's make it difficult for you to understand his central point?

2. What is his central point?

3. Beginning with par. 7 Gallico discusses a series of sports. What are the sports? What relation does this discussion have to the central point?

4. Are the first six paragraphs essential to the writer's purpose? Does the first paragraph have anything to do with sports?

5. In the last two paragraphs Gallico contrasts two reactions to an event. Is this the same contrast that he has made in pars. 11 and 17 between the spectator and the player?

6. Is the style of this selection different, or should it be different, from that found on the average sports page? Consider, for example, this sentence in par. 8: "I watched him sag a spar boy with what seemed to be no more than a light cuff on the neck, or pat his face

with what looked like no more than a caressing stroke of his arm, and the fellow would come all apart at the seams and collapse in a useless heap, grinning vacuously or twitching strangely."

Suggestions for Writing

1. Select a particular sport which you know well and make it the basis for a discussion of the difference between the player's and the spectator's point of view.

2. Draw on your experiences or observations outside the realm of sports for material to use in demonstrating the importance of "the feel." For example, you might like to contrast what you had thought about the life of a farmer with what you learned by working on a farm for a summer.

3. Have you ever been in danger because you were doing something for which you lacked training and experience? Write about your sensations during this incident, making sure that your account has a "point" to give it a principle of organization.

*The Turtle**

by JOHN STEINBECK

The concrete highway was edged with a mat of tangled, broken, dry grass, and the grass heads were heavy with oat beards to catch on a dog's coat, and fox-tails to tangle in a horse's fetlocks, and clover burrs to fasten in sheep's wool; sleeping life waiting to be spread and dispersed, every seed armed with an appliance of dispersal, twisting darts and parachutes for the wind little spears and balls of tiny thorns, and all waiting for animals and for the wind, for a man's trouser cuff or the hem of a woman's skirt all passive but armed with appliances of activity, still, but each possessed of the anlage of movement.

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* From *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck. Copyright 1939 by John Steinbeck. Reprinted by permission of The Viking Press, Inc., New York.

2. The sun lay on the grass and warmed it, and in the shade under the grass the insects moved, ants and ant lions to set traps for them, grasshoppers to jump into the air and flick their yellow wings for a second, sow bugs like little armadillos, plodding restlessly on many tender feet. And over the grass at the roadside a land turtle crawled, turning aside for nothing, dragging his high-domed shell over the grass. His hard legs and yellow-nailed feet threshed slowly through the grass, not really walking, but boosting and dragging his shell along. The barley beards slid off his shell, and the clover burrs fell on him and rolled to the ground. His horny beak was partly open, and his fierce, humorous eyes, under brows like fingernails, stared straight ahead. He came over the grass leaving a beaten trail behind him, and the hill, which was the highway embankment, reared up ahead of him. For a moment he stopped, his head held high. He blinked and looked up and down. At last he started to climb the embankment. Front clawed feet reached forward but did not touch. The hind feet kicked his shell along, and it scraped on the grass, and on the gravel. As the embankment grew steeper and steeper, the more frantic were the efforts of the land turtle. Pushing hind legs strained and slipped, boosting the shell along, and the horny head protruded as far as the neck could stretch. Little by little the shell slid up the embankment until at last a parapet cut straight across its line of march, the shoulder of the road, a concrete wall four inches high. As though they worked independently the hind legs pushed the shell against the wall. The head upraised and peered over the wall to the broad smooth plain of cement. Now the hands, braced on top of the wall, strained and lifted, and the shell came slowly up and rested its front end on the wall. For a moment the turtle rested. A red ant ran into the shell, into the soft skin inside the shell, and suddenly head and legs snapped in, and the armored tail clamped in sideways. The red ant was crushed between body and legs. And one head of wild oats was clamped into the shell by a front leg. For a long moment the turtle lay still, and then the neck crept out and the old humorous frowning eyes looked about and the legs and tail came out. The back legs went to work, straining like elephant legs, and the shell tipped to an angle so that the front legs could not reach the level cement plain. But higher and higher the hind legs boosted it, until at last the center of balance was reached, the front tipped down, the front legs scratched at the pavement, and it was up. But the head of wild oats was held by its stem around the front legs.

3. Now the going was easy, and all the legs worked, and the shell boosted along, waggling from side to side. A sedan driven by a forty-year old woman approached. She saw the turtle and swung to the right, off the highway, the wheels screamed and a cloud of dust boiled up. Two wheels lifted for a moment and then settled. The car skidded back onto the road, and went on, but more slowly. The turtle had jerked into its shell, but now it hurried on, for the highway was burning hot.

4. And now a light truck approached, and as it came near, the driver saw the turtle and swerved to hit it. His front wheel struck the edge of the shell, flipped the turtle like a tiddly-wink, spun it like a coin, and rolled it off the highway. The truck went back to its course along the right side. Lying on its back, the turtle was tight in its shell for a long time. But at last its legs waved in the air, reaching for something to pull it over. Its front foot caught a piece of quartz and little by little the shell pulled over and flopped upright. The wild oat head fell out and three of the spearhead seeds stuck in the ground. And as the turtle crawled on down the embankment, its shell dragged dirt over the seeds. The turtle entered a dust road and jerked itself along, drawing a wavy shallow trench in the dust with its shell. The old humorous eyes looked ahead, and the horny beak opened a little. His yellow toe nails slipped a fraction in the dust.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

This selection is the third chapter of *The Grapes of Wrath.* The chapters of this novel fall into two types: those containing the story proper, and those containing observations and commentaries about experiences and events relevant, directly or obliquely, to the story proper and its theme. This chapter may be interpreted to have a symbolic significance for the novel as a whole, but it also has a unity of its own.

1. In par. 2 Steinbeck presents a great many details about the turtle and its activities. By what simple method does he tie these details together? In this paragraph what obstacles or dangers does the turtle overcome?

2. What connection does par. 1 have with pars. 2 and 4? Could par. 3 be combined with one of the other paragraphs or be omitted entirely?

3. Does Steinbeck indicate what attitude he wants you to take toward the turtle? What, for example, would be the effect if this statement, in the next-to-last sentence of par. 4, were changed from "The old humorous eyes looked ahead" to "The tired old eyes drooped"?

4. Do you think Steinbeck based this selection on his observation of a particular turtle at a particular time?

Suggestions for Writing

Here is a topic you might develop in a way similar to that used by Steinbeck in par. 3: a woman, packages in arms, getting on a bus. Whatever method you use for organizing details, remember that you can write accurately only about what you have observed carefully. If you haven't developed an eye for details, go out and look before you begin to write.

Cub-Pilot[*]

by MARK TWAIN

I—The Boys' Ambition

When I was a boy, there was but one permanent ambition among my comrades in our village [1] on the west bank of the Mississippi River. That was, to be a steamboatman. We had transient ambitions of other sorts, but they were only transient. When a circus came and went, it left us all burning to become clowns; the first negro minstrel show that ever came to our section left us all suffering to try that kind of life; now and then we had a hope that, if we lived and were good, God would permit us to be pirates. These ambitions faded out, each in its turn; but the ambition to be a steamboatman always remained.

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[*] From *Life on the Mississippi* by Mark Twain. Reprinted by permission of Harper & Brothers, New York.

[1] Hannibal, Missouri.

2. Once a day a cheap, gaudy packet arrived upward from St. Louis, and another downward from Keokuk. Before these events, the day was glorious with expectancy; after them, the day was a dead and empty thing. Not only the boys, but the whole village, felt this. After all these years I can picture that old time to myself now, just as it was then: the white town drowsing in the sunshine of a summer's morning; the streets empty, or pretty nearly so; one or two clerks sitting in front of the Water Street stores, with their splint-bottomed chairs tilted back against the walls, chins on breasts, hats slouched over their faces, asleep—with shingle-shavings enough around to show what broke them down; a sow and a litter of pigs loafing along the sidewalk, doing a good business in watermelon rinds and seeds; two or three lonely little freight piles scattered about the "levee"; a pile of "skids" on the slope of the stone-paved wharf, and the fragrant town drunkard asleep in the shadow of them; two or three wood flats at the head of the wharf, but nobody to listen to the peaceful lapping of the wavelets against them; the great Mississippi, the majestic, the magnificent Mississippi, rolling its mile-wide tide along, shining in the sun; the dense forest away on the other side; the "point" above the town, and the "point" below, bounding the river-glimpse and turning it into a sort of sea, and withal a very still and brilliant and lonely one. Presently a film of dark smoke appears above one of those remote "points"; instantly a negro drayman, famous for his quick eye and prodigious voice, lifts up the cry, "S-t-e-a-m-boat a-comin'!" and the scene changes! The town drunkard stirs, the clerks wake up, a furious clatter of drays follows, every house and store pours out a human contribution, and all in a twinkling the dead town is alive and moving. Drays, carts, men, boys, all go hurrying from many quarters to a common center, the wharf. Assembled there, the people fasten their eyes upon the coming boat as upon a wonder they are seeing for the first time. And the boat *is* rather a handsome sight, too. She is long and sharp and trim and pretty; she has two tall, fancy-topped chimneys, with a gilded device of some kind swung between them; a fanciful pilot-house, all glass and "gingerbread," perched on top of the "texas" deck behind them; the paddle-boxes are gorgeous with a picture or with gilded rays above the boat's name; the boiler-deck, the hurricane-deck, and the texas deck are fenced and ornamented with clean white railings; there is a flag gallantly flying from the jack-staff; the furnace doors are open and the fires glaring bravely; the upper decks are black with passengers; the captain stands by the big bell, calm, imposing,

the envy of all; great volumes of the blackest smoke are rolling and tumbling out of the chimneys—a husbanded grandeur created with a bit of pitch-pine just before arriving at a town; the crew are grouped on the forecastle; the broad stage is run far out over the port bow, and an envied deck-hand stands picturesquely on the end of it with a coil of rope in his hand; the pent steam is screaming through the gauge-cocks; the captain lifts his hand, a bell rings, the wheels stop; then they turn back, churning the water to foam, and the steamer is at rest. Then such a scramble as there is to get aboard, and to get ashore, and to take in freight and to discharge freight, all at one and the same time; and such a yelling and cursing as the mates facilitate it all with! Ten minutes later the steamer is under way again, with no flag on the jack-staff and no black smoke issuing from the chimneys. After ten more minutes the town is dead again, and the town drunkard asleep by the skids once more.

[3] My father was a justice of the peace, and I supposed he possessed the power of life and death over all men, and could hang anybody that offended him. This was distinction enough for me as a general thing; but the desire to be a steamboatman kept intruding, nevertheless. I first wanted to be a cabin-boy, so that I could come out with a white apron on and shake a table-cloth over the side, where all my old comrades could see me; later I thought I would rather be the deck-hand who stood on the end of the stage-plank with the coil of rope in his hand, because he was particularly conspicuous. But these were only day-dreams—they were too heavenly to be contemplated as real possibilities. By and by one of our boys went way. He was not heard of for a long time. At last he turned up as apprentice engineer or "striker" on a steamboat. This thing shook the bottom out of all my Sunday-school teachings. That boy had been notoriously worldly, and I just the reverse; yet he was exalted to this eminence, and I left in obscurity and misery. There was nothing generous about this fellow in his greatness. He would always manage to have a rusty bolt to scrub while his boat tarried at our town, and he would sit on the inside guard and scrub it, where we all could see him and envy him and loathe him. And whenever his boat was laid up he would come home and swell around the town in his blackest and greasiest clothes, so that nobody could help remembering that he was a steamboatman; and he used all sorts of steamboat technicalities in his talk, as if he were so used to them that he forgot common people could not understand them. He would speak of the "labboard" side of a horse in an easy, natural way

that would make one wish he was dead. And he was always talking about "St. Looy" like an old citizen; he would refer casually to occasions when he was "coming down Fourth Street," or when he was "passing by the Planter's House," or when there was a fire and he took a turn on the brakes of "the old Big Missouri"; and then he would go on and lie about how many towns the size of ours were burned down there that day. Two or three of the boys had long been persons of consideration among us because they had been to St. Louis once and had a vague general knowledge of its wonders, but the day of their glory was over now. They lapsed into a humble silence, and learned to disappear when the ruthless "cub"-engineer approached. This fellow had money, too, and hair-oil. Also an ignorant silver watch and a showy brass watch-chain. He wore a leather belt and used no suspenders. If ever a youth was cordially admired and hated by his comrades, this one was. No girl could withstand his charms. He "cut out" every boy in the village. When his boat blew up at last, it diffused a tranquil contentment among us such as we had not known for months. But when he came home the next week, alive, renowned, and appeared in church all battered up and bandaged, a shining hero, stared at and wondered over by everybody, it seemed to us that the partiality of Providence for an undeserving reptile had reached a point where it was open to criticism.

4 This creature's career could produce but one result, and it speedily followed. Boy after boy managed to get on the river. The minister's son became an engineer. The doctor's and the postmaster's sons became "mud clerks"; the wholesale liquor dealer's son became a barkeeper on a boat; four sons of the chief merchant, and two sons of the county judge, became pilots. Pilot was the grandest position of all. The pilot, even in those days of trivial wages, had a princely salary—from a hundred and fifty to two hundred and fifty dollars a month, and no board to pay. Two months of his wages would pay a preacher's salary for a year. Now some of us were left disconsolate. We could not get on the river—at least our parents would not let us.

5 So, by and by, I ran away. I said I would never come home again till I was a pilot and could come in glory. But somehow I could not manage it. I went meekly aboard a few of the boats that lay packed together like sardines at the long St. Louis wharf, and humbly inquired for the pilots, but got only a cold shoulder and short words from mates and clerks. I had to make the best of this sort of treatment for the time being, but I had comforting day-dreams of a future when

I should be a great and honored pilot, with plenty of money, and could kill some of these mates and clerks and pay for them.

II—I Want to Be a Cub-Pilot

6 Months afterward the hope within me struggled to a reluctant death, and I found myself without an ambition. But I was ashamed to go home. I was in Cincinnati, and I set to work to map out a new career. I had been reading about the recent exploration of the river Amazon by an expedition sent out by our government. It was said that the expedition, owing to difficulties, had not thoroughly explored a part of the country lying about the headwaters, some four thousand miles from the mouth of the river. It was only about fifteen hundred miles from Cincinnati to New Orleans, where I could doubtless get a ship. I had thirty dollars left; I would go and complete the exploration of the Amazon. This was all the thought I gave to the subject. I never was great in matters of detail. I packed my valise, and took passage on an ancient tub called the *Paul Jones*, for New Orleans. For the sum of sixteen dollars I had the scarred and tarnished splendors of "her" main saloon principally to myself, for she was not a creature to attract the eye of wiser travelers.

7 When we presently got under way and went poking down the broad Ohio, I became a new being, and the subject of my own admiration. I was a traveler! A word never had tasted so good in my mouth before. I had an exultant sense of being bound for mysterious lands and distant climes which I never have felt in so uplifting a degree since. I was in such a glorified condition that all ignoble feelings departed out of me, and I was able to look down and pity the untraveled with a compassion that had hardly a trace of contempt in it. Still, when we stopped at villages and wood-yards, I could not help lolling carelessly upon the railings of the boiler-deck to enjoy the envy of the country boys on the bank. If they did not seem to discover me, I presently sneezed to attract their attention, or moved to a position where they could not help seeing me. And as soon as I knew they saw me I gaped and stretched, and gave other signs of being mightily bored with traveling.

8 I kept my hat off all the time, and stayed where the wind and the sun could strike me, because I wanted to get the bronzed and weather-beaten look of an old traveler. Before the second day was half gone I experienced a joy which filled me with the purest gratitude; for I saw

that the skin had begun to blister and peel off my face and neck. I wished that the boys and girls at home could see me now.

[9] We reached Louisville in time—at least the neighborhood of it. We stuck hard and fast on the rocks in the middle of the river, and lay there four days. I was now beginning to feel a strong sense of being a part of the boat's family, a sort of infant son to the captain and younger brother to the officers. There is no estimating the pride I took in this grandeur, or the affection that began to swell and grow in me for those people. I could not know how the lordly steamboatman scorns that sort of presumption in a mere landsman. I particularly longed to acquire the least trifle of notice from the big stormy mate, and I was on the alert for an opportunity to do him a service to that end. It came at last. The riotous pow-wow of setting a spar was going on down on the forecastle, and I went down there and stood around in the way—or mostly skipping out of it—till the mate suddenly roared a general order for somebody to bring him a capstan bar. I sprang to his side and said: "Tell me where it is—I'll fetch it!"

[10] If a rag-picker had offered to do a diplomatic service for the Emperor of Russia, the monarch could not have been more astounded than the mate was. He even stopped swearing. He stood and stared down at me. It took him ten seconds to scrape his disjointed remains together again. Then he said impressively: "Well, if this don't beat h——l!" and turned to his work with the air of a man who had been confronted with a problem too abstruse for solution.

[11] I crept away, and courted solitude for the rest of the day. I did not go to dinner; I stayed away from supper until everybody else had finished. I did not feel so much like a member of the boat's family now as before. However, my spirits returned, in instalments, as we pursued our way down the river. I was sorry I hated the mate so, because it was not in (young) human nature not to admire him. He was huge and muscular, his face was bearded and whiskered all over; he had a red woman and a blue woman tattooed on his right arm—one on each side of a blue anchor with a red rope to it; and in the matter of profanity he was sublime. When he was getting out cargo at a landing, I was always where I could see and hear. He felt all the majesty of his great position, and made the world feel it, too. When he gave even the simplest order, he discharged it like a blast of lightning, and sent a long, reverberating peal of profanity thundering after it. I could not help contrasting the way in which the average landsman would give an order with the mate's way of doing it. If the landsman should wish

the gang-plank moved a foot farther forward, he would probably say: "James, or William, one of you push that plank forward, please"; but put the mate in his place, and he would roar out: "Here, now, start that gang-plank for'ard! Lively, now! *What* 're you about! Snatch it! *snatch* it! There! there! Aft again! aft again! Don't you hear me? Dash it to dash! are you going to *sleep* over it! *'Vast* heaving. 'Vast heaving, I tell you! Going to heave it clear astern? WHERE 're you going with that barrel! *for'ard* with it 'fore I make you swallow it, you dash-dash-dash-*dashed* split between a tired mud-turtle and a crippled hearse-horse!"

[12] I wished I could talk like that.

[13] When the soreness of my adventure with the mate had somewhat worn off, I began timidly to make up to the humblest official connected with the boat—the night watchman. He snubbed my advances at first, but I presently ventured to offer him a new chalk pipe, and that softened him. So he allowed me to sit with him by the big bell on the hurricane-deck, and in time he melted into conversation. He could not well have helped it, I hung with such homage on his words and so plainly showed that I felt honored by his notice. He told me the names of dim capes and shadowy islands as we glided by them in the solemnity of the night, under the winking stars, and by and by got to talking about himself. He seemed over-sentimental for a man whose salary was six dollars a week—or rather he might have seemed so to an older person than I. But I drank in his words hungrily, and with a faith that might have moved mountains if it had been applied judiciously. What was it to me that he was soiled and seedy and fragrant with gin? What was it to me that his grammar was bad, his construction worse, and his profanity so void of art that it was an element of weakness rather than strength in his conversation? He was a wronged man, a man who had seen trouble, and that was enough for me. As he mellowed into his plaintive history his tears dripped upon the lantern in his lap, and I cried, too, from sympathy. He said he was the son of an English nobleman—either an earl or an alderman, he could not remember which, but believed was both; his father, the nobleman, loved him, but his mother hated him from the cradle; and so while he was still a little boy he was sent to "one of them old, ancient colleges"—he couldn't remember which; and by and by his father died and his mother seized the property and "shook" him, as he phrased it. After his mother shook him, members of the nobility with whom he was acquainted used their influence to get him the position of "lob-

lolly-boy in a ship"; and from that point my watchman threw off all trammels of date and locality and branched out into a narrative that bristled all along with incredible adventures; a narrative that was so reeking with bloodshed, and so crammed with hair-breadth escapes and the most engaging and unconscious personal villainies, that I sat speechless, enjoying, shuddering, wondering, worshiping.

14 It was a sore blight to find out afterward that he was a low, vulgar, ignorant, sentimental, half-witted humbug, an untraveled native of the wilds of Illinois, who had absorbed wildcat literature and appropriated its marvels, until in time he had woven odds and ends of the mess into this yarn, and then gone on telling it to fledglings like me, until he had come to believe it himself.

III—A Cub-Pilot's Experience

15. What with lying on the rocks four days at Louisville, and some other delays, the poor old *Paul Jones* fooled away about two weeks in making the voyage from Cincinnati to New Orleans. This gave me a chance to get acquainted with one of the pilots, and he taught me how to steer the boat, and thus made the fascination of river life more potent than ever for me.

16 It also gave me a chance to get acquainted with a youth who had taken deck passage—more's the pity; for he easily borrowed six dollars of me on a promise to return to the boat and pay it back to me the day after we should arrive. But he probably died or forgot, for he never came. It was doubtless the former, since he had said his parents were wealthy, and he only traveled deck passage because it was cooler.[2]

17 I soon discovered two things. One was that a vessel would not be likely to sail for the mouth of the Amazon under ten or twelve years; and the other was that the nine or ten dollars still left in my pocket would not suffice for so impossible an exploration as I had planned, even if I could afford to wait for a ship. Therefore it followed that I must contrive a new career. The *Paul Jones* was now bound for St. Louis. I planned a siege against my pilot, and at the end of three hard days he surrendered. He agreed to teach me the Mississippi River from New Orleans to St. Louis for five hundred dollars, payable out of the first wages I should receive after graduating. I entered upon the small enterprise of "learning" twelve or thirteen hundred miles of the great Mississippi River with the easy confidence of my time of life. If

[2] "Deck" passage—*i. e.*, steerage passage.

I had really known what I was about to require of my faculties, I should not have had the courage to begin. I supposed that all a pilot had to do was to keep his boat in the river, and I did not consider that that could be much of a trick, since it was so wide.

[18] The boat backed out from New Orleans at four in the afternoon, and it was "our watch" until eight. Mr. Bixby, my chief, "straightened her up," plowed her along past the sterns of the other boats that lay at the Levee, and then said, "Here, take her; shave those steamships as close as you'd peel an apple." I took the wheel, and my heartbeat fluttered up into the hundreds; for it seemed to me that we were about to scrape the side off every ship in the line, we were so close. I held my breath and began to claw the boat away from the danger; and I had my own opinion of the pilot who had known no better than to get us into such peril, but I was too wise to express it. In half a minute I had a wide margin of safety intervening between the *Paul Jones* and the ships; and within ten seconds more I was set aside in disgrace, and Mr. Bixby was going into danger again and flaying me alive with abuse of my cowardice. I was stung, but I was obliged to admire the easy confidence with which my chief loafed from side to side of his wheel, and trimmed the ships so closely that disaster seemed ceaselessly imminent. When he had cooled a little he told me that the easy water was close ashore and the current outside, and therefore we must hug the bank, up-stream, to get the benefit of the former, and stay well out, down-stream, to take advantage of the latter. In my own mind I resolved to be a down-stream pilot and leave the up-streaming to people dead to prudence.

[19] Now and then Mr. Bixby called my attention to certain things. Said he, "This is Six-Mile Point." I assented. It was pleasant enough information, but I could not see the bearing of it. I was not conscious that it was a matter of any interest to me. Another time he said, "This is Nine-Mile Point." Later he said, "This is Twelve-Mile Point." They were all about level with the water's edge; they all looked about alike to me; they were monotonously unpicturesque. I hoped Mr. Bixby would change the subject. But no; he would crowd up around a point, hugging the shore with affection, and then say: "The slack water ends here, abreast this bunch of China trees; now we cross over." So he crossed over. He gave me the wheel once or twice, but I had no luck. I either came near chipping off the edge of a sugar-plantation, or I yawed too far from shore, and so dropped back into disgrace again and got abused.

20. The watch was ended at last, and we took supper and went to bed. At midnight the glare of a lantern shone in my eyes, and the night watchman said:

21. "Come, turn out!"

22. And then he left. I could not understand this extraordinary procedure; so I presently gave up trying to, and dozed off to sleep. Pretty soon the watchman was back again, and this time he was gruff. I was annoyed. I said:

23 "What do you want to come bothering around here in the middle of the night for? Now, as like as not, I'll not get to sleep again to-night."

24 The watchman said:

25. "Well, if this ain't good, I'm blessed."

26. The "off-watch" was just turning in, and I heard some brutal laughter from them, and such remarks as "Hello, watchman! ain't the new cub turned out yet? He's delicate, likely. Give him some sugar in a rag, and send for the chambermaid to sing 'Rock-a-by Baby,' to him."

27 About this time Mr. Bixby appeared on the scene. Something like a minute later I was climbing the pilot-house steps with some of my clothes on and the rest in my arms. Mr. Bixby was close behind, commenting. Here was something fresh—this thing of getting up in the middle of the night to go to work. It was a detail in piloting that had never occurred to me at all. I knew that boats ran all night, but somehow I had never happened to reflect that somebody had to get up out of a warm bed to run them. I began to fear that piloting was not quite so romantic as I had imagined it was; there was something very real and worklike about this new phase of it.

28 It was a rather dingy night, although a fair number of stars were out. The big mate was at the wheel, and he had the old tub pointed at a star and was holding her straight up the middle of the river. The shores on either hand were not much more than half a mile apart, but they seemed wonderfully far away and ever so vague and indistinct. The mate said:

29 "We've got to land at Jones's plantation, sir."

30 The vengeful spirit in me exulted. I said to myself, "I wish you joy of your job, Mr. Bixby; you'll have a good time finding Mr. Jones's plantation such a night as this; and I hope you never *will* find it as long as you live."

31. Mr. Bixby said to the mate:

32. "Upper end of the plantation, or the lower?"

33. "Upper."

34. "I can't do it. The stumps there are out of water at this stage. It's no great distance to the lower, and you'll have to get along with that."

35. "All right, sir. If Jones don't like it, he'll have to lump it, I reckon."

36. And then the mate left. My exultation began to cool and my wonder to come up. Here was a man who not only proposed to find this plantation on such a night, but to find either end of it you preferred. I dreadfully wanted to ask a question, but I was carrying about as many short answers as my cargo-room would admit of, so I held my peace. All I desired to ask Mr. Bixby was the simple question whether he was ass enough to really imagine he was going to find that plantation on a night when all plantations were exactly alike and all of the same color. But I held in. I used to have fine inspirations of prudence in those days.

37. Mr. Bixby made for the shore and soon was scraping it, just the same as if it had been daylight. And not only that, but singing:

"Father in heaven, the day is declining," etc.

It seemed to me that I had put my life in the keeping of a peculiarly reckless outcast. Presently he turned on me and said:

38. "What's the name of the first point above New Orleans?"

39 I was gratified to be able to answer promptly, and I did. I said I didn't know.

40. "Don't *know*?"

41. This manner jolted me. I was down at the foot again, in a moment. But I had to say just what I had said before.

42. "Well, you're a smart one!" said Mr. Bixby. "What's the name of the *next* point?"

43. Once more I didn't know.

44. "Well, this beats anything. Tell me the name of *any* point or place I told you."

45 I studied awhile and decided that I couldn't.

46. "Look here! What do you start out from, above Twelve-Mile Point, to cross over?"

47. "I—I—don't know."

48. "You—you—don't know?" mimicking my drawling manner of speech. "What *do* you know?"

49. "I—I—nothing, for certain."

50. "By the great Cæsar's ghost, I believe you! You're the stupidest dunderhead I ever saw or ever heard of, so help me Moses! The idea

of *you* being a pilot—*you!* Why, you don't know enough to pilot a cow down a lane."

51 Oh, but his wrath was up! He was a nervous man, and he shuffled from one side of his wheel to the other as if the floor was hot. He would boil awhile to himself, and then overflow and scald me again.

52 "Look here! What do you suppose I told you the names of those points for?"

53 I tremblingly considered a moment, and then the devil of temptation provoked me to say:

54. "Well to—to—be entertaining, I thought."

55 This was a red rag to the bull. He raged and stormed so (he was crossing the river at the time) that I judged it made him blind, because he ran over the steering-oar of a trading-scow. Of course the traders sent up a volley of red-hot profanity. Never was a man so grateful as Mr. Bixby was; because he was brimful, and here were subjects who could *talk back.* He threw open a window, thrust his head out, and such an irruption followed as I never had heard before. The fainter and farther away the scowmen's curses drifted, the higher Mr. Bixby lifted his voice and the weightier his adjectives grew. When he closed the window he was empty. You could have drawn a seine through his system and not caught curses enough to disturb your mother with. Presently he said to me in the gentlest way:

56 "My boy, you must get a little memorandum-book; and every time I tell you a thing, put it down right away. There's only one way to be a pilot, and that is to get this entire river by heart. You have to know it just like A B C."

57. That was a dismal revelation to me; for my memory was never loaded with anything but blank cartridges. However, I did not feel discouraged long. I judged that it was best to make some allowances, for doubtless Mr. Bixby was "stretching." Presently he pulled a rope and struck a few strokes on the big bell. The stars were all gone now, and the night was as black as ink. I could hear the wheels churn along the bank, but I was not entirely certain that I could see the shore. The voice of the invisible watchman called up from the hurricane-deck:

58 "What's this, sir?"

59. "Jones's plantation."

60. I said to myself, "I wish I might venture to offer a small bet that it isn't." But I did not chirp. I only waited to see. Mr. Bixby handled the engine-bells, and in due time the boat's nose came to the land, a torch glowed from the forecastle, a man skipped ashore, a darky's

voice on the bank said: "Gimme de k'yarpet-bag, Mass' Jones," and the next moment we were standing up the river again, all serene. I reflected deeply awhile, and then said—but not aloud—"Well, the finding of that plantation was the luckiest accident that ever happened; but it couldn't happen again in a hundred years." And I fully believed it *was* an accident, too.

[61] By the time we had gone seven or eight hundred miles up the river, I had learned to be a tolerably plucky up-stream steersman, in daylight; and before we reached St. Louis I had made a trifle of progress in night work, but only a trifle. I had a note-book that fairly bristled with the names of towns, "points," bars, islands, bends, reaches, etc.; but the information was to be found only in the note-book—none of it was in my head. It made my heart ache to think I had only got half of the river set down; for as our watch was four hours off and four hours on, day and night, there was a long four-hour gap in my book for every time I had slept since the voyage began.

[62] My chief was presently hired to go on a big New Orleans boat, and I packed my satchel and went with him. She was a grand affair. When I stood in her pilot-house I was so far above the water that I seemed perched on a mountain; and her decks stretched so far away, fore and aft, below me, that I wondered how I could ever have considered the little *Paul Jones* a large craft. There were other differences, too. The *Paul Jones's* pilot-house was a cheap, dingy, battered rattletrap, cramped for room; but here was a sumptuous glass temple; room enough to have a dance in; showy red and gold window-curtains; an imposing sofa; leather cushions and a back to the high bench where visiting pilots sit, to spin yarns and "look at the river"; bright, fanciful "cuspidores," instead of a broad wooden box filled with sawdust; nice new oilcloth on the floor; a hospitable big stove for winter; a wheel as high as my head, costly with inlaid work; a wire tiller-rope; bright brass knobs for the bells; and a tidy, white-aproned, black "texas-tender," to bring up tarts and ices and coffee during mid-watch, day and night. Now this was "something like"; and so I began to take heart once more to believe that piloting was a romantic sort of occupation after all. The moment we were under way I began to prowl about the great steamer and fill myself with joy. She was as clean and as dainty as a drawing-room; when I looked down her long, gilded saloon, it was like gazing through a splendid tunnel; she had an oil-picture, by some gifted sign-painter, on every stateroom door; she glittered with no end of prism-fringed chandeliers; the clerk's office was elegant, the

bar was marvelous, and the barkeeper had been barbered and upholstered at incredible cost. The boiler-deck (*i. e.*, the second story of the boat, so to speak) was as spacious as a church, it seemed to me; so with the forecastle; and there was no pitiful handful of deck-hands, firemen, and roustabouts down there, but a whole battalion of men. The fires were fiercely glaring from a long row of furnaces, and over them were eight huge boilers! This was unutterable pomp. The mighty engines—but enough of this. I had never felt so fine before. And when I found that the regiment of natty servants respectfully "sir'd" me, my satisfaction was complete.

IV—Perplexing Lessons

63. At the end of what seemed a tedious while, I had managed to pack my head full of islands, towns, bars, "points," and bends; and a curiously inanimate mass of lumber it was, too. However, inasmuch as I could shut my eyes and reel off a good long string of these names without leaving out more than ten miles of river in every fifty, I began to feel that I could take a boat down to New Orleans if I could make her skip those little gaps. But of course my complacency could hardly get start enough to lift my nose a trifle into the air, before Mr. Bixby would think of something to fetch it down again. One day he turned on me suddenly with this settler:

64 "What is the shape of Walnut Bend?"

65 He might as well have asked me my grandmother's opinion of protoplasm. I reflected respectfully, and then said I didn't know it had any particular shape. My gun-powdery chief went off with a bang, of course, and then went on loading and firing until he was out of adjectives.

66 I had learned long ago that he only carried just so many rounds of ammunition, and was sure to subside into a very placable and even remorseful old smoothbore as soon as they were all gone. That word "old" is merely affectionate; he was not more than thirty-four. I waited. By and by he said:

67. "My boy, you've got to know the *shape* of the river perfectly. It is all there is left to steer by on a very dark night. Everything else is blotted out and gone. But mind you, it hasn't the same shape in the night that it has in the daytime."

68. "How on earth am I ever going to learn it, then?"

69. "How do you follow a hall at home in the dark? Because you know the shape of it. You can't see it."

70. "Do you mean to say that I've got to know all the million trifling variations of shape in the banks of this interminable river as well as I know the shape of the front hall at home?"

71. "On my honor, you've got to know them *better* than any man ever did know the shapes of the halls in his own house."

72. "I wish I was dead!"

73 "Now I don't want to discourage you, but—"

74. "Well, pile it on me; I might as well have it now as another time."

75 "You see, this has got to be learned; there isn't any getting around it. A clear starlight night throws such heavy shadows that, if you didn't know the shape of a shore perfectly, you would claw away from every bunch of timber, because you would take the black shadow of it for a solid cape; and you see you would be getting scared to death every fifteen minutes by the watch. You would be fifty yards from shore all the time when you ought to be within fifty feet of it. You can't see a snag in one of those shadows, but you know exactly where it is, and the shape of the river tells you when you are coming to it. Then there's your pitch-dark night; the river is a very different shape on a pitch-dark night from what it is on a star-light night. All shores seem to be straight lines, then, and mighty dim ones, too, and you'd *run* them for straight lines, only you know better. You boldly drive your boat right into what seems to be a solid, straight wall (you knowing very well that in reality there is a curve there), and that wall falls back and makes way for you. Then there's your gray mist. You take a night when there's one of these grisly, drizzly, gray mists, and then there isn't *any* particular shape to a shore. A gray mist would tangle the head of the oldest man that ever lived. Well, then, different kinds of *moonlight* change the shape of the river in different ways. You see—"

76 "Oh, don't say any more, please! Have I got to learn the shape of the river according to all these five hundred thousand different ways? If I tried to carry all that cargo in my head it would make me stoop-shouldered."

77 "*No!* you only learn *the* shape of the river; and you learn it with such absolute certainty that you can always steer by the shape that's *in your head,* and never mind the one that's before your eyes."

78. "Very well, I'll try it; but, after I have learned it, can I depend on it? Will it keep the same form and not go fooling around?"

79. Before Mr. Bixby could answer, Mr. W. came in to take the watch, and he said:

80. "Bixby, you'll have to look out for President's Island, and all that

country clear away up above the Old Hen and Chickens. The banks are caving and the shape of the shores changing like everything. Why, you wouldn't know the point above 40. You can go up inside the old sycamore snag, now." [3]

81 So that question was answered. Here were leagues of shore changing shape. My spirits were down in the mud again. Two things seemed pretty apparent to me. One was, that in order to be a pilot a man had got to learn more than any one man ought to be allowed to know; and the other was, that he must learn it all over again in a different way every twenty-four hours.

82 That night we had the watch until twelve. Now it was an ancient river custom for the two pilots to chat a bit when the watch changed. While the relieving pilot put on his gloves and lit his cigar, his partner, the retiring pilot, would say something like this:

83. "I judge the upper bar is making down a little at Hale's Point; had quarter twain with the lower lead and mark twain [4] with the other."

84. "Yes, I thought it was making down a little, last trip. Meet any boats?"

85 "Met one abreast the head of 21, but she was away over hugging the bar, and I couldn't make her out entirely. I took her for the *Sunny South*—hadn't any skylights forward of the chimneys."

86 And so on. And as the relieving pilot took the wheel his partner [5] would mention that we were in such-and-such a bend, and say we were abreast of such-and-such a man's woodyard or plantation. This was courtesy; I supposed it was *necessity*. But Mr. W. came on watch full twelve minutes late on this particular night—a tremendous breach of etiquette; in fact, it is the unpardonable sin among pilots. So Mr. Bixby gave him no greeting whatever, but simply surrendered the wheel and marched out of the pilot-house without a word. I was appalled; it was a villainous night for blackness, we were in a particularly wide and blind part of the river, where there was no shape or substance to anything, and it seemed incredible that Mr. Bixby should have left that poor fellow to kill the boat, trying to find out where he was. But I resolved that I would stand by him anyway. He should find that he was not wholly friendless. So I stood around, and waited to be asked where we were. But Mr. W. plunged on serenely through the

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[3] It may not be necessary, but still it can do no harm to explain that "inside" means between the snag and the shore.

[4] Two fathoms. Quarter twain is 2¼ fathoms, 13½ feet. Mark three is three fathoms.

[5] "Partner" is technical for "the other pilot."

solid firmament of black cats that stood for an atmosphere, and never opened his mouth. "Here is a proud devil!" thought I; "here is a limb of Satan that would rather send us all to destruction than put himself under obligations to me, because I am not yet one of the salt of the earth and privileged to snub captains and lord it over everything dead and alive in a steamboat." I presently climbed up on the bench; I did not think it was safe to go to sleep while this lunatic was on watch.

87 However, I must have gone to sleep in the course of time, because the next thing I was aware of was the fact that day was breaking, Mr. W. gone, and Mr. Bixby at the wheel again. So it was four o'clock and all well—but me; I felt like a skinful of dry bones, and all of them trying to ache at once.

88 Mr. Bixby asked me what I had stayed up there for. I confessed that it was to do Mr. W. a benevolence—tell him where he was. It took five minutes for the entire preposterousness of the thing to filter into Mr. Bixby's system, and then I judge it filled him nearly up to the chin; because he paid me a compliment—and not much of a one either. He said:

89 "Well, taking you by and large, you do seem to be more different kinds of an ass than any creature I ever saw before. What did you suppose he wanted to know for?"

90 I said I thought it might be a convenience to him.

91 "Convenience! D——nation! Didn't I tell you that a man's got to know the river in the night the same as he'd know his own front hall?"

92 "Well, I can follow the front hall in the dark if I know it *is* the front hall; but suppose you set me down in the middle of it in the dark and not tell me which hall it is; how am *I* to know?"

93 "Well, you've *got* to, on the river!"

94 "All right. Then I'm glad I never said anything to Mr. W."

95 "I should say so! Why, he'd have slammed you through the window and utterly ruined a hundred dollars' worth of window-sash and stuff."

96 I was glad this damage had been saved, for it would have made me unpopular with the owners. They always hated anybody who had the name of being careless and injuring things.

97 I went to work now to learn the shape of the river; and of all the eluding and ungraspable objects that ever I tried to get mind or hands on, that was the chief. I would fasten my eyes upon a sharp, wooded point that projected far into the river some miles ahead of me, and go to laboriously photographing its shape upon my brain; and just as I

was beginning to succeed to my satisfaction, we would draw up toward it and the exasperating thing would begin to melt away and fold back into the bank! If there had been a conspicuous dead tree standing upon the very point of the cape, I would find that tree inconspicuously merged into the general forest, and occupying the middle of a straight shore, when I got abreast of it! No prominent hill would stick to its shape long enough for me to make up my mind what its form really was, but it was as dissolving and changeful as if it had been a mountain of butter in the hottest corner of the tropics. Nothing ever had the same shape when I was coming down-stream that it had borne when I went up. I mentioned these little difficulties to Mr. Bixby. He said:

98 "That's the very main virtue of the thing. If the shapes didn't change every three seconds they wouldn't be of any use. Take this place where we are now, for instance. As long as that hill over yonder is only one hill, I can boom right along the way I'm going; but the moment it splits at the top and forms a V, I know I've got to scratch to starboard in a hurry, or I'll bang this boat's brains out against a rock; and then the moment one of the prongs of the V swings behind the other, I've got to waltz to larboard again, or I'll have a misunderstanding with a snag that would snatch the keelson out of this steamboat as neatly as if it were a sliver in your hand. If that hill didn't change its shape on bad nights there would be an awful steamboat graveyard around here inside of a year."

99. It was plain that I had got to learn the shape of the river in all the different ways that could be thought of—upside down, wrong end first, inside out, fore-and-aft, and "thort-ships"—and then know what to do on gray nights when it hadn't any shape at all. So I set about it. In the course of time I began to get the best of this knotty lesson, and my self-complacency moved to the front once more. Mr. Bixby was all fixed, and ready to start it to the rear again. He opened on me after this fashion:

100 "How much water did we have in the middle crossing at Hole-in-the-Wall, trip before last?"

101 I considered this an outrage. I said:

102 "Every trip, down and up, the leadsmen are singing through that tangled place for three-quarters of an hour on a stretch. How do you reckon I can remember such a mess as that?"

103 "My boy, you've got to remember it. You've got to remember the exact spot and the exact marks the boat lay in when we had the

shoalest water, in every one of the five hundred shoal places between St. Louis and New Orleans; and you mustn't get the shoal soundings and marks of one trip mixed up with the shoal soundings and marks of another, either, for they're not often twice alike. You must keep them separate."

104. When I came to myself again, I said:

105 "When I get so that I can do that, I'll be able to raise the dead, and then I won't have to pilot a steamboat to make a living. I want to retire from this business. I want a slush-bucket and a brush; I'm only fit for a roustabout. I haven't got brains enough to be a pilot; and if I had I wouldn't have strength enough to carry them around, unless I went on crutches."

106 "Now drop that! When I say I'll learn [6] a man the river, I mean it. And you can depend on it, I'll learn him or kill him."

V—Continued Perplexities

107 There was no use in arguing with a person like this. I promptly put such a strain on my memory that by and by even the shoal water and the countless crossing-marks began to stay with me. But the result was just the same. I never could more than get one knotty thing learned before another presented itself. Now I had often seen pilots gazing at the water and pretending to read it as if it were a book; but it was a book that told me nothing. A time came at last, however, when Mr. Bixby seemed to think me far enough advanced to bear a lesson on water-reading. So he began:

108. "Do you see that long, slanting line on the face of the water? Now, that's a reef. Moreover, it's a bluff reef. There is a solid sand-bar under it that is nearly as straight up and down as the side of a house. There is plenty of water close up to it, but mighty little on top of it. If you were to hit it you would knock the boat's brains out. Do you see where the line fringes out at the upper end and begins to fade away?"

109 "Yes, sir."

110 "Well, that is a low place; that is the head of the reef. You can climb over there, and not hurt anything. Cross over, now, and follow along close under the reef—easy water there—not much current."

111 I followed the reef along till I approached the fringed end. Then Mr. Bixby said:

112 "Now get ready. Wait till I give the word. She won't want to mount

[6] "Teach" is not in the river vocabulary.

the reef; a boat hates shoal water. Stand by—wait—*wait*—keep her well in hand. *Now* cramp her down! Snatch her! snatch her!"

113 He seized the other side of the wheel and helped to spin it around until it was hard down, and then we held it so. The boat resisted, and refused to answer for a while, and next she came surging to starboard, mounted the reef, and sent a long, angry ridge of water foaming away from her bows.

114 "Now watch her; watch her like a cat, or she'll get away from you. When she fights strong and the tiller slips a little, in a jerky, greasy sort of way, let up on her a trifle; it is the way she tells you at night that the water is too shoal; but keep edging her up, little by little, toward the point. You are well up on the bar now; there is a bar under every point, because the water that comes down around it forms an eddy and allows the sediment to sink. Do you see those fine lines on the face of the water that branch out like the ribs of a fan? Well, those are little reefs; you want to just miss the ends of them, but run them pretty close. Now look out—look out! Don't you crowd that slick, greasy-looking place; there ain't nine feet there; she won't stand it. She begins to smell it; look sharp, I tell you! Oh, blazes, there you go! Stop the starboard wheel! Quick! Ship up to back! Set her back!"

115 The engine bells jingled and the engines answered promptly, shooting white columns of steam far aloft out of the 'scape-pipes, but it was too late. The boat had "smelt" the bar in good earnest; the foamy ridges that radiated from her bows suddenly disappeared, a great dead swell came rolling forward, and swept ahead of her, she careened far over to larboard, and went tearing away toward the shore as if she were about scared to death. We were a good mile from where we ought to have been when we finally got the upper hand of her again.

116 During the afternoon watch the next day, Mr. Bixby asked me if I knew how to run the next few miles. I said:

117 "Go inside the first snag above the point, outside the next one, start out from the lower end of Higgins's woodyard, make a square crossing, and—"

118 "That's all right. I'll be back before you close up on the next point."

119 But he wasn't. He was still below when I rounded it and entered upon a piece of the river which I had some misgivings about. I did not know that he was hiding behind a chimney to see how I would perform. I went gaily along, getting prouder and prouder, for he had never left the boat in my sole charge such a length of time before. I

even got to "setting" her and letting the wheel go entirely, while I vaingloriously turned my back and inspected the stern marks and hummed a tune, a sort of easy indifference which I had prodigiously admired in Bixby and other great pilots. Once I inspected rather long, and when I faced to the front again my heart flew into my mouth so suddenly that if I hadn't clapped my teeth together I should have lost it. One of those frightful bluff reefs was stretching its deadly length right across our bows! My head was gone in a moment; I did not know which end I stood on; I gasped and could not get my breath; I spun the wheel down with such rapidity that it wove itself together like a spider's web; the boat answered and turned square away from the reef, but the reef followed her! I fled, but still it followed, still it kept —right across my bows! I never looked to see where I was going, I only fled. The awful crash was imminent. Why didn't that villain come? If I committed the crime of ringing a bell I might get thrown overboard. But better that than kill the boat. So in blind desperation, I started such a rattling "shivaree" down below as never had astounded an engineer in this world before, I fancy. Amidst the frenzy of the bells the engines began to back and fill in a curious way, and my reason forsook its throne—we were about to crash into the woods on the other side of the river. Just then Mr. Bixby stepped calmly into view on the hurricane-deck. My soul went out to him in gratitude. My distress vanished; I would have felt safe on the brink of Niagara with Mr. Bixby on the hurricane-deck. He blandly and sweetly took his toothpick out of his mouth between his fingers, as if it were a cigar—we were just in the act of climbing an overhanging big tree, and the passengers were scudding astern like rats—and lifted up these commands to me ever so gently:

[120] "Stop the starboard! Stop the larboard! Set her back on both!"

[121] The boat hesitated, halted, pressed her nose among the boughs a critical instant, then reluctantly began to back away.

[122] "Stop the larboard! Come ahead on it! Stop the starboard! Come ahead on it! Point her for the bar!"

[123] I sailed away as serenely as a summer's morning. Mr. Bixby came in and said, with mock simplicity:

[124] "When you have a hail, my boy, you ought to tap the big bell three times before you land, so that the engineers can get ready."

[125] I blushed under the sarcasm, and said I hadn't had any hail.

[126] "Ah! Then it was for wood, I suppose. The officer of the watch will tell you when he wants to wood up."

127 I went on consuming, and said I wasn't after wood.

128 "Indeed? Why, what could you want over here in the bend, then? Did you ever know of a boat following a bend up-stream at this stage of the river?"

129 "No, sir—and *I* wasn't trying to follow it. I was getting away from a bluff reef."

130 "No, it wasn't a bluff reef; there isn't one within three miles of where you were."

131 "But I saw it. It was as bluff as that one yonder."

132 "Just about. Run over it!"

133 "Do you give it as an order?"

134 "Yes. Run over it!"

135 "If I don't, I wish I may die."

136 "All right; I am taking the responsibility."

137 I was just as anxious to kill the boat, now, as I had been to save it before. I impressed my orders upon my memory, to be used at the inquest, and made a straight break for the reef. As it disappeared under our bows I held my breath; but we slid over it like oil.

138 "Now, don't you see the difference? It wasn't anything but a *wind* reef. The wind does that."

139 "So I see. But it is exactly like a bluff reef. How am I ever going to tell them apart?"

140 "I can't tell you. It is an instinct. By and by you will just naturally *know* one from the other, but you never will be able to explain why or how you know them apart."

141 It turned out to be true. The face of the water, in time, became a wonderful book—a book that was a dead language to the uneducated passenger, but which told its mind to me without reserve, delivering its most cherished secrets as clearly as if it uttered them with a voice. And it was not a book to be read once and thrown aside, for it had a new story to tell every day. Throughout the long twelve hundred miles there was never a page that was void of interest, never one that you could leave unread without loss, never one that you would want to skip, thinking you could find higher enjoyment in some other thing. There never was so wonderful a book written by man; never one whose interest was so absorbing, so unflagging, so sparklingly renewed with every reperusal. The passenger who could not read it was charmed with a peculiar sort of faint dimple on its surface (on the rare occasions when he did not overlook it altogether); but to the pilot that was an *italicized* passage; indeed, it was more than that, it

was a legend of the largest capitals, with a string of shouting exclamation-points at the end of it, for it meant that a wreck or a rock was buried there that could tear the life out of the strongest vessel that ever floated. It is the faintest and simplest expression the water ever makes, and the most hideous to a pilot's eye. In truth, the passenger who could not read this book saw nothing but all manner of pretty pictures in it, painted by the sun and shaded by the clouds, whereas to the trained eye these were not pictures at all, but the grimmest and most dead-earnest of reading-matter.

142 Now when I had mastered the language of this water, and had come to know every trifling feature that bordered the great river as familiarly as I knew the letters of the alphabet, I had made a valuable acquisition. But I had lost something, too. I had lost something which could never be restored to me while I lived. All the grace, the beauty, the poetry, had gone out of the majestic river! I still kept in mind a certain wonderful sunset which I witnessed when steamboating was new to me. A broad expanse of the river was turned to blood; in the middle distance the red hue brightened into gold, through which a solitary log came floating, black and conspicuous; in one place a long, slanting mark lay sparkling upon the water; in another the surface was broken by boiling, tumbling rings, that were as many-tinted as an opal; where the ruddy flush was faintest, was a smooth spot that was covered with graceful circles and radiating lines, ever so delicately traced; the shore on our left was densely wooded, and the somber shadow that fell from this forest was broken in one place by a long, ruffled trail that shone like silver; and high above the forest wall a clean-stemmed dead tree waved a single leafy bough that glowed like a flame in the unobstructed splendor that was flowing from the sun. There were graceful curves, reflected images, woody heights, soft distances; and over the whole scene, far and near, the dissolving lights drifted steadily, enriching it every passing moment with new marvels of coloring.

143 I stood like one bewitched. I drank it in, in a speechless rapture. The world was new to me, and I had never seen anything like this at home. But as I have said, a day came when I began to cease from noting the glories and the charms which the moon and the sun and the twilight wrought upon the river's face; another day came when I ceased altogether to note them. Then, if that sunset scene had been repeated, I should have looked upon it without rapture, and should have commented upon it, inwardly, after this fashion: "This sun means

that we are going to have wind to-morrow; that floating log means that the river is rising, small thanks to it; that slanting mark on the water refers to a bluff reef which is going to kill somebody's steamboat one of these nights, if it keeps on stretching out like that; those tumbling 'boils' show a dissolving bar and a changing channel there; the lines and circles in the slick water over yonder are a warning that that troublesome place is shoaling up dangerously; that silver streak in the shadow of the forest is the 'break' from a new snag, and he has located himself in the very best place he could have found to fish for steamboats; that tall dead tree, with a single living branch, is not going to last long, and then how is a body ever going to get through this blind place at night without the friendly old landmark?"

[14f] No, the romance and beauty were all gone from the river. All the value any feature of it had for me now was the amount of usefulness it could furnish toward compassing the safe piloting of a steamboat. Since those days, I have pitied doctors from my heart. What does the lovely flush in a beauty's cheek mean to a doctor but a "break" that ripples above some deadly disease? Are not all her visible charms sown thick with what are to him the signs and symbols of hidden decay? Does he ever see her beauty at all, or doesn't he simply view her professionally, and comment upon her unwholesome condition all to himself? And doesn't he sometimes wonder whether he has gained most or lost most by learning his trade?

* * *

Commentary and Questions

These autobiographical experiences first appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1875. Later they were incorporated by the author in a book, *Life on the Mississippi.* The five sections here reprinted are chapters 4-6 and 8-9 of that book.

1. Show how in each one of the five sections there is an increase or a decrease (or both) in the fascination of river life. How would you distinguish the attitude of the boy at the beginning of section I from that of the cub-pilot at the end of section V? The title of the selection is not the author's. Suggest a title to replace "Cub-Pilot."

2. Does the author in this selection take the same attitude toward actual experience as Paul Gallico does in "The Feel" (pp. 5-14)?

3. In pars. 19 and 37-57 one topic is considered; in pars. 28-36 and 57-60, another topic. Do you think the author should have completed his treatment of one before going on to the other?

4. Par. 107 serves as an introduction to section V and as a transition from the preceding section. If you were dividing the rest of section V into sub-sections, what paragraphs would you group together? What titles or headings would you give each of the sub-sections? How is par. 107 related to your final sub-section?

5. What technique has been used to achieve a humorous effect in these four passages: "He would boil awhile to himself, and then overflow and scald me again" (par. 51); "You could have drawn a seine through his system and not caught curses enough to disturb your mother with" (par. 55); ". . . my memory was never loaded with anything but blank cartridges" (par. 57); ". . . the barkeeper had been barbered and upholstered at incredible cost" (par. 62)? Can you find other examples in this selection?

Suggestions for Writing

1. In par. 2 the author presents two contrasting pictures of Hannibal, Missouri. Use the same technique in writing about a particular place, for example, a football stadium.

2. In par. 144 the question is asked whether a doctor "has gained most or lost most by learning his trade." Do you think a yes-or-no answer is possible? Draw examples from your own experiences in developing your discussion. One of these topics may prove helpful:

(a) Those whom the gods love die young.

(b) Where would we be without doctors?

(c) Keeping a sense of wonder without remaining naïve.

A Miserable, Merry Christmas[*]

by LINCOLN STEFFENS

My father's business seems to have been one of slow but steady growth. He and his local partner, Llewelen Tozer, had no vices. They were devoted to their families and to "the store," which grew with the town, which, in turn, grew and changed with the State from a gambling, mining, and ranching

[*] From *The Autobiography of Lincoln Steffens.* Copyright 1931 by Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc.

community to one of farming, fruit-raising, and building. Immigration poured in, not gold-seekers now, but farmers, business men and home-builders, who settled, planted, reaped, and traded in the natural riches of the State, which prospered greatly, "making" the people who will tell you that they "made the State."

2 As the store made money and I was getting through the primary school, my father bought a lot uptown, at Sixteenth and K Streets, and built us a "big" house. It was off the line of the city's growth, but it was near a new grammar school for me and my sisters, who were coming along fast after me. This interested the family, not me. They were always talking about school; they had not had much of it themselves, and they thought they had missed something. My father used to write speeches, my mother verses, and their theory seems to have been that they had talents which a school would have brought to flower. They agreed, therefore, that their children's gifts should have all the schooling there was. My view, then, was that I had had a good deal of it already, and I was not interested at all. It interfered with my own business, with my own education.

3 And indeed I remember very little of the primary school. I learned to read, write, spell, and count, and reading was all right. I had a practical use for books, which I searched for ideas and parts to play with, characters to be, lives to live. The primary school was probably a good one, but I cannot remember learning anything except to read aloud "perfectly" from a teacher whom I adored and who was fond of me. She used to embrace me before the whole class and she favored me openly to the scandal of the other pupils, who called me "teacher's pet." Their scorn did not trouble me; I saw and I said that they envied me. I paid for her favor, however. When she married I had queer, unhappy feelings of resentment; I didn't want to meet her husband, and when I had to I wouldn't speak to him. He laughed, and she kissed me—happily for her, to me offensively. I never would see her again. Through with her, I fell in love immediately with Miss Kay, another grown young woman who wore glasses and had a fine, clear skin. I did not know her, I only saw her in the street, but once I followed her, found out where she lived, and used to pass her house, hoping to see her, and yet choking with embarrassment if I did. This fascination lasted for years; it was still a sort of super-romance to me when later I was "going with" another girl nearer my own age.

4. What interested me in our new neighborhood was not the school, nor the room I was to have in the house all to myself, but the stable

which was built back of the house. My father let me direct the making of a stall, a little smaller than the other stalls, for my pony, and I prayed and hoped and my sister Lou believed that that meant that I would get the pony, perhaps for Christmas. I pointed out to her that there were three other stalls and no horses at all. This I said in order that she should answer it. She could not. My father, sounded, said that some day we might have horses and a cow; meanwhile a stable added to the value of a house. "Some day" is a pain to a boy who lives in and knows only "now." My good little sisters, to comfort me, remarked that Christmas was coming, but Christmas was always coming and grown-ups were always talking about it, asking you what you wanted and then giving you what they wanted you to have. Though everybody knew what I wanted, I told them all again. My mother knew that I told God, too, every night. I wanted a pony, and to make sure that they understood, I declared that I wanted nothing else.

5 "Nothing but a pony?" my father asked.

6 "Nothing," I said.

7 "Not even a pair of high boots?"

8 That was hard. I did want boots, but I stuck to the pony. "No, not even boots."

9 "Nor candy? There ought to be something to fill your stocking with, and Santa Claus can't put a pony into a stocking."

10 That was true, and he couldn't lead a pony down the chimney either. But no. "All I want is a pony," I said. "If I can't have a pony, give me nothing, nothing."

11 Now I had been looking myself for the pony I wanted, going to sales stables, inquiring of horsemen, and I had seen several that would do. My father let me "try" them. I tried so many ponies that I was learning fast to sit a horse. I chose several, but my father always found some fault with them. I was in despair. When Christmas was at hand I had given up all hope of a pony, and on Christmas Eve I hung up my stocking along with my sisters', of whom, by the way, I now had three. I haven't mentioned them or their coming because, you understand, they were girls, and girls, young girls, counted for nothing in my manly life. They did not mind me either; they were so happy that Christmas Eve that I caught some of their merriment. I speculated on what I'd get; I hung up the biggest stocking I had, and we all went reluctantly to bed to wait till morning. Not to sleep; not right away. We were told that we must not only sleep promptly, we

must not wake up till seven-thirty the next morning—or if we did, we must not go to the fireplace for our Christmas. Impossible.

12 We did sleep that night, but we woke up at six A.M. We lay in our beds and debated through the open doors whether to obey till, say, half-past six. Then we bolted. I don't know who started it, but there was a rush. We all disobeyed; we raced to disobey and get first to the fireplace in the front room downstairs. And there they were, the gifts, all sorts of wonderful things, mixed-up piles of presents; only, as I disentangled the mess, I saw that my stocking was empty; it hung limp; not a thing in it; and under and around it—nothing. My sisters had knelt down, each by her pile of gifts; they were squealing with delight, till they looked up and saw me standing there in my nightgown with nothing. They left their piles to come to me and look with me at my empty place. Nothing. They felt my stocking: nothing.

13 I don't remember whether I cried at that moment, but my sisters did. They ran with me back to my bed, and there we all cried till I became indignant. That helped some. I got up, dressed, and driving my sisters away, I went alone out into the yard, down to the stable, and there, all by myself, I wept. My mother came out to me by and by; she found me in my pony stall, sobbing on the floor, and she tried to comfort me. But I heard my father outside; he had come part way with her, and she was having some sort of angry quarrel with him. She tried to comfort me; besought me to come to breakfast. I could not; I wanted no comfort and no breakfast. She left me and went on into the house with sharp words for my father.

14. I don't know what kind of a breakfast the family had. My sisters said it was "awful." They were ashamed to enjoy their own toys. They came to me, and I was rude. I ran away from them. I went around to the front of the house, sat down on the steps, and, the crying over, I ached. I was wronged, I was hurt—I can feel now what I felt then, and I am sure that if one could see the wounds upon our hearts, there would be found still upon mine a scar from that terrible Christmas morning. And my father, the practical joker, he must have been hurt, too, a little. I saw him looking out of the window. He was watching me or something for an hour or two, drawing back the curtain never so little lest I catch him, but I saw his face, and I think I can see now the anxiety upon it, the worried impatience.

15. After—I don't know how long—surely an hour or two—I was brought to the climax of my agony by the sight of a man riding a pony

down the street, a pony and a brand-new saddle; the most beautiful saddle I ever saw, and it was a boy's saddle; the man's feet were not in the stirrups; his legs were too long. The outfit was perfect; it was the realization of all my dreams, the answer to all my prayers. A fine new bridle, with a light curb bit. And the pony! As he drew near, I saw that the pony was really a small horse, what we called an Indian pony, a bay, with black mane and tail, and one white foot and a white star on his forehead. For such a horse as that I would have given, I could have forgiven, anything.

16 But the man, a disheveled fellow with a blackened eye and a fresh-cut face, came along, reading the numbers on the houses, and, as my hopes—my impossible hopes—rose, he looked at our door and passed by, he and the pony, and the saddle and the bridle. Too much. I fell upon the steps, and having wept before, I broke now into such a flood of tears that I was a floating wreck when I heard a voice.

17 "Say, kid," it said, "do you know a boy named Lennie Steffens?"

18 I looked up. It was the man on the pony, back again, at our horse block.

19 "Yes," I spluttered through my tears. "That's me."

20 "Well," he said, "then this is your horse. I've been looking all over for you and your house. Why don't you put your number where it can be seen?"

21 "Get down," I said, running out to him.

22 He went on saying something about "ought to have got here at seven o'clock; told me to bring the nag here and tie him to your post and leave him for you. But, hell, I got into a drunk—and a fight—and a hospital, and—"

23 "Get down," I said.

24 He got down, and he boosted me up to the saddle. He offered to fit the stirrups to me, but I didn't want him to. I wanted to ride.

25 "What's the matter with you?" he said, angrily. "What you crying for? Don't you like the horse? He's a dandy, this horse. I know him of old. He's fine at cattle; he'll drive 'em alone."

26 I hardly heard, I could scarcely wait, but he persisted. He adjusted the stirrups, and then, finally, off I rode, slowly, at a walk, so happy, so thrilled, that I did not know what I was doing. I did not look back at the house or the man, I rode off up the street, taking note of everything—of the reins, of the pony's long mane, of the carved leather saddle. I had never seen anything so beautiful. And mine! I was going

to ride up past Miss Kay's house. But I noticed on the horn of the saddle some stains like rain-drops, so I turned and trotted home, not to the house but to the stable. There was the family, father, mother, sisters, all working for me, all happy. They had been putting in place the tools of my new business: blankets, currycomb, brush, pitchfork—everything, and there was hay in the loft.

[27] "What did you come back so soon for?" somebody asked. "Why didn't you go on riding?"

[28] I pointed to the stains. "I wasn't going to get my new saddle rained on," I said. And my father laughed. "It isn't raining," he said. "Those are not rain-drops."

[29] "They are tears," my mother gasped, and she gave my father a look which sent him off to the house. Worse still, my mother offered to wipe away the tears still running out of my eyes. I gave her such a look as she had given him, and she went off after my father, drying her own tears. My sisters remained and we all unsaddled the pony, put on his halter, led him to his stall, tied and fed him. It began really to rain; so all the rest of that memorable day we curried and combed that pony. The girls plaited his mane, forelock, and tail, while I pitchforked hay to him and curried and brushed, curried and brushed. For a change we brought him out to drink; we led him up and down, blanketed like a race-horse; we took turns at that. But the best, the most inexhaustible fun, was to clean him. When we went reluctantly to our midday Christmas dinner, we all smelt of horse, and my sisters had to wash their faces and hands. I was asked to, but I wouldn't, till my mother bade me look in the mirror. Then I washed up—quick. My face was caked with the muddy lines of tears that had coursed over my cheeks to my mouth. Having washed away that shame, I ate my dinner, and as I ate I grew hungrier and hungrier. It was my first meal that day, and as I filled up on the turkey and the stuffing, the cranberries and the pies, the fruit and the nuts—as I swelled, I could laugh. My mother said I still choked and sobbed now and then, but I laughed, too; I saw and enjoyed my sisters' presents till—I had to go out and attend to my pony, who was there, really and truly there, the promise, the beginning, of a happy double life. And—I went and looked to make sure—there was the saddle, too, and the bridle.

[30] But that Christmas, which my father had planned so carefully, was it the best or the worst I ever knew? He often asked me that; I never could answer as a boy. I think now that it was both. It covered the

whole distance from broken-hearted misery to bursting happiness—too fast. A grown-up could hardly have stood it.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

This is the third chapter of *The Autobiography of Lincoln Steffens.* Steffens begins the book with an account of his parents and his earliest experiences in San Francisco, where he was born in 1866. In the chapter preceding this one, he has described his longing for a pony and his disappointments when adults have thoughtlessly put him off with promises.

1. How closely related are the first three paragraphs to the rest of this selection? Can you find any justification later in the selection for the inclusion of par. 3?

2. Is the assertion (par. 11) that his sisters, being girls, counted for nothing in young Steffens' life borne out by the rest of the episode?

3. Find a number of places in the chapter where Steffens suggests the difference in attitude between children and grown-ups: for example, the closing sentences of par. 2. How fundamental is this to the effect of the episode? Can the title of the selection be applied to the parents as well as to the son? What does Steffens mean by saying at the end of the story, "A grown-up could hardly have stood it"?

4. Actual dialogue is used at only three points in the essay. Why do you think Steffens selected these particular points? Could the substance of the dialogue have been summarized as effectively?

5. How does Steffens maintain suspense until the final arrival of the pony? What hints does he plant of action to come? Why is there almost no let-down of interest even after Lennie gets the pony?

Suggestions for Writing

In the last paragraph Steffens, as he looks back on this particular Christmas, generalizes about its significance. Select a single event from your early experiences which you are now able to evaluate; then develop it so that the reader will be able to understand its significance.

My Life Is an Open Book[*]

by CLIFTON FADIMAN

Between ten and seventeen I did the major bulk of my reading. I have never read as many books (I don't mean manuscripts) per year since, nor do I expect to in the future. Those were the splendid years, and it is my notion that they are the splendid years of most devoted readers. After seventeen (in some cases a year or two later) the books choose you, not you the books. You read within limits. Reading becomes a program. You read as part of your college curriculum, or to gain knowledge in a specific field, or to be able to bore your neighbor at dinner-table conversation. Adult reading is usually purposive. In my own case—I shall speak of this later on—it is more than purposive. I make a living by it.

2. Even the reading done during one's college years lacks the spontaneity, the high waywardness of one's pre-adolescent and adolescent reading. It circles around the classroom. It consists of authors recommended by authority or who you feel should be "covered." Or it has to do with books you know a good deal about in advance, one of the most effective ways to spoil one's reading pleasure. Such reading may be mentally stimulating or socially useful. It may benefit you in a dozen ways. But it is not an adventure in quite the same sense that reading in your second decade so often is.

3. I am not, in this random biblio-autobiography, proposing to list the books I have read. Nothing could be duller or less useful, except when he who does the listing owns a mind whose operations are really of interest to mankind, as was the case, for example, with John Stuart Mill. All I am here endeavoring to do is to outline some of the processes whereby an average person became an above-the-average reader, which is what I immodestly claim to be. To understand these processes a mere catalogue of titles is of no avail.

4. Yet I would like to list a few names, mainly to indicate the kind of writer that, as I recall, influenced the more bookish boys and girls

[*] From *Reading I've Liked.* Copyright 1941 by Simon and Schuster, Inc. Reprinted by permission of the publishers.

of my generation. Shaw, Galsworthy, Bennett, Conrad, Merrick, Barrie, Moore, Dunsany, Yeats, Synge, Swinnerton, Chesterton, Meredith, Wilde, Hewlett, Gissing, Zangwill, and above all H. G. Wells—these, to confine the list to Englishmen only, are a few of the authors I remember devouring from my tenth to my eighteenth year, miscomprehending many, overprizing some, but getting from all an exultant sense of discovery, a peak-in-Darien thrill rarely enjoyed since.

5 The secret of second-decade reading, of course, is that you are not really finding out what Shaw thinks or Conrad feels, but what *you* think and *you* feel. Shaw and Conrad and the rest are but handy compasses to guide you through the fascinating jungle of your young self. When I read Wells' *Tono-Bungay* at fourteen or fifteen, I found myself saying in delight, "But that's just the way *I* feel!" When I now read Thomas Mann's *Joseph* story I find myself thinking how true it is to the experience of men in general. There is a difference in the quality of the emotion. The grown-up emotion may be larger and wiser (and probably more pompous), but the boyish one is unique just because it is so utterly, innocently self-centered.

6. During this adolescent period of my reading life I had a lucky break. My brother, five years my senior and a student at Columbia College, was at the time taking a conventional survey course that used a sound standard anthology known, I think, as *Century Readings in English Literature,* edited by Cunliffe, Pyre, and Young. For some reason, possibly a mild fraternal sadism, he made me take the course along with him—he at college, I at home. The whole thing was over my head—I was fourteen—but when I had finished my *Century Readings,* which took a year, I had at least a hazy notion of the course and development, from *Beowulf* to Stevenson, of the most magnificent, after the Greek, of all literatures. I remember writing essays, perhaps no more interminable than my subjects, on Hakluyt and Spenser. I am still unable to dislodge from my memory—which is not a good one—odd lines of verse from subminor poets like Drayton. That is all of no account. The important thing is that I got through my head at an early age a few simple truths: that the proper reading of a good writer requires energy and application; that reading is not mere "diversion"; that it is impossible to admire writing you do not understand; that understanding it does not destroy but rather enhances its beauty; that unless a writer's mind is superior to, more complicated than, your own, it is a bore to read him. (That is why I never recommend a book to a person if it is on his own mental level.)

7 I learned also that daydreaming and intelligent reading do not go together. There is a story told by Dr. Sandor Ferenczi, the psychoanalyst, about a Hungarian aristocrat who, while devouring a quick lunch between trains, was recognized by a boorish acquaintance.

8 "My dear Count! How are you?"

9 "Umph."

10 "And how is the Countess?"

11 "Dead."

12 "How shocking! It must be terrible for your daughter."

13 "She's dead."

14 "But your son—"

15 "Dead! Everybody's dead when I'm eating!"

16 During my all-out period everybody was dead when I was reading. Most children and adolescents know this magical secret of concentration, though it is not till they are older and duller that they realize it was magical.

17 I remember that, when I was fourteen, we lived about two miles from the nearest library. I had a choice. I could cycle there, borrow my books, and cycle back in a very few minutes—but those few minutes were lost to reading. Or, if I wished, I could walk to the library, reading the last fifty or seventy-five pages of my calculatedly unfinished book en route, make my borrowings, and walk back, reading a new volume on the way. I usually preferred the latter procedure. It is no trick at all to read while walking, to step off and onto curbs with unconscious skill, to avoid other pedestrians while your eyes are riveted to the page. There was a special pleasure in it: I had outwitted Father Time. I think Providence meant me to be an ambulant reader, for I never once even stumbled. But one afternoon when I was cycling home from the library with my wire basket full of books, I was hit from behind by a car and sent sprawling.

18 This absorption, this "losing yourself" in a book, though clearly quite remote from "practical life" (for children "practical life" is simply what grownups want them to do), is not daydreaming. The child does not interpose a continuous, fuzzy, wavering screen of personal desires and wishful visions between himself and the page. On the contrary, he and the page are one. The Victorian female, with whom novel reading was a disease, was the real daydreamer. For her, reading became a drug, a kind of literary marijuana, an instrumentality for the production of needed visions. The child's hearty relation to his book is devoid of this sick quality.

[19] Well, the course my brother gave me, via that blessed trinity Cunliffe, Pyre, and Young, was calculated to make me understand that literature, beyond helping one to discover oneself, has a higher, more impersonal function. It is a challenge issued by a higher mind, the author's, to a lower mind, the reader's. Even if the challenge is not met, much pleasure may still result. But if it is met, or if a sincere attempt to meet it is made, a finer, rarer pleasure is experienced. If you read for pure diversion, well and good, but if you read for any other purpose, always read above yourself. One of the reasons for the general mental fuzziness of most "cultivated" people we know is that publishers have become too shrewd. They have learned, the cunning little fellows, just how to temper their books to the lamblike mental innocence of their readers. The result is that every week we are deluged with books which, the publishers assure us, we can understand. It is quite true. We *can* understand them, all too easily. It would be much better for us if now and then we read a book just a few rungs beyond our mental capacities in their most relaxed state.

[20] My second-decade reading—and I think this is sadly true of most of us—was in this sense educationally more valuable than any I have done since, with certain notable (and I shall note them later) exceptions. During adolescence our feeling of bewilderment and insecurity tends to be greater than at any other time. Hence the need to know, to learn, is greater. Therefore whatever reading is done is intense. It is utterly assimilated. We pay absorbed attention to it, as we would to the instructions of an expert before venturing into a trackless forest.

[21] It seems to me that in my late teens I did more "heavy" reading and digested it more thoroughly than at any succeeding period. In this connection I recall two antithetical experiments I made extending over an interval of six months. The first was an experiment in difficult reading. The other was an experiment in nonreading.

[22] One summer I decided to spend my evenings reading only "hard" books. I went at it with the humorless obstinacy of a sixteen-year-old—and I was more humorless and more obstinate than most. I staggered wildly through stuff like Ueberweg's *History of Philosophy,* Winwood Reade's *Martyrdom of Man,* Saintsbury's *History of English Prosody,* Taine's *History of English Literature,* Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.* It was enough for a book to seem important and forbidding—I read it at once. No novels, no light literature of any sort, no magazines for three solid months—hot months, too. Now, as I look back on this extravagant experiment, it seems like the disagreeable

behavior of a young prig. Yet I was not really priggish; I didn't read for show-off purposes. I read my Ueberweg as a challenge to myself, as a test, as a deliberate gesture, if you will, of self-punishment. The boy of sixteen by overexercise will punish his body deliberately just to see how much it can take. That same boy may punish his mind in the same way. It is a kind of initiation ceremony that he performs upon himself, a queer, grotesque test of approaching manhood. Sometimes he will decide to go right through *The Encyclopaedia Britannica.*

23. The notable part of the experience is that just because that summer's reading came out of a powerful emotional impulse it has stuck with me, as more formal reading, particularly that done as part of my school work, has not. Also, it left me with a taste for a certain kind of "difficult" reading, a taste which, because I am a book reviewer, I rarely have an opportunity to indulge. This does not mean that I read heavy books with ease. On the contrary, I have to go through painful mental struggles to understand them, but the struggle still gives me an odd satisfaction, which I know has something to do with that lunatic summer I spent perusing nothing but huge volumes several miles above my head.

24 Today, for example, the books I look forward with most pleasure to reading and reviewing are books of popular science, of the Hogben-Julian Huxley-Eddington type. I am not really competent to judge them, but I like to read them, perhaps primarily because for me—I am a scientific illiterate—they present challenging difficulties. It may be an illusion, but I always feel, when I have finished a book of this sort, that I have "got" something out of it. I hardly ever get this feeling from a novel or a conventional biography.

25 Well, that was Experiment Number One. The second was its polar opposite. I decided to spend three months *reading nothing at all,* not even a daily newspaper. (The three months coincided with a long absence from school, so the conditions for the experiment were at their optimum.) Now, why did I want to do this? It was again a matter of self-testing. I felt I had grown too dependent upon other people's ideas. The only way I could perceive to cure myself of this dependence was to abjure other people's ideas completely. The mental life of the adolescent is frequently characterized by this oscillatory quality. He can find out what his real nature is only by leaping from one extreme to the other.

26. And so for three months I read, as nearly as I can recall, virtually nothing. It was by no means a fruitless experiment, and to those held

too tightly in the grip of the reading habit I heartily recommend it. The effect is purgative. The mind disgorges a good deal of waste and clutter, it slows down, for a time it seems vacant. Then gradually it fills again, this time not with the myriad, secondhand impressions induced by nonstop reading, but with the few clear ideas and desires that reflect more accurately your true self. The experience, in addition to being cleansing, is humbling; you realize how sparse is the net content of your mind.

27. I have known men and women who read so voraciously and continuously that they never have the time or opportunity to discover who they really are. Indeed, I suspect it is precisely because they prefer not to make that discovery that they cling so limpetlike to books. I suppose this is better for them than alcohol or hasheesh, but it is not very different. All of us, I am sure, have noticed people who suffer from reader's fidgets. If there is a book, a magazine, any piece of print within easy reach, they will at once take it up, idly, without real intent to peruse it, but out of a kind of mechanical compulsion. They will do this while they are talking to you, while you are talking to them, while engaged in some other activity. They are victims of print. Perhaps some dim premonition that unless I watched out I too would become afflicted with reader's fidgets made me carry through with entire success my three months' literary fast.

28 Some years ago I helped to manage a bookstore featuring a circulating library. The main body of customers consisted of commuters. Every evening, a few minutes after five, the commuters would dash in.

29. "Give me a novel!"

30. "Any special title?"

31. "No, any novel will do: it's for my wife"—as if that somehow made everything clear.

32. These commuters' wives—there are tens of thousands of them—were not really in any active sense doing any reading at all. They were taking their daily novel in a numbed or somnambulistic state. They were using books not for purposes of entertainment, but as an anodyne, a time-killer, a life-killer. Many "great readers" are of this class. Truth to tell, they have never read a book in their lives.

33. Akin to these novel-addicts are the newspaper fiends who read three, four, or five papers a day and supplement them with radio news reports. There is only one Keeley cure I can recommend for this weakness, and that is for these people to save their papers for a week, and go back and read the news of seven days before. They will then see,

even in the short perspective thus provided, how contradictory, foolish, ineptly stated most "spot news" is. They will perceive that, if taken in overfrequent doses, its main effect is to bewilder or even to frighten, rather than to inform. A ration of one newspaper a day ought to be enough for anyone who still prefers to retain a little mental balance.

34. Serious reading is an art. An art is something you have to learn. To learn an art requires a teacher. There are too few such teachers of reading in the United States, and that is one of the reasons why we are still only a semieducated people. I, like my fellow Americans, was never taught, in elementary and high school, how to read properly. Thus, when I reached college, I was but ill-equipped to understand any really original book that was handed to me, though I found no particular difficulty in getting through the required textbooks, manuals, and other predigested matter. I do not think I would ever have learned how to read had it not been for one man and one college course.

35 The man was John Erskine and the course was, rather absurdly, called Honors. Erskine himself was largely responsible for the conception underlying Honors, which in turn was the only begetter of Robert Hutchins' Chicago Plan, of the St. John's College classics curriculum, and in fact of the whole return in modern education to the great tradition of Western thought. John Erskine is a man of such varied talents that his original contribution to American education is often forgotten.

36 It is very hard to explain why Erskine was a great teacher. He was not a character as Copeland of Harvard was. Although always genial and fair, he never atempted to make the students like him. He did not act as if he were a perennial contestant in a popularity contest. (I am convinced, by the way, that those teachers who year after year are voted Most Popular by the undergraduates are rarely educators of great value.) In his literature courses Erskine never swooned over beauty or tried to make you "feel" the lines or the paragraph.

37. There were two things about Erskine that may help to explain the influence he wielded over his students, even over those who didn't care greatly about literature. One was his enormous respect (not merely liking) for his subject matter. This may seem a commonplace, but it is not. Many teachers—no more surprisingly than other frustrated human beings—have a silent, gnawing contempt for what they teach. Unaware of this contempt, they often find it subtly tra-

lated into a resentment of their students. The result is vitiated teaching, teaching of a purely formal sort.

38. Erskine not only loved his subject but reverenced it and respected himself for teaching it. There was thus a good moral relationship between himself and his work. It may seem high-flown to say that this moral relationship was a vital aid in the production of good teaching. Yet I'm sure this was the case. He could teach his students to read because he had a large and lofty attitude toward what we were reading.

39 At the same time, if Erskine had been able to communicate only this attitude, he would not have been the great teacher he was. He went beyond this. To put it simply, he challenged us to *understand* what we were reading. He called upon us for a kind of mental exercise that is ordinarily devoted to mastering such "hard" subjects as philosophy and the sciences. (Actually, there are no "hard" or "easy" subjects. Donne is as difficult and as rewarding as Euclid.) Erskine made us work and the odd thing about it was that the more we understood, the more we liked the particular book we were reading.

40. The Honors Course was but a systematic extension of the Erskine educational program. For two years, under the guidance of a group of selected instructors, we read and talked about one great book a week, beginning with Homer and concluding, as I recollect, with William James. That was all there was to the course, and it was by far the most valuable one I took at college.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

This selection is an excerpt from the preface of *Reading I've Liked,* a book of readings, as the title indicates, which Clifton Fadiman has found to his taste. Later in his preface, called a "prologue," Fadiman comments on his experiences as an editorial assistant and as a book reviewer. Earlier in the preface he has given an account of reading he liked during his first decade. Transitional sentences have been omitted from the first and last paragraphs of this excerpt.

1. In par. 5 Fadiman explains the "secret of second-decade reading." How does he contrast that reading with the reading done by an adult?

2. How is the incident recounted in pars. 7-15 related to the topic under discussion? Could the incident be omitted?

3. In par. 3 Fadiman describes what he is doing as "random biblio-autobiography." Just how accurate is this phrase as a descrip-

tion of the selection? Explain how the different parts of this piece of writing are related to one another.

4. Show how these expressions are explained by the context in which they appear, but at the same time make that context more significant: "the fascinating jungle of your young self" (par. 5); "a mild fraternal sadism" (par. 6); "an ambulant reader" (par. 17); "that blessed trinity Cunliffe, Pyre, and Young" (par. 19); "a queer, grotesque test of approaching manhood" (par. 22); "reader's fidgets" (par. 27).

5. In par. 33 Fadiman alludes to an American doctor named Keeley who developed a cure for alcoholics and drug addicts. Do you recognize the allusion in the expression (par. 4) "a peak-in-Darien thrill"?

Suggestions for Writing

1. My experiment in reading.
2. A victim of print.
3. Take the title of Fadiman's book of readings as a topic. To avoid a mere listing of books ("Nothing could be duller or less useful," says Fadiman), find a unifying principle for your essay. Do you, for example, see anything in your background that has conditioned your reading habits or interests? You might find it helpful to consider why you have or have not read some of the books or authors that Fadiman talks about.

Surveyor in the Woods[*]

by KENNETH ANDLER

I

I want to tell you about a woodsman, what he was like, what his work was, and what it meant. His name was Alfred D. Teare and he came originally from Nova Scotia, but all the time I knew him his home was in Berlin, New Hampshire. Probably the best surveyor of old lines in New England, he was—in his way—a genius.

[*] From *Harper's Magazine*, July, 1947. By permission of the publishers and the author. Copyright 1947 by Harper & Brothers.

[2] I saw him for the first time when I was a boy of twelve; he was visiting my stepfather, a lawyer, who was then engaged in litigation involving boundary lines. Mr. Teare, a wonderful story-teller, held our family entranced with his tales of the woods. He conjured up a marvelous land of mountains, rivers, and lakes, peopled it with lumberjacks, rivermen, timber cruisers, Maine guides, and plenty of bears and moose for good measure. Just the expression "the Maine woods," as he used it, tingled along my spine. He visited our house several times after that and always brought my stepfather a bundle of pipe-lighters, little sticks about a foot long, taken from the roots of an old-growth pine windfall, for use with an open fire. They smelled good; they had the woods in them as a sea shell has the roar of the sea.

[3] The summer I was fourteen, in 1918, I had a chance to work as a chainer for Mr. Teare, who then was running lines near Reading and Plymouth, Vermont; and I spent several seasons with him thereafter.

[4] At that time he was nearing sixty years of age. Over average height in spite of a pronounced stoop to his shoulders and quite heavily set, he appeared to be coming at you aggressively with his head lowered like a buffalo. Although his back was quite bent he had powerful arms and shoulders, and somehow he seemed stronger that way than if he had been erect, particularly when he carried an enormous pack by means of a tumpline.

[5] He had a forceful, weatherbeaten, almost leathery face; a dewlap like a bulldog's; a bald pate bounded by a horseshoe of black hair turning gray; blue eyes, and short, strong, even teeth with spaces between them. One of the curious little tricks he delighted in, when occasion required, was biting a fish line in two with hardly more than one snap. His hands, remarkably square with large blunt fingers, were tough and work-hardened with skin like brown leather. A mosquito never could drill through this hide of his, and often, when one tried, Mr. Teare would watch it with a tolerant amusement until it staggered off bewildered.

[6] He took a peculiar pride in his eyesight; but he must have been farsighted like many outdoor men, for he had a sturdy pair of glasses which hung from a fish line about his neck and nestled snugly under his shirt in the abundant hair on his chest. To use them, he always hauled them up through his open shirt, and taking them by one end with his blunt fingers, perched them on his nose. He had the characteristic habit of always sitting on his left foot, his left leg bent under him, his right leg out straight. He was nimble enough to do this as

long as he lived and it provided him a cushion of sorts on ground no matter how cold or wet. When he made his survey notes he would seat himself thus, affix his glasses with a kind of clumsy ease and write laboriously in a red-covered notebook with a hard smudgeless drawing pencil which seemed lost in his great, rough paw.

[7] Summer or winter he always wore heavy woolen socks, and in summer, ankle-height moccasins, half-soled and hobnailed (really the best footgear imaginable), trousers of heavy khaki, a faded blue denim work shirt, and a slouch hat. He never would wear corduroy as he said corduroy gets wet two weeks before a rain.

[8] Of Scottish descent and old-fashioned in manner, he used rare and almost obsolete expressions seldom if ever heard nowadays. He used "gran'sir" for "grandfather," spoke of building up a good fire "against the night," and was the only person I ever heard use the archaic "an" for "if." One favorite expression he coined himself, I believe: of an honest man he would say, "He's as square as ninety degrees."

[9] Of course, he reeked with ordinary woods lore. He pointed out to me what a widow-maker was: the dead top of a tree which would come crashing down when an axeman started to cut at the base. A fool-killer, equally dangerous, was a live tree bent over by a fallen one so that when an unwary chopper drove an axe into it the tremendous tension, suddenly released, sent the tree splitting and charging up to catch him under the chin. A smudge of brakes warded off mosquitoes, of course, but it was news to me that only a bright fire would stop midges or "no-see-ums," for they'd fly right into it. Nothing in the world could stop an onslaught of black flies while we were at work on the line, although the best protection was a smudge pot and smearing our faces and hands with tobacco juice. Mr. Teare advised these things for our sakes; insects didn't irritate him. When we got soaked from a sudden shower, as we often did, and came tramping back to camp through water-laden brush, Mr. Teare said we wouldn't catch cold if we let our clothes dry on us. We always took his advice and slogged around camp like saturated dishrags while we built up a fire, but we never did catch cold from our wettings.

[10] He was ingenious to a degree and a wizard with an axe. When a tree became lodged, he employed what he called a "Samson Pole" to make it fall in a different direction. This was a strong pole which he held upright, in a notch of which another strong pole fitted, running as a cross bar to a notch in the recalcitrant tree, and with this device

he could exert a tremendous leverage. If an axe handle got cracked he fixed it by binding a fish line tightly about it in a manner few could duplicate. He always had in camp an awl with waxed ends with which he could sew up his moccasins, and if he was far enough back in the woods and the need arose, he would tap them, sometimes using bark for leather.

11. He was full of lore and ideas of his own concerning the curative properties of herbs. For bronchial trouble he advised the sticky gum which exudes from cherry trees. Balsam blisters were also good. If he had a bad enough cough he mixed up a mysterious concoction which someone called "spruce gum and blue vitriol," and he downed it with a bearlike roar of distaste. When I cut my fingers deeply near the knuckles with an axe he rushed to my side where I was leaning against a tree, faint from loss of blood in July heat, and mopping up the gash with a handkerchief, he told me to wiggle my fingers. They wiggled; he could see the cords move, and he acted relieved. Then he took his plug of tobacco, chewed up a piece to a soft cud and placed it in the gash. He bound up my fingers with a splint and a handkerchief to keep in the tobacco. No infection set in, thanks to the nicotine, and although some stitches would have been a good idea, none were taken. The cut healed perfectly, though I shall always bear the scar.

12 His medicinal theories carried more weight with me when I learned that, many years before, when a doctor had given him six months to live because of his weakened, and I gathered, consumptive condition, he had struck out for the woods where he slept on the ground and gulped a prodigious number of raw eggs every day. He came out of it all right and throughout the rest of his years was as rugged as an old gnarled oak.

II

13. He was not by any means simply a backwoodsman. He had traveled extensively throughout the United States; his work brought him into contact with the executives of large companies; but most of his life he spent in the woods. They were really home to him although he had a conventional home, a remarkable wife, and five grownup children.

14. While I worked with him we usually camped out in a lean-to tent, open on one side, and before this side we built with huge flat rocks a fireplace in which on chilly nights we kept a fire of four foot wood. Sometimes we threw into the fire great pieces of punk, a fungus black

on the outside, reddish within, which grows in nubs on old birch trees, and then we'd have coals for the morning. We made our bed on the ground from the tips of fir branches, set upright very close together and then pushed backward at an angle.

15 At the opening of the tent we had a bench made from saplings, or from a board if we had one, which Mr. Teare called the "deacon seat." Sometimes where a tent would be a nuisance and we weren't going to stay long we built a bark lean-to, and often we reveled luxuriously in deserted and almost ruined farmhouses.

16 Although the company furnished us a cook one summer in Vermont when we had two timber cruisers with us, almost all the time I was with him, Mr. Teare did the cooking. He was very good at it, too. When we got in from work he would don a white apron (at least it had been white originally), mix up a batch of biscuits on a table of saplings covered with birch bark, put them in his little tin baker which faced the open fire, fry some meat, turn out a rice pudding to which we helpers contributed raspberries or blueberries in season, brew tea, and in no time produce an excellent meal. He delighted in baking beans in the ground, fried excellent doughnuts and a somewhat similar product which he called "doughgods."

17 We always carried our lunch for the noon meal together with a nest of metal cups and a tin tea pail. Invariably we would stop by a spring or brook and build a fire. Mr. Teare would sit on his left foot, hunched forward and intent, holding the pail over the fire on a long pole, and he never paid the slightest attention if the smoke engulfed him. When the water boiled, he would swing the pail out for one of us to toss in a handful of good black tea, and then he'd swing it back over the fire for a momentary re-boiling in the interest of strength and power. Our pail had seen so much service that merely boiling water in it produced stronger tea than most people would care to drink.

18 After lunch Mr. Teare would get out his long-bladed jackknife, pare off some shavings from his strong plug tobacco, and with the knife still held, blade upright, between thumb and forefinger of his right hand (lest more paring be necessary) he'd work the tobacco with a semicircular motion, between the palms of his hands—grist between millstones—then fill and light his pipe. He never, never used a match for this purpose if a fire were going, principally, I think, because he regarded matches in the woods as precious. He always took a brand from the fire, blew on it prodigiously to bring it to a bright coal, and lighted up with that. Often he would have only embers to

choose from and these too he used, holding one somehow in his tough paw. He would press the ignited tobacco down with an impervious thumb and then, when the smoke rolled out, he would settle back to spellbind us with some yarn. The whole business of the noon meal was a never-varied rite.

19. He worked summer and winter on every passably workable day. In the winter, if camping out, he used a square tent with a stove in it. He wore ordinary snowshoes for fairly level country but bearpaws for rough and hilly terrain. As our lunch always froze we toasted our sandwiches over the fire. When Mr. Teare knocked the icy clods from his snowshoes, stood them up in the snow, and hunched over to start a fire with birch bark and dry sticks, he seemed as integral a part of winter in the woods as the snow upon the ground.

20 Sometimes he would stay at farmhouses instead of camping out. During the last forty years of his life, he worked mostly for such large corporations as the International Paper Company, the Mt. Tom Sulphite & Pulp Company, the Draper Corporation, the Brown Company and others. He traveled extensively through the back country of northern New England and stayed at literally hundreds of isolated farmhouses, using them either to work from directly or as bases from which he could pack his "wangan" into the woods for a camp. Lonely farm families whose homes he had previously visited looked forward eagerly to his coming, for he brought to their routine existence an inexhaustible store of adventure tales and to their drab lives a fresh and lively color.

III

21. The problem of surveying in the timberland of northern New England is one of the most difficult and fascinating things in the world. It's difficult because it consists largely of re-locating the old lines of original lots and ranges run by pioneers with crude compasses as much as one hundred and seventy-five years ago. The early surveyors blazed or spotted the trees along these lines, and for corners set posts, marked trees, or piled up stones. They also blazed trees about the corners for "witnesses." Succeeding surveyors have respotted the lines infrequently, perhaps not oftener than once in twenty years, and in many instances the original lines have not been renewed at all.

22. When a tree is spotted with an axe the wood grows over the blaze in a few years and leaves nothing on the bark but a scar which only an experienced woodsman can recognize. A novice either notices no spot

at all or thinks that every scar he sees is a spot whether it's a hedgehog mark, a wind-gall, or just a natural blemish.

[23] The original lots, laid out by the proprietors of each township, classified by number in ranges and divisions, usually contained about one hundred acres each and were described quite accurately and specifically by the early surveyors, who gave points of compass and definite distances in the title deeds; but as these lots were either split up or amalgamated with other lots, people grew very careless when conveying real estate, and fell into the habit of bounding land by the names of the adjoining owners, as in the classic example Mr. Teare used to quote from a Vermont deed: "Bounded on the North by Brother Jim, on the West by Brother Bill, on the South by Sister Sal, and on the East by Mother."

[24] With the migration of farmers to the West, or to the cities, immense areas of rural farm land reverted to the wilderness. Even many New Englanders do not realize how far this went and how extensively the forests have crept in over once-tilled fields. We have seen sites of villages silent in the woods, crumbling cellar holes through which great trees are growing, once proud highways which are now only dim trails, and even a graveyard in Vermont from which three crops of pulp wood have been cut. Gone are the people who owned these farms, their most lasting works faded like old ink, their names nothing but an echo in the land records.

[25] Consequently, in these abandoned districts, now merely a wilderness, a reference in an old deed such as "bounded on the North by land of Abijah Davis," which may have been perfectly plain to the contracting parties in 1860, means very little now. A surveyor must trace the title deeds in the registry, draw tentative diagrams and fit them together like a jigsaw puzzle, and somehow or other get the chain of title back to the older deeds where references to compass courses and distances provide something definite to work on. By this research one may discover that Abijah Davis owned Lot Number 2 in the 3d Range and 1st Division and that the line in question was originally "North 85° East 88 Rods and 17 Links."

[26] To his task Mr. Teare brought very peculiar educational equipment. He never went beyond the seventh grade in school as he had to leave and go to work, but in his early years he had followed the sea and had become skipper of a three-masted schooner, and thus he had learned navigation.

[27] As a surveyor he brought this navigation inland. It was really dead

reckoning on land. A college-trained engineer would have thought his methods rule of thumb, but where such an engineer would have seen only woods, Mr. Teare could read them like an open book. For instance, he would go up to some old spruce on which, once he'd pointed it out, you could see a small scar, then taking an axe he'd swing with great true blows; and as large flying chips began to litter the ground he would lay open the white flesh of the tree in a larger and larger gash. After a while he would begin to strike more slowly and carefully, now and then peering into the opening, until finally he had disclosed an old blaze, black and flat with the original axemarks in it.

28 Then he would fish up his glasses from his shirt and holding them to his eyes would count the annual rings of growth. More than once I have seen him cut out spots made more than a hundred years before, and he once found spots on the old Masonian curved line, run in 1751 by Joseph Blanchard—the first line surveyed in New Hampshire. Mr. Teare had a spiritual affinity with the pioneer surveyors. He saw at a glance what they'd done, what they meant by their marks. He would sometimes look at a spot which definitely had been made with an axe, glance around and growl: "Not a line, just a trapper's trail."

29. He could follow not only the original spotted lines but the "lines of occupancy" as well, such as the trail of an old brush fence, all obvious remnants of which had disappeared at least twenty-five years before. This he would do by noting the crooked growth of trees here and there along its course, or a stretch of hazel bushes (which are likely to grow up along the remains of a brush fence), or piles of moss-covered stones in which fence posts had once been set. Whenever Mr. Teare, scattering the leaf mould near one of these stone heaps, uncovered a split ash rail, he would pick it up and fondle it lovingly. "They never rot," he would say with a solid approval of the wood itself and of the pioneer farmer who had taken pains to use it.

30 For equipment he used an open-sight compass with about a five-inch needle. There was no telescope on it but sight vanes instead with slits in them, and this compass rested not on a tripod, which would be too awkward in the woods, but rather on a single staff called a "Jacob staff." That was the kind of compass George Washington and Abraham Lincoln used when they were land surveyors, but Mr. Teare's was considerably more accurate. He referred affectionately to his compass as "Mary Jane" and almost always called it an "instrument" instead of a "compass."

31. When I first went with him he used a Gunter's chain, two rods in

length, but in later years a steel tape of the same length. The Gunter's chain is an actual chain with real links and it can be folded up instead of rolled. It is very durable; it can be used to help a man go down over steep ledges, and will perform a hundred and one odd jobs that it would be sacrilege to force on a tape, which couldn't do them anyhow. He never wanted a chain or tape longer than two rods because the ground he had to work on was so hilly and rough. Somehow or other the Gunter's chain seemed to fit him better than a tape.

32 This type of surveying, difficult and requiring an analytical mind as well as woodcraft, is a fascinating pursuit—a sort of treasure hunt for old lines and corners. The problem was posed more than a century ago by men who marked those lines and corners in the wilderness and left cryptic directions on how to find them. In deserted areas it is a search through a forest-buried civilization as dead as the bottom layer of an Egyptian city. The fascination of it for Mr. Teare never left him.

33. I can see him now hunched over his compass while the needle settles on the proper course, then standing behind it and shouting directions to his axemen, while the two chainers bring up the rear. He is full of anticipation at what he may find at a given distance where he thinks a corner ought to be. He assiduously examines the trees alongside the line to see if he is following the old spotting, and now and then breaks into some rollicking song. His joy in living radiates around him.

34. Mr. Teare's genius, true to the proverb, consisted largely in his capacity for taking infinite pains. He would always make sure of a starting point that could not be questioned. Once he ran twenty-four miles of trial line to locate one corner. Furthermore, he would never let an obstacle or a series of them block him. If a swamp were deep and cold he crossed it nevertheless, if towering cliffs barred his way he scaled them, if blown down trees strewed his path he slashed his way through, if a swollen river cut across a line he felled a tree for a bridge and kept on going. He was absolutely indomitable and he followed an old line as a hound follows a fox.

35. He hated to see the woods cut by the companies for which he was working, even though he well knew that timber like other crops must be harvested. Often people asked him what he considered the most beautiful thing he had seen and he always gave them the same reply —sunset over the Adirondacks and Lake Champlain, from Mt. Mansfield. He worked most of a lifetime in the woods of northern New

England and in spite of hardships and privation he never lost his love for these wild and wooded hills, for the silence of the deep forest in winter, the splendor of the mountains in the winey tang of autumn days.

36. The infinite variety of his daily scenes of activity pleased him. One day he might stand among tall spruces high up on some mountain, sighting, far below, an isolated farmhouse on which he could take a "triangulation shot"; another day he might be following a hardwood ridge of beech and maple, or working in the bear-wallow sort of land that often lies atop a mountain, or following the stone walls of abandoned fields. Often he made a traverse survey of the great roaring brooks which come tumbling out of mountain ponds and cut their resounding way down deep ravines; he loved to drive a canoe across a lake or down a river through white water.

37 Often he would pause at the summit of some hill. Then with his Jacob staff, he would point out to us the mountains and hills as they rolled away into blue distance, calling them by name and referring to certain jobs he had done on each. He knew them all as a father knows his children.

IV

38 The thing that staggers me when I get to thinking about Mr. Teare is the stupendous amount of work he accomplished in his long career. He surveyed thousands upon thousands of acres in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont. And he did not work merely for a monthly pay check; a craftsman, he labored so that his work would endure.

39 Many if not most surveyors in timberlands leave few marks or monuments. Some of them figure that they'll soon be hired to resurvey the land if the lines become easily lost. Most make a half-hearted attempt to mark their lines and corners, but their work is like snow upon the desert, for the resurgent life in New England woods is almost tropical, as anyone knows who has tried to keep brush out of a field.

40 Mr. Teare, on the other hand, when he was sure a line was finally right—and if he was sure it was right, it *was*—would have the axemen blaze almost every tree along the whole line. One that stood exactly on line he'd spot on both sides, while a tree that stood off a little way to one side or the other he'd blaze with "quarter spots," that is, blazes which were quartered on the bole, not centered, and these faced toward the line.

41 He made his blazes deep enough to take out a shaving of the wood, and they were large man-size spots, not boy's work. Some foresters

and engineers complained that every tree would die but Mr. Teare knew better and he was right. He knew one great primary truth: you can't mark a line in New England's fast-growing woods a bit too plain.
42. Iron rods are impractical to carry in the woods and also a menace to the compass, so for a corner he set a large wooden post, fashioned from a suitable tree nearby, hewn flat on three sides or four as circumstances demanded, sharpened at the bottom and topped at an angle for a "roof." He never pounded it into the ground as that would soften the top and let the rain in, but instead forced it in with its own weight. Around it he piled rocks. He stripped the bark off so it would last longer and with a timber scribe—a fascinating little instrument with which he could carve letters almost as fast as one can print on paper—he marked the names of the adjoining owners, the date, and his mark which was two parallel lines with a circle between them. He always said with a twinkle in his eye when he finished a corner and straightened up from piling stones, "There, that'll stand till Gabriel calls all good surveyors home."
43 About the corner he blazed witness trees in a circle facing the post and inscribed on them the date and his mark. These words, figures, and symbols, being only in the bark, never grow over. One could stand at a corner and, looking back into the woods, see the line stretching straight and true and well brushed out, its blazes shining new and startlingly clear. Few things give one quite the sense of accomplishment that this does—to go forth to a tract of land as nebulous in location as the scene of a fantasy, to find the old lines and corners, and to leave them well marked and definite.
44 These lines of Mr. Teare's, reaching for hundreds of miles in the aggregate through the deep woods of northern New England, live on today as I can testify, for while working as a land surveyor myself and later while abstracting titles, I have followed many of them. One of the companies had Mr. Teare respot its lines at seven-year intervals and, of course, these are exceptionally plain. But I have followed easily, and without a compass, lines which he had established thirty-five years before and which had never been touched since. The wooden corner posts needed renewing, yes, but that was easily accomplished. One can follow his lines even through the areas devastated by the hurricane of September, 1938, where the blazed trees, no longer upright, lie in a tangled snarl upon the ground.
45. In scores, even hundreds of towns in northern New England, his lines form a reliable basic network from which almost any survey of

land in their general neighborhood would be started today. The local people, farmers, timber operators, and investors would no more think of questioning his lines than they would the law of gravitation. More than once when I have told some timber buyer that several lines of a proposed tract had been run by Mr. Teare I have seen his face light up—he knew that *those* boundaries would be distinct, at any rate. Quite often I have heard one of Mr. Teare's old friends use the expression, "Why, it's as plain as one of Teare's lines."

[46] Whenever I happen to come upon one of his corners now that he is gone and, in the solemn hush of the forest, see the post in its cairn standing there, the trees about it alive with dates of those years when we worked together, and with his mark and perhaps the initials of the old crew members, I feel an ineffable sadness not only because he is gone but because everything in those woods seems to inquire for him—and he would be enjoying himself so much if he were there.

[47] But he did his work well and it survives him. No more can a mortal really ask. His lines are impressed into the living forest, his corners stand in wooded solitudes silently eloquent of his skill, and his witness trees bear witness not only to them but to him. Wherever he worked he brought order out of confusion and established a lasting thing.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

1. The author of this selection, an attorney by profession, grew up in New England. What autobiographical details appear here?

2. Is the first sentence an adequate statement of what the writer intends to do? Is it an effective opening sentence?

3. If the first three paragraphs of section I are considered introductory, on what basis could the other paragraphs in the section be divided into two groups?

4. What heading or title do you think might be given to pars. 14-18?

5. If pars. 21-31 were divided into three groups (21-25, 26-29, 30-31), what heading would you give each group? How are the three groups related?

6. What purpose do the last two sentences in par. 27 serve? Can you find other examples in this selection?

7. Why do you think Andler waits until section IV to give a detailed account of Mr. Teare's lines, with their blazes and corners?

8. In "My Life Is an Open Book" Fadiman describes (pars. 34-40, pp. 55-56) a college teacher, John Erskine. Do Erskine and Mr. Teare have anything in common?

9. Why does Andler explain some of the following words or phrases but not others: *tumpline* (par. 4); *dewlap* (par. 5); *widow-maker* (par. 9); *fool-killer* (par. 9); *Samson Pole* (par. 10); *punk* (par. 14); *deacon seat* (par. 15); *doughgods* (par. 16); *quarter spots* (par. 40); *bole* (par. 40)?

Suggestions for Writing

1. A woodsman I have known.
2. A man who respects his work.
3. In par. 26 Andler explains that Mr. Teare had "peculiar educational equipment." Write about somebody you have known well who also has peculiar educational equipment for his job.

"Kitty" of Harvard*

by ROLLO WALTER BROWN

I

There could be no doubt about the matter: George Lyman Kittredge consisted of more than one man. Just how many men were required to constitute him, nobody seemed able to say. But that he was not less than two, everybody who knew him was ready to admit.

2 The first of these two—the one he was most widely thought of as being—was the "Kitty" of Harvard Hall. Undergraduates with vivid imaginations made sketches of the old building on the point of blowing up, with zigzag electric fragments of Shakespeare shooting from

* Chapter Four, "King of the Anglo-Saxons," in *Harvard Yard in the Golden Age* by Rollo Walter Brown, by permission of the publisher, Current Books, Inc., A. A. Wyn, Publisher, New York. Originally published in slightly condensed form under the title "'Kitty' of Harvard" in *The Atlantic Monthly*, October, 1948. Copyright 1948 by The Atlantic Monthly Company. Copyright 1948 by Current Books, Inc.

windows and roof, whenever "Kitty" held forth. To many of them for a lifetime the total meaning of Harvard Hall was "Kitty."

3 The sight of him as he came to the ten-o'clock class was in itself something that had to be recognized as dramatic. In the pleasant autumn or spring, men stood high on the steps or out on the turf in front and watched in the direction of Christ Church to see who could catch the first glimpse of him.

4 "There he comes!" somebody called, and then everybody who was in a position to see watched him as he hurried breezily along—a graceful, tallish man in very light gray suit and gray fedora hat, with a full square beard at least as white as his suit, who moved with energy, and smoked passionately at a big cigar. Students used to say that he smoked an entire cigar while he walked the short distance along the iron fence of the old burying ground and across the street to Johnston Gate. But as he came through the gate he tossed the remnant of his cigar into the shrubbery with a bit of a flourish, and the students still outside hurried in and scrambled up the long stairway in order to be in their places—as he liked—before he himself entered. If any of them were still on the stairway when he came in at the outer door like a gust, they gave way and he pushed up past them, and into the good-sized room and down the aisle to the front, threw his hat on the table in the corner, mounted the two steps to the platform, looked about with a commanding eye, and there was sudden silence and unrestrained expectancy.

5 "Any questions?" he asked—meaning questions about matters considered at the last meeting of the course. After five minutes of these questions, he was ready to begin.

6. The play under consideration was *Macbeth*—let us say; and he was ready to take up Act III. Always his method was a meticulously careful examination of every line, every significant word, with a running commentary on problems of drama and theatre. At the end of the year we were supposed to know five plays—sometimes a sixth—so thoroughly that in the final examination we could spot any line or piece of line that he quoted (usually about sixty), tell what came just before and after, tell who said the words and to whom, and be able to comment on whatever was significant in the passage. Then there were somewhat more than six hundred lines of memory passages. And there were books of assigned reading. Even the least wise in the course filled the margins of his copy of the text, and pages of gummed interleaving paper, with notes against an oncoming evil day.

7. "Now," he said, after he had read and commented upon Banquo's opening speech, and had reminded us once more that *Macbeth* is a swift-moving play, "there are three very important questions on this next page. They are neatly imbedded, yet for the purposes of the play, they stand out in red ink. What are they?"—and he glanced up and down the class list—"Mr. Howard."

8. Mr. Howard—it might have been Cabot or Flynn or Jones—did not seem to be present.

9 "Mr. Howard?" "Kitty" repeated, with the slightest trace of irritation in his voice.

10 When there was still no response he suddenly exploded. "The college office had two ghost men on my list for two or three weeks before I could get them off! Is this Mr. Howard another?"

11 There was no response.

12 "Is there anybody in this room who knows anything about this spook Mr. Howard?"

13 There was not a murmur, seemingly not even a breath, among the hundred or more students.

14 He slapped the book down on his desk so sharply that some of the men in the front row jumped. "By heavens, this is not to be endured! I asked a perfectly decent question, and I am going to have an answer if I have to take a poll of the entire class!"

15 A man in the middle of the room hesitantly lifted a hand. "I am Mr. Howard."

16 "Then why didn't you answer?"

17 "I was not prepared."

18. "Kitty" flew into so vast a rage that even the top of his head was ruddy. "Well, couldn't you at least have identified yourself? Stand up, Mr. Howard"—and he made a movement as if to step down off the platform—"so that this class can see who you are. And"—after Mr. Howard had very promptly stood up—"you are to come over to Sever 3 at twelve o'clock and expostulate with me—in the Elizabethan sense."

19. He picked up the book and in a twinkling went on, quite as if nothing unusual had happened, to point out that the three questions down the page were the ones that Macbeth asked Banquo:

Ride you this afternoon?
Is't far you ride?
Goes Fleance with you?

[20] And then in an engaging smoothness of temper and in flowing brilliance he commented on one passage after another, made compact explanation of linguistic details, reminded us that it was not the words that had become obsolete that made the most trouble for us in understanding Shakespeare, but the words that had not become obsolete, and otherwise rounded out the whole scene until we felt as if we must be knowing the play somewhat as the audience knew it when it was originally produced.

[21] He came to a very brief stage direction. "Note that Shakespeare is usually brief. If Mr. George Bernard Shaw had been writing that stage direction, he would have filled a page, at least."

[22] There was a flutter of mirthfulness. It was the style then to laugh at any mention of this new playwright, as though of course he could not be much.

[23] "Incidentally," he said, as he paced the platform, "there are other differences between William Shakespeare and Mr. Shaw."

[24] There was greater mirthfulness still; and time flowed on harmoniously.

[25] Some professor of economics had great charts and maps on rollers all over the front of the room, and there were two or three long, gracefully sloping pointers at hand. "Kitty" picked up one of these and used it as a stafflike cane as he paced back and forth and commented. He was magnificent. He was an Anglo-Saxon king speaking to his people.

[26] Once in his march as he socked the royal staff down, it came in two where there was a knot in the wood, and he made a somewhat unkingly lurch. A few students snickered very cautiously.

[27] He glowered upon them. "You have a fine sense of humor!" Then without taking his eyes off the humbled faces, he drew his arm back as if he were hurling a javelin, and drove the long remnant of the pointer into the corner of the room. "Now laugh!" he dared them.

[28] When "Kitty" was having a run of bad days, an hour might be highly electric from beginning to end.

[29] One wintry morning when he was late and the legitimate seven minutes of grace had ticked away, somebody called bravely, "All out!" There was much shuffling of feet and there were echoing cries all over the room, "Time up!" "Let's go!" But nobody moved. Finally one man arose and marched defiantly toward the door, to the accompaniment of whoops and cheers.

[30] Soon there was a solid procession pushing out through the doorway. Just when the Arnolds and Bonbrights from down in front were

approaching the door and the room suddenly looked deserted, somebody called from downstairs: "Here he is!"

31. There was a mad scramble to get back into the room. But he was moving faster than any crowd could move. On the long semicircular stairway he pushed through with his green bookbag and smart gray hat held high, and let everyone give way in the manner possible. He was in the front of the room, and had his hat and overcoat and bookbag on the table, and was mounting the platform all in readiness to begin before the last of the returning students were in their chairs.

32 He waited for a moment of silence before he spoke—with something of scorn in his voice. "When I was an undergraduate in this college, by thunder we never went back for a professor."

33. Then for an hour he treated us as if we were a bunch of softies. He commented on words, on lines, on entire speeches with lightning speed. He assumed vast historical and linguistic knowledge on our part which we did not possess. He fired questions in every direction. One of these he addressed to a thirty-eight-year-old graduate student —a professor on leave from a well-known institution—and gave him such a cross-examination that he never came back to the course.

34 And then, just before bell time when even the laziest student in the course had been stimulated by the charged atmosphere to make notes and otherwise try to keep up, "Kitty" broke off in the middle of a sentence with a terrifying shout that was also a roar, slapped his copy of the play down on the desk, hurried toward the door, nervously pushing his hand back through his white hair, and disappeared into the hallway.

35. A moment later he reappeared at the door, bowing a man in with extraordinary graciousness. The man was frightened almost beyond speech.

36. "I b-beg your pardon," he stammered, "I am not a member of the course; I am a visitor."

37 "That does not excuse you from the rules of courtesy. You were disrespectful to me and to the young gentlemen of the class. Nobody leaves this room till the bell rings."

38. By the time he was back at his desk and had found the interrupted sentence in the play, the bell was ringing and he made a gesture of dismissal. As the men crowded toward the door they somehow felt sheepish, like schoolboys.

39. It was always a double experience. "Kitty" might suddenly step out of the Elizabethan world and pounce upon some man and scare

him until he was unable to define the diaphragm—it once happened —and require him to come to the next meeting "prepared to discuss the diaphragm" as a preliminary to an hour of *King Lear*. No man might feel altogether sure that he would escape. Once "Kitty" read with such a poetic impression of reality that a man who was later to be widely known as a magazine editor sat lost in rapturous enjoyment. Suddenly "Kitty" stopped. "Now what is the commanding word in that passage"—and he picked up the printed class list and let his eye run down over the names—"Mr. . . . Smith?" Mr. Smith had been so rapturously lost that he did not even know where the passage was. A neighbor whispered the number of the line to him and he answered correctly: "Why—'God.'" "Don't you 'Why—God' me!" "Kitty" stormed back at him, and then gave him such a dressing down for using the unnecessary word as he had never known, so that he always had that to carry along with his memory of the perfect reading. On another occasion "Kitty" picked up the class list, started on the *R*'s, became interested in one man's brilliant answers to his rapid-fire cross-examination, and left the rest of the *R*'s dangling in suspense throughout the three remaining months of the year.

40 Men knew that he was a miracle man, and thought it worth accepting all hazards in order to possess some part of his basic richness of life. They completed the year, grumbled a little about the marks he gave them—there were few *A*'s—and very probably came back the next year to study the alternating group of plays. In that case they had the thorough knowledge of ten or eleven plays, instead of five or six; they knew eleven or twelve hundred lines of good passages by heart; they had vast information about drama and theatre and sources and language and Elizabethan life, and they had interesting fragments of such a store of miscellaneous knowledge and wisdom as they had not supposed until last year could be the possession of any one human being.

II

41 That was one of the men in the total George Lyman Kittredge. That part of him could not be brushed aside as if it were not an essential part. It was. But it was the more external part. Many of the men in the course in Shakespeare knew this well enough. They saw that it was their irresponsibility, or laziness, or grotesque ignorance, that touched him off into his tantrums. His disgust and amazement and scorn were release for a sensitive mind—usually in need of sleep—whose everyday high level made it impossible for him not to suffer in

the presence of unlimited imperfections. And his graduate students who had never taken the course in Shakespeare found it difficult to believe the wild stories about him. For to them he was a courteous gentleman who begged them to smoke some of his good cigars and know that they were potential scholars about to be admitted to the most honorable company of men on earth.

[42] His courtesy did not prevent him from exercising the dominant mind. When a student explained somewhat fearfully that he had noticed in the dictionary that a certain word was accented on the second syllable, "Kitty" said, as he put the word down on the back of an envelope, "That's wrong; I'll see that that is changed." Through generations of Shakespeare students—and his place on the board of editors of one dictionary—he caused a shift in preference to the pronunciation of "Elizabethan" with an accented long *e*. But he could never establish "Shakspere" as a preferred spelling. Sometimes, too, his overpositiveness came back upon him in ironic ways. He insisted on withholding a degree from a man for insufficient acquaintance with the drama who later became a national figure in play-writing. He once prevented a man from receiving honors in English with whom ten years later he marched down the aisle at a university commencement where both received honorary degrees—the young author and the white-haired professor.

[43] Men who were chiefly concerned with the literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries very justly felt that he placed heavy emphasis on the early centuries. But he insisted that the early centuries were of the utmost importance, and that they were full of interest. The age of Chaucer, he contended, was closer to us than the age of Pope. Always there were students who had looked upon Chaucer as some vague accident back there on the edge of the pure night of the Dark Ages, and for a time they sat skeptical, although they assumed that Chaucer was somebody about whom they should know a little.

[44] But when they listened to Professor Kittredge—or "Mr. Kittredge" —they saw the age of Chaucer coming to such vividness of view that they had to admit that it outshone the nearer centuries in brightness. He invited them to see that

> the spirit of radicalism was abroad in the land. To describe as an era of dumb submissiveness the age of Wyclif, and John Huss, and the Great Schism, of the Jacquerie in France and Tyler and

> Ball in England, is to read both literature and history with one's eyes shut. . . . It was a scambling and unquiet time when nobody was at rest but the dead. In a word, it was a good age to live in, and so Chaucer found it.[1]

45. And so they found it—and the heroic world of Beowulf, and the world of English and Scottish popular ballads, and all the other less familiar worlds to which he introduced them. Something of his own vividness had gone into his original exploring, and now something of it went into the revelation of what he had discovered.

46 But whatever the area in which he for the moment was occupied, he was engaged in perhaps the most difficult—and most desperately needed—of all educational endeavors in the United States; that is, in having pure scholarship recognized as a source of life for all men. Scholarship is the final high honesty. Men worked with Professor Kittredge—always the least bit awesomely—and came to feel how great was the disgrace of a human mind that let itself be content with anything short of the completest disinterested understanding.

47 From his fortunate position he all the while was sending out great numbers of men to important college and university posts. They were such men as John M. Manly, of the University of Chicago, one of his earliest students; Walter Morris Hart, of the University of California; John Samuel Kenyon, of Hiram College; Karl Young, of Yale; Carleton Brown, chiefly of Bryn Mawr; John A. Lomax, of the field of American ballads and folk songs; John Livingston Lowes, who came back from Washington University to teach in the Yard for the rest of his active life—and write *The Road to Xanadu.*

48 At times the objection made its way back to Cambridge that some of his disciples were not important men of this kind, but only "little Kittredges." And sometimes the reports were true. If men are basically small they are sure to adopt the accessible mannerisms of anyone whose superior qualities are out of reach. But Professor Kittredge's distinguished former students constituted a great company. In Texas, in Iowa, in Pennsylvania, in California, men accustomed to the ax-to-grind sort of thinking in what they called the practical world looked upon these honest scholars as an ultimate standard of excellence to be applied in matters of every perplexing sort.

49 And in Professor Kittredge it was more than honesty; it was high faith in honesty. His former students often traveled a thousand miles

[1] *Chaucer and His Poetry.* 1915. Harvard University Press. By permission.

—sometimes farther—to have his counsel when they were in doubt. A young professor in a Midwestern college had confided in an older man in one of the chief universities of America about an original project that he had in mind for the next year, and then found that the older man had immediately hurried off a young colleague to work at the idea and be first in the field. Sleepless, the young professor went to consult someone who was wise.

50 Professor Kittredge sat erect and smoked at a great fragrant cigar and listened in silence until the man was through. Then he said without a moment's hesitation: "Don't let the matter trouble you for one minute. And don't modify your plans—not by as much as a hair. Scurvy business of that kind doesn't work out—in the end. It is not the other man's idea; he is working at it because his chief suggested it to him. He will make little of it. The idea is yours, from the inside of you, and consequently you will be aware of all sorts of possibilities in it that the other man, whoever he is, will never see." And when it turned out precisely so, Professor Kittredge said with a trace of a smile round his eyes and down into his white beard, "We have to count on its being like that."

III

51 He gave his complete self to the world of the teacher. He required nothing else. In it he had labor and recreation and profound joy—without end. For forty-eight years (1888-1936) he taught at Harvard. He never took a year of leave, nor a half year. He did not like to have breaks in his work. He did not like to go off to other universities to lecture in term time. He made a number of trips to Europe, but with one exception he made them in the summer-vacation period. England was his great fascination east of the Atlantic. When he was made an honorary fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge, he was delighted and proud. When Oxford wished to confer on him an honorary degree he felt highly honored, of course. But the great joy of work was at home.

52. In this world of the teacher to which he was devoted, he carried on endless research. When he was confronted by the teacher's much-discussed choice between teaching and research, he said: "Thank you, I'll take both."

53. In his own explorations the range that he covered was so wide that some persons actually believed that there were at least two persons named G. L. Kittredge writing at the time. He was interested in such matters as Increase Mather's views on smallpox, the ballads of Ken-

tucky, the vocabulary of the Australasians, the history of witchcraft, the history of words for popular reading, cowboy songs, the early Teutonic notions of immortality, the toad in folklore, Chaucer on marriage, the history of religion, and scores of subjects thought of as more strictly within the field of language and literature. And his books ranged from *Chaucer and His Poetry* to *The Old Farmer and His Almanack*—and manuals of grammar and composition for high school.

[54] It was at Barnstable, down on the Cape, that he was able to do much of his own work. For there he had long summer weeks that were little interrupted. If one chanced to be at the house on Hilliard Street in Cambridge just when he was about to go away for the summer, one might well decide that he was leaving for all time, so completely did he seem to be transferring his scholarly effects. Eventually he built a study a little away from the house in Barnstable so that he might work in entire seclusion, with only the cheerful voices of his children and their friends on the tennis court to remind him pleasantly—if he heard them at all—that he was not completely isolated in time and space.

[55] On the Cape, too, he could be elementally refreshed. On the Cape, he was happy to say, he—or his son—had come upon the perfect pessimist, a native who grew chickens. When it was suggested that a few chicks just outside a coop were sturdy youngsters, the native replied, "Yes, but the trouble is, the old hen hatched out six, and by God all of them have died on me but five."

[56] The Cape was heaven for work; yet back in Cambridge in the autumn he carried his own work right along with his teaching—and thereby constantly gave his teaching enrichment. He moved briskly from his classroom to Gore Hall, and very quickly disappeared. Then one came upon him somewhere deep in the stacks, lost to the immediate world over a puzzling text or fat galleys of proofs. The library was nothing musty and dead for him. It was man recorded. When the great new Widener Memorial Library was spoken of as an elephant among the other buildings in the Yard, he asked, "What if it is? You could destroy all the other Harvard buildings to the northward, and with Widener left standing, still have a university."

[57] If days were not long enough, always there were nights. Like Charles Péguy, he considered night as the part of existence that holds everything together that is sacred to man, "wherein he accomplishes his being." But for Professor Kittredge this was not to be done through sleep; it was to be done through work.

[58] For many years one of his intimate friends walked from Boston to

Cambridge on Sunday afternoon, had supper with the Kittredges, and then the two read Greek together till eleven o'clock—as relaxation. But that still left the body of the night ahead. So, too, was it when his "ballad course" met at his house in the evening, and some of the most enthusiastic lingered a little in the big study. It was when his own house had become quiet, and the lights in houses everywhere were beginning to disappear, and the roar of the city had lost its nearness, and the world was otherwise losing the last signs of its daytime confusion, that he knew freedom. In the enveloping quiet he could give himself to work without fear of distraction. If he felt the need of diversion, he could read one more detective story.

59 When Mrs. Kittredge chanced to know at two or two-thirty or three in the morning that he was still at work, she would slip down and remind him that it was time for him to be getting some sleep. Very obediently he would go off to bed for the rest of the night. In the course of years, Mrs. Kittredge wearied a little of making the trip downstairs and had an electric bell installed with a button by her bed. But he did not like it. In the perfect quiet of night it made him jump. Sometimes nobody reminded him that he ought to be in bed, and he did not think of the matter himself; and when Thomas the chore man slipped into the study at six in the morning to build a new fire, there sat Professor Kittredge peacefully asleep in his comfortable chair before the empty fireplace, with one hand clutching a book on the arm of the chair as firmly as if he were awake. On such a night he did not get to bed at all.

IV

60 When a vivid man does a sufficient number of things that are unfailingly characteristic, legend begins to attach itself to his name. And when he lives on and on through one college generation after another until men who were in his classes almost a half century before come back to visit their grandsons in the freshman class and find him still teaching with the same old fire, the contributions of legendary instance mount till they constitute a kind of running supplemental biography.

61 Men argued over the original color of his hair and beard, for he was gray—or white—so early that nobody could quite remember him when he was not gray or white. They liked to speak, too, of the fact that Kitty never bothered with any degree except an A.B. They laughed over the gushing woman who asked in disappointment why he had never taken a Ph.D. and his supposed reply: "Who would have

examined me?" Or they repeated the story of the famous woman college president who wished a Harvard man as an instructor in English, but said she could not consider anyone who lacked a Ph.D., and of Charles Townsend Copeland's stentorian reply to her: "Thank God, then we'll not lose Kittredge!"

62 Legend was helped, too, by the fact that in his highly charged life there was always unpredictable heartening for the less positive, the less courageous. When a frightened young candidate for honors in English had to say in reply to a question: "I'm afraid I can't answer; I have not read all of Wordsworth," Professor Kittredge brought him quickly to life and confidence by replying: "Neither have I! I couldn't be hired to!" When the efficiency experts were rising up everywhere in institutions, and one of them asked Professor Kittredge just how many hours and minutes it took him to prepare one of his "lectures" on Shakespeare, he replied: "I refuse to answer. It's one of my trade secrets." Then he relented and said, "Just a lifetime—can't you see that?" When graduate students in the field of English made their way to Professor K. G. T. Webster's house at Gerry's Landing for a relaxing great dinner and then a joyous session on the third floor in a room that some of the guests thought of as an Anglo-Saxon mead hall, Professor Kittredge was always so full of wit and generosity of spirit that the guests were stirred to believe they could face anything.

63 So there he was, about to be seventy-five, full of fiery power, and seemingly without a thought that he had already taught ten years past the usual retiring age. He walked energetically through the traffic of Harvard Square and the policeman said bravely but so that Professor Kittredge would be sure not to hear: "Be a little careful there, Santa Claus!" In the Yard the general assumption seemed to be that nobody quite dared to tell him that he must retire.

64 On his seventy-fifth birthday, when he went to his class at Radcliffe the girls had put seventy-five magnificent crimson roses on his desk.

65 What was this they had done? Often enough he had scolded them. Sometimes he had walked out on them when they did not come up to his expectations in brilliance. And now they had remembered him in this fashion. They had almost taken an unfair advantage of him—so startling was it all. He told them—and suddenly he was deeply touched —that he found it difficult to express his great appreciation. "If it would help, I'd declare a holiday. And I do hereby declare a holiday." Then quite as suddenly he recovered his usual manner, looked up, and

said with a self-defiant kind of smile: "Now if only some of you will tell me how to get them home without looking like a bridegroom!"

66. At home he admitted modestly to his wife that not every man received that many roses from his girl students on his seventy-fifth birthday. In the afternoon when one of his former students and his wife dropped in to offer best wishes, he was in the happiest of moods. He told them how near he had come to being born on the twenty-ninth of February. He admitted in great joviality that undergraduates had at times led him to make "characteristic remarks" and do "characteristic things," and he drew out of the past a few instances himself. Yes, he supposed he would be giving up teaching sooner or later, for he had in mind finishing that annotated edition of such plays of Shakespeare as had interested him most, and that would keep him busy for a number of years ahead.

67. And so it did.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

1. Rollo Walter Brown, the author of this essay, was one of Mr. Kittredge's students. Would you say that this helped or hindered his drawing a just and rounded picture of Mr. Kittredge? Support your answer.

2. In the first paragraph the author states that "George Lyman Kittredge consisted of more than one man." What is the dominant impression that the author tries to give in each of the first two sections?

3. Why is the average length of paragraphs in section II greater than that of the paragraphs in section I?

4. In the opening sentence of section III the author says that Mr. Kittredge "gave his complete self to the world of the teacher." What proof is offered to back up this assertion?

5. Some of the sentences in par. 59 are very short. Can you suggest any reason why these particular sentences are short as contrasted with the first and next-to-last sentences in the paragraph?

6. Should pars. 66 and 67 be combined into one paragraph?

7. The author of this portrait makes use of a large number of anecdotes and illustrative quotations and incidents about Mr. Kittredge, yet his essay is never merely a string of disconnected stories, as such portraits too often are. How does he make these anecdotes and illustrations a source of strength instead of weakness?

Suggestions for Writing

Give two views of some individual you have known well. You might, for example, contrast what you had heard about the individual before meeting him with what you came to know about him later.

Frederick Jackson Turner[*]

by CARL L. BECKER

I went to the University of Wisconsin (in 1893 it was) for the same reason that many boys go to one college rather than another—because a high school friend of mine, whose cousin or something had "been at Madison," was going there. As youth will, I at once endowed the place, which I had never seen and had only recently heard of, with a romantic glamour. Was not Madison a distant and large city? (I am speaking now of a prairie country boy who had never ventured from his small town into the world so wide.) And was it not located on a great body of water, a lake eight miles in diameter, no less? One other bit of knowledge contributed to the splendor that was Wisconsin. On the faculty of that University there was a man whom a young lawyer in my town had belauded and bragged about, and familiarly referred to as "old Freddie Turner."

2 "Is he old?" I asked, picturing the long gray locks of a Faust before the devil comes in the spotlight.

3 "Oh no, not *old*. We just called him that, I don't know why—just a rough way of showing boyish admiration without being sentimental about it, I suppose."

4 "What does he teach?"

5. "Well, he teaches American history. But it's not what he teaches, the subject I mean. The subject doesn't matter. It's what he is, the

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[*] From *American Masters of the Social Sciences*, edited by Howard W. Odum. By permission of Henry Holt and Company, Inc. Copyright 1927 by Henry Holt and Company.

personality and all that sort of thing. It's something he gives you, inspiration, new ideas, a fresh light on things in general. It's something he makes you want to do or be. I don't remember much American history, but I'll never forget that man Turner, old Freddie Turner."

6 So I went to the University of Wisconsin clear about one thing—I would take a course with old Freddie Turner. Unfortunately he taught history. The word held no blandishments for me. In high school I had studied (that isn't the word, but what word is there for it?) history, general history, Barnes' *General History,* or some such misdemeanor against youth; of which I remembered only one sentence: "*Egypt has been called the gift of the Nile.*" That alone of all the history of the world I remembered; and even that I hadn't learned the meaning of, hadn't indeed supposed or ever been told that it was expected to have a meaning. A dull subject, history. And yet there I was at the University of Wisconsin determined to take a course in history because, unfortunately, that was the only "subject offered" by old Freddie Turner.

I

7 I was not many days in Madison before the man was pointed out to me, on the campus, going somewhere in a hurry, loaded down with an immense leather portfolio bulging with books and notes; belatedly hurrying up the hill to class I dare say, probably perspiring but certainly unbowed. Of course he wasn't old—thirty-three or thereabouts at that time. To a youth of eighteen, men of thirty-three, professors at all events, might more often than not *seem* old; were at least likely to convey the impression of having settled all disturbing questions, of having as it were astutely encased themselves in a neat armor of fixed defensive habit warranted proof against the slings and arrows of whatever unusual experience or risky adventure the mischances of life, within cloistered academic walls, were likely to threaten them with. No such impression was conveyed by "that man Turner" beating it up the hill at 10:02 A.M. Even to a boy of eighteen there was something essentially youthful in the rounded lines of the short compact figure, in the free and unstudied swing of arms and legs; something gay and larky about the head ever so gallantly held, with ever so slight and so engaging a lifted backward tilt of valiant defiance to all the associated fates; something mischievously boyish even about the ruddy complexion, above all about the eyes and lips—eyes and lips

that seemed always smiling even in repose, or always ready to smile, as if the world were so full of a number of things that odd chances and interesting episodes were to be momentarily expected. Expected and welcomed. Such was the impression. Serious indeed the man was, you never doubted that, but not solemn, above all not old, not professionally finished; just beginning rather, zestfully and buoyantly beginning, out for adventure, up to something, in the most casual friendly way inviting you to join in.

[8] Inviting you to join in, yes. I don't mean (God forbid!) soliciting students to take his courses. Heaven knows he didn't need to make sly maneuvers to get you. Well I remember the opening day of the second year when I stood in line by his desk, waiting to ask him a question (totally unnecessary question, invented for the precise purpose of standing there and being spoken to). There I stood, and presently he turned to me with the quick upward flash of blue eyes that seemed to lift and throw over and through me a shaft of live light. I seemed, dumb shy youth that I was, to stand fully revealed in the light of those extraordinary eyes—cool, steady, challenging, yet friendly too, and hoping for the best. Haltingly I asked my foolish question, and was answered. The answer was nothing, the words were nothing, but the voice—the voice was everything: a voice not deep but full, rich, vibrant, and musically cadenced; such a voice as you would never grow weary of, so warm and intimate and human it was. I cannot describe the voice. I know only that it laid on me a kind of magic spell which I could never break, and have never wanted to. Well, there it was, the indefinable *charm.* An upward lift of the eyes, a few friendly words, and I, like I know not how many other lads of nineteen, was straightway a devoted disciple and questionless admirer of "old Freddie Turner." I didn't care *what* he offered. For him I would even study history.

[9] Even then I didn't study history. I took courses in history, and in due time I took Turner's "junior course" in American history. But I didn't study history, not really; because I didn't know how to study it. Remembering what things happened at what times—that was what studying history meant to me then. Learning these things out of a book. Well, we had a book. To begin with Turner asked us to buy Thwaites' *Colonies,* and I bought it. I have it yet, with certain dates set down opposite the successive chapters in the table of contents; all these "assignments" having been given us once for all at the beginning of the term. Simple enough, I thought—each week I will learn a chap-

ter. But after the second week we were behind the schedule, and after the fourth week we didn't know where we were, and never found out. Of course I read the book—I think I did; was expected to and, being an obedient boy, must have done so. But the book was like all history books, dull, filled with uninteresting facts which I couldn't remember; and so it happened that when Turner sometimes for ten minutes asked us questions,—"Mr. Becker, what were the provisions of the Tariff Bill of 1816?"—I never could answer, or almost never. During the second term I did answer one question, a question which had just gone its weary round without eliciting any response. I forget what the question was. The answer was "1811." "Precisely," said Turner, in a tone implying that he now recognized me as of that select company of scholars who would see at once the peculiar significance of 1811.

[10] But if I didn't study history that year, I was infected with the desire to do so. This of course was Turner's fault, not mine (Haskins' fault too, by the way; and if I were writing chiefly about myself instead of Turner, which it may be thought I am doing if I don't watch out, there would be much to be said about Haskins). For it was true, as my lawyer friend said, that Turner had a singular capacity for making you want to do and be something—to do, in short, what he was doing, and to be, if possible, what he was. And what was he? And what was he doing? Fascinated by the man, I attended to his every gesture and expression, listened to everything he said, less at first for the content than for the voice, the intention, the implication. The implication of the whole performance was of something vital being under consideration, something that had in itself only incidentally to do with students "taking a course." The implication was that we (all of us together, if *we* chose—that was our affair) were searching for something, ferreting out hidden secrets. Facts there were, plenty of them, and as a matter of course to be known; but that wasn't the end. There was something concealed there, in and behind the facts, some problem that concerned humanity at large waiting to be solved. The implication was that we might, on our own account, turn over the dead facts once more, on the chance of finding something, something the others had missed.

[11] Inconceivable that Thwaites had missed anything, I couldn't suppose it! Yet so it appeared. For here was a "teacher," who at one moment confessed his ignorance and the next modestly questioned the textbook. Inviting us one day to consider the problem of sovereignty,

he quoted Austin's definition; said he couldn't understand it; admitted he wasn't blessed with the logical mind; and drew two (or was it three?) overlapping circles on the blackboard illustrating the theory of "divided sovereignty," which he said seemed to fit the facts of American history better, but even of that he wasn't certain either. Well, a "teacher" was supposed to know everything, yet there was Turner not able to explain sovereignty. Supposed to know everything, a teacher was, but of course not more than the textbook. Yet there another day stood Turner saying, as casually as ever you please, "I do not agree with Thwaites on this point." What to make of a teacher who knew more than the textbook, but was still ignorant of something? After I know not how long it dawned on me, and with what a joyous sense of emancipation, that Turner wasn't, that no university professor need be, merely a teacher. Turner obviously hadn't just learned his history out of a book. The rash sceptic had gone out of his way to get the "facts" somewhere else, had "investigated"—that was the word—the documents on his own account, had taken his own notes from the "sources," was in short an "authority" in his own right, and might if he wished write his own book of American history.

12 From the moment Turner ceased to figure in my mind as a teacher, I began to learn something from him. Not "teacher" but "historian" he was, better still "author," whose main occupation it was, not to teach us, but to be deeply engaged in researches preliminary to the writing of notable books. Obvious enough, once you got the idea. For surely no professor, coming somewhat distraitly into class at the last moment, ever spread about such a cheerful happy air of having been interrupted in preparatory studies, or ever more successfully conveyed the impression of going cheerfully on, during the brief hour, for our benefit, with the morning's labors. Material evidence of those labors there was a plenty in the stacks of notes deposited on the desk, notes on slips of paper 6 x 8, or some such size, filed in labeled manilla envelopes; more enveloped notes every day brought to class than could by any chance be looked into; as if the preoccupied scholar, leaving his study on the run, had hastily gathered together whatever he could conveniently lay his hands on, hoping to be prepared with illustrative material relevant to any one of a number of interesting topics which might, happily, turn up during the lecture.

13. The lecture itself, if that is the word for it, seemed never "prepared," never studiously "got up" under the lamp. It seemed rather

the spontaneous result of preparations always going on and never finished. The lecture was just informal, intimately conversational talk, beginning as might happen with this interesting matter, and ending as might happen with that; always serious without ever being solemn; enlivened with humor and wholesome infectious laughter, yet never falling to the level of the sad professorial joke; running off into relevant digressions occasioned by some student query: coming back again to the main point; coming now and again to the full stop while "notes" were eagerly searched for and found (oh, well, usually found), if not in one manilla envelope perhaps in another, notes containing some desired quotation from the documents, with exact reference given, illustrating a point, clinching an argument. No, lecture isn't the word. Nothing *ex cathedra* here, no musty air of academic infallibility clouding the room, no laying down of the law and gospel according to Turner; but all compact of inquiry and novel ideas carelessly thrown out with more questions asked than were answered, more problems posed than solved. The professor seemed not at all concerned to ladle out the minimum dose of American history suitable to our complaint. He was just talking to us as a man might talk to men, about the problems that interested *him*, problems which he had apparently been thinking about after breakfast, and might very likely, one felt, think some more about after luncheon.

[14] Such was the impression. But where then did we, poor dazed novices astray in the bright intellectual world, come in on this business? No doubt the method, or lack of it, was not well calculated to send the shining morning-faced student away rejoicing with neatly wrapped and labeled packets of "knowledge," to be held until called for, at examination time, and then duly returned, unopened. No doubt the student often felt like asking, as students will, what precisely the "required work" was—"Professor, what are we expected to know for examination?" Well, one could trust to luck, would have to apparently. I at least knew that something (something about the bank was it?) happened in 1811. Curiously enough I didn't worry, timid and cautious youth that I was, I didn't worry much about the packets of useful information; for you see I was getting, as failing students say, "a great deal out of the course." I was getting a great deal out of Turner. I was daily enjoying the inestimable privilege of watching an original and penetrating intelligence at work, playing freely with facts and ideas, handling with discrimination the problems of history,

problems which so often turned out to be the problems of life itself. Unorganized the course was certainly; but the resulting impression was nevertheless not one of confusion. The impression always was that of a brilliant light being thrown on dark places. For the talk, however desultory it may have been, was never merely rambling, but went always winding in and through and round about the matter in hand at the behest of some fresh idea, suggestion, or tentative hypothesis. Something vital and significant in the facts these flashed ideas and hypotheses seemed always revealing. An ordered body of information I could get, and did afterwards get, for myself; but from no other man did I ever get in quite the same measure that sense of watching a first-class mind at work on its own account, and not merely rehearsing for the benefit of others; the most delightful sense in the world of sitting there waiting for ideas to be born; expectantly waiting for secret meanings, convenient explanatory hypotheses to be discovered, lurking as like as not under the dullest mass of drab facts ever seen. [15] In this happy way I got a new idea of history. It was after all no convention agreed upon to be learned by rote, but just the infinitely varied action and thought of men who in past times had lived and struggled and died for mean or great objects. It was in short an aspect of life itself, and as such something to be probed into, thought about, written about. Who would not like to study history as Turner studied it? And write about it as he would write about it? Not possible of course to do it with his brilliant competence, not a chance; but still there was something to try for, a standard set, an ideal. And so in this eventful junior year I brought out my tiny little wagon and fumblingly hitched it to that bright particular star. Procuring quantities of paper and manilla envelopes, I began "pen in hand" to study history; with patient, plodding abandon poring over such fascinating works as *Niles Register* and the *New York Colonial Documents,* or any other mouldy, crumbling old tome, provided only it contained those "original sources" which Turner, by some species of white magic, had invested with color and charm. What a joy it was in those days merely to turn the yellow pages of old books! With what a sense of solid work accomplished one extracted the substance of no matter what official document, always, with reverent piety, noting the "exact reference"—*Niles,* XII, 749. Still preserved they are, those stacks of notes in manilla envelopes, aging now undisturbed on upper shelves, long since covered with dust!

II

16. With the novitiate ended, one took the full vows. For three years I pursued my researches in Turner's seminary, a group of twelve or fifteen men, with a stray woman or two, meeting in the Law Building, or, better still, in the state Historical Society Library, then housed in the Capitol. Here we did our work, each man having a table, or part of one, in an alcove; and all of us assembling, on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, round one of the larger tables, with Turner in our midst. To be so commoded was to be in the very center of the temple of learning; for we were here, all of us, professor and pupils, daily boxed about with walls of books, the books we needed and were currently using, those very collections of "documents" which exhaled the mothy odors of scholarship; so that just to sit motionless in the blest place breathing in the incensed atmosphere of research at its thickest enabled one to anticipate the illusions of the fully erudite.

17 Informal to a degree this seminary was, more informal even than the "junior course." Lectures there were none, or almost none, unless one prefers to say there were always lectures, or nearly always. For the engaging theory was that we were all scholars together, surveying broadly the field of American history, each man having his particular subject—the colonization of Virginia, Internal Improvements, or whatever—subjects large and unconfined, opening a career to talent. Each man was expected to master his subject as well as might be; to be responsible for it; to be ready like a cabinet minister to answer such questions, bearing upon it, as might be asked by the opposition; above all from time to time to make reports giving the matured results of his investigation. In this way each of us, including the professor, would lecture in turn, and all of the others, including the professor, would take notes. The professor, such was the theory, was just one of us, the principal one no doubt, organizing and directing the whole performance, but still not professing to know too much, modestly deferring to any one of us where our particular topics were concerned, and himself taking notes, when we lectured, with an alert and convincing air of being instructed, of having old matter freshly examined and interpreted for him. I swear he did take notes, and he has since assured me, with just a trace of asperity I thought, that it was no frame-up, but that he did actually obtain from us valuable ideas and information which afterwards he sometimes made good use of. Well, I believe him. I do believe he did sometimes get from us some or other odd fact,

such was his inordinate thirst for facts and his uncanny instinct for finding them in the most unlikely places, such his skill in disengaging what was significant from even the most confused jumble of the incompetent, the irrelevant, and the immaterial.

[18] I took notes too, of course I did. It was part of the ritual, and I was nothing if not strong in the faith—in those old days. The notes I took are not such, I do confess, that one could reconstruct from them an adequate account of American history; but they had, and have had, for me at least, a high value nevertheless. Here before me, for example, are the notes, easily contained on one sheet of paper 6 x 8, of a two-days' report on the Mexican War.

> Rogers' report—Mexican War. Polk. Taylor. Senate Bill. Biglow Papers frequently referred to. Turner asks: "By the way, Mr. Rogers, what exactly are the Biglow Papers?" Rogers says: "The Biglow Papers—" (Hesitates, seems a little dazed, has at last a happy inspiration) "Why, the Biglow Papers are—a well known work by—a famous author." Hilarious laughter, led by Turner, who then explains Biglow Papers. Don't myself know B. P. Remember look up and read B. P. Lowell, J. R.

Thus to my great regret I missed the significant points of the Mexican War, but at least I read the Biglow Papers, and have always remembered that the work is well known and by a famous author. Another sheet lies before me.

> Turner asks, why the unusual literary activity in generation following 1815? Various suggestions. Becker says perhaps on account of feeling of relief and freedom after War of 1812 and Napoleonic wars. Turner says, perhaps. Is that a fact or only a plausible inference? What is an historical fact? Can you prove an inference? May historian be satisfied with inference? Have all great wars been followed by intellectual and literary activity? What in general is cause of changes in character of thought? Fifteen minute talk, mostly questions, a cascade of questions. No one answers these questions. Why doesn't Turner tell us the answers? Something to think about.

Something to think about, sure enough! Well, I have thought about it, off and on, for twenty-five years; but I don't now wonder why Turner didn't tell us the answers.

[19] As time passed I was made aware indeed that Turner very often

didn't answer questions. Heaven knows he asked enough, was always handing out some riddle to be solved, always giving us something to think about and then serenely leaving us to think about it. But there were questions he neglected either to ask or to answer. For example, did the colonies or the British government have the right of it in the War of Independence? Should one properly sympathize with Jefferson or Marshall? Was the tariff a wise policy? Was Jacksonian democracy a good or a bad thing? Were the slave states justified in seceding from the Union? Important questions these were surely; questions which a teacher who had given his life to the study of American history might be supposed to answer for students who came to college expecting to be furnished with right opinions and convictions. But I don't recall that Turner ever answered these questions, or the like of them; so that to this day I don't know what his convictions are on the great issues. Is he protectionist or free trader? Democrat or republican? Baptist or infidel, or member of that great church which Lord Melbourne commended for never meddling with either politics or religion? Above all is he a conservative, satisfied with the evils we have? Or a liberal, willing to substitute for them others which formerly existed? Or a radical, eager for the shock of new ones never yet tried? I don't know. Turner never gave us answers to these questions. He never told us what to think.

[20] I hope I am not conveying the impression that Turner appeared to his students in the somber light of a "strong silent man." Somber is the last word in the world to describe him, and silent isn't the word either. He talked freely enough, and he answered questions freely enough, questions of a certain sort. After I don't know how many months or years I learned that the answers he commonly neglected to give were answers which would have enabled me to borrow his opinions and judgments, and so save myself the trouble of thinking. He would do what he could to help me think, but he wouldn't if he knew it tell me what to think. He was not much given to handing down final judgments.

[21] This is important, and I wish to emphasize it a little. Turner didn't pronounce final judgments. In those days it sometimes troubled me that he didn't. But I have long since forgiven him, blessed him indeed, for it, having seen quite enough of those complacent people who go about recreating the world in their own image and expecting others to see that it is good. Turner might have said, with Mr. Justice Holmes, that one important article of his creed as a scholar was that

he was *not* God. Like Margaret Fuller, he "accepted the universe," although, unlike that voluble lady, he did it silently. I am speaking now of Turner the scholar, not of Turner the man and citizen. As man and citizen he had, and always has had, convictions, knows what he thinks right and wise, and never leaves you in any doubt about it. As man and citizen he doesn't, I am sure, think this the best of conceivable worlds, or always find it a comfortable place to be in, as what intelligent or sensitive person does? He has indeed always met the reverses of life with serenity and high courage, no man I think ever more so; but I know not how many times he may in his heart have refreshingly damned the universe to extinction, as, on occasion, all good men do I hope. But I am now concerned with the scholar. As scholar, so it seems to me, Turner accepts men and things as given, the business of the scholar being not to *judge* but only to *understand* them.[22] To me at least it is a matter of no slight importance that he accepted us, graduate students, in that spirit. We, too, were apparently parts of the universe, to be accepted as given. He never made me feel that I was before the Judgment Seat. He was never the schoolmaster, standing behind me prodding, with sharp exclamation points pitchforking me up the steep path of learning. He criticized my work to be sure, but it was the work he criticized, and in the most honest friendly way, without leaving any aftertaste of personal depravity in the mouth. He appeared to take me as the associated fates had made me, more or less intelligent, and to assume that I would willingly do the best I could. Amazing, to me at least, was the casual friendly way he had of treating us as equals, as serious scholars with whom it was a pleasure to be associated in common tasks. Even our work he didn't criticize much, condemning it by silence mainly, commending it on rare occasions by a few hearty words of approval. How the rash man gambled on us to be sure, professing to see in us qualities and virtues marking us out for future *savants*. Perhaps there was some method in this madness. To get the best out of graduate students, or any students, it is perhaps just as well not to assume to begin with that there isn't any best there to be got out. Often enough there isn't, but then it doesn't greatly matter. If there was any best in me, I at least needed, in order to get it out, just the freedom and friendly confidence which Turner gave me, having until then been for the most part "criticized" and "trained" quite sufficiently; oh quite sufficiently told, by parents and uncles and aunts and teachers and pastors, what to do and what not to do; told in such an interesting variety of ways, and with such an

implication of futility in the telling, as to leave me clutching the miserable little suspicion that I would probably never, all things considered, be much good at doing anything. Never having talked with my pastor, Turner didn't know this. He blandly assumed that I might amount to something, and at last one day told me that he thought I "had it in me" to become a scholar and a writer—seemed really to believe it. To be told by this admired master that I could probably do the very thing I most wanted to do released what little ability I had to do it. Released the ability, and intensified the desire to do it, because I then, and ever after, worked all the harder in order to justify Turner's faith in me.

[23] This friendly method of dealing with graduate students (the honest ones, I mean; the occasional fakir got the full blaze of his hot scorn) might not have been the best method for another, but I am sure it was the best method for Turner. It was the best method precisely because there wasn't any method in it. When Turner came into class he didn't put on the teacher's manner because he didn't think of himself as a teacher. He thought of himself—or no, he didn't think of himself, that's just the point. He was just Turner, man and scholar, absorbed in his work, who met us because we were interested in the same thing he was; and who met us in the most casual democratic way in the world because it was perfectly natural for him to meet us in that way. The easy aristocratic grace and charm of this friendly democrat from Portage, Wisconsin, had about it neither a shade more nor less of any manner for his high placed colleagues than for the obscurest graduate student. It didn't, this unstudied friendly manner which at once put us at ease, seem to be even second nature. It seemed to be the instinctive expression of a lively and supple intelligence restrained and directed by some inexhaustible native fund of sincerity, integrity, and good will. This is after all one of the reasons, perhaps the chief reason, for his success with graduate students.

[24] It is also, I think, one principal secret of his success as a scholar. For the scholar, the historian at all events, has to meet humanity in some fashion or other; and humanity will commonly reveal little to those who meet it with reticences and reservations and didactic motives. Even in those student days it seemed to me that Turner met humanity very much as he met us, graduate students; he didn't put on anything special for the occasion. Humanity, like graduate students, doubtless had virtues and qualities concealed somewhere about it, and might very well, such was the implication, stumble on, if you

gave it rope enough, to some or other place worth going to. Best at all events to assume as much; for humanity is like graduate students in this too, that it will be more likely to do well if you trust it a little, if you have faith to gamble on its hidden capacities.

25. But who could tell us where poor old humanity is headed for, rope or no rope? I would not willingly charge a reputable historian with harboring a Philosophy of History. Yet I recall that one day Turner quoted Droysen, apparently with approval, to the effect that "history is the self-consciousness of humanity." And another day he said: "The question is not whether you have a Philosophy of History, but whether the philosophy you have is good for anything." In extenuation I feel moved to say that if Turner does indeed have a Philosophy of History, I can't imagine it taking the form of an answer. Much more likely to take the form of a question, thus: "If mankind could once really understand what it has done and thought in the past, is it not possible that it would stumble along now, and in the future, with more intelligence and a more conscious purpose?" I don't know whether this is a Philosophy of History or not. Whether, if it is, it is a good one, I know still less. But of one thing I feel quite sure: if Turner subscribes to it, whatever it is, it doesn't cost him much. It doesn't cost him anything in fact, for it doesn't burden him with any noticeable preoccupations or fixed ideas. He pursues his proper task, which is to find out what certain groups of men did and thought in past times, and to furnish the proximate explanation of their so acting and thinking; and this task he pursues as if he had no philosophy, as if it made no difference at all to him what they did and thought, or what the explanation might turn out to be. He pursues his task in short with detachment, with objectivity.

26. So at last we come to it, the inevitable word, objectivity. The word has many meanings. In those days I had myself got, or at least got up, chiefly out of books, a notion of objectivity scarcely distinguishable from complete indifference, a sort of stiff solemnity or *rigor mortis* of the spirit; so that I sometimes wondered if Turner really was "objective and disinterested," so lively and interested he always seemed. Certainly indifference, such as Renan's Man in the Moon might be supposed to exhibit, couldn't by any stretch of the imagination be attributed to Turner. Here then was a dilemma; and not being willing to abandon either Turner or the ideal of objectivity, I ended by seeing that Turner was objective in some other fashion than the Man in the Moon. The objectivity of Turner's mind, I found, was a quality he

enjoyed in his own right, and not something acquired by training. It wasn't something he had painfully got up in college out of Bernheim —a set of artificially induced and cultivated repressions such as would enable any careful historian to write, let us say, an account of the Battle of Cold Harbor without revealing the fact that his father was an ardent admirer of Grant. That kind of objectivity is common enough, and often pernicious enough, being the best substitute for ideas yet invented. Turner at least didn't need it, having always more ideas than he could perhaps well manage. The objectivity he had seemed rather to spring from that intense and sustained interest which an abundance of ideas can alone generate. A hard truth for me to learn, this was, since I hadn't too many ideas; but I couldn't help seeing that Turner was so wholly absorbed in his work that he hadn't time to think of anything else, not even of the necessity of being objective. He was "disinterested" because he was so interested in the object before him that he forgot, for the time being, to be interested in anything else; he was "objective" because he was so genuinely curious about that object, desired with such singleness of purpose to know it for the sake of knowing it, that his mind was empty, for the time being, of all other objects. This kind of objectivity doesn't come by willing (not that any sane man, living in a world of action, would will to have it); it is a quality of mind, like the sense of absolute pitch, which one is or isn't born with. No doubt it may, if one has it, be cultivated, but at any rate it is inseparable from genuine *intellectual curiosity,* the lively and irrepressible desire to know merely for the sake of knowing. A rare quality indeed that is, but I think Turner has it.

[27] Another thing about Turner used in those days to strike me as a little odd. I don't know just what to call it. "Independence" isn't quite the word. Of course he was an independent scholar; but then most professors were independent scholars in the ordinary sense of the term. His was a peculiar kind of independence which struck me then, and still strikes me, as relatively uncommon among professors. I might call it a certain obliviousness to professional convention, an almost complete freedom from academic provincialism. I first noticed it indeed because it seemed to me then not quite the thing. For I was then doing what many college boys do—emancipating myself from one form of provincialism by taking on another. Coming fresh, or almost fresh, from the farm into an academic community, the professor's world seemed to me the last word in sophistication. The most obvious form which this sophistication took was a certain smart aware-

ness on the professor's part of belonging to a larger and freer society than the one in which, geographically speaking, he perforce lived. Comfortable enough his ivory tower in Madison was no doubt; but he was likely to be often looking out of it towards the more splendid towers of the east, over-anxiously concerned perhaps to know what the wise men there were thinking and doing. One gathered that there were decencies proper to the academic world, a minor one being that no professor should have too much confidence in himself until he received a call from Yale or Harvard, and even then a lively sense of the fitting, some hang over from colonial days perhaps, would keep him subtly servile and apologetic for being no more than an American scholar who must forever abandon hope of entering the sacred portals of Oxford, Paris, or Berlin. If all this was only a second provincialism worse than the first, I was not yet aware of the fact. It seemed to me then no more than the proper mark of those who had oriented themselves in the intellectual world, quite the attitude in short for a professor to have. Therefore it struck me as a little odd that my admired master Turner didn't have it.

[28] For Turner didn't have it. There was no getting round the fact that he didn't have it at all. I got the distinct impression that he didn't mind living in Wisconsin, seemed to think Portage a jolly good place to come from, as if being born there, even if the fact became known, needn't seriously impair the quality of his scholarship. If he knew that Europe was infinitely richer than the United States in historic remains and traditions, I never heard him mention the fact, at least not with the appropriate air of regret for missed opportunities. He had, on the contrary, every appearance of being contented with his opportunities, seemed indeed to rejoice in his opportunities, quite as a man might who had just discovered a gold mine in his back yard. American history, he seemed to say, is a new lead, never yet properly uncovered, as rich and enticing a mine for the scholar as can anywhere be found, all the better for never having been worked by Waitz or von Ranke. It was as if some rank American flavor, some sturdy strain of backwoods independence, resisting every process of academic refinement, kept the man still proud to be an American citizen, contentedly dwelling in Madison, quite satisfied with the privilege of going every day to the State Historical Society Library where the Draper Manuscripts were.

[29] Even in those days I felt, without quite understanding, this non-professional attitude on Turner's part. The time was to come when I found the professional attitude less engaging; and it was probably

just because I saw Turner as "different" that these old student day impressions never faded, just because he was never quite the "professor" that his influence was more enduring than that of many professors. His influence was enduring I think because he himself didn't "date." Above all his ideas about American history didn't date, never struck one as being modeled upon any established authority or cribbed from any school of historians. Something personal there always was in his "point of view," in his "interpretations," as if the subject were being freshly looked at by a mind washed clean of scholastic dust. Not that there was anything aggressive about his independence. He never gave one the impression that, having made up his mind to be original, he was somewhat bellicosely making good. His independence wasn't an achievement. And yet I wonder. Was there not about him too (or did I just imagine it?) some indefinable but quite jolly air of conscious insubordination, just a quick little gesture of the mind impatiently dismissing the solemn snobbery of all that is academically canonized and sacrosanct? I can't be sure, but I like to think so.

[30] That is as it may be. But this I know, that three qualities of the man's mind made upon me a profound and indelible impression. These qualities were: a lively and irrepressible intellectual curiosity; a refreshing freedom from personal preoccupations and didactic motives; a quite unusual ability to look out upon the wide world in a humane, friendly way, in a fresh and strictly independent way, with a vision unobscured by academic inhibitions. These are also the qualities, I think, which have enabled him to make an "original contribution" (not so common a performance as is often supposed) to the study of American history.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

This appreciation of a very famous American historian was written in 1927, when Turner was still alive, by one of his most gifted former students. The selection given here includes the introduction and first two sections of the essay, but omits a transitional sentence and the third and fourth sections, which explain and evaluate Turner's "original contribution" to the study of American history.

1. In par. 10 Becker mentions the name of another famous historian, C. H. Haskins, who was also at one time (1892-1902) a teacher at the University of Wisconsin. On what basis does Becker omit a detailed discussion of Haskins? How much justification is there for

including as much autobiographical detail (for example, pars. 1-6) as Becker does? Is he doing something more than sketching a lifelike portrait of his former teacher?

2. Show how the last two sentences of par. 8 look both forward and backward in transition.

3. Show how pars. 9-13 and pars. 14-15 are separate but related units.

4. In par. 21 Becker explains Turner the scholar by saying that he "accepts men and things as given, the business of the scholar being not to *judge* but only to *understand* them." How does Becker make use of this explanation in the succeeding paragraphs?

5. In par. 30 Becker lists three qualities of Turner's that he has been discussing through much of the essay. Do you get an equally intimate view of Mr. Kittredge's mind from reading Rollo Walter Brown's essay (pp. 69-81)? What does this tell you about the differences in technique and purpose of the two authors?

6. As you read this selection, did you notice anything distinctive about the sentence construction? You might find it helpful to compare the style of this essay with that of another selection by Becker printed on pp. 588-593.

Suggestions for Writing

1. On not telling students what to think.

2. In par. 27 Becker speaks of Turner's "obliviousness to professional convention." If you have known somebody—it might be a taxi driver, a visiting fireman, a landlady, a minister—who ignored professional convention, discuss particular examples of his attitude for the purpose of deciding why the person acted as he did.

3. Two teachers have been discussed in this and the preceding selection. With the aim of determining the source of his influence or his popularity, write about one of your former teachers, perhaps in high school.

Part Two

Explanation

Contents — *Part Two*

EDITORS OF "FORTUNE" ..... *The Machine and the Farm*

CHRISTOPHER W. COATES ..... *The Kick of an Electric Eel*

WOLFGANG LANGEWIESCHE . *Winds That Blow Straight Up*

NORMAN WARE ..... *The Industrial Revolution*

FREDERICK LEWIS ALLEN ..... *Crash!*

DIXON WECTER ..... *From Riches to Rags*

ALDOUS HUXLEY ..... *Who Are You?*

THOMAS HENRY HUXLEY
The Method of Scientific Investigation

PAUL A. ZAHL . *Cancer Research: Integrator of the Sciences*

LINCOLN BARNETT ..... *The Universe and Dr. Einstein*

Explanation

To provide someone else with information is one of the commonest reasons for writing. The kinds of information and the reasons for providing it may of course be infinite in variety. The man who writes down the facts of history in a textbook is doing this kind of writing; so is the author of a magazine article telling his readers what new advance has been made in science, or why the corn crop is so large or so small this year, or how to build a boat. The function, then, of this sort of writing—to which in this book we have given the name *explanation*—is to explain, to instruct, to inform; and its emphasis is not on personal experience, as in the selections of Part I, nor on personal opinion and appraisal, as in those of Part III, nor on converting others to a point of view, as in those of Part IV, but on setting forth facts and ideas objectively and without bias. The qualities of an author's mind and heart always affect what he writes, but for many purposes it is more important that he provide information than that he parade his opinions or persuade others to adopt them.

To do this job properly, explanatory writing must have clarity, completeness, and accuracy. Accuracy means precision of statement as well as of fact. Completeness means giving all the pertinent facts or concepts that are necessary for the intended reader's understanding of the subject. Clarity in itself implies precision and thoroughness of statement and thought. But clarity also demands that material be presented in a logical and comprehensible order, and that it have readability. For writing cannot really be called clear, even though it may be accurate and thorough, if the reader finds it unnecessarily difficult—difficult, that is, not through any inherent complexity in

the facts and ideas but because of the author's lack of skill in presenting them. A style that is lively and forceful—provided that the liveliness and force are not gained at the expense of accuracy and completeness—is essentially clearer than one that is turgid and dull. For the aim of explanatory writing is to convey facts and ideas from the mind of the author to the mind of the reader, and whatever facilitates that process without annoying the reader is an aid to clarity.

A few sentences back we mentioned the "intended reader." This phrase is important. Not all authors write for the same set of readers, and not all readers are alike. A style that is clear and simple to one reader may be a bore to another, while what is lively and stimulating to some may be over the heads of the rest. A wise author is therefore very careful to consider what class of readers he is aiming at, and what his purpose is in writing for them. The selections which follow show a considerable variety of intended audience and purpose, and consequently a considerable range of style and method. All, however, are intent on solving the same problem: to convey information from writer to reader. Each one is a profitable case-study in how well, and by what means, the writer solved his particular form of the problem.

The Machine and the Farm[*]

by THE EDITORS OF *FORTUNE*

It is easy to misread it, but the rush for farm machinery in the past few years has looked like that final revolution in agriculture. Looking out upon the vast and vastly complex scene of U.S. agriculture, it appeared at first glance that the miracle of American industrial production had been repeated upon the farm.

2 And in a very real sense it had. Record after crop record has been smashed as the good earth of the U.S. yielded up an almost unbelievable bounty. Forty million more people than there were in 1920 were now fed from roughly the same area of cultivated land—some 360 million acres—and with a million and a half less workers. Consider that basic index of civilization: the number of people required to produce food. In 1800 three out of four in the working population were in agriculture; only one out of four was available for all the rest of the work of society—industrial, commercial, professional, intellectual, and what not. Throughout most of the world that ratio still holds true. In 1948 only one in seven U.S. workers is needed to provide the nation's food. Each of the nation's ten million farm workers provides enough food and fiber for himself and thirteen other citizens. What is more, he is helping to supply European and other countries with huge tonnages of farm products.

3. Thus, close to the mid-century, agriculture seemed to have caught up—somewhat tardily, to be sure—with the rest of the American enterprise system. The formula of science and research, plus capital, plus freedom for individual initiative, was working in agriculture as miraculously as it had in industry.

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[*] Reprinted from the October, 1948 issue of *Fortune* Magazine by special permission of the Editors. Copyright 1948 by Time Inc.

4. There are now more than three million tractors on American farms, twice as many as there were eight years ago, and, in addition, some 35 million pieces of other farm machinery whose variety is as startling as it is enormous. Riding the biggest boom he has ever known, the farmer has had for the first time the cash—the four and five-figure cash—that mechanization requires. Sales of farm equipment have been running up and up to more than $1.26 billion last year—nearly ten times the 1947 sales of machine tools.

5 Both the avidity of the farmer for mechanization and his present cash position are, of course, products of the war, but they are wholly new phenomena in the history of agriculture. It would be difficult to overestimate what they imply for the future of farming. But there is general agreement—perhaps the one agreement that can be found in the highly controversial field of agriculture—that the U.S. farm promises the greatest opportunity for advance of any major area of the U.S. economy. In short, the most astonishing fact about farming today is that the agricultural revolution is not complete; it is just beginning its final phase.

6 Basic research, which yields its enormous rewards far in the future, has hardly started. The geneticists, the agronomists, the chemists, the entomologists, and the engineers feel the future is only now beginning to open up. The chemical, oil, and rubber industries have swung the full power of their research techniques upon the productive problems of food and fiber. These exciting developments—and they lie beneath the surface of every phase of agriculture—must be left to future articles. Except for this: the key word is "integration"—integrated research (chemical-weed-killer men working with plant researchers and soil chemists); integrated operations (fit the crop to the soil, fit the machine to both the crop and the soil, or if that can't be done, breed a plant for the machine and remodel the land); integrated machinery (make buildings into machines, coordinate machines with buildings as well as with other machines).

7. This article considers only the state of integration in machinery. In the vocabulary of the production engineer, farm production is "discontinuous," that is, it is a series of independent operations, some highly efficient (combine harvesting), some appallingly inefficient (tobacco farming). Despite the tremendous number of machines now on American farms, it is still true that agriculture could have gained far more from industry than it has.

8. It should not be imagined that the mechanization of American farms is by any means complete. Farmers still own some ten million horses and mules, and 60 per cent of all farm work is done by hand. Some of their methods of cultivation would be hard to distinguish from their Sumerian counterparts of 3500 B.C. The uneven pattern of mechanization has been determined in great measure by type rather than by size of farm. Thus dairy, cattle, and fruit farms are on the whole the least mechanized. One reason, of course, is that both the handling of livestock and the picking of fruits call for more judgment and care than anyone has yet been able to build into a machine.

9 Conversely, the mechanization of standard crop farming is relatively well advanced. Tractor-powered implements for tilling, cultivating, planting, and harvesting have reached an incredible diversity; International Harvester Co.'s catalogue, for example, lists over 350 pages of such equipment. Nearly all of this machinery goes to handle the three biggest U.S. crops: the food grains (wheat, rice, rye, and buckwheat), the feed grains (corn, oats, barley, and sorghums), and hay, which together cover 84 per cent of the nation's harvested acreage. Cotton, covering 6 per cent, has just begun to submit to mechanization; this year only 3 per cent of the total crop will be gathered by International Harvester's new mechanical pickers.

10 The most spectacular tools and techniques are to be found in California, where mechanisms are bigger and more ingenious than anywhere else in the country. California is tremendously fertile not only in soil but in ideas, and it will continue to furnish inventions that are taken over the mountains, modified for the plains, and eventually reach the South and Northeast. But California is a specialized case. It is more profitable for the student of mechanization to study the more normal parts of the country, starting first with a quick glance back at how farm mechanization reached its present state.

Slow Going

11 The agricultural revolution began in the U.S.—and began slowly—at the close of the eighteenth century, about the time that farmer Thomas Jefferson worked out a scientifically efficient moldboard plow. More than forty years passed between the first American patent on a reaper and the appearance of the first factory-produced model of Cyrus McCormick's reaper in 1847. Throughout the rest of the nineteenth century appeared the disk harrow, the cultivator, the hay rake, the hay loader, and scores of other farm tools. Many of the labor-

saving devices were as simple as the manure carrier and the rope sling for hoisting hay that farmer William Louden mounted on a wooden monorail in 1867, both of which served the farmer virtually unchanged for fifty years. Meantime Louden Machinery Co. went on to leadership in industrial conveyer systems for twentieth-century industry. Other inventions, like the oscillating mower, the planter, the manure spreader, the grain thresher, and the milking machine were fairly intricate. And some of these early machines were so complicated that they have only recently been perfected—the corn picker and the cotton picker, for example. But the fact remains that practically every one of the basic general tools now known to farmers had been thought out and built before the turn of the century. They took from the production of food most of the elemental backbreaking labor of the antique sickle, scythe, shovel, fork, and hoe.

Shift to Horsepower

12 For the first forty years of this century, the problem was to switch from the horse to horsepower—the development of the tractor and the adaptation of horse-drawn machines to mechanical power.

13 What transformed the tractor from a four-wheeled horse to a modern prime mover was, first, the perfection of the economical heavy-duty, high-compression engine; second, the introduction of the tricycle-type front wheel that made the tractor maneuverable and thus usable for row-crop farming; and third, the simple substitution of rubber tires for the spiked or cleated steel wheels it had been rolling on for thirty-odd years. Mounted on rubber, the tractor acquired the virtues the farmer had been looking for—more speed, flexibility, and ease of handling. Indeed, the rubber-tired tractor may be, as some believe, the greatest agricultural improvement since the invention of the moldboard plow.

14. Following the shift to rubber came the application of hydraulic controls and fully mounted tools, which enabled the tractor, originally a substitute for the horse, to perform all kinds of farming jobs. These two developments took the hard work out of tilling and made possible a whole line of other tools, such as scoops, buck rakes, lifts, and bulldozers. Complete machines, like the three-ton cotton picker, are now mounted directly on the tractor. As a stationary engine, the tractor's power plant can be hitched up to drive an assortment of smaller mechanisms, ranging from posthole diggers to nut-tree shakers.

[15] As the tractor has evolved into the almost universal prime mover of agriculture, a lot of other farm machinery has been developed for special operations. Thus there are now hay choppers and hay crushers as well as hay balers, and beet diggers and sugar-beet diggers as well as potato diggers. And there are huge "landplanes" for leveling the earth for irrigation. One manufacturer is working on a machine for digging the rocks out of a field, crushing them, and spreading the pulverized rock back over the soil. On the other hand, some machines now perform several functions—the small, all-purpose combine is good for 125 different crops, for example, and the forage harvester can be used for both corn and hay. Along with these machines a few radically different tillage tools have appeared, notably the rotary tiller, invented by the Swiss in 1911, which in one fast and violent operation can prepare land for seeding.

The Farmer and the Manufacturer

[16] It might be assumed that, in view of the machines he has and those he has to choose from, the well-heeled farmer of 1948 would be a relatively happy entrepreneur. To hear him talk, this is not so at all. From coast to coast, from large and small farmers, arises a dismal chorus of complaints about their machinery and about the industry that makes it. The farmer, of course, claims the hereditary privilege of grousing. As an American, he claims the inalienable right to perennial dissatisfaction. But to this chorus of complaints are joined the more authoritative voices of agricultural engineers, of professional farm managers and consultants, and of a number of industrialists who have had direct contact with the farm-machinery industry.

[17] What is the bill of particulars? The first and major group of complaints concerns mechanical failures and breakdowns. Repairs cost priceless time as well as money, for while a machine is laid up in the shop the farmer may lose many times its entire worth in loss or damage to his crops. Awkward engineering means that one broken part may require a major teardown job. Sometimes an item of farm equipment is so carelessly engineered that it has to be strengthened or modified before it can do a satisfactory job. Maintenance is now such a large item on the heavily mechanized farm that a well-equipped machine shop is a necessity, in constant use. Small electrical welding units have sold so well in one midwestern area that, in the words of a power-company official, the transformers on the local power lines have been "hopping off the poles."

[18] Farmers are bitter about maintenance and many go so far as to charge that the industry is purposely selling cheap machines in order to profit on spare parts. No manufacturer, of course, could consciously pursue such a policy and stay in business. The farmer's complaint is based on the fact that, on a per pound basis, replacement parts cost roughly three to four times as much as new machines, which is not out of line with the pricing ratios in any comparable industry. But the farmer who is struggling with a breakdown is not apt to be in a mood of sweet reasonableness.

[19] The next group of complaints centers on the lack of initiative of the equipment makers. Improvements come slowly. Yet opportunities for improvement are often so simple and obvious that a farmer, with only a welding set and power drill, can make them himself, e.g., a shield to cover an open sprocket on a field chopper. Again, for instance, though a constant running power take-off was shown to be a practical mechanism for tractors in France as early as 1906, American farm-equipment makers have only lately been considering the insistent demand for it; this year one company incorporated this feature in new models as an extra. Along with their annoyance at such delays in engineering improvements, many farmers chide the industry for letting the farmer do so much of the inventing and developing of new tools. As one put it: "They save a lot of money by letting the farmers do the pioneering; then give you the backhanded compliment of following you."

The Industry's Defense

[20] It is not to be supposed for a moment that the industry takes this kind of criticism meekly, or hangs its head in remorse. For equipment manufacturers know they have done a good job on a great many farm machines, and an outstanding job on tractors. Since tractors and tractor parts comprise 40 per cent of the industry's total sales, it has considerable cause for pride in that alone. At the same time, moreover, some of the 1,043 manufacturers in the industry have unloaded on the farmer a lot of indubitably poor machinery, and on that score the reputable suffer undeservedly.

[21] What is the industry's case? To begin with, many of the farmer's grievances can be laid at his own gate, for he commonly overloads and misuses his tools. Some of this must be expected, for, unlike the manufacturer, who can control his working conditions, the farmer operates his tools in dust, mud, rocks, and other hazards to mechanical functioning, including bugs. The development of International Har-

vester's cotton picker, for instance, was stymied for more than three years until ways were found to prevent the juice of squashed bugs from gumming up the picker's 600 barbed spindles. (The answer: a lubrication system for moistening the spindles.) Similar obstacles have made the job of supplying foolproof tools anything but easy.

22. Some of the farmer's complaints about the quality of his equipment are also explained by the fact that he has demanded a great variety of tools. In attempting to supply them, equipment makers have had to use semi-custom production methods, and so have been unable to employ either mass production or the precision techniques of the tractor plant. There has been, in fact, no true mass market for any farm machines, except tractors. One manufacturer, for example, still carries more than 100 models of moldboard plows; another, which tried to reduce its plow models to one, has concluded that at least thirty are necessary.

23 But the industry's defense rests mainly on two historic facts: the farmer's low income in the past and his extreme reluctance to try anyone else's "newfangled" machine. Since the farmer has rarely enjoyed a large cash income, the industry necessarily made tools he could afford. In some cases this meant the use of low-cost and relatively brittle iron castings instead of alloy steels. And it also meant that the industry, forced to keep its prices down, has remained a low-profit business; over the last thirty years the highest average rate of return on capital investment among the large companies was less than 10 per cent, and several have made less than 3 per cent. Those are not the profit margins that build great research laboratories and engineering staffs. The industry's sales last year reached more than $1.26 billion, of which 73 per cent went to the seven dominant companies.[1] But the industry is still relatively small, if not young, and it has had no such great sums to spend on research as the oil, chemical, and electrical-equipment industries have had.

24 To a large extent, the financial position of the farmer and of the industry explains why there has been, as the farmer charges, a lack of pioneering and research development among farm-equipment makers. As an industry, it has not been attractive to many engineers, since so many other industrial fields offered far greater promise. In the past,

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[1] Farm-equipment sales: International Harvester ($292 million); Deere & Co. ($212 million), Allis-Chalmers Co. ($132 million, including industrial tractors); Massey-Harris ($84 million); J. I. Case & Co. ($81 million); Oliver Corp. ($74 million); Minneapolis-Moline Corp. ($51 million).

much of the engineering was done by "graduate blacksmiths." Although in recent years many of the large companies have taken on more young engineering talent, no company could be said to be overburdened with it even now. Many companies continue to believe they can best serve the farmer by depending on him for the invention of new machines.[2] As one executive recently expressed it: "We do not create; we are the servants of the farmer." The farm-equipment industry is a very conservative industry.

25 There are, happily, a few signs that it may be changing some of its policies. One is the move of several large companies to buy up established equipment manufacturers in California, where farmers' complaints about breakage have always been the loudest. Following the example set by Deere in 1937, International Harvester, Allis-Chalmers, Massey-Harris, and Case have all acquired or built California factories specializing in heavy-duty tillage and harvesting machinery. Californians, characteristically, voice dark fears that the products of these small specialized factories will suffer; but the new owners, at any rate, may pick up some fresh ideas in the land of agricultural invention.

26 Moreover, others outside the farm-equipment industry have recently taken an interest in its industrial potentials. This year the Sperry Corp. (precision instruments) bought the New Holland Machine Co. (stone crushers), which developed and put over the first completely automatic field baler and has gone on to experiment with a heavy rotary tillage machine. And fabulous Food Machinery Corp. (*Fortune*, April, 1947) has branched out heavily into farm equipment and chemicals. Many another outsider, like the steel companies and the building-material companies, is beginning to show a lively interest in the farm market.

To Mechanize or Not to Mechanize?

27. Part of the challenge to industrialists lies in solving some of the problems that mechanization has raised for the farmer. For the drive toward mechanization has caught him up in an economic spiral that is threatening to get out of control. One reason is that many farmers simply cannot resist the obvious time and laborsaving appeal of machinery. Example: total labor requirements per acre of corn grown

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2 Some recent examples of farmers' inventions: the buck rake, the field baler, the sugar-beet digger, the high-clearance tractor.

and harvested with horses and hand pickers are three times those needed with four-row tractor equipment and a mechanical picker.

[28] These virtues of mechanization are universally true, but on some crops time and labor savings with machinery may be heavily offset by losses in quality of the final product. Take the cotton picker: one test in the Mississippi Delta area showed that hand-picking costs were more than five times those of mechanical picking—nearly $38 a bale as against about $7. Yet because of the trash in the machine-picked cotton, its quality was lowered by one or two grades for an average loss of more than $18 a bale. Field losses—cotton damaged in the field by the picker—raised this to $26 a bale. Thus the cotton picker saved only about $4 a bale over hand methods. One big operator in California figures that his over-all savings with this machine are only $1.50 or so a bale.

[29] Tractor-drawn and self-propelled machines have other advantages over and above their laborsaving features that make them irresistible to the farmer. Being so much faster, they give the farmer far greater control over weather risks. Even after a long rainy spell, he can get his crop into the ground in time, as thousands of corn-belt farmers did last year when they recouped what promised to be a total loss on their cornfields. Since there are usually a few best days or hours for harvesting any given crop, working at night under searchlights is now a common practice on thousands of farms. For what the farmer could lose through being too slow or too late with his harvest might be many times what it would cost him to have machines on hand at the right moment. And with airplanes to dust his fields, the farmer can check within a few hours a potentially disastrous invasion of pests or disease.

[30] Thus impelled to buy machinery to reduce his operating risks, the farmer is apt to pile up a capital-investment risk in equipment all out of proportion to the size of his business. Yet as a capitalist—and not a small one, either—the farmer must use his capital profitably. He knows that with farm machinery direct operating costs per acre will be lower because the land can be worked faster. He knows that savings in man-hours help to offset costs very rapidly today. But he also knows that year after year, interest, depreciation, and repairs on machinery can seriously cut his profits unless he gets a lot of use out of his equipment —or unless he can sell his machines and buy new models every couple of years. A manufacturer can count on using a $10,000 turret lathe, say, for 2,000 or more hours a year. The farmer, however, may use his $3,200 hay baler for only fifty hours. He gets most use out of his

tractor, but the U.S. average is only 600 hours a year, and for many implements it is less than sixty.

Forced Expansion

[31] This low rate of use is the joker in farm mechanization, for it has induced thousands of farmers to buy more land in order to make their investment in machines pay off. The average size of the American farm has risen as a result from 160 to nearly 200 acres since 1940. With a very high-profit crop—onions, for instance—and with superior management, a small farmer may mechanize and stay small. But the small, ordinary farmer who mechanized but could not expand has often found that what machines saved him in time and labor may have been lost in overhead—particularly in repairs and depreciation charges. In which case he can either sell out, fall back on subsistence farming and take a job in town, or try to cut his overhead by using his machines to do custom work for local farmers. If he owns tractor-mounted earth-moving implements, he may also pick up spare-time non-farming jobs, such as strip mining or ditch digging.

[32] In several areas state agricultural colleges and other research groups have analyzed this problem of farm-machinery usage fairly accurately. Findings on one point at least are roughly similar: mechanization is not likely to pay off for most farmers working less than 100 acres of tillable cropland. A 1946 study of implement and tractor use in Kentucky, for example, showed that overhead costs rose drastically if the annual use of a two-plow tractor fell below 1,000 hours a year. The over-all spread in costs was very wide, ranging from $10 per day if the tractor was operated less than 300 hours, down to $2.50 a day for 1,800 hours of use a year. Average minimum-use levels per year for other implements: disk harrows, 200 acres, once over; tractor mowers, 100 acres; pickup hay baler, 150 tons; combine harvester, 100 acres; corn picker, 75 acres.

[33] That a great many farmers realize the necessity for getting greater use out of their machines is clear from other surveys. The trend to bigger farms and more intensive farming is evident even in the relatively unmechanized South. A recent study of sixty-one Georgia farmers showed that after introduction of tractor power, nearly half increased their acreage and thirteen others cultivated more of what they had. Total cultivated acreage increased by more than 40 per cent while double-cropping nearly tripled, upping the total of harvested acres by 65 per cent.

How Far and How Much?

34. Such increases naturally raise the question as to how far mechanization can go, economically. Here and there in the U.S. large-scale operators appear to have pushed mechanization to its present limits. Two examples will indicate how the economy of farm machines can vary at even this stage. Both are so big that they can be called farms only by courtesy; they are big little businesses.

35. Consider first the 11,000-acre farm of Saul Camp, a son of North Carolina who settled near Bakersfield, California, twenty-five years ago to raise cotton. He and his son James and a staff of twenty-five are running a business now grossing around $8 million a year in cotton, sugar beets, potatoes, hay, and a feeder-lot operation that handles 40,000 head of cattle annually. The Camps employ more than 350 pieces of wheel-mounted farm equipment worth some $250,000, including fifty heavy-duty tractors, three $4,000 sugar-beet harvesters, and eleven of International Harvester's cotton pickers costing $9,000 each. In addition the Camps have installed a sixty-seven well irrigation system, invested $100,000 in a mill for processing cattle feed, and $1 million in a new cotton-seed oil mill. Thanks to California's weather, their farm machines can be operated all year; many of their tractors, for example, are used well over 5,000 hours annually.

36 The Camps grow and harvest their crops with only about 500 field-workers. But the continuous use of the machines in their tough California soil chews up tools so fast that maintenance costs offset much of the laborsaving and are enough to stagger any farmer east of the Rockies. Practically every machine the Camps buy is rebuilt, strengthened, and toughened before it goes on the field. Nevertheless, wear and tear cuts tractor life to 3,000 hours and on an elaborate mechanism like a cotton picker repairs have run up to $4,000 per machine per year. Despite such costs, profit margins on the Camps' crops are good—around 10 per cent.

37 Now consider the operations of Charles F. Seabrook and his three sons, who run a 15,000-acre truck-garden business on the sandy flats of southern New Jersey. The Seabrooks have carried mechanization right through to the processing of frozen foods, and last year their sales were over $13 million. Nine Seabrook division managers operate sixty track-type and 130 wheel tractors whose relatively easy tasks give them a life expectancy of 10,000 hours. The total investment in farm equipment amounts to more than $1 million, major items being

eight new pea-and-spinach harvesters, costing $4,800 each. Intensive cultivating schedules and peak harvest loads bring maintenance costs up to around 25 per cent of the cost of new equipment. The Seabrooks hire up to 3,500 workers and although increased mechanization in the last two years has cut the number of fieldworkers in half, 700 are still needed for picking, weeding, and cutting jobs for which no machines are yet—or may ever be—available.

[38] In this kind of farming, operating costs are so critical that Seabrook accountants figure them out daily, and by midnight each manager has a tabulated report showing how his costs compare with those in other divisions. Before planting, a staff climatologist calculates rates of maturity on crops, assuring a harvest schedule geared to Seabrooks' processing equipment. This makes for lower costs and uniform quality of product, both of which are essential to profitable operations. On the pea crop, sold for 5 cents a pound, direct costs run around 3 cents, yet net profit averages less than two mills, or about 5 per cent. For the Seabrooks, the rewards of mechanization are a very slim but certain profit.

Integration: Early Signs

[39] The present economic problems of farm mechanization are a measure of what remains to be done for agriculture. Many of them would disappear if farm processes were integrated, and before that can happen many ancient farming ideas will have to be scrapped. But the start toward integration has been made, and the evidence appears in such developments as these:

Stubble mulching, i.e., churning the crop trash into the topsoil with a harrow or chisel-type plow, has made the moldboard plow outmoded on millions of acres in the old Dust Bowl.

At its tillage laboratory in Auburn, Alabama, the Department of Agriculture is working on the fundamental relationship between soil and tools, and the efficiency of both tire treads and earth-working implements is being tested in nine strips of different soils common to the Southeast.

At its Stoneville, Mississippi, cotton research laboratory the U.S.D.A. has developed a planter-cultivator that performs all operations through planting except the original ground breaking, eliminating three common steps (double-disking, dragging, and harrowing).

A California farmer, Albert Jongeneel, inventor of the first sugar-beet harvester successful in California, which is now used to produce 65 per cent of the state's crop, has turned to inventing tools that will

help offset the damage that intensive mechanized farming has wrought in certain U.S. areas. In addition to his mammoth "sucker-upper" for collecting seeds, he is working on a planter that he hopes will make it possible to sow row crops in stubble mulch and thus enable the soil-conserving practice of mulch farming to spread.

In Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Ohio, farmers in the last year have held "Farm Transformation Day" to demonstrate the application of conservation practices. Rolling out tractors, bulldozers, and other machinery, they make over a farm in one day, changing, among other things, fields, woods, and watercourses.

The Doane Agricultural Service of St. Louis, biggest and oldest (twenty-nine years) of professional farm-management companies, is making time studies of various machines, to arrive at the proper relationship between hours of use, capital investment, labor costs, yields, crop prices, etc. Doane engineers have also developed flexible and portable farm structures—for example, a barn that can be used for hay, cattle, sheep, or farm equipment and an open shed that can be moved from field to field as pasturage is rotated.

Laborless Barn

40. Perhaps the most striking exhibition of what can be accomplished by redesigning farm structures has been provided, not by a farmer, but by an investment banker, Paul Mazur, a Lehman Bros. partner. Mazur brought to an ordinary run-down farm in southern New Jersey a highly challenging mind, a profound knowledge of the American economy, and total ignorance of practical farming. He came prepared to admire and enjoy the wonders of farm machinery and wound up with the conviction that industry still had a lot to do for the farmer. And what was more, that industry had not only a greater market in the farmer than it had ever realized but a very direct stake in keeping farmers, the only other group of enterprisers with enough votes to count, strongly in the enterprise column. With this in mind, Mazur hit upon an idea at once startlingly simple and wholly revolutionary.

41. Working closely with agricultural engineers at Rutgers University, and with the help of his ingenious manager, Mazur by trial and error got what was in essence simply one barn straddling a smaller one, with hay feeding by gravity between the outer and inner shell. This has emphatically demonstrated its worth; last year only two hours of labor were required to keep hay feeding through the barn properly.

Having proved his idea, Mazur turned the project over to Rutgers as a research grant. To make the barn practical for the small grassland farmer, Mazur decided to experiment with prefabricated construction. He approached the Stran Steel Division of Great Lakes Steel Corp., which had his idea checked and approved by a farm consultant from the Doane Service. Great Lakes promptly engineered and donated the new double-Quonset model. A second manufacturer has also seen future commercial possibilities in Mazur's barn: for the air blowers that use engine heat for drying the hay, Continental Motors has supplied motors like those used in wind tunnels.

[42] The significance of the Mazur barn lies in the approach. Coming to farming with no fixed ideas, Mazur analyzed the over-all problem starting with the relative economic advantages and disadvantages of a farmer in the Northeast. The soil dictated grass as the crop, the crop dictated livestock. The individual problems were then tackled simultaneously—soil, fertilizers, grasses, cutting methods, curing techniques, handling equipment, and finally effective storage and efficient feeding—all to the end of getting grass into animals twelve months a year by the most efficient system that research, engineering, and industry could devise. That is what is meant by integration, or rather the approach to it, and it can, indeed, bring American agriculture into its golden era.

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Commentary and Questions

The editors of *Fortune* frequently publish articles surveying a particular industry or type of business enterprise. Such a survey should select the pertinent facts and organize them into a pattern which will give the reader a concise yet reasonably complete and accurate picture of the business under review. In the article here reprinted, *Fortune* examines the business of agriculture, and examines it from a particular point of view: its progress toward the mechanization that has characterized most other segments of American economic life. The authors treat this topic with completeness and clarity, and they also maintain reader interest in what could be a dry subject.

1. The article can be divided for convenience of analysis into seven sections, beginning at pars. 1, 7, 11, 16, 20, 27, and 39. (These sections do not always coincide with the headings printed in the text.) Formulate a one-sentence summary of each section. Pick out the words and sentences at the beginning of each section that tie it to the preceding one, or at the end of a section that tie it to the one following. Find

examples of similar transitional devices within sections to tie together the individual paragraphs.

2. The last two sentences of par. 5, the last sentence of par. 7, and the first sentence of par. 8 all state approximately the same idea, yet each restatement has a particular purpose in relation to its context. What is it in each case? Par. 7 limits the subject of this article to just one phase of agriculture. Why is this limitation stated here instead of in the first paragraph? What is the function of the first section of the article (pars. 1-6)? Why doesn't the article begin with the section containing pars. 11-15, which deals with the beginnings of agricultural mechanization? Justify the order of the rest of the sections indicated in question 1.

3. Why didn't the authors of this article name it "The Mechanization of Agriculture"? Why in par. 24 did they use the term "graduate blacksmiths" instead of "men with inadequate technical training"? Would it have been more effective if in par. 30 they had replaced the two sentences about the turret lathe and hay baler with a statement like this: "A farmer gets fewer hours of use per unit cost out of his equipment than does a manufacturer"? Why are there so many exact figures and specific examples sprinkled through the text? What keeps them from being a pointless enumeration like a laundry list or a telephone book? Pick out some that seem to you particularly effective. Does the article leave the reader to draw his own generalizations, does it leave the reader to supply his own evidence, or does it blend generalizations and evidence?

4. In a good college-level dictionary, find the meaning and derivation of the following words: *integration* (par. 6), *Sumerian* (par. 8), *food* and *feed* (par. 9), *hydraulic* (par. 14), *prime mover* (par. 15), *stymied* (par. 21), *capitalist* (par. 30), *joker* (par. 31), *grossing* (par. 35), *bulldozer* (par. 39). On what level of style and vocabulary is this article written? Name a magazine whose style appeals to a less sophisticated audience than that of *Fortune;* to a more sophisticated audience. Suggest characteristics of this article—vocabulary, sentence structure, selection of detail—that make it suitable to the audience for which it was intended.

Suggestions for Writing

1. The machine and the home.
2. The hazards of farming.
3. Improvements that automobile manufacturers should make.

4. Explain the problems resulting from the introduction of machines (or a new method) in some occupation or industry you are acquainted with.

The Kick of an Electric Eel[*]

by CHRISTOPHER W. COATES

I

There are so-called lower creatures on earth today which can accomplish electrical feats beyond those of our most advanced laboratories. These living dynamos are all fishes and they hail from Africa, South America, and the temperate and tropical seas. How long they have been electrocuting their enemies and prey is unknown, but fossil fishes from deposits laid down over a hundred million years ago have organs so similar to the electric ones of living forms that there is no doubt they, too, possessed electric powers.

[2] Of all the electric fishes, the best known, both by scientists and by laymen, is the electric eel, and as self-appointed press agent to that fish I have extolled and demonstrated its powers to so many people that I have come to look upon it with paternalistic affection. Our first meeting was not auspicious, however, for in 1929, when I saw my first electric eel sluggishly swimming about at the old New York Aquarium and read on the label that such a four-foot animal could "knock down a horse," I was more than a little dubious. How could *one* animal produce a current? Where did the current go in the water and why didn't it electrocute the fish itself?

[3] The scientific literature on the subject did not dispel my doubts either. Although such illustrious scientists as Galen, Lord Cavendish, Sir Humphry Davy, and Michael Faraday had all worked on electric fishes, none of them offered a satisfactory explanation of the fishes'

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[*] From *The Atlantic Monthly*, October, 1947. By permission of the publishers and the author. Copyright 1947 by The Atlantic Monthly Company.

powers or even a measurement of their potency. Faraday did determine that externally the current from an electric eel flows from head to tail, but that was about all. I hoped I could do better.

4 My chance came a few years later when, as a member of the Aquarium staff and armed with assorted wires and lamps, I set out to trap the eel's current. I learned the hard way, first by being literally knocked off my feet when I attempted to pick up the fish in a net. Maybe it could down a horse! I gingerly noosed a bit of wire around the front part of the fish's elongate body, carefully holding on to the insulated portion, and did likewise with its tail. Now a lamp joining these two wires should light most brightly. But when I introduced the lamp into the circuit nothing at all happened, not even the slightest glow. With my first two fingers I touched the ends of the wires, but did not feel anything until I gently prodded the eel with a dry wooden handle of a net. The tingle in my hand proved that the fish was giving off electricity, but there was still not a sign of response from the lamp. What kind of electricity was this?

5 From here on my investigations took a most discouraging turn. I was convinced that until I could measure the eel's electricity, or at least prove that it *was* electricity, I was in no position to approach some hard-working physicist or biochemist and request that he devote some of his time to my pet interest. Nothing worked. Voltmeters, ammeters, and galvanometers either burned out or failed to register any "juice" at all, while electric lights both in water and out reacted not one bit. It seemed as if the only way to gauge this strange power was to feel it—a nerve-racking process. To the detriment of my pocketbook and the chagrin of my friends (who had lent me some of the instruments) I continued this unsuccessful experimenting intermittently for over a year.

6 Everyone who came into contact with the eel swore that it was electric—in fact many simply swore. One time I was trying to unload a whole hogshead of eels stored 'tween decks of a steamer. I had on a pair of heavy rubber gloves and we tried to move the hogshead towards the hatchway but made no progress at all, because the container was much too heavy for me to handle alone, and when the longshoremen tried to help, their bare hands were continually subject to shock. One of them, a giant of a man, said he would fix it and, hooking in his dog hook, gave a mighty heave. Over went the hogshead, out came the water and the eels in a slithery, slimy cascade, and up and down went all the people in a mad dance to get their feet off the steel deck.

Imagine fourteen writhing giant eels—some of them nine feet long—all giving off several hundred volts of electricity at the same time. I am still not sure how we managed to get them back into the hogshead and finally into the Aquarium.

7. The turning point in my investigations came one Saturday afternoon. I was trying out a new kind of lamp, a neon one—not the kind employed for advertising, but a small bulb or pip such as is used for a night light. The laboratory floor was liberally splashed with water and was covered by a maze of wires. Things were both literally and figuratively at loose ends, for the electric eel that was the subject of the experiments had been behaving badly. At times like these I try to remember the "Harvard law of animal behavior" [1] and laugh the trouble off, but this afternoon I was tired and discouraged and careless. Suddenly, I received the full shock of the eel, was thrown several feet into the air, and at the same time saw the neon pip burst into a dull orange glow. So intense was the jolt that I suspected the glow to be an illusion caused by the shock.

8. None too hopefully I traced out the circuit. Apparently, the pip was in simple direct circuit with the fish. I disturbed the eel with a rubber-gloved hand and again the light flickered on and off. All at once it dawned on me why I had been unable to register the current before. Ordinary electrical apparatus has an appreciable warm-up time, or lag, as it is called, before it begins to operate; commercial incandescent lamps have a lag of about one fiftieth of a second, for example. The electric eel's discharge was powerful enough, but of such short duration that it failed to excite the usual instruments and lights. I now also knew that the potential was at least eighty volts, because that was the minimum necessary to light such a neon pip.

II

9. *Electrophorus electricus,* as ichthyologists call it, looks like a caricature of an eel, being eel-shaped but completely lacking the sinuous grace and streamlined contours of the common fish-market variety. It is a much stouter creature, a specimen forty-eight inches long having a girth of over a foot. From its bluntly rounded head to the tip of its clumsy tail it is a more or less uniform dull gray in color, with the exception of an expanse of salmon red on its throat and chin. This area

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[1] That animals under the most exactly controlled experimental conditions do exactly as they please.

is yellowish green in eels from Venezuela. The Amazonian variety, which I am here describing, belongs to the same species. Its skin is naked and wrinkled, with small flattened papillae irregularly distributed over it. Two absurd little round fins stick out on either side of its head like the ears on a cartoon character. No fins at all are to be found on its back, but one long continuous fin stretches along the posterior four fifths of its underside. By undulating this the eel moves about, seemingly as easily backwards as forwards.

10 Practically nothing is known about the life history of the electric eel. For example, we are not absolutely positive whether the fish lays eggs or gives birth to live young, although our anatomical investigations strongly point to the former method of reproduction. No one has yet seen an electric eel's egg with the embryo eel developing in it.

11 Very small eels have never been brought to this country, but collectors in South America have reported finding specimens an inch or so long at the ebb of flood waters towards the end of the rainy season. They are reported as accompanying an adult fish, sex unknown, swimming in a more or less compact group of from fifty to five hundred about the head of the presumed parent. At this size they can produce a discernible amount of electricity, although no more than enough to tingle the cupped hands in which they are held. The collectors are quite certain that the adults swim over the inundated lowlands during the wet season to spawn, not returning to the streams and rivers until the receding floods force them back. Fish six or eight inches long apparently have left the parental brood and seem to be on their own. At this stage of development the amount of electricity per unit length of eel is higher than at any other, for while the average voltage per centimeter of a large eel may be eight or ten, that of a small one is nearer thirty for each centimeter of electric tissue. Since any voltage smaller than this would be inadequate to discourage enemies or to immobilize food, it seems reasonable to assume that the young eels remain under the care of their parent until they are large enough to protect themselves with their own discharges.

12 My first device for actually measuring the electricity of the eel was a simple series of neon pips connected with different resistances. With these I was able to make good estimates of the fish's voltage and found that it ranged to over three hundred and that Faraday had correctly determined the direction of the flow of current—from head to tail outside the body of the fish. Now I felt I had sufficient tangible evidence to approach some specialist for aid in further investigations. But bio-

physicists or physicists interested in animate things are few and far between, and I "peddled" my eel at a number of different institutions before I discovered one sufficiently interested in "eel-electricity" to work with me on it. Dr. Richard T. Cox, at that time Professor of Physics at New York University, was already up to his ears in nuclear physics, but he agreed to come down to the old Aquarium and try out on the eel the new portable model Cathode Ray Oscillograph he had recently received.

13 Like a neon light, the oscillograph has no appreciable lag, and this made it suitable for picking up the eel's discharges; best of all, it gave a graphic picture of them, providing the means whereby the electricity drew a picture of itself on a fluorescent screen. We came up with some amazing results. We recorded voltages up to 550 and found that the average discharge in water amounted to about forty watts—more than enough to stun a man or a horse. Each discharge lasted only two one-thousandths of a second, but the eel could send out four hundred or more per second!

III

14. That a creature of flesh and blood could energize so much seemed fantastic. However, we soon learned that the eel was largely composed of a very special kind of flesh: electric tissue. All its vital organs—stomach, intestine, liver, and so forth—are confined to the front fifth of its body, and even its vent is located under the chin; the remainder of its elongate body is principally occupied by three pairs of electric organs. Measured by volume, nearly half of the fish is electric tissue. These organs are, in turn, made up of smaller units, which are separated by thin walls of electrically resistant tissue and act very similarly to cells in a storage battery. They are the producers of the electricity, each one creating about one tenth of a volt. It is by hooking these tiny batteries together in series, so to speak, that the eel builds up its powerful discharge. Just how it does this, throwing thousands of "switches" on and off hundreds of times a second, we do not know. That is another of the mysteries of the electric eel.

15. The electric organs of the eel are in three pairs: the Large Organs, the Bundles of Sachs, and the Organs of Hunter. The Large Organs are apparently so called for want of a better name; the Bundles of Sachs were named for Dr. Carl Sachs, the naturalist and Amazon explorer, who devoted much time to the study of the eel in the 1870's; the Organs of Hunter were first described by Dr. John Hunter, the

eighteenth-century anatomist. The first of these is functionally the most important, and begins at about one fifth of the length of the fish behind the snout, continuing unchanged to a point about two-thirds the length of the fish behind the snout. From this place on, it tapers off and the resulting space is taken up by the Bundles of Sachs, which grow in size as the Large Organs diminish. The Bundles are responsible for the small discharges apparently used for locating food. The third pair of organs, those of Hunter, start at the same level as do the Large Organs and run to the end of the tail. In cross-section these are very small and their discharge is irregular and appears to be a function of that of the Large Organs. In relation to the area of the whole cross-section of the fish at a point midway from head to tail the electric organs occupy about 55 per cent. The appearance of electric tissue is different from any other. It is a flaccid whitish jelly and, by analysis, is composed of 92 per cent water.

16 Another mystery of the electric eel is its sensitivity to electric currents. When I finally got the fourteen eels—the ones that had been spilled out of their hogshead on the steamer deck—into a tank at the Aquarium, I noticed that the fish were aware of each other's discharges. (This was apparently the first time anyone had made any observations on more than one eel at a time—at least anyone who cared to talk about it.) The natural food of electric eels consists of fishes and other small aquatic animals which they stun before swallowing whole. Although they can be taught in captivity to eat cut-up raw fish and strips of beef, when first caught they will eat only live fish. While feeding these fourteen eels I discovered that when one fish discharged, stunning its prey, all the others in the tank came over, apparently to see what was going on, and they always went to the spot where the feeding eel had discharged, even if it had subsequently moved away. Apparently, eels were not only aware of one another's discharges but could nicely judge whence the current came.

17 Later on, Professor Cox and I "electrolyzed" a tankful of eels by dropping an electrode at each end of their tank and passing a strong current through the water. All the eels then gathered at the anode or positive pole. This was reasonable, because the head of a discharging eel is always positive in respect to the body behind it, and the head would be exactly where a hungry eel would want to go, when he sensed his brother eel shocking some prey.

18 We now wanted to find out whether captive electric eels behaved like wild ones, since our researches were more or less based on the

proposition that what the fish did in the Aquarium's tanks and laboratory was "normal." For this purpose Professor Cox established headquarters at the Goeldi Museum in Para at the mouth of the Amazon.[2] What he found confirmed our supposition: eels in Brazil behaved no differently from those in New York. However, he also discovered some electrical activity we hadn't noticed before. When lying quietly on the bottom, only moving occasionally to come to the surface for a gulp of air—the fish is an air-breather and drowns if kept under water—electric eels give off no electricity at all, but while "cruising about" they emit a series of weak discharges having a voltage of the order of fifty and at a rate of about fifty per second.

19 We first believed that these were warning discharges by which the eel kept potential enemies at a distance, and we were supported in this view by some observations on the eel's closest relatives. These are fishes of the family of gymnotid eels of which the electric eel is a member—elongate fishes, not at all related to the true, edible eel, but rather to the infamous piranhas of South American rivers and the radiant neon tetras of tropical-fish fame. Their popular name is knife fish, and a triangular carving knife, minus its handle, gives a good approximation of their body shape. None of these "cousins" to the electric eel has any electric powers, and all of them are more or less likely to have their long tails nipped off in the course of growing up. In fact, in some species it is almost impossible to find an intact specimen. Electric eels, on the other hand, almost never show such mutilations.

20 Undoubtedly the electric eel's discharges protect it, but the steady repetitions of minor discharges which it emits while swimming serve another purpose, quite as utilitarian. We discovered this use by carefully observing the behavior of a lone eel. Adult electric eels are virtually blind, since they develop cataracts when quite young, undoubtedly as a consequence of either their own electric shocks or those of their fellows. Nevertheless, when a food fish was put into its tank, the lone eel unerringly made for it. That the eel could see through the clouded lenses of its eyes seemed unbelievable; yet to be positive that sight was not being utilized, we repeated the test in nearly total darkness. Not only did the eel easily find the food fish in the dark, but it could even distinguish between a dead floating food fish and a piece of floating wood of approximately the same size.

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[2] A popular account of this expedition is to be found in Shelby Shackleford's *Electric Eel Calling* (Scribner's, New York, 1941).

21. Was the eel using its weak discharges to locate the fish? We couldn't stop the eel from broadcasting its current, so perhaps we could stop it from receiving that current back, and this we did. Arranged in definite patterns on both sides and the top of an electric eel's head are series of prominent pits. No such development is found in other gymnotids; therefore we thought these might in some way be associated with electric powers. We painted the head of our eel with an insulating lacquer, thus sealing off the pits from any possible electric impulses. Sure enough, that fish now failed to find any prey, living or dead, dropped into its tank, and simply swam aimlessly around. If the food fish was placed on its lips, however, it would gulp the meal down; and when the lacquer was removed, the eel once again easily located its food.

22 The details of this wonderfully acute eel "radar" have yet to be worked out; we believe it operates something like this. The minor discharges of the eel radiate out in all directions from the rear portion of its tail, the area in which they are produced. Whenever they come into contact with some solid object in the water, they are reflected back towards the sensory pits on the eel's head. By turning its head and discharging again, the eel can so orient itself that both left and right sides receive the reflected pulses simultaneously. Then it is pointed towards the reflecting object. When we realize that this locating of an object is done through a complex "background" of reflected impulses (from the walls of the tank, for example); that although the impulses travel at the speed of light, the eel can differentiate between differences of a few inches; and that the eel can make allowance for its own movement as well as that of living prey, the truly amazing character of this behavior is apparent. Nothing I have ever learned about this incredible creature has astounded me more.

IV

23. Electric fishes in general have played a long role in medical history, if not always an honorable one. No one knows how long the Indians of Surinam have employed the discharge of the electric eel in the treatment of disease. Even today in Brazil its flesh is considered by some to be a cure for rheumatism. One learned rheumatic doctor, however, told Professor Cox that he had eaten eel meat and, of the two, he considered rheumatism the more bearable. Dr. Peter Kellaway of McGill University has made a thorough study of the use of electric fishes in medicine, and the first record he found of the therapeutic

use of these creatures' electric powers was in A.D. 46 when one Scribonius Largus, a Roman physician, claimed the shock of the torpedo to be a cure for headache and gout.

> For any type of gout, a live black torpedo should, when the pain begins, be placed under the feet. The patient must stand on a moist shore washed by the sea and he should stay like this until his whole foot and leg up to the knee is numb. This takes away present pain and prevents pain from coming on if it has not already arisen.

24. The discharge of electric catfishes, too, has been utilized since ancient times by African tribes as a cure for various ailments, and one Moslem physician of the eleventh century thought that to place a live electric catfish on the brow of a person suffering an epileptic fit was beneficial. Electrotherapy was all the rage in Europe during the eighteenth century, and electric fishes vied successfully with Leyden jars and other shocking machines. When many electric eels were imported for this purpose, people flocked to them for relief from gout, rheumatism, and other ills. One London advertisement of 1777 gives a price of two shillings and sixpence per treatment of "natural" electricity from a "torporific eel."

25. The importance of the electric eel in present-day medical science rests not with its use as a shocking machine, but with its physiology. The physico-chemical reactions that take place in a nerve whenever an impulse passes over it are of prime importance to physiologists, and books have been written on this subject alone. A nerve is so small, however, that to determine quantitatively just what chemical reactions are taking place inside it is next to impossible. But the discharge of an electric eel is identical in nature with the passage of an impulse over a nerve, and since thousands of times more tissue is involved, the chemical changes can be much more easily measured.

26 Briefly, this is how such an investigation is made. A tiny piece of electric tissue is removed from a resting eel; then the fish is made to discharge and the amount of electricity produced is carefully recorded. Another small piece of electric tissue is now taken out. By chemically analyzing these two pieces, the changes which took place in the electric organ during the electric discharges are determined. This amount of change is then correlated with the amount of electricity produced. Studies like this have enabled Dr. David Nachmansohn of the College of Physicians and Surgeons to confirm certain

basic theories on the nature of nervous activity—a matter of fundamental importance to biologists, physicians, neurologists, and psychologists. And lest it be thought that such treatment of an eel injures it, let me point out that not only is the fish apparently unaware of the operation, since it does not discharge during the process, but so great are its regenerative capabilities that in less than a month not even a scar remains where the pieces of tissue were removed.

[27] One of the key substances in the production of electric energy in electric fishes, and in the production of a nervous impulse too, is cholinesterase. During the war, it became necessary to obtain large amounts of this rare chemical, which cannot yet be synthetically produced but must be extracted from living tissue. Ounce for ounce, the electric organs of the eel are far richer in cholinesterase than any other known tissue; so when the Chemical Warfare Service called for large amounts of it in order to study the effects of a new, deadly nerve gas they were investigating, scores of eels were sacrificed to provide them with the precious substance.

[28] Not only is the electric eel well known to scientists these days; it is familiar to laymen as well. Thousands of people witnessed a demonstration of its powers in the New York Zoological Society's building at the World's Fair, and even more now come to the Lion House in the Zoological Park in the Bronx to see it. But tall tales die hard: the one Humboldt told about the electric eel still circulates around, even in some high-class encyclopedias and natural history books. Humboldt reported that South American Indians capture the eels by driving horses into water containing the fish. When the eels have exhausted themselves shocking the horses, the Indians harpoon them and remove them from the water with impunity. Our investigations have proved that this notion is tommyrot, because an electric eel can't be exhausted so easily. If kept moist, so that it can breathe properly, it will discharge intermittently all day long without showing appreciable fatigue.

[29] Even after giving off electric shocks at its greatest rate, for twenty minutes, a five-minute rest is all that is needed to bring its activity back to normal. In fact, one of our leading battery manufacturers has been studying the eel, trying to pick up some pointers on current-production. One of the company's experts wistfully remarked to me the other day: "If we only could make batteries that would operate as efficiently as that eel!"

* * *

Commentary and Questions

The satisfaction of reader curiosity is the legitimate purpose of a good deal of explanatory writing. Most people have heard of electric eels without knowing very much about them. In this essay Christopher W. Coates, drawing on his experiences as curator and aquarist of the New York Aquarium, satisfies a certain amount of public curiosity in a lively example of informal exposition.

1. What is the significance of the questions Coates asked himself on first seeing an electric eel (par. 2)? Were his reactions the ones to be expected of other people? Why does he mention the failure of earlier scientists (par. 3)? Why does he emphasize the contrast, or seeming paradox, in pars. 5 and 6? Why is there so much narrative in pars. 2-8? Is the author's primary purpose to tell a story or to transmit information by telling how he himself discovered the information?

2. Why is par. 8 logically the end paragraph in the first section? What new kind of information is introduced in section II? Why does the author put this in section II instead of beginning with it in section I? Why are the exact measurements of eel voltage and current reported in the closing paragraphs of section II instead of immediately following par. 8? How is par. 12 connected with par. 11? Section III with section II? How is par. 16 linked to earlier paragraphs?

3. What is the dominant subject of section III? What method does the author use in pars. 16-21 to convey his information to the reader and make it seem lively? What is the dominant subject of section IV of the essay? Why is this information presented here instead of, say, in section II? Is there anything in par. 29 that echoes something in par. 1? Was this echo accidental?

4. What kind of reader is the author writing for? How much technical knowledge does he assume in the reader? Although the same person might well enjoy both essays, do you think that Coates and the editors of *Fortune* (pp. 103-116) were aiming at the same sort of interest? Defend your answer. Compare the styles of the two essays. Which one depends more on its skill in presentation and less on the intrinsic interest of its subject to hold the reader's attention?

Suggestions for Writing

1. If at some time you have been sufficiently interested in an unusual plant or animal to make an investigation of your own, explain

for the benefit of those lacking your knowledge what makes the plant or animal unusual.

2. Seeing an electric eel in an aquarium led Coates to make his investigation. Describe an event which resulted, perhaps unexpectedly, in your becoming interested in something new to you: it may have been an enforced visit to a museum or merely reading a suggested book.

*Winds That Blow Straight Up**

by WOLFGANG LANGEWIESCHE

1

A puff of wind comes down the street. An old newspaper stirs in the gutter, jumps up on the sidewalk, spirals up to second-story height and flaps about there for a moment; then, with a new burst of energy, it sweeps upward again, and when you last see it, it is soaring high above the roof tops, turning over and over, blinking in the sunlight.

2 The wind has picked up a piece of paper and blown it away. What of it? A generation ago, in philosophical discourse, one might have chosen this as an example of an event completely void of significance, completely chance. But not in the air age. The tiny occurrence demonstrates an important fact concerning the air ocean—one that is only now becoming the practical knowledge of practical air-faring men: there are winds which blow neither east nor west, neither north nor south, but in the third dimension: straight up.

3. These upward currents run in all sizes and strengths. Sometimes they are barely able to lift pieces of paper and bits of dust, and not very high at that. Sometimes they do not blow at all. Sometimes they

* From *Harper's Magazine*, August, 1945. By permission of the publishers and the author. Copyright 1945 by Harper & Brothers.

are upward hurricanes which blow clear up to the stratosphere and would be strong enough to lift a man. There is a story going around the airports now that a man was caught in such an updraft, after bailing out of a disabled airplane; and that the updraft carried him up and killed him by cold and lack of oxygen before he came down far from the scene of the wreck. The story is probably apocryphal; it is told sometimes of Europe, sometimes of the South Pacific, and can't be pinned down. But it is not impossible; the laws of chance say that it will happen someday.

4. These upward winds answer an amazing variety of questions—some of them vague questions perhaps, but some of them very old.

5. The soaring of birds, for example—how does an eagle, a buzzard, a hawk manage to fly on out-stretched wings, without flapping, apparently without effort? Now in retrospect one wonders that this puzzle did not drive men crazy. Yet the answer is simple. The bird seeks out one of these upward winds and lets himself be blown upward, precisely as that piece of paper was blown upward.

6. Had Leonardo da Vinci seen the plain evidence of these upward winds—the flying leaves, the soaring birds—the air age might have begun in his time, and the airplane developed along with the sailing vessel. For these upward winds also explain the soaring of gliders. And a glider is nothing but a wood-and-fabric replica of a hawk; there is nothing in it that Leonardo could not have designed, built, and flown. It used to be that motorless airplanes could fly only over carefully selected sites, where a steep hillside faced a strong wind and deflected it upward. But today, with no new equipment but a clear mental image of these upward winds, men can fly without motors for hundreds of miles across country, even across flat plains, without machine power of any kind, riding on these updrafts.

7. The updrafts also are an important ingredient of all weather. In fact, it is but a small exaggeration to say that they *are* the weather. They explain why some days are clear, others smoky, still others showery. They account for cloud shapes; one kind of cloud particularly—the white puffy kind you find on a summer afternoon—is nothing but an updraft become visible. And the updrafts explain thunderstorms: by modern understanding, a thunderstorm is nothing but an updraft of terrific strength; the rain and the hail, the thunder and the lightning are merely by-products of this upward rush of air. Thus the puff of wind which lifts a piece of paper is nothing but a thunderstorm in embryo.

II

8. What makes the air rise in these updrafts is heat. The air is not being blown from below, nor being sucked from above; it rises because it is warmer than the surrounding air and hence less dense and hence buoyant—it *bubbles* up. You have seen those shimmering, trembling "heat waves" over a sun-heated pavement: those waves are really blobs of air that have been heated by contact with the warm ground, have thus become light and are ballooning away; and this sort of air is the stuff which feeds those upward winds.

9 These winds themselves—if we could see them, perhaps on a summer afternoon when they are most nicely developed—would appear as giant columns, mile-high, standing all over the countryside at intervals of miles; chimney-like shapes within which warm air is flowing upward. One such chimney might stand over a little town, draining the warm-air bubbles off its pavements and roofs. Another might stand over a sunny hillside; still another above some dark, plowed field; any particularly hot spot of ground is likely to cause an updraft. One chimney might stop spouting for a while and fade out. Another might form nearby and start blowing. But always these winds would be, not a general widespread upward drift of all the air, but narrow, fast-blowing jets.

10 That's why pilots did not become clearly conscious of these updrafts until the middle '30's, although anyone who rides in an airplane will feel these updrafts often. On a day when the updrafts blow, an airplane is bound simply by chance to run into one every minute or so. It then gets an upward shove, felt by the occupants as a bump. But because the updraft is so narrow, the airplane flies out of it, usually a couple of seconds later. The sudden fading of lift then makes the occupants feel as if they were dropping. People used to call that an "air pocket," and used to imagine that they had fallen into a hole in the air. Thus, through three decades of flying there had been plenty of experience with updrafts. Any old-timers remembered some quite powerful, big updrafts: "There I was, with my throttle clear back and my nose down, and still going up a thousand feet per minute!" And they knew also that certain types of clouds tended to suck you in as you passed underneath. But pilots, proud of their motors, did not see any use in such commotions, nor any pattern; they were merely annoyed by them and called them "rough air."

11. As for the glider enthusiasts, they were indeed always looking for updrafts that would hold them up. But they looked for them over sites where an ordinary wind—a level-blowing wind—was caught in a trick configuration of terrain and forced to flow up a steep hillside. Such "slope soaring" had first been proved possible by Orville Wright, in a little-known exploit in 1911, 12 years before the famous German gliding meets on the Rhone, when he soared a glider for 13 minutes over the dunes of Kitty Hawk. In the '20's it was proved again and again, and pilots stayed up in such slope winds literally for days. It finally ceased to make much sense, even as a sport, for it was easy as shooting fish, and you could fly, by this technique, only back and forth, back and forth over some carefully selected hill.

12 But all the time the hawks and buzzards knew better. The trick by which the soaring bird plays the updrafts is amazingly simple: when he enters an updraft, he has sense enough not to fly out on the other side. Instead, he banks around and circles—thus staying within the updraft. This technique is particularly obvious in the case of the turkey buzzards of the South because they do their hunting at low altitude, and at low altitude the updrafts are narrowest so that the bird can sometimes stay within them only by flying quite steeply banked, in tight and accurate circles. Higher up, where hawks and eagles fly, the updrafts are wider, so that those birds' circling is less steeply-banked and less regular.

13 Not until the early '30's did glider pilots begin to see the light: that a glider, too, flown by a hawk's technique, can fly on these heat-updrafts, and that it therefore can fly anywhere, even over plains, on any day when the updrafts are blowing. Today, a sailplane is launched from any ordinary airport. An automobile pulls it into the air with a long rope, much as a boy launches a kite by running with it against the wind. At 800 feet or so, the pilot pulls a lever which releases the tow rope. He then glides along, steadily losing altitude of course, just as an airplane glides with the engine throttled; and he hopes to hit a bump. If he fails to hit one, he keeps on coming down for a forced landing; and then is towed up for another try. If he does hit one—it may be so gentle that it can't be felt but only shown by a sensitive instrument—he lays the sailplane over into a steeply-banked turn and then jockeys so as to stay within the updraft. Thus, circling like a hawk, he is slowly, steadily carried upward. And so new is the idea of these currents, even today, that his delight is flavored with a strong admixture of unbelief.

III

14. The updrafts don't blow every day all day. They depend on the weather, just as they are in turn the weather's most important mechanism.

15 For example, it happens several times each month (in the course of world-wide, almost rhythmical commotions of the air ocean) that a flood of cold air from the polar regions sweeps southward across the northern United States, when the pavements, the fields, and the woods are still warm from a previous warm spell. Then the whole country acts as one giant hot-spot; the ground everywhere warms the air which comes in contact with it. The entire bottom layer of the atmosphere becomes light and buoyant, and updrafts bubble up everywhere, practically at random. On such a day you can see factory smoke being caught in the updrafts. Instead of flowing away in a smooth trail, it breaks up into individual puffs which bubble upward as they drift away with the wind. That's how those extra-clear days come about: the smoke from forest fires, factories, railroad yards, and kitchens pours forth on such a day just as on any other. But the updrafts carry it up with them and wash it out into the immense spaces of the upper air, where it disappears. Thus an especially clear day is usually an especially cool one. By the same token, the lively updrafts which keep the air extra-clear also make it extra-rough for flying.

16. Again it happens several times each month that a wave of warm air from the Caribbean streams north across the continent. By comparison with such tropical air, the ground of the northern U. S. is cool —even in summer. Thus the entire bottom layer of the atmosphere is then cooled by the ground. It becomes heavy and wants to stay at the bottom. Even a hot-spot—such as a city or a sunny hillside—is then not hot enough to produce light air. No updrafts can develop.

17. On such a day factory smoke drifts lazily from the stacks, hangs about low, even sinks to the ground. And you soon begin to miss the scavenging action of the updrafts. The lower layers of the atmosphere fill with smoke. The stockyards can be smelled downtown. Looking down a city street you can see the bottom-heaviness of the air—motor fumes and dust are thick at street level, making a bluish-gray, ill-smelling haze, while even at 10th-story height the air is clearer.

18. Three days of such up-and-down calm in the atmosphere, and you can't quite tell whether the day really means to be "good" or "bad." Straight up, the sky may be blue, but toward the horizon it is gray or

yellow. A solid week of up-and-down calm—a rare occurrence—and the air becomes so smoke-laden that your eyes smart. The sun seems yellow. Most flying stops. The "smog" of St. Louis comes about largely that way, and so does the traditional London fog.

19. In the South, such days are less likely to develop—at least in summer. The ground is warmer, and updrafts do develop, even in this tropical air, during the hot hours of the day. They clear the air of smoke and water vapor, keep the sky blue, and toward afternoon make big, puffy clouds, showers, and thunderstorms. That's why the Southern summer, even though hotter, is actually so much more pleasant than the steamy season of New York, Pittsburgh, or St. Louis.

20. Another typical sort of day is caused by an "inversion": the ground is warm enough and the air is cool enough to *start* updrafts. But a few thousand feet aloft there lies some warmer air; and such a warm layer forms an invisible lid which stops the updrafts short.

21. You have seen an updraft run against such a lid and die. The peculiarly-shaped smoke cloud of Mt. Vesuvius—so often photographed and painted—is caused by just that condition. This smoke is, of course, nothing but a very hot updraft rising from an unusual sort of hot-spot. On most days it rises practically straight up in the narrow, chimney-like shape typical of updrafts to a height of a few thousand feet above the mountain's top. At that height it stops rising abruptly and spreads out level across the Bay of Naples. The explanation is simple: on most days the lower air layers in that region consist of cool, Mediterranean Sea air; compared to such cool air the smoke is warm, has good buoyancy, and rises briskly. The higher air layers consist of warm African desert air; compared to such warm air the smoke is cool, has no buoyancy, and cannot rise.

22. This condition is called an inversion because normally, and on the average, the higher up you go the colder the air. That's why mountain resorts are cool, and why aviators wear fur clothing. A layer of relatively warm air aloft is thus a reversal, locally at that altitude, of this general arrangement.

23. Such inversions are almost always present at some altitude. If you watch for them, you will often see ordinary U. S. working smoke assume the Mt. Vesuvius pattern. Sometimes the inversion is very low. During a summer night, for example, the ground cools off and in turn cools the lowest layer of air. At daybreak, then, the smoke from the kitchen fire may rise only 20 feet above the roof of a farm, and there hit that invisible lid and spread. This "morning inversion" has re-

cently caused some concern at Wichita, Kansas. Normally Wichita burns natural gas which is smokeless. But in the new housing, hastily built for B-29 workers, coal ranges had to be installed because of wartime shortages. First thing you knew, the smoke from innumerable breakfast fires, spreading out underneath the morning inversion, formed a low blanket across the airport. The airliners had to pass up their stops, and the B-29's had to postpone their morning's test flying.

24. These morning inversions are tenuous things, broken up by the wind and the sun before most people are up and around. More persistent inversions often lie a mile or so up in the air, for days at a time. Such an inversion is characteristic, for example, of the tropical, moist air masses which spread from the Caribbean Sea across the U. S.—in summer our typical summer air. It is what makes the usual summer days of the Atlantic seaboard—those hot, muggy days which are almost gray in the morning, turn blue and a little clearer in the early afternoon, and gray and smoky again at night. It is that mile-high inversion holding down the industrial smoke, the dust, and the moisture. Only during the early afternoon is the ground heated enough so that it starts updrafts hot enough to pierce that inversion and thin out the pollution a little. And the whole stagnant condition won't break until an entirely new air mass, cooler and without a strong inversion, sweeps the old one away.

25. From the ground, you feel that high-up, oppressive blanket more than you see it. But from the air a strong inversion sometimes makes a dramatic sight. It looks like a lake. A flat, sharp, grayish surface spreads in all directions all the way out to the horizon, completely, mathematically level. This is the top surface of the murk. Sometimes this haze level is so clearly defined that you can let your plane wheels trail in the smoke, as you might let your hand into the water from a rowboat, while the rest of your airplane is in the clear air. Looking down through the smoke, you see the ground dimly, as you might see the bottom of a lake. Above you, the air is clear and the sky dark blue, almost black; just because all the smoke, dust, and vapor is being held down, the upper air is almost completely clean.

IV

26. Even on a day with no such lid aloft, the updrafts still don't keep going up and up, mile after mile. Every updraft has a built-in brake which tends to bring it to a stop.

27. As soon as each warm air bubble starts away from the ground, it

begins to cool. What cools it is not, as one might think, its contact with the cooler air aloft. Warm air and cool air never mix well, and never heat or cool each other appreciably. That's why there is such a thing as a cool draft in a heated room: some cool air current stubbornly refuses to mix with the rest of the air, or to be warmed by its warmth. In the same way, the updraft-air stubbornly remains a separate entity. What cools it is a process akin to mechanical refrigeration. Each updraft bubble, as it balloons upward, runs into lower and lower atmospheric pressures. Hence it expands, and this expansion cools it. This is another general fact about air—it always heats up when you compress it, and cools when you let it expand. You know this if you have ever felt a tire pump get hot, or if you have ever released pressure from a tire and felt the icy coldness of the escaping air.

28. The soaring pilot experiences both—the expansion and the cooling. The expansion, by making the updrafts bigger in diameter, makes them easier to find, easier to stay in than they are near the ground. Once a soaring pilot has climbed a few thousand feet, he can easily hop from updraft to updraft, and thus fly across country. As for the cooling, it soon makes him shiver, and it also makes him wonder. Though the currents he is riding are technically warm air chimneys, they can feel mighty cool.

29. This sounds like a paradox, but it isn't. The same climb which expands the updraft air and cools it also takes it up into the colder air layers aloft. Compared to this colder air, even the cooled-off updraft is then still warm and still has lift. Near the ground, it was hot air rising through warm air. Higher up, it is cool air rising through cold air. Still higher up, it may be cold air rising through ice-cold air. But eventually, the expansion cooling wins out. Eventually the rising air finds itself cooled to the same temperature as the air which then surrounds it. It loses its lift and comes to a stop—usually about a mile or so above the ground. The brake has worked.

30. And a good thing, too. If all the updrafts always kept going up and up, mile after mile, the atmosphere would be a witches' cauldron of perpetual thunderstorms and the earth would be uninhabitable.

31. But sometimes the brake is taken off. And then—look out.

V

32. It begins mildly enough with a little cloud. The updraft consists of moist air, and somewhere on its way up, expansion makes it so cool that it can no longer hold all the water vapor which it held easily when

it was warm, near the ground. The water condenses out in the form of tiny droplets, so small that they don't fall, but float like dust. These droplets, dancing on the updraft and glistening white in the sun—that's a cloud.

33 Thus on a bright, blue summer morning about 10 o'clock, puffs of white cloud often appear quite suddenly all over the sky, all at the same altitude. Those are the updrafts reaching, after a morning's climb, the altitude where they start clouding; and from then on, until late afternoon, they keep growing bigger and higher.

34 Each of these clouds, then, is the top-most visible spearhead of an updraft. At the seashore or on the Great Lakes on a typical summer day banks of white, towering clouds build up everywhere inland; but over the water the sky is blue all day. That's because the land is hot and sends up updrafts, but the water is cool and does not.

35 Right here, another of those old, vague puzzles explains itself—the long ocean voyages of some Pacific islanders. How do they manage to find a tiny island, across hundreds of miles of ocean, without sextants, chronometers, or star tables? Here is the answer: The ocean is cool and sends up no updrafts. In it the island, sun-heated, forms a hot-spot. Moist ocean air which flows across it heats up, becomes light, bubbles up and turns into cloud. Thus a bank of cumulus clouds floats high above the island throughout the day, while the surrounding sky is clear. A low, palm-studded island is visible to a man in a boat for perhaps 8 miles; but the cloud acts as a beacon, and marks the location of the island for perhaps 80 miles around!

36 Now, as a cloud, the updraft is still an updraft. True, it is now cool, foggy air; but the clear air which surrounds it up there is downright cold. Compared to this cold air, the cloud is warm. It is buoyant. It still wants to go up.

37 On some days the clouds can't make it. On some days the clouds run out of moisture and die. On some days they run into a strong inversion and flatten out. On some days they form so close to one another that they make a solid deck which then keeps the sun from the ground. A pilot knows as many varieties of cumulus as a botanist knows of orchids. There is *cumulus humilis, c. castellatus, c. mammatus, fracto-cumulus, strato-cumulus, cirro-cumulus, cumulo-nimbus* and so forth. But one thing all these clouds have in common: They *want* to go up. For this account, we pick a day with warm, moist air and no very strong inversion.

38 On such a day, the clouds keep growing upward until by mid-

afternoon they are towering mountains. Looking up straight from the ground you may not appreciate just how high they are, because in that perspective you see only the base. But they show up clearly out toward the horizon, where you see them in side view. The typical cumulus cloud has a mathematically flat base—and the bases of all the clouds in the sky are at exactly the same height. That is the level at which the updraft-air turns foggy. Above that level, each cumulus cloud looks remarkably like the billows of smoke rising from a bonfire. And that's not chance. What the two air shapes have in common is that hot, live air is pushing its way up through cold, inert air.

39. For something paradoxical happens to the updraft once it has turned into cloud: it develops heat within itself. It is as if a fire had been lit within the cloud, *driving* it upward. This invisible fire is really sun-heat—but old, preserved sun-heat. Weeks ago the sun shone on some tropical sea or on some hot, moist field, and evaporated bits of water into the air. In this hidden form, then, as water vapor, sun-heat is contained in the air, although you can't feel it as warmth. The air is then caught in an updraft, and expansion-cooled by its rise. The vapor is turned back into water and in the process the sun-heat is freed again and now, as actual feelable warmth, goes back into the air. It isn't enough to make the air actually warmer; but it is enough to keep it from getting as cold as its expansion-cooling would otherwise make it.

40 And that means the brake is now off! Up to the clouding stage the updraft was continually being braked to a stop by its own internal expansion-cooling. Now that the cloud-making has begun, the uncorking of this preserved sun-heat counteracts the expansion-cooling. The cloud still cools as it rises, but at a much slower rate. Now, as it penetrates into even cooler layers of even higher air, it finds itself, by *comparison* with that cold altitude air, more and more of a hot air balloon. The higher it rises, the more lift it gains. The more lift it gains, the faster and farther it wants to rise: it becomes a runaway.

41 To the pilot of a sailplane, a well-developed cumulus is a beautiful sight because it marks a really live updraft—a sort of spiral staircase to the upper air. Even well below the cloud, he can feel its lift. As he circles, the cloud's flat, dark underside rapidly becomes larger above him, and then all of a sudden the air around him turns into mist, and he is in it.

42. Once he is inside, the cloud mauls him roughly. He is flying blind. Water is running in rivulets on his windshield. The thing which seemed so soft and vapory from the outside is vicious and rough in-

side. Vast powers are on the rampage. Hard, slamming gusts shoulder him upward. He has to work hard to keep control, but all the time he is going up—sometimes at the rate of an express elevator.

43 If a cumulus cloud grows high enough, it produces a shower. "Yes, sure," you might think, "with all that vapor turning back to water, it's bound eventually to drop out." But it isn't so simple—nothing about the weather is simple. The water droplets which make up the cloud are much too small for rain. It takes ten thousand of them to make one raindrop. And for fundamental reasons of physics, having to do with vapor pressure, surface tension, etc., the droplets of a cloud do not run together voluntarily or even by chance. They stay apart. Considering their minute size, they are almost as far apart as the moon from the earth.

44 Yet the cloud does eventually drop out a lot of rain, and drops it with a bang, suddenly. Here is how. As the up-flowing air reaches higher and higher, clouding as it goes, it finally becomes so cold that it no longer makes cloud droplets. Instead, ice crystals materialize directly out of the air. In summertime the updraft has to go at least three miles up before it will be so cold. It is then *still* a hot-air current—for the clear air around it up there is way below freezing.

45 And the ice crystals do it. As the cloud's turbulence mixes crystals and droplets together, the water droplets which could not coalesce with one another can adhere to the much colder ice. Each ice crystal becomes the nucleus of a raindrop; and heavy with the water adhering to it, it drops.

46 That's why a shower comes so suddenly: just as there was one certain moment when the updraft first turned into cloud, so there is one certain moment when it reaches the crystal-making level. And at that moment, the rain breaks loose.

VI

47. The final, most spectacular stage of an updraft is the thunderstorm.

48. Seen from the ground as it goes over you, a thunderstorm is merely a confused sequence of events—low, dark clouds, puffs of wind, rain and hail, thunder and lightning. But sometimes you can see one on the horizon, in side view. Or you may see one from the air—clear of the low cloud-scud which usually hides the storm-cloud itself from the ground observer. Then you see that a thunderstorm is really one monstrous thing—a thing which has its own characteristic shape—just as a

breaking wave, a tornado, a flame each has a shape of its own. It is a cumulus cloud of gigantic proportions and ferocious energy.

49. What drives this giant cloud upward is the same invisible fire which drives an ordinary cumulus cloud; the hidden heat, contained in water vapor, suddenly turned back into actual heat.

50. What makes it so ferocious is a particular set of conditions. The most important of these is that the air be warm and muggy. If it were warm and *dry*, it would not contain enough of that hidden heat-energy, because it would not contain enough water vapor. If it were moist, but *cool*, it would not actually contain much water. That's why thunderstorms occur almost always in warm, muggy air.

51 Thus in a thunderstorm this heat comes flowing in such vast waves and so suddenly that the driving fire resembles more nearly an explosion. A motion picture of a thundercloud's growth, reeled off in fast motion, actually looks remarkably like a slow-motion picture of an explosion!

52 Essentially then, what happens in a thunderstorm is the story you already know. The characteristic difference lies in the incredible violence of the updraft. The usual shower mechanism triggers off a violent rain, but the updraft catches many of the raindrops and won't let them fall. That is, the drop keeps falling and falling through the air; but the air itself rushes upward about as fast as the drop can fall.

53 But a raindrop, falling through air, is not a stable thing. When it first starts falling, it takes on a nice streamlined shape—the "tear drop" shape which much resembles an airplane's fuselage. Thus it slips easily through the air and picks up speed. But at the higher speed, the air then presses it out of shape. It flattens out, becomes short and squat. For that shape it is then falling too fast: it splatters itself into bits.

54 This tearing of rain from rain has an effect which is electrically analogous to pulling a sweater off yourself, or a cellophane wrapper off a cigarette package: as you tear apart what had been together, the small, split-off fragments of each raindrop come away charged with "negative" electricity; the main part of each drop itself keeps the "positive" charge. The small fragments, being lighter, are blown back up into the cloud. The main parts of the drops, being heavier, soar around in the lower part of the cloud and eventually fall to the ground. Thus high tension is built up between the upper and lower parts of the cloud, and between the cloud and the ground. Lightning then jumps across as a gigantic spark.

[55] Often the updraft inside a thunderstorm is so strong that the raindrops are blown clear up into the icy top of the cloud—perhaps 4 miles above the ground. Up in that sub-zero region, the drop freezes into a chunk of solid ice—a hailstone. The stone finally is kicked out of the lively part of the updraft and starts falling. But further down in the cloud, in the rainy part, it is often caught again in a renewed upward gust and soars upward again. Meteorologists have dissected freshly-fallen hailstones and found that they consist of many layers, onion-like. This suggests that a hailstone must have taken many trips up into the ice zone to freeze, down into the water zone of the cloud to pick up more water, and up again to freeze the water on as another coat. That's how the big ones are made that kill sheep and wreck car roofs. Wind tunnel tests show that to make an object of such weight and size soar upward takes a wind of 200 mph—straight up!

[56] That's the dynamite packed in the puff of wind which picks up a piece of paper.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

To explain complex scientific or technical facts and processes in terms that the untrained layman can understand is not easy. It requires that the explainer understand not only the technicalities of the subject but also the techniques of making himself clear. Wolfgang Langewiesche has written a number of articles on aviation and weather which demonstrate that he has this firm grip on both facts and prose.

In writing about the winds that blow straight up, Langewiesche has one marked disadvantage and one marked advantage. The disadvantage is that the physical processes of the weather are distinctly complicated, demanding for full scientific explanation a knowledge of hydrostatics, thermodynamics, and higher mathematics; so that to make them understandable to the general public requires an immense and judicious simplification. The advantage is that everyone has actually observed the weather at close range; it is an everyday phenomenon. Notice what skillful use the author of this essay makes of the reader's own observation and experience to illuminate and make simple the essentially complicated processes he is explaining.

1. What is the purpose of section I? Is the introduction to the subject made by general statement or by concrete example? How does the author suggest the amount of power latent in winds that blow

straight up? At what points in this opening section does the author appeal to the reader's direct experience of the effects of these upward winds?

2. What is the relation of par. 4 to pars. 5, 6, and 7? Of pars. 4 and 5 to section II? Of par. 7 to sections III, IV, V, and VI? In section II the author first explains the cause of updrafts. Why is the explanation here instead of in section I? In what section does the author continue his explanation by showing what makes updrafts keep going or slow down? Why is this continuation put where it is instead of earlier or later? Give two good reasons for putting the section on thunderstorms last: one connected with the logical order of explanation and one with the need for climax. Can you find similar reasons for the order of topics within section VI?

3. What connects the last paragraph of section I with the first, and the last paragraph of the essay with both? What is the effect of these connections? Why does the word *updrafts* appear in either the first or second sentence of every section from II through VI? Why doesn't it occur in the first paragraph? Would this article have been more likely to attract readers if it had been called "Updrafts"?

4. The author of this essay makes very good use of metaphors and similes—comparison, implied or expressed, between what he is explaining and something vivid in the reader's experience. For example, heated air is said to *bubble* up and to go *ballooning* away (par. 8); the updrafts are called *columns, chimneys,* and *fast-blowing jets* (par. 9). Find a few other such comparisons and consider their effectiveness in making the author's explanations clear and vivid.

5. Is the author of this article trying to write a textbook chapter in meteorology? What is he trying to do? How successful is he? Defend your answer.

Suggestions for Writing

1. What happens when a lake freezes.
2. The effects of a severe storm in my home town.
3. How an automobile engine works.
4. How a plant grows.

The Industrial Revolution *

by NORMAN WARE

The Industrial Revolution was a series of changes resulting from inventions in the methods of production and transportation of goods and services which reached a point of high acceleration toward the end of the eighteenth century and culminated in the perfecting of the steam engine which revolutionized the power factor in the economy. Men differ from the lower animals in ability to use tools. Tools are instruments, more or less complicated, which serve as additional and more effective extensions of human effort or labor. A tool, however, has serious limitations in that it is incapable of productivity beyond the labor or human power that operates it.

2. In common parlance a machine is nothing more than a complicated tool. If it is operated by human or animal power, it is limited as is a tool by the limits of the labor that operates it. A dictionary definition of a machine is "Any device consisting of two or more resistant, relatively constrained parts which may serve to transmit and modify force and motion so as to do some kind of work."

3. Thus a machine differs from a tool in having resistant parts, but the power used may be either animal or nonanimal. For our purpose it is necessary to distinguish between these two sorts of power, because the revolutionary thing about the Industrial Revolution was not that it found new tools or machines, but that it made a new machine that was worked by steam, a power that had never before been harnessed to productive effort and is almost unlimited in its effectiveness and flexibility. What we have, then, at the center of the Industrial Revolution is a new power machine and a new source of power, and nothing that ever happened to production since the discoveries of antiquity, of fire, the wheel, and the domestication of animals had anything like the same profound effect.

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* From Chapter 11 of *Wealth and Welfare: The Backgrounds of American Economics* (New York: William Sloane Associates, Inc., 1949). By permission of the publishers. Copyright 1949 by Norman Ware.

4. The Industrial Revolution, then, was in two parts:

A series or cluster of mechanical inventions which emerged together within a few years, and a large number of improvements on these and other machines that greatly stimulated production but lacked basic newness.

The steam engine, which added a new, more efficient and more flexible power, capable of being applied to other mechanisms and of raising productivity to unheard-of heights.

5 Nonhuman power was of course as old as the domestication of animals, but animal power is limited by the physical displacement of the animals themselves; it is impossible to put an unlimited number of horses to a plough. And there are comparable limitations on the use of wind and water power due to the unaccountability of the wind and water. But steam power, once the technical difficulties of confining and applying it are overcome, is almost unlimited in its effectiveness, so that no operation is too large to be powered by it, and it can be generated anywhere that fuel can be provided. Later additions to this sort of power, like electricity and explosive gases, have continued the tempo of the Industrial Revolution through the nineteenth century, but never before or since 1785 has an economy been given so great a stimulus and been so transformed as was the case in England when James Watt's steam engine was finally perfected.

6 The Industrial Revolution took its first halting steps in the textile industry with the new spinning and weaving machinery driven by water power. This encouraged what was for the time a considerable concentration of this industry, for it drew it out of the homes and into the small mills scattered along quiet streams through the countryside. But the real acceleration and concentration in textiles, as in every other industry, did not take place until the steam engine supplanted the water wheel and metal replaced wood. The steam engine made it possible to spin and weave and to perform any mechanical operation anywhere, and it came into general use in textiles between 1825 and 1840. The revolution in transportation came next, and finally the making of machines to make machines, both completely dependent on the steam engine.

The Steam Engine

7. During the Renaissance a book by Hero of Alexander, written in the fifth century B.C., was published in many languages and in eight editions. This book described the use of steam in an engine and the jobs, none of them industrial, to which the engine might be put—

changing water into wine, opening temple doors, and pouring libations to the gods. This illustrates the fact that the most important discovery is of no value unless the general state of the arts and the ways of life are receptive, so as to make the discovery of real importance. If there is no important thing to be done by an invention, the discovery of a superior way of doing unimportant things will remain unimportant. The steam engine was revolutionary not simply because it was new, but because of a situation in western Europe that put a great price on the production of goods in quantity and with dispatch. The Cornish tin and copper mines, for instance, which had been exploited before the Romans came, were being flooded and needed a more powerful pump than the Newcomen engine to salvage much wealth needed in industry generally.

8. In the first half of the seventeenth century the second Marquis of Worcester invented an engine to raise water by steam power; and a French Protestant doctor, Dionysius Papin (1647-1712), forced by his religion to leave France, made discoveries in England and Germany in the use of steam. Papin learned that when steam cooled and condensed it created a vacuum into which air rushes, so that not only the expansion of steam but the suction created by the vacuum when steam cooled could produce power and drive a piston up and down a cylinder. Papin failed to make a working engine for industrial use, but he produced a steam-driven boat which was destroyed by Münden boatmen on its way to London to be tested.

9. The inventor of the first steam-pumping engine employed in industry was Thomas Savery (1650-1715). It was called "The Miners' Friend" and was patented in 1698. It was not powerful enough to handle the amount of water found in most mines, and was used for garden displays chiefly. It was superseded by the invention of Thomas Newcomen (1663-1729). The Newcomen pumping engine was operated by alternate injections of steam and cold water by the operation of cocks turned by hand. Humphrey Potter, a boy whose job it was to turn these cocks, seeking leisure for more congenial uses, connected the cocks by string to the lever beam so that they opened and shut automatically. By 1769 there were nearly one hundred Newcomen engines working in the northern coal mines of England, but they were expensive to run because the cylinder had to be reheated after each cooling off with water to create a vacuum.

10. In 1765 James Watt, an instrument maker of Glasgow, and an inventive genius of the first order, at the age of twenty-nine found a

solution for the problem of keeping the cylinder of the steam engine hot while condensing steam to make a vacuum. He used a separate condenser. Then he added an airtight cover to the cylinder and encased the whole in a larger vessel and filled the space between the two with steam.

11. Watt worked in the University of Glasgow because he was not a full-fledged journeyman and could not work at his trade in the city. He was able to borrow some money from Dr. Black, professor of chemistry in the university, and he built a model. More money was needed, and the whole project was almost dropped before Watt met Dr. Roebuck, an English physician who had started the Carron Iron Works in Scotland, and a friend of Dr. Black. Roebuck had leased a number of coal mines and was unable to keep them dry. He agreed to pay Watt's debts to the amount of one thousand pounds, supply additional capital, and pay for the patent for a two-thirds interest in the invention. A patent was taken out in 1769, but the first trial engine failed to work. Dr. Black again came to the rescue, and again the project almost failed for want of funds, and Watt considered an offer to go to Russia on a, for him, munificent salary as inventor extraordinary for the Crown. For the interest in invention was general, not only in England but throughout Europe, and in Russia especially. Catherine the Great was a collector of celebrities. She had Voltaire at her court, and the physiocrat Mercier de la Rivière, but without important results, and Watt escaped by the intervention of Matthew Boulton, a hardware manufacturer of Birmingham and a creditor of Roebuck, who had failed.

12. Boulton was the prototype of the high-power business enterpriser and had himself invented a gadget, an inlaid steel shoe buckle, that appealed to the gentry, which made him a lot of money. In 1762 he set up his iron works in Soho just north of Birmingham and employed about a thousand people making hardware. His plant was a show place of the time; it was visited by Catherine of Russia and it made metal vases copied from antique pottery for Queen Charlotte. Boulton needed new power for his enterprise. His grinding mill was operated by a water wheel, and this had to be supplemented by horses in the dry season when the stream dried up. He had corresponded with Benjamin Franklin and had sent him a model of the Newcomen engine. And Franklin, with his usual or unusual acumen, had suggested smoke consumption, which would not only have increased productivity but would have saved many a countryside and London

and Pittsburgh from smog. "All that is necessary," wrote Franklin, "is to make the smoke of the fresh coals pass descendingly through those that are already thoroughly ignited." As usual Franklin was ahead of his time, but Watt actually took out a patent for consuming smoke in 1785.

13. Watt was brought to Soho, his trial engine was dismantled and a new one built. This worked better, and Watt went to London to have his patent extended. There was opposition to this on the ground that it tended toward monopoly—which of course it did—and Burke objected, but in 1775 an extension was granted by act of Parliament for twenty-four years. On his return to Soho, Watt discovered that John Wilkinson, the ironmaster, had improved his engine by the substitution of a cast-iron cylinder for the tin that went into the earlier model. With an adequate patent term, Watt made a good bargain with Boulton. The manufacturer put Watt on a salary of 330 pounds a year to manage the production of the now perfected pumping engine, and agreed to pay all expenses of manufacture and sale.

14 In 1775 Watt moved to Birmingham, and in 1776 the first two of Watt's pumping engines were put into successful operation. Over them was printed the same not unreasonable inscription that adorned those of Newcomen:

> "Whoever wants to see the engine here
> Must give the engine man a drop of beer."

15. The only use to which the steam engine was then put was the pumping of water out of mines, but the Newcomen engine was not powerful enough for working in the deeper mines. Watt's engine arrived in time to save many deposits from neglect. But complications over payment arose and the firm of Boulton and Watt was almost broke when a new use was found for the engine in the textile industry.

16 At the time of the invention of the steam engine the cotton mills were operated by water power. Rather reluctantly Watt adapted his engine to rotary motion so that it would take the place of the water wheel and thereby free manufacturing from its dependence on streams. In 1782 Watt invented the reciprocating expansive engine. In 1784 he was able to apply the steam engine to tilt hammers in iron and steel forges and for parallel motion. He then added a governor to regulate the speed automatically and other improvements. The first cotton mill to use steam power was at Papplewick in 1785. By 1786 orders for rotary engines were plentiful and for the first time in his

life James Watt was on easy street. And the Industrial Revolution was begun.

17. Between 1775 and 1800 Boulton and Watt installed 289 steam engines of all sorts: eighty-four were placed in cotton mills, nine in woolen mills, thirty in collieries, twenty-eight in foundries and forges, twenty-two in copper mines, eighteen on canals, and seventeen in breweries. But with the arrival of prosperity Watt's genius dried up. William Murdock applied a Watt patent to a carriage in 1784, producing the first steam automobile, but Watt was not interested. Henry Bell launched a steamer on the Clyde in 1812 without Watt's aid. Boulton went bankrupt, but Watt failed him, though Boulton had been much more generous to him than Roebuck. In 1800 the most fertile partnership the modern world had seen was dissolved and Watt retired to a life of comfortable leisure outside Birmingham. He died in 1819, having done more to mold our modern industrial society, for better or for worse, than any other man.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

This selection is a portion of a chapter in a book on economic history. In its original form the chapter begins with a brief discussion of the change from the static, feudal economy of the Middle Ages to modern capitalism; continues with the passage here reprinted explaining the significance of the Industrial Revolution and the development of the steam engine; and concludes with similar accounts of the development of the textile and iron industries and their effect on economic society. But though it was intended as part of this larger chapter, the selection here reproduced can stand by itself and be treated as an independent essay. The first third presents certain basic general facts and draws logical conclusions from them. The rest explains the how and why of that discovery which has in the first part been shown to be the key fact of the Industrial Revolution.

1. What is the most significant clause in the first sentence of par. 1? In the following paragraphs, how does the author go about justifying this clause? At what point does he first restate it in somewhat more emphatic form? What is the relation of par. 4 to the first sentence of par. 1? Which half of par. 4 is yet again restated at the end of par. 5? What objections that may have arisen in the reader's mind to the sweeping statements concluding pars. 3 and 4 are answered in par. 5?

What is the relation between par. 6 and the first half of par. 4? Does the part of par. 6 beginning "But the real acceleration . . ." furnish evidence for a general statement that has been made before? If a statement is made in different ways five times in six paragraphs, how important do you believe it is to the author? to the reader?

2. The first six paragraphs in this selection are devoted chiefly to drawing one main generalization from certain evidence. Because this evidence is in part abstract, and because the generalization is so important, the passage is built essentially on a pattern of statement followed by demonstration and proof, followed by restatement and more proof, and so on. But once the reader has been thoroughly convinced of the historical importance of the steam engine, he may then be seized with a certain curiosity as to just how the steam engine came to be developed. The author takes the next eleven paragraphs to satisfy this curiosity, using a simple chronological structure quite different from the elaborate demonstrative pattern of the preceding section. Yet the reiteration in par. 7 of the idea that the steam engine was revolutionary ties the paragraph to the preceding section. Do you see anything in par. 17 which relates it to earlier statements and makes the whole selection a reasonably self-contained unit? Would the reader be likely to have a greater or less sense of the revolutionary importance of the steam engine had the author omitted pars. 7-17 from his text?

3. Do you find any evidence that the author wished in a mild sort of way to entertain as well as inform the reader in pars. 7-17? Is there any objection to mixing entertainment with information provided the former does not interfere with the latter? Is there any advantage? What are the possible pitfalls? Is the third sentence in par. 12 extraneous?

4. Do you find any places where the author uses the details of his historical account of Watt to suggest the future social and economic effect of the steam engine? Consider, for example, the *smog* (par. 12), *rotary motion, cotton mill* (par. 16).

Suggestions for Writing

1. Discoveries I should like to make.
2. My almost-invention.
3. The importance of inventing things at the right time.
4. The impact on American life of the diesel, the vacuum tube, the pneumatic tire, or the beauty parlor.

*Crash!**

by FREDERICK LEWIS ALLEN

I

Early in September the stock market broke. It quickly recovered, however; indeed, on September 19th the averages as compiled by the *New York Times* reached an even higher level than that of September 3rd. Once more it slipped, farther and faster, until by October 4th the prices of a good many stocks had coasted to what seemed first-class bargain levels. Steel, for example, after having touched 261¾ a few weeks earlier, had dropped as low as 204; American Can, at the closing on October 4th, was nearly twenty points below its high for the year; General Electric was over fifty points below its high; Radio had gone down from 114¾ to 82½.

2. A bad break, to be sure, but there had been other bad breaks, and the speculators who escaped unscathed proceeded to take advantage of the lesson they had learned in June and December of 1928 and March and May of 1929: when there was a break it was a good time to buy. In the face of all this tremendous liquidation, brokers' loans as compiled by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York mounted to a new high record on October 2nd, reaching $6,804,000,000—a sure sign that margin buyers were not deserting the market but coming into it in numbers at least undiminished. (Part of the increase in the loan figure was probably due to the piling up of unsold securities in dealers' hands, as the spawning of investment trusts and the issue of new common stock by every manner of business concern continued unabated.) History, it seemed, was about to repeat itself, and those who picked up Anaconda at 109¾ or American Telephone at 281 would count themselves wise investors. And sure enough, prices once more began to climb. They had already turned upward before that Sunday in early October when Ramsay MacDonald sat on a log with Herbert Hoover at the Rapidan camp and talked over the prospects for naval limitation and peace.

* From *Only Yesterday* by Frederick Lewis Allen. By permission of Harper & Brothers, publishers. Copyright 1931 by Frederick Lewis Allen.

3. Something was wrong, however. The decline began once more. The wiseacres of Wall Street, looking about for causes, fixed upon the collapse of the Hatry financial group in England (which had led to much forced selling among foreign investors and speculators), and upon the bold refusal of the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities to allow the Edison Company of Boston to split up its stock. They pointed, too, to the fact that the steel industry was undoubtedly slipping, and to the accumulation of "undigested" securities. But there was little real alarm until the week of October 21st. The consensus of opinion, in the meantime, was merely that the equinoctial storm of September had not quite blown over. The market was readjusting itself into a "more secure technical position."

II

4 In view of what was about to happen, it is enlightening to recall how things looked at this juncture to the financial prophets, those gentlemen whose wizardly reputations were based upon their supposed ability to examine a set of graphs brought to them by a statistician and discover, from the relation of curve to curve and index to index, whether things were going to get better or worse. Their opinions differed, of course; there never has been a moment when the best financial opinion was unanimous. In examining these opinions, and the outgivings of eminent bankers, it must furthermore be acknowledged that a bullish statement cannot always be taken at its face value: few men like to assume the responsibility of spreading alarm by making dire predictions, nor is a banker with unsold securities on his hands likely to say anything which will make it more difficult to dispose of them, unquiet as his private mind may be. Finally, one must admit that prophecy is at best the most hazardous of occupations. Nevertheless, the general state of financial opinion in October, 1929, makes an instructive contrast with that in February and March, 1928, when, as we have seen, the skies had not appeared any too bright.

5. Some forecasters, to be sure, were so unconventional as to counsel caution. Roger W. Babson, an investment adviser who had not always been highly regarded in the inner circles of Wall Street, especially since he had for a long time been warning his clients of future trouble, predicted early in September a decline of sixty or eighty points in the averages. On October 7th the Standard Trade and Securities Service of the Standard Statistics Company advised its

clients to pursue an "ultra-conservative policy," and ventured this prediction: "We remain of the opinion that, over the next few months, the trend of common-stock prices will be toward lower levels." Poor's *Weekly Business and Investment Letter* spoke its mind on the "great common-stock delusion" and predicted "further liquidation in stocks." Among the big bankers, Paul M. Warburg had shown months before this that he was alive to the dangers of the situation. These commentators—along with others such as the editor of the *Commercial and Financial Chronicle* and the financial editor of the *New York Times*—would appear to deserve the 1929 gold medals for foresight.

6 But if ever such medals were actually awarded, a goodly number of leather ones would have to be distributed at the same time. Not necessarily to the Harvard Economic Society, although on October 19th, after having explained that business was "facing another period of readjustment," it predicted that "if recession should threaten serious consequences for business (as is not indicated at present) there is little doubt that the Reserve System would take steps to ease the money market and so check the movement." The Harvard soothsayers proved themselves quite fallible: as late as October 26th, after the first wide-open crack in the stock market, they delivered the cheerful judgment that "despite its severity, we believe that the slump in stock prices will prove an intermediate movement and not the precursor of a business depression such as would entail prolonged further liquidation." This judgment turned out, of course, to be ludicrously wrong; but on the other hand the Harvard Economic Society was far from being really bullish. Nor would Colonel Leonard P. Ayres of the Cleveland Trust Company get one of the leather medals. He almost qualified when, on October 15th, he delivered himself of the judgment that "there does not seem to be as yet much real evidence that the decline in stock prices is likely to forecast a serious recession in general business. Despite the slowing down in iron and steel production, in automobile output, and in building, the conditions which result in serious business depressions are not present." But the skies, as Colonel Ayres saw them, were at least partly cloudy. "It seems probable," he said, "that stocks have been passing not so much from the strong to the weak as from the smart to the dumb."

7. Professor Irving Fisher, however, was more optimistic. In the newspapers of October 17th he was reported as telling the Purchasing Agents Association that stock prices had reached "what looks like

a permanently high plateau." He expected to see the stock market, within a few months, "a good deal higher than it is today." On the very eve of the panic of October 24th he was further quoted as expecting a recovery in prices. Only two days before the panic, the *Boston News Bureau* quoted R. W. McNeel, director of McNeel's Financial Service, as suspecting "that some pretty intelligent people are now buying stocks." "Unless we are to have a panic—which no one seriously believes—stocks have hit bottom," said Mr. McNeel. And as for Charles E. Mitchell, chairman of the great National City Bank of New York, he continuously and enthusiastically radiated sunshine. Early in October Mr. Mitchell was positive that, despite the stock-market break, "The industrial situation of the United States is absolutely sound and our credit situation is in no way critical. . . . The interest given by the public to brokers' loans is always exaggerated," he added. "Altogether too much attention is paid to it." A few days later Mr. Mitchell spoke again: "Although in some cases speculation has gone too far in the United States, the markets generally are now in a healthy condition. The last six weeks have done an immense amount of good by shaking down prices. . . . The market values have a sound basis in the general prosperity of our country." Finally, on October 22nd, two days before the panic, he arrived in the United States from a short trip to Europe with these reassuring words: "I know of nothing fundamentally wrong with the stock market or with the underlying business and credit structure. . . . The public is suffering from 'brokers' loanitis.' "

8. Nor was Mr. Mitchell by any means alone in his opinions. To tell the truth, the chief difference between him and the rest of the financial community was that he made more noise. One of the most distinguished bankers in the United States, in closing a deal in the early autumn of 1929, said privately that he saw not a cloud in the sky. Habitual bulls like Arthur Cutten were, of course, insisting that they were "still bullish." And the general run of traders presumably endorsed the view attributed to "one large house" in mid-October in the *Boston News Bureau's* "Broad Street Gossip," that "the recent break makes a firm foundation for a big bull market in the last quarter of the year." There is no doubt that a great many speculators who had looked upon the midsummer prices as too high were now deciding that deflation had been effected and were buying again. Presumably most financial opinion agreed also with the further statement which appeared in the "Broad Street Gossip" column on October 16th, that "business is now

too big and diversified, and the country too rich, to be influenced by stock-market fluctuations"; and with the editorial opinion of the *News Bureau,* on October 19th, that "whatever recessions (in business) are noted, are those of the runner catching his breath. . . . The general condition is satisfactory and fundamentally sound."

9. The disaster which was impending was destined to be as bewildering and frightening to the rich and the powerful and the customarily sagacious as to the foolish and unwary holder of fifty shares of margin stock.

III

10 The expected recovery in the stock market did not come. It seemed to be beginning on Tuesday, October 22nd, but the gains made during the day were largely lost during the last hour. And on Wednesday, the 23rd, there was a perfect Niagara of liquidation. The volume of trading was over six million shares, the tape was 104 minutes late when the three-o'clock gong ended trading for the day, and the *New York Times* averages for fifty leading railroad and industrial stocks lost 18.24 points—a loss which made the most abrupt declines in previous breaks look small. Everybody realized that an unprecedented number of margin calls must be on their way to insecurely margined traders, and that the situation at last was getting serious. But perhaps the turn would come tomorrow. Already the break had carried prices down a good deal farther than the previous breaks of the past two years. Surely it could not go on much longer.

11 The next day was Thursday, October 24th.

12 On that momentous day stocks opened moderately steady in price, but in enormous volume. Kennecott appeared on the tape in a block of 20,000 shares, General Motors in another of the same amount. Almost at once the ticker tape began to lag behind the trading on the floor. The pressure of selling orders was disconcertingly heavy. Prices were going down. . . . Presently they were going down with some rapidity. . . . Before the first hour of trading was over, it was already apparent that they were going down with an altogether unprecedented and amazing violence. In brokers' offices all over the country, tape-watchers looked at one another in astonishment and perplexity. Where on earth was this torrent of selling orders coming from?

13 The exact answer to this question will probably never be known. But it seems probable that the principal cause of the break in prices during that first hour on October 24th was not fear. Nor was it short selling. It was forced selling. It was the dumping on the market of

hundreds of thousands of shares of stock held in the name of miserable traders whose margins were exhausted or about to be exhausted. The gigantic edifice of prices was honeycombed with speculative credit and was now breaking under its own weight.

14. Fear, however, did not long delay its coming. As the price structure crumbled there was a sudden stampede to get out from under. By eleven o'clock traders on the floor of the Stock Exchange were in a wild scramble to "sell at the market." Long before the lagging ticker could tell what was happening, word had gone out by telephone and telegraph that the bottom was dropping out of things, and the selling orders redoubled in volume. The leading stocks were going down two, three, and even five points between sales. Down, down, down. . . . Where were the bargain-hunters who were supposed to come to the rescue at times like this? Where were the investment trusts, which were expected to provide a cushion for the market by making new purchases at low prices? Where were the big operators who had declared that they were still bullish? Where were the powerful bankers who were supposed to be able at any moment to support prices? There seemed to be no support whatever. Down, down, down. The roar of voices which rose from the floor of the Exchange had become a roar of panic.

15. United States Steel had opened at 205½. It crashed through 200 and presently was at 193½. General Electric, which only a few weeks before had been selling above 400, had opened this morning at 315—now it had slid to 283. Things were even worse with Radio: opening at 68¾, it had gone dismally down through the sixties and the fifties and forties to the abysmal price of 44½. And as for Montgomery Ward, vehicle of the hopes of thousands who saw the chain store as the harbinger of the new economic era, it had dropped headlong from 83 to 50. In the space of two short hours, dozens of stocks lost ground which it had required many months of the bull market to gain.

16 Even this sudden decline in values might not have been utterly terrifying if people could have known precisely what was happening at any moment. It is the unknown which causes real panic.

17. Suppose a man walked into a broker's branch office between twelve and one o'clock on October 24th to see how things were faring. First he glanced at the big board, covering one wall of the room, on which the day's prices for the leading stocks were supposed to be recorded. The LOW and LAST figures written there took his breath away, but soon he was aware that they were unreliable: even with the

wildest scrambling, the boys who slapped into place the cards which recorded the last prices shown on the ticker could not keep up with the changes: they were too numerous and abrupt. He turned to the shining screen across which ran an uninterrupted procession of figures from the ticker. Ordinarily the practiced tape-watcher could tell from a moment's glance at the screen how things were faring, even though the Exchange now omitted all but the final digit of each quotation. A glance at the board, if not his own memory, supplied the missing digits. But today, when he saw a run of symbols and figures like

R WX
6.5½.5.4. 9.8⅞¾½¼.8.7½.7.

he could not be sure whether the price of "6" shown for Radio meant 66 or 56 or 46; whether Westinghouse was sliding from 189 to 187 or from 179 to 177. And presently he heard that the ticker was an hour and a half late; at one o'clock it was recording the prices of half-past eleven! All this that he saw was ancient history. What was happening on the floor now?

[18] At ten-minute intervals the bond ticker over in the corner would hammer off a list of selected prices direct from the floor, and a broker's clerk would grab the uncoiling sheet of paper and shear it off with a pair of scissors and read the figures aloud in a mumbling expressionless monotone to the white-faced men who occupied every seat on the floor and stood packed at the rear of the room. The prices which he read out were *ten or a dozen or more points below those recorded on the ticker.* What about the stocks not included in that select list? There was no way of finding out. The telephone lines were clogged as inquiries and orders from all over the country converged upon the Stock Exchange. Once in a while a voice would come barking out of the broker's rear office where a frantic clerk was struggling for a telephone connection: "Steel at ninety-six!" Small comfort, however, to know what Steel was doing; the men outside were desperately involved in many another stock than Steel; they were almost completely in the dark, and their imaginations had free play. If they put in an order to buy or to sell, it was impossible to find out what became of it. The Exchange's whole system for the recording of current prices and for communicating orders was hopelessly unable to cope with the emergency, and the sequel was an epidemic of fright.

[19] In that broker's office, as in hundreds of other offices from one end of the land to the other, one saw men looking defeat in the face. One

of them was slowly walking up and down, mechanically tearing a piece of paper into tiny and still tinier fragments. Another was grinning shamefacedly, as a small boy giggles at a funeral. Another was abjectly beseeching a clerk for the latest news of American & Foreign Power. And still another was sitting motionless, as if stunned, his eyes fixed blindly upon the moving figures on the screen, those innocent-looking figures that meant the smash-up of the hopes of years. . . .

GL.	AWW.	JMP.
8.7.5.2.1.90.89.7.6.	3.2½.2.	6.5.3.2½.

[20] A few minutes after noon, some of the more alert members of a crowd which had collected on the street outside the Stock Exchange, expecting they knew not what, recognized Charles E. Mitchell, erstwhile defender of the bull market, slipping quietly into the offices of J. P. Morgan & Company on the opposite corner. It was scarcely more than nine years since the House of Morgan had been pitted with the shrapnel-fire of the Wall Street explosion; now its occupants faced a different sort of calamity equally near at hand. Mr. Mitchell was followed shortly by Albert H. Wiggin, head of the Chase National Bank; William Potter, head of the Guaranty Trust Company; and Seward Prosser, head of the Bankers Trust Company. They had come to confer with Thomas W. Lamont of the Morgan firm. In the space of a few minutes these five men, with George F. Baker, Jr., of the First National Bank, agreed in behalf of their respective institutions to put up forty millions apiece to shore up the stock market. The object of the two-hundred-and-forty-million-dollar pool thus formed, as explained subsequently by Mr. Lamont, was not to hold prices at any given level, but simply to make such purchases as were necessary to keep trading on an orderly basis. Their first action, they decided, would be to try to steady the prices of the leading securities which served as bell wethers for the list as a whole. It was a dangerous plan, for with hysteria spreading there was no telling what sort of *débâcle* might be impending. But this was no time for any action but the boldest.

[21] The bankers separated. Mr. Lamont faced a gathering of reporters in the Morgan offices. His face was grave, but his words were soothing. His first sentence alone was one of the most remarkable understatements of all time. "There has been a little distress selling on the Stock Exchange," said he, "and we have held a meeting of the heads of several financial institutions to discuss the situation. We have found

that there are no houses in difficulty and reports from brokers indicate that margins are being maintained satisfactorily." He went on to explain that what had happened was due to a "technical condition of the market" rather than to any fundamental cause.

[22] As the news that the bankers were meeting circulated on the floor of the Exchange, prices began to steady. Soon a brisk rally set in. Steel jumped back to the level at which it had opened that morning. But the bankers had more to offer the dying bull market than a Morgan partner's best bedside manner.

[23] At about half-past one o'clock Richard Whitney, vice-president of the Exchange, who usually acted as floor broker for the Morgan interests, went into the "Steel crowd" and put in a bid of 205—the price of the last previous sale—for 10,000 shares of Steel. He bought only 200 shares and left the remainder of the order with the specialist. Mr. Whitney then went to various other points on the floor, and offered the price of the last previous sale for 10,000 shares of each of fifteen or twenty other stocks, reporting what was sold to him at that price and leaving the remainder of the order with the specialist. In short, within the space of a few minutes Mr. Whitney offered to purchase something in the neighborhood of twenty or thirty million dollars' worth of stock. Purchases of this magnitude are not undertaken by Tom, Dick, and Harry; it was clear that Mr. Whitney represented the bankers' pool.

[24] The desperate remedy worked. The semblance of confidence returned. Prices held steady for a while; and though many of them slid off once more in the final hour, the net results for the day might well have been worse. Steel actually closed two points higher than on Wednesday, and the net losses of most of the other leading securities amounted to less than ten points apiece for the whole day's trading.

[25] All the same, it had been a frightful day. At seven o'clock that night the tickers in a thousand brokers' offices were still chattering; not till after 7:08 did they finally record the last sale made on the floor at three o'clock. The volume of trading had set a new record—12,894,650 shares. ("The time may come when we shall see a five-million-share day," the wise men of the Street had been saying twenty months before!) Incredible rumors had spread wildly during the early afternoon—that eleven speculators had committed suicide, that the Buffalo and Chicago exchanges had been closed, that troops were guarding the New York Stock Exchange against an angry mob. The country had known the bitter taste of panic. And although the

bankers' pool had prevented for the moment an utter collapse, there was no gainsaying the fact that the economic structure had cracked wide open.

IV

[26] Things looked somewhat better on Friday and Saturday. Trading was still on an enormous scale, but prices for the most part held. At the very moment when the bankers' pool was cautiously disposing of as much as possible of the stock which it had accumulated on Thursday and was thus preparing for future emergencies, traders who had sold out higher up were coming back into the market again with new purchases, in the hope that the bottom had been reached. (Hadn't they often been told that "the time to buy is when things look blackest"?) The newspapers carried a very pretty series of reassuring statements from the occupants of the seats of the mighty; Herbert Hoover himself, in a White House statement, pointed out that "the fundamental business of the country, that is, production and distribution of commodities, is on a sound and prosperous basis." But toward the close of Saturday's session prices began to slip again. And on Monday the rout was under way once more.

[27] The losses registered on Monday were terrific—17½ points for Steel, 47½ for General Electric, 36 for Allied Chemical, 34½ for Westinghouse, and so on down a long and dismal list. All Saturday afternoon and Saturday night and Sunday the brokers had been struggling to post their records and go over their customers' accounts and send out calls for further margin, and another avalanche of forced selling resulted. The prices at which Mr. Whitney's purchases had steadied the leading stocks on Thursday were so readily broken through that it was immediately clear that the bankers' pool had made a strategic retreat. As a matter of fact, the brokers who represented the pool were having their hands full plugging up the "air-holes" in the list—in other words, buying stocks which were offered for sale without any bids at all in sight. Nothing more than this could have been accomplished, even if it could have been wisely attempted. Even six great banks could hardly stem the flow of liquidation from the entire United States. They could only guide it a little, check it momentarily here and there.

[28] Once more the ticker dropped ridiculously far behind, the lights in the brokers' offices and the banks burned till dawn, and the telegraph companies distributed thousands of margin calls and requests for more collateral to back up loans at the banks. Bankers, brokers,

clerks, messengers were almost at the end of their strength; for days and nights they had been driving themselves to keep pace with the most terrific volume of business that had ever descended upon them. It did not seem as if they could stand it much longer. But the worst was still ahead. It came the next day, Tuesday, October 29th.

29 The big gong had hardly sounded in the great hall of the Exchange at ten o'clock Tuesday morning before the storm broke in full force. Huge blocks of stock were thrown upon the market for what they would bring. Five thousand shares, ten thousand shares appeared at a time on the laboring ticker at fearful recessions in price. Not only were innumerable small traders being sold out, but big ones, too, protagonists of the new economic era who a few weeks before had counted themselves millionaires. Again and again the specialist in a stock would find himself surrounded by brokers fighting to sell—and nobody at all even thinking of buying. To give one single example: during the bull market the common stock of the White Sewing Machine Company had gone as high as 48; on Monday, October 28th, it had closed at 11⅛. On that black Tuesday, somebody—a clever messenger boy for the Exchange, it was rumored—had the bright idea of putting in an order to buy at 1—and in the temporarily complete absence of other bids he actually got his stock for a dollar a share! The scene on the floor was chaotic. Despite the jamming of the communication system, orders to buy and sell—mostly to sell—came in faster than human beings could possibly handle them; it was on that day that an exhausted broker, at the close of the session, found a large waste-basket which he had stuffed with orders to be executed and had carefully set aside for safe-keeping—and then had completely forgotten. Within half an hour of the opening the volume of trading had passed three million shares, by twelve o'clock it had passed eight million, by half-past one it had passed twelve million, and when the closing gong brought the day's madness to an end the gigantic record of 16,410,030 shares had been set. Toward the close there was a rally, but by that time the average prices of fifty leading stocks, as compiled by the *New York Times*, had fallen nearly forty points. Meanwhile there was a near-panic in other markets—the foreign stock exchanges, the lesser American exchanges, the grain market.

30. So complete was the demoralization of the stock market and so exhausted were the brokers and their staffs and the Stock Exchange employees, that at noon that day, when the panic was at its worst, the Governing Committee met quietly to decide whether or not to close

the Exchange. To quote from an address made some months later by Richard Whitney: "In order not to give occasion for alarming rumors, this meeting was not held in the Governing Committee Room, but in the office of the president of the Stock Clearing Corporation directly beneath the Stock Exchange floor. . . . The forty governors came to the meeting in groups of two and three as unobtrusively as possible. The office they met in was never designed for large meetings of this sort, with the result that most of the governors were compelled to stand, or to sit on tables. As the meeting progressed, panic was raging overhead on the floor. . . . The feeling of those present was revealed by their habit of continually lighting cigarettes, taking a puff or two, putting them out and lighting new ones—a practice which soon made the narrow room blue with smoke. . . ." Two of the Morgan partners were invited to the meeting and, attempting to slip into the building unnoticed so as not to start a new flock of rumors, were refused admittance by one of the guards and had to remain outside until rescued by a member of the Governing Committee. After some deliberation, the governors finally decided not to close the Exchange.

[31] It was a critical day for the banks, that Tuesday the 29th. Many of the corporations which had so cheerfully loaned money to brokers through the banks in order to obtain interest at 8 or 9 per cent were now clamoring to have these loans called—and the banks were faced with a choice between taking over the loans themselves and running the risk of precipitating further ruin. It was no laughing matter to assume the responsibility of millions of dollars' worth of loans secured by collateral which by the end of the day might prove to have dropped to a fraction of its former value. That the call money rate never rose above 6 per cent that day, that a money panic was not added to the stock panic, and that several Wall Street institutions did not go down into immediate bankruptcy, was due largely to the nerve shown by a few bankers in stepping into the breach. The story is told of one banker who went grimly on authorizing the taking over of loan after loan until one of his subordinate officers came in with a white face and told him that the bank was insolvent. "I dare say," said the banker, and went ahead unmoved. He knew that if he did not, more than one concern would face insolvency.

[32] The next day—Wednesday, October 30th—the outlook suddenly and providentially brightened. The directors of the Steel Corporation had declared an extra dividend; the directors of the American Can Company had not only declared an extra dividend, but had raised the

regular dividend. There was another flood of reassuring statements—though by this time a cheerful statement from a financier fell upon somewhat skeptical ears. Julius Klein, Mr. Hoover's Assistant Secretary of Commerce, composed a rhapsody on continued prosperity. John J. Raskob declared that stocks were at bargain prices and that he and his friends were buying. John D. Rockefeller poured Standard Oil upon the waters: "Believing that fundamental conditions of the country are sound and that there is nothing in the business situation to warrant the destruction of values that has taken place on the exchanges during the past week, my son and I have for some days been purchasing sound common stocks." Better still, prices rose—steadily and buoyantly. Now at last the time had come when the strain on the Exchange could be relieved without causing undue alarm. At 1:40 o'clock Vice-President Whitney announced from the rostrum that the Exchange would not open until noon the following day and would remain closed all day Friday and Saturday—and to his immense relief the announcement was greeted, not with renewed panic, but with a cheer.

[33] Throughout Thursday's short session the recovery continued. Prices gyrated wildly—for who could arrive at a reasonable idea of what a given stock was worth, now that all settled standards of value had been upset?—but the worst of the storm seemed to have blown over. The financial community breathed more easily; now they could have a chance to set their houses in order.

[34] It was true that the worst of the panic was past. But not the worst prices. There was too much forced liquidation still to come as brokers' accounts were gradually straightened out, as banks called for more collateral, and terror was renewed. The next week, in a series of short sessions, the tide of prices receded once more—until at last on November 13th the bottom prices for the year 1929 were reached. Beside the figures hung up in the sunny days of September they made a tragic showing:

	High price Sept. 3, 1929	Low price Nov. 13, 1929
American Can	181⅞	86
American Telephone & Telegraph	304	197¼
Anaconda Copper	131½	70
General Electric	396¼	168⅛
General Motors	72¾	36
Montgomery Ward	137⅞	49¼

	High price Sept. 3, 1929	Low price Nov. 13, 1929
New York Central	256⅜	160
Radio	101	28
Union Carbide & Carbon	137⅞	59
United States Steel	261¼	150
Westinghouse E. & M.	289⅜	102⅝
Woolworth	100⅜	52¼
Electric Bond & Share	186¾	50¼

[35] The *New York Times* averages for fifty leading stocks had been almost cut in half, falling from a high of 311.90 in September to a low of 164.43 on November 13th; and the *Times* averages for twenty-five leading industrials had fared still worse, diving from 469.49 to 220.95.

[36] The Big Bull Market was dead. Billions of dollars' worth of profits —and paper profits—had disappeared. The grocer, the window-cleaner, and the seamstress had lost their capital. In every town there were families which had suddenly dropped from showy affluence into debt. Investors who had dreamed of retiring to live on their fortunes now found themselves back once more at the very beginning of the long road to riches. Day by day the newspapers printed the grim reports of suicides.

[37] Coolidge-Hoover Prosperity was not yet dead, but it was dying. Under the impact of the shock of panic, a multitude of ills which hitherto had passed unnoticed or had been offset by stock-market optimism began to beset the body economic, as poisons seep through the human system when a vital organ has ceased to function normally. Although the liquidation of nearly three billion dollars of brokers' loans contracted credit, and the Reserve Banks lowered the rediscount rate, and the way in which the larger banks and corporations of the country had survived the emergency without a single failure of large proportions offered real encouragement, nevertheless the poisons were there: overproduction of capital; overambitious expansion of business concerns; overproduction of commodities under the stimulus of installment buying and buying with stock-market profits; the maintenance of an artificial price level for many commodities; the depressed condition of European trade. No matter how many soothsayers of high finance proclaimed that all was well, no matter how earnestly the President set to work to repair the damage with soft

words and White House conferences, a major depression was inevitably under way.

38. Nor was that all. Prosperity is more than an economic condition; it is a state of mind. The Big Bull Market had been more than the climax of a business cycle; it had been the climax of a cycle in American mass thinking and mass emotion. There was hardly a man or woman in the country whose attitude toward life had not been affected by it in some degree and was not now affected by the sudden and brutal shattering of hope. With the Big Bull Market gone and prosperity going, Americans were soon to find themselves living in an altered world which called for new adjustments, new ideas, new habits of thought, and a new order of values. The psychological climate was changing; the ever-shifting currents of American life were turning into new channels.

39 The Post-war Decade had come to its close. An era had ended.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

"Crash!" is the next to last chapter in Frederick Lewis Allen's lively and informative book about that extraordinary American decade of the 1920's, which began with the "return to normalcy" after the First World War and ended with the country falling downhill fast into the bog of the Great Depression. In this chapter Allen does two things. He first of all explains how the Big Bull Market came to an end—how its disastrous toboggan-slide began, what kept it going, and how far it went. But he is also explaining the effect of this slide on the sliders—the citizens of the country—and making clear why he says at the end of this chapter that "an era had ended."

1. The basic structure of this chapter is obviously chronological. It is not, however, merely a simple sequence of facts, for at several points the author interrupts the chronological flow with passages of necessary explanation. Tell why the following such passages are placed where they are and explain what each one accomplishes: pars. 4-9, 13, 17-19, 36-39. What is the effect of the short sentence that begins the chapter? Notice that although a good many of the paragraphs are moderately long (but not at all ponderous), the author once in a while uses a very short one—perhaps only a single sentence. What is accomplished by the extreme brevity of the following paragraphs: pars. 9, 11, 16, 39?

2. Since nearly every reader of this chapter knows that there was

a stock market crash in 1929, followed by a depression, the author cannot depend for interest and suspense on the simple desire to "know how the story comes out." He does, however, play skillfully on the reader's desire to know just how complete and spectacular the collapse was. What details does the author choose to point up the unbelievable and nightmarish quality of the autumn of 1929? How does he keep hinting that worse is yet to come? Note how the author heightens the effect by a liberal use of irony—that is, a contrast between the surface meaning of a set of words and their real meaning, or between what is said and what the reader knows is really true: for example, the last sentence of par. 8. Find other places in which irony is made to reinforce the reader's sense that the men of 1929 could not believe what was happening because they had so thoroughly and fatuously deluded themselves.

3. The style of this selection is marked by a number of lively expressions and plays on words: for example, the last sentence of par. 22 and the remark in par. 32 about John D. Rockefeller's pouring "Standard Oil upon the waters." Find other such expressions. There are also in this selection a number of rather well worn phrases, such as "nor was Mr. Mitchell by any means alone in his opinions" (par. 8), "the gigantic edifice of prices was honeycombed with speculative credit" (par. 13). Can you find other examples? Compare Allen's choice of words with that of Dixon Wecter when you read the next selection.

Suggestions for Writing

1. How to get poor quick.

2. Explain the effect some outside event or series of events had on your immediate circle of friends or on your family.

3. Allen makes ironic use of the self-deluding statements of certain leaders at the time of the crash. Contrast an actual event within your range of experience—for example, the unexpected outcome of an election with the mistaken prophecies that preceded it.

From Riches to Rags[*]

by DIXON WECTER

In mid-October, 1929, the average middle-class American saw ahead of him an illimitable vista of prosperity. A newly inaugurated president, Herbert Hoover, had announced soberly in the previous year that the conquest of poverty was no longer a mirage: "We have not yet reached the goal, but given a chance to go forward with the policies of the last eight years, and we shall soon with the help of God be within sight of the day when poverty will be banished from the nation." [1] This was the economic promise interwoven with what a popular historian soon would call the American Dream. More complacently, Irving Fisher and other economists in the confidence of Wall Street assured the citizen that he was dwelling upon "a permanently high plateau" of prosperity.

2. This upland of plenty—more tangible than the Beulahland dear to the old Protestant hymnal—appeared to be the final triumph of a great industrial development dating from the Civil War. The aftermath of America's latest war had seen the arrival in strength of mass production, to compound the wonders of the new technology. Even now, in this third week of October, 1929, with the president and other notables in attendance, Henry Ford was sponsoring the "Golden Jubilee of Light," honoring Edison and the fiftieth birthday of the incandescent lamp. Motor cars, bathtubs, electric refrigerators, radios, were the touchstones of progress. Keeping up with the Joneses, under the spur of fashion and advertisement, demanded nothing less than the latest model. Pressures of salesmanship urged even the duplication of luxuries—two cars in every garage—in a consumer's market already

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[*] From Dixon Wecter, *The Age of the Great Depression 1929-1941*. Copyright 1948 by The Macmillan Company and used with their permission.

[1] Speech accepting the nomination of the Republican party, *N. Y. Times*, Aug. 12, 1928. With omission of "yet" and "soon" and "with the policies of the last eight years," Hoover stoutly repeated these words in the depths of the Depression, in his Madison Square Garden speech of October 31, 1932. Herbert Hoover, *State Papers* (W. S. Myers, ed., N. Y., 1934), II, 426-427.

displaying symptoms of surfeit, not because all Americans were gorged with worldly goods, but because buying power was unevenly distributed.

[3] The nation's policies and institutions were closely enmeshed with the prosperous middle class. "The suburban community is the dominant American group," one observer wrote in the summer of 1929. The increasing stress upon the solidarity and good fellowship of certain organizations—fraternal orders, business men's luncheon clubs, Legion conventions—and the moral meddlesomeness of others like the Anti-Saloon League bred a regimentation which he feared as foreshadowing "the group from which the Fascisti of the future will be drawn, if there are Fascisti." That Babbitt might ever doff his natty silk shirt for one of brown or black was problematical; but the cult of conformity, in so far as it boosted material success, was in the saddle. Cotton Mather, Ben Franklin, Peter Parley and Horace Greeley would have understood the spirit of the times, even though old maxims of drudgery and penny pinching seemed to have been by-passed for quicker ways to wealth.

[4] *Time,* liveliest weekly of the decade, in January, 1929, hailed Walter P. Chrysler as "Man of the Year," because during the past twelvemonth he had introduced the public to Plymouth and DeSoto cars, bought out Dodge Brothers for one hundred and sixty million dollars and begun to build "the world's tallest skyscraper, a 68-story colossus." [2] Now, on the cover of *Time* for October 14, 1929, appeared the face of William Wrigley, jr., to be followed in successive weeks by Harry F. Guggenheim, Ivar Kreuger, Samuel Insull and Thomas W. Lamont—heroes all. The last issue before the Wall Street crash carried a triple-page announcement of the new magazine *Fortune,* at the "unique price of $10 a year," which proclaimed the "generally accepted commonplace that America's great achievement has been Business." Other large advertisements featured Babson's *Reports* ("Your Dollars—Are They Continuously and Efficiently at Work?"), the Hamilton watch ("Can you tell a successful man by the time he carries?"), Robert I. Warshow's new book *The Story of Wall Street* ("These giants march through its pages . . . like the adventurers of the middle ages . . . Daniel Drew, Jim Fisk, Jay Gould, Vanderbilt,

[2] As announced in January, 1930, "Man of the Year" was Owen D. Young, author of the Young Plan for the payment of German reparations and also endowed with the glamour of great wealth; but *Time's* choice for the following year, by significant contrast, was Mahatma Gandhi.

Hill, Harriman . . . and the many others whose exploits have astounded the nation"), and the investment services of a firm to collapse in 1932 leaving millions in defaulted bonds, S. W. Straus & Co. ("He invests his modest earnings in good sound securities"). They represented the stimuli which beat incessantly upon the mind of the average magazine reader.

5 Masses of Americans who bought their first bonds in the liberty loans of 1918 had lately turned to more speculative issues. Advertisements flaunting high prices instead of bargains—from $45,000 apartments on Park Avenue and bathrooms equipped with "Crane Louis XVI Trianon Fittings Gold-Plated," down to $2.50 lipsticks and razor blades at three for fifty cents—set the sumptuary scale for a generation of easy money. To keep abreast of the traffic in this climb to the highlands of permanent prosperity, the stock market was the obvious vehicle. In 1920 there had been 29,609 stockbrokers in the United States; within ten years they had jumped to 70,950. It was commonly observed that a great many citizens no longer read the front page of their newspaper, but turned hurriedly to the financial columns. Tabloid papers and tip sheets offered investment advice to amateurs. Over the radio flowed the voice of the "Old Counselor," steady as a deacon, intoning the wisdom of Samuel Insull's own brokers.[3]

6 Popular interest was growing about the mystery of business cycles. Whether they were ruled by overproduction or underproduction, banking operations, innovations in method, hysterias of hope or panic, or perhaps sun spots, was not clear. Guessing was garbed in the robes of prophecy. Wishfulness took priority over planning. Optimists believed that the old laws of economics had been arrested; others conceded that rainy days might come, but after every storm the skies must clear—if everybody, as the season's most popular song exhorted, would keep his sunny side up. Above all, recession was the abnormal thing. Prosperity needed no explanation. Nor was it the monopoly of so-called leisured classes, or the Republican party, despite their effort to claim all the credit.

If a man saves $15 a week, and invests in good common stocks, and allows the dividends and rights to accumulate, at the end of

[3] The identity of this famous character was a minor mystery. While the head of Halsey, Stuart & Co., his sponsors, told a Senate committee that the "Old Counselor" was a University of Chicago professor paid $50 a week to read their script, the president of NBC, M. H. Aylesworth, testified that he was an actor. Ruth Brindze, *Not to Be Broadcast* (N. Y., 1937), 40-41.

> twenty years he will have at least $80,000 and an income from investments of around $400 a month. He will be rich. And because income can do that, I am firm in my belief that anyone not only can be rich, but ought to be rich.

So declared John J. Raskob, chairman of the Democratic national committee, in the summer of 1929. Employees were encouraged to invest in the stocks and bonds of their employers—a system regarded somewhat vaguely as the American equivalent of profit sharing, or perhaps social security.

7. Much of this buying of stocks was on margin, which meant that investors, including the small fry with little cash but big hopes, put up about a fourth of the price. The broker advanced the rest by borrowing from banks. This precarious credit structure of brokers' loans had trembled in February, 1929, when the Federal Reserve Board ordered member banks not to lend money for such speculative purposes. But private bankers, led by Charles E. Mitchell, had promptly unlocked their millions for speculation and given a further fillip to the great bull market and the age of confidence upon which it was built. This caused another spasm of activity, unwarranted by any such tangibles as consumer demand, gains in productive efficiency or real earning of the stocks in question. While the rich were growing richer, several million citizens with small incomes were raiding their savings, reducing their immediate purchasing power and mortgaging their future in order to speculate. Ninety per cent of these market transactions in the twenties, it has been estimated, were gambling ventures rather than permanent investments.

8. Almost imperceptibly a shift had occurred in economic control, from the industrial capitalism of an earlier day to finance capitalism. Exploitation of investors and frequent duplicity in bookkeeping were among the less lovely traits of the new order. The holding company—an avatar which sprang from the slain dragon of the "trusts" late in the previous century—now flourished mightily. It permitted control by a small group of stockholders over a widely scattered empire of interlocking or even loosely related interests, like Samuel Insull's three-billion-dollar domain in utilities. The power exercised by the holding company, particularly in the utility field, was often so disproportionate to its size that Franklin D. Roosevelt as president well described it as "a ninety-six-inch dog being wagged by a four-inch tail."

9 These concerns were sometimes pyramided one upon another,

towers of Babel reaching to the skies and equally tremulous at the base. Not infrequently they were used to mask the true state of corporate finances from the eyes of regulatory authorities or the public. A New York state bank called Bank of United States, in January, 1930 —almost a year before its spectacular failure brought down the roof upon nearly half a million depositors—concealed its growing weakness by creating a dummy company, the Bolivar Development Corporation, capitalized at one hundred dollars, to buy and sell the stock of still another dummy conjured by the Bank into making the motions of prosperity. Deceived by this solemn farce, the outsider was slow to suspect that many a façade of granite and marble had become a hollow shell of indebtedness and precarious bookkeeping.

[10] Another development in the pathology of Wall Street was the mushrooming in the latter twenties of so-called investment trusts, whose function was to invest moneys loaned to them and to distribute the net return to their stockholders or beneficiaries. Some were "rigid," *i.e.* confined to a restricted list of securities, but many were "flexible," which meant that the selection of securities for investment was left wide open. In practice they were little better than gambling establishments in which the innocent patron intrusted his stakes not even to a fellow player picked at random but to the croupier—whose main interest, of course, was to represent "the house." Four and a half million Americans, it was reported, handed over part or all their savings to investment trusts, eventually losing about a third of their capital, or a total of three billion dollars.

[11] The overexpansion of credit was a prime cause of the disasters that followed 1929. The First World War began a process which reckless financing continued to accelerate. In the background loomed the huge structure of long-term debt in the United States—a public debt, federal, state and municipal, of thirty-three billion dollars, and corporate and individual debts of one hundred billion—which demanded expanding markets and world prosperity for successful carrying. A relatively small reduction in buying power, or backsliding of prices, could send tremors along the whole length of this mountain chain. The grand operations of credit, a new force of such power that one economist likened it to the prime movers of physics, were still imperfectly understood and recklessly abused. The average American in 1929 had little notion of credit on the imperial scale, such as the growth of international financing dependent upon a constant transfusion of credit from have to have-not nations, nor even the magnitude of eight

billion dollars' credit in the form of brokers' loans which Wall Street recorded at its all-time crest of September 3, 1929.

12. The common man knew more about overexpansion of credit in such homely shapes as installment buying. Intensive campaigns to break down "sales resistance"—often insufficient purchasing power among small citizens—led to new extensions of the time-payment plan for cars, clothes, electric washers, refrigerators, furniture, jewelry. In effect it was a loan from producer to consumer, because the latter lacked cash, and the former, with his urgent need for sales, preferred this method to that of increasing mass purchasing power by cutting prices and boosting wages. By 1929 felicity on the installment plan had lured its tens of millions. In the harsh light of the Great Depression, such aspects of the system as inflated prices and exorbitant carrying charges, along with misrepresentation of the product, would become all too plain. Certain state laws, like those of New York and Kentucky, held a still more pernicious trap, sprung during the early thirties, by which a debtor's entire wages could be attached until the account was cleared.

13 Meanwhile important business enterprises were being concentrated in fewer hands. The forging of chain stores all over the nation was no less significant than recent big mergers in the automotive industry. Centralized industry made every metropolis the center of a regional web, and each of these networks fitted into a national pattern for making, selling and distributing commodities. The economy of a continent had never been so highly integrated, nor its equilibrium so sensitive. The frontier, the farm, the village and Middletown had at last been engulfed by the rise of the city. As never before, urban industrialism called the tune. In 1870 wage and salary workers had made up about half the working population; now they composed four fifths. An interdependence unknown to old-fashioned America had become the basic economic fact. The fabric of industrial and corporate life, joined to the structure imposed by labor unions and labor legislation, had imperceptibly altered the flexibility of *laissez faire* into something more rigid, less accommodating.

14 These sweeping changes had hardly entered the consciousness of the average citizen. In his own mind he was never more loyal than in 1929 to the doctrine of individualism and unhampered private enterprise. Clashes between theory and practice, like the potential friction of capital and labor, remained almost inaudible so long as the nation's economic mechanism ran with the oil of prosperity.

15. Not, indeed, that the prosperity of the twenties was consistently sound. To the later view it resembled a hectic flush rather than the bloom of health. Agriculture still groaned from its dropsical overexpansion in 1917-1918. Along with bituminous coal mining and textiles, it belonged to a clinical ward known as the "sick industries." Great was the industrial turnover; a sense of insecurity about jobs had been rising for several years. Even in 1926 the unemployed were estimated at 1,500,000; by 1929 their number had swelled to upwards of 1,800,000.[4] Unperceived by the optimists, joblessness and poverty had come to be chronic social problems in the United States—neither a passing crisis nor one readily met by efforts of private charity. The ratio of private to public funds for such purposes was diminishing, as public relief expenditures gradually mounted. Sixteen major cities which in 1911 had spent $1,500,000 on public charity were by 1928 spending $20,000,000 annually.

16 Flaws in banking practice might also have been suspected. During the six years prior to the October crash of 1929 bank failures occurred at an average rate of nearly two a day, but since the delinquents were minor institutions, chiefly in small towns, scant publicity resulted. Nor was the output of goods commensurate with the capacity to produce. At least twenty per cent of the country's resources were not being utilized, to the loss of about fifteen billion dollars in national income, or one fourth of the goods and services it was actually producing.

17 Yet beyond question the major shortcomings of the American economy lay not with production but consumption. Already in the early autumn of 1929 financial pages gloomed over "heaviness" in automobiles and radios, slackening of the building trades, disappointment along the new frontiers of aviation. Much of America's productive effort and income had lately gone into luxuries and durable goods, whose purchase could be postponed without affecting daily needs. At the first storm warnings these goods would pile up in warehouses, causing wheels to stop turning and huge areas of joblessness to appear. This was one reason why the Depression following 1929 was unparalleled for severity and duration.

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[4] R. R. Nathan, *Estimates of Unemployment in the United States, 1929-1935* (Geneva, 1936), gives the higher computation of 2,860,000 by March, 1929—a figure accepted by Harry L. Hopkins, *Spending to Save* (N. Y., 1936), 13. Generally speaking, liberals tended to estimate unemployment in the twenties and early thirties at higher figures than did the Hoover administration and the majority of conservatives.

18. Even in 1929 the purchasing power of the American people looked ill-balanced, an anomaly soon to be pointed up by quotation of Carlyle's phrase, "poverty in the midst of plenty." Between 1923 and 1928, while the index of speculative gains rose from 100 to 410, the index of wages advanced from 100 to a mere 112. Naturally enough, too little income went for consumer goods in proportion to the torrents that flowed into investment channels and the call-money market, into the making of new capital equipment for future production and into the savings of the well-to-do. Never before had so large a share of the national income been saved and invested as in this decade, nor had current production ever outstripped current consumption so spectacularly. The National Survey of Potential Product Capacity later described the period from 1923 to 1929 as an "orgy of saving" among the rich.

19 Two thirds of the country's savings were made by families with incomes over $10,000 a year. Those with less than $1500, comprising forty per cent of the population, actually paid out more than they earned. Six million families, one fifth of the nation, fell below even $1000. Making provision for a rainy day seemed less than feasible when one was already drowning. Up to the income bracket of $5000, American families had to spend a disproportionate amount merely to get sufficient food; hence among those nine out of ten families "not in a position to enjoy a liberal diet," substantial savings could hardly be expected.[5] In presenting the extremes of the economic spectrum a study by the Brookings Institution observed that the twenty-four thousand families which received over $100,000 apiece in 1929 enjoyed a total income three times as great as that of the six million poorest families. In other words, the average income among the top group was six hundred and thirty times that in the bottom one.

20. Orthodox economists argued that savings led to more capital equipment and superior efficiency and, in turn, to lower production costs, lower prices and greater purchasing power for the masses. It was plain by 1929, however, that this chain of causation had developed weak links. Mass buying power was unable to absorb the nation's output, not alone because wages had advanced comparatively

[5] Maurice Leven and others, *America's Capacity to Consume* (Wash., 1934), 93, 123 At 1929 prices an adequate diet for the average family was estimated to cost $800; $2000 was reckoned the minimum for basic necessities of living. A summary of statistics on this subject for 1929 and later will be found in S. C. Menefee, "Standard of Living," *Survey*, LXXIII (1937), 281-282.

little but because retail prices took virtually no cut between 1922 and 1929. Savings achieved by improved technologies were not being handed on to the consumer in the form of lower prices. They were diverted into dividends, reserves, bigger salaries and bonuses. Various shapes of monopoly, like trusts in disguise, mergers, combinations in mining and manufacturing, helped keep prices up, even while new machinery, better production methods and services of "efficiency experts" increased the over-all output of American labor by more than a third in the decade after the First World War. In some trades, like automobiles, productive efficiency was reported to have tripled.

[21] But from this plenitude the average consumer gathered only the crumbs, and even the producer reaped merely a shortsighted advantage. To reckon profit not for a day or season, but upon a broad and long-term base of buying power, might have proved wiser. Posterity would probably agree with the retrospective view of Hoover who, after praise for the technologists, remarked:

> When we fully understand the economic history of the 'twenties, we shall find that the débâcle which terminated another apparently highly prosperous period was largely contributed by a failure of industry to pass its improvement (through labor-saving devices) on to the consumer.

[22] Some others were less inclined to praise the engineers than to damn them. Their ingenuity, it was charged, had supplanted men with machines. The effect of invention in upsetting group equilibrium was, of course, no novelty. In the past, management had sometimes shown reluctance to scrap old equipment for new; more often, labor feared the "immigration of iron men." Naturally at the first threat of spreading unemployment the machine was indicted, for this generation was less apt than its forefathers to accept all calamities as mysterious visitations of Providence. Soon, in the wake of apprehensions that technology had done its job too well, came a flock of ideas about social engineering. Could not the same magic which had rid the factory of waste and inefficiency do the same for society? This hope—newer to American life than the invincible faith in applied science—led from Hoover the "Great Engineer" to Technocracy, the National Recovery Administration, the Tennessee Valley Authority, the National Resources Committee and other concepts of a managed economy. Few could have foreseen in 1929 all the paths of this projection. Nevertheless in that year the fundamental balances of a vast indus-

trial civilization were slipping: the precarious relations between wages and prices, production and consumption, machines and man power.

[23] Upon this world of uneasy prosperity the first blow fell in late October. Like the sound of gunshot which starts an Alpine avalanche, a minor panic on the New York Stock Exchange began on the twenty-third among stocks that speculators had pushed to fantastic heights. The next day, "Black Thursday," saw hysteria rampant. Brokers wept and tore off their collars trying to keep abreast selling orders; sightseers jammed the Wall Street district, ogled the arrival of great bankers in their limousines before the House of Morgan, and under the rumor of mass suicide gathered to watch an ordinary workman on a scaffolding in morbid expectation of his plunge.

[24] At first it appeared that the magicians of finance had arrested disaster, but just as the public cheered them and breathed more easily, another sickening lurch sent the market to new depths, spreading conviction that these wizards had merely propped the falling timbers long enough to get out from under. October 29 set a lurid record for sales, a total of 16,410,000 shares. At the month's close fifteen billion dollars in market value had been wiped out, and before the end of the year losses reached an estimated forty billion.

[25] After the first shock official optimism took over. A generation taught to be "a bull on the United States" was conditioned to respond. Upon feeling the initial jolt, many seemed as incredulous about the real gravity of the situation as the passengers of a luxury liner ripped below decks by an iceberg: the boat listed only a trifle at first while the band played on. Manhattan's dapper mayor, "Jimmy" Walker, asked the movies to show nothing but cheerful pictures. The patient was recommended to try the hair of the dog that bit him: *True Story Magazine* ran big advertisements in the newspapers urging wage-earners to buy more luxury items on credit. "Wall Street may sell stocks, but Main Street is buying goods," came a cheery assurance from the *Saturday Evening Post*. A Manhattan jeweler in early November put on display a "$750,000 pearl necklace," while the Shuberts revealed plans for a $15,000,000 theater-hotel on Broadway. "Forward America, Nothing Can Stop U. S.," shouted the nation's billboards. And over the radio Julius Klein, assistant secretary of commerce, announced that only four per cent of the people had been adversely affected. A tuneful hit called "Happy Days Are Here Again" was copyrighted on November 7 for one of the new talking pictures appro-

priately named "Chasing Rainbows"; three years later it would become the campaign song of the New Deal. And early in 1930, with skies growing blacker, makers of a cheap radio brought out a "prosperity model."

[26] The solvent of American humor began early to attack the crisis. Grim jokes arose about the complimentary revolver given with every share of Goldman Sachs, or the room clerk's query of every registrant, "For sleeping or jumping?" A little later, when mass unemployment began to steal the headlines from Wall Street, bravado succeeded flippancy. Billboards began to ask, "Wasn't the Depression Terrible?" The departing owner of a ruined shop scrawled upon the door "Opened by mistake" if he were a humorist, or "Busted and disgusted" if possessed by the blues. Trained in the cult of the stiff upper lip, of singing in the rain, Americans hated to admit that things were not as they had always been. The International Association of Lions Clubs observed the week of October 19, 1930, as Business Confidence Week. Prosperity was just around the corner; perhaps the corner was one already turned.

[27] For a while the momentum of the great bull market carried certain enterprises. The year 1931, for example, saw the opening of the world's finest luxury hotel, the new Waldorf-Astoria in Manhattan, and completion of the tallest of all skyscrapers, the Empire State Building of one hundred and two stories topped by a "mooring mast" for airships—but functionally as useless as the metallic needle surmounting its nearest rival, the new Chrysler Building. Many floors in each of these grandiose business palaces remained spectrally vacant in the times ahead. The same year saw publication of architects' plans for New York's most impressive cluster of buildings, Rockefeller Center, which the next two years consummated. Housing broadcasting studios, ornate movie and music halls, foreign-trade syndicates and other business enterprises upon a scale never before attempted, this group culminated in the austere gray seventy-story shaft of the R. C. A. building.

[28] Some critics of architecture prophesied that these would be the last dinosaurs of America's metropolitan era, convinced that such vainglory had overreached itself, promoting little save congested traffic, overcrowding and colossal debts. Like many other vanities of the century, perhaps the skyscraper too was bankrupt. At any rate, the nation's outlay for new construction fell sixty per cent between 1931 and 1932 as the momentum of prosperity ground to a dead stop.

By 1933 architects were doing less than a seventh of the business they had enjoyed in 1928.

[29] Gala openings and soothing statements no longer fitted the temper of the times; the smile of official optimism slowly froze into something that resembled a *risus sardonicus.* In 1931 Edward Angly garnered the more fulsome assurances of Wall Street and Washington into a little book with the derisive title *Oh Yeah!* Early in the following year appeared a new magazine called *Ballyhoo,* its first issue packaged in cellophane as a touch of commercial parody. Within six months it rocketed to a two-million circulation largely by debunking the specious salesmanship of the twenties.[6]

[30] The public, seeking a scapegoat for its bitterness, found one with the help of a shrewd publicist hired by the Democratic party, Charles Michelson. Old newspapers were called "Hoover blankets," jack rabbits "Hoover hogs" and the shanties of starvation rising on outskirts of cities "Hoovervilles." A large share of popular odium also fell upon the shoulders of rich and weary Andrew Mellon, lately toasted by business as the "greatest secretary of the treasury since Alexander Hamilton." In February, 1932, Mellon was glad enough to relinquish his portfolio and be kicked upstairs as ambassador to Britain.

[31] As President Coolidge had said in the palmy days, the business of America had indeed been business. But now the luxuries and amusements, the bustling sense of power which cloaked life's essential materialism for the prosperous urban or suburban citizen, were suddenly stripped away. This greatest of economic reverses gave millions of citizens the jolt of taking a downward step in the dark when expecting an upward one. A nation used to regarding prosperity as a habit found itself startled, then incredulous, more than a little helpless and finally resentful. It made the situation no easier that the adversary was invisible, and unlike a domestic or foreign foe, invulnerable to ridicule, ballots or bullets.

[32] But the reality of this enemy admitted no doubt. His unseen stature could be measured by the two yardsticks of income and employment. The loss of earnings, chiefly paper profits, had first taken the spotlight. A few moths had singed their wings; so what? But as early as the spring of 1930, when the Federal Council of Churches set aside

[6] Its creator was a disillusioned Manhattan editor and artist, Norman Anthony, but the name which *Ballyhoo* made famous was that of a fictional high-powered advertising man, one Elmer Zilch. In a chapter called "Jackpot!" Anthony gave the history of this magazine in *How to Grow Old Disgracefully* (N. Y., 1946).

April 27 as "Unemployment Sunday," the crisis had assumed breadth as well as depth. Soon, lowered income and unemployment were seen in constant interaction, forcing the national economy into a descending spiral. White-collar workers began to take salary cuts, laborers to find discharge slips in pay envelopes. The city felt the shock first. Initial symptoms were not ostentatious: postponement in buying that new car, or breaking ground for a new home; surrender of small apartments by young couples moving in with parents; a drop in pleasure travel and theater attendance; more business for the cleaner, invisible mender, shoe-repair man, less for tailor and haberdasher.

33 A few grimmer signs appeared early, upon a small scale. In late February, 1930, Seattle, Los Angeles and Chicago witnessed minor demonstrations of the unemployed, in which Communists usually had a hand. In the same month bread lines in the Bowery were drawing two thousand daily. In March Milwaukee opened a municipal soup kitchen. The summer of 1930, as happened seasonally through the Depression, brought a measure of relief. Food was fresher, more plentiful and cheaper; clothing, fuel and shelter offered problems less acute. But the descent of winter in 1930-1931 inaugurated harder times, with New York City appropriating a million dollars for direct relief and Lloyd's of London announcing that for the first time on record they were selling riot and civil-commotion insurance in quantity to American clients.

34. Outside the city, harbingers of the crisis were less newsworthy. Farmers had known nothing but depression since the Armistice boom burst, and even though their plight continued to worsen, they had the gloomy satisfaction of long conditioning. Smaller industrial cities and towns, however, were reluctant to admit the fact of hard times, which in many citizens' eyes was either a Manhattan gamblers' fiasco or else just a state of mind. They congratulated themselves upon a firmer foundation. Notwithstanding that every fourth factory worker in Muncie, Indiana—the Middletown of sociologists—had lost his job before the end of 1930, men of substance in that community kept insisting to the end of 1931 that the Depression was "mainly something we read about in the newspapers." Still feeding upon the gospel of keeping up appearances, a delegation of local business men in 1932 persuaded General Motors not to board up the windows of its abandoned Muncie plant, which stood in clear view of the passing trains. The philosophy of the peptomists died hard.

35. As the average citizen could see for himself, working capital and

jobs were closely interlocked, and upon their joint scarcity the years of depression hinged. What happened to income may be shown briefly. National income dwindled from eighty-one billion dollars in 1929 to less than sixty-eight in 1930, then cascaded to fifty-three in 1931 and hit bottom in 1932 with forty-one. Correspondingly, the country's estimated wealth over this span shrank from three hundred and sixty-five billion to two hundred and thirty-nine, a loss representing diminished values in real property, capital and commodities. Much of the nation's physical plant, of course, rusted in idleness and disrepair. These three years took a toll of eighty-five thousand business failures with liabilities of four and a half billion dollars and the suspension of five thousand banks. Nine million savings accounts were wiped out, and wage losses upwards of twenty-six billion dollars sustained.

[36.] While the debt structure of the American economy remained little changed—only 3.5 per cent less money being paid out in interest in 1932 than in 1929—in other fields deflation proceeded furiously, making long-term debts more crushing than borrowers had anticipated when incurring them. The volume of money paid as salaries dwindled 40 per cent, dividends 56.6 per cent, and wages 60 per cent. Early in the crisis, at the Hoover administration's earnest request, major industries made few cuts in pay rates, but by drastic reduction of working hours and days they contrived to slash pay rolls about 40 per cent between 1929 and September, 1931. Since a workingman's family had to live on the money he brought home, this procedure looked better in the headlines than in private.

[37.] For the country at large, per-capita realized income (adjusted to the cost of living) tumbled from $681 in 1929 to $495 in 1933. At the apex of the economic pyramid the number of persons reporting an annual income over a million dollars fell from seventy-five in 1931 to only twenty the next year. Despite repeated assurances from government circles and high finance that the recession had reached bedrock—the "terminal trough," forecasters liked to call it—the general course of business after the Wall Street crash plunged fitfully downward for more than three years.

[38.] Many industries and small businesses denied even lip service to the administration's plea for maintenance of wage rates. A growing backwater of unemployment led department stores to pay clerks as little as five or ten dollars weekly. Investigation of a group of working girls in Chicago showed the great majority toiling for less than

twenty-five cents an hour, a fourth for less than ten cents. Makers of ready-to-wear dresses, confectionery employees and cannery workers were among the classes exploited most callously. First-class New York stenographers' salaries fell from $35 and $45 a week to $16; domestic servants were obliged to labor for room and board plus ten dollars a month. As usual, unskilled workers had been the shock troops, followed by white-collar workers and technicians. Professional classes felt the jar a little later, as teachers' and ministers' salaries were cut or fell into arrears, and the practice of other groups declined, with fees increasingly hard to collect. Even in 1936 physicians' incomes were still from eighteen to thirty per cent below their 1929 level, lawyers' between eighteen and thirty-eight per cent.

[39] Turning from lowered income and diminished working capital to the other side of the coin, one comes upon the face of total unemployment. In April, 1930, President Hoover ordered a house-to-house survey of this situation, the first federal census of unemployment in the nation's history. In all, slightly more than three million employables were reported out of work, against forty-five million persons gainfully employed. But the tide was rising fast, and a special census by the department of commerce in January, 1931, based upon sampling, disclosed more than six million unemployed. Before the end of that year almost all appraisers agreed that the ten-million mark had been passed, and 1932 saw the addition of four or five million more. Thanks to seasonal factors and local flurries of advance or retreat, the national picture shifted constantly; unemployment tended also to propagate itself, with wives and older children of idle men now joining in the scramble for any crumbs of odd jobs. Exhaustion of savings and losses in modest investments drove aged folk to participate in the frantic search and be counted.

[40] This cycle brought forth its changing tokens and symbols. If the still cheerful desperation of 1931 was crystallized in the song "Life Is Just a Bowl of Cherries," the grimmer abasement of 1932 was epitomized by "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?" appealing on behalf of casualties like the jobless war veteran or the discarded builder of an industrial empire. The most memorable symbol of the great unemployment, and of pride in facing it, came to be the apple. In the autumn of 1930 the International Apple Shippers' Association devised a scheme to dispose of surpluses. It offered to sell the fruit on credit to the jobless, to retail at five cents apiece. By early November six thousand apple sellers had taken their stand on the sidewalks of New

York, and the idea soon spread elsewhere. In this early phase of the Depression, the stubborn self-reliance of America—the poor as well as the rich—bridled at the notion of direct relief or a dole, as had been practised since the First World War in Britain. But this meager toll upon the passing throng soon lost its novelty. In 1931 Manhattan began to forbid apple selling upon certain streets. By 1932 people were reported to be "sick of apples."

41 Those who could lift their eyes from this bleak domestic picture to scan the international horizon could draw at least some solace from the proverbial fellowship of misery. President Hoover himself at first was inclined to lay the ultimate blame upon causes outside the United States. In the war of 1914-1918 and its aftermath he saw the well-spring of this bitter draught. Waste and destruction, loss of man power, war debts and taxes, inflation and subsequent devaluation, the greed and imperialism of others, together with the fears and new spending bred by rearmament, were the malign heritage of a struggle "for which our people had no blame." And so far as America was concerned, these complications sprang from the days of Woodrow Wilson, "this war having come on during a Democratic administration." [7]

42 If this analysis seemed overcomforting—presenting the American people in the classic rôle of innocents at home and abroad—at least none could deny that the Depression was fast spreading over an economically interdependent world. Nations were seen to be roped together like mountain climbers in the bonds of loans and debts, cartels and tariffs, and quick communication whether of hope or panic. The footing of countries mainly agricultural tended to give way first, with the industrial powers slipping later but more spectacularly. By the spring of 1929 or slightly earlier, Australia, Brazil, the Orient, the Near East, Argentina, Canada and Poland were showing symptoms of decline, while Germany's chronic postwar depression deepened. Later than the United States to feel the shock were Great Britain, France, Czechoslovakia, Switzerland and the Scandinavian countries. A second wave, beginning about 1931 and more severe than the first, likewise affected all these lands, and did not begin to recede until around the spring of 1933.

43 In most places similar factors had been at work, although the

[7] Hoover, *State Papers*, II, 137, 437. "Without the war, we would have had no such depression," Hoover said flatly at Indianapolis in June, 1931. Myers and Newton, *Hoover Administration*, 90.

shape and gravity of the crisis varied a good deal. A look at the global picture, however, showed that Americans had not been the only dupes of hit-or-miss prosperity, the Republicans not the sole villains of 1929, nor the Democrats the exclusive heroes of 1933.

[44] Refusal to admit this fact of economic interdependence was never shown more clearly than by the Hawley-Smoot tariff of June, 1930, in itself an aggravation of the crisis. The armistice of 1918 found the United States for the first time in history a great creditor country. At the same time its citizens' private investments abroad were growing so rapidly that from a prewar total of three billion dollars they had swollen to fourteen by 1932. A mighty producing nation, America naïvely construed foreign commerce as the right to sell, with little or no obligation to buy in exchange. Indeed, the nightmare of foreign dumping led both farmers and industrialists to clamor for the highest protective rates yet known and to obtain them in 1930 at an average of forty per cent. President Hoover wished to limit the bill chiefly to a few agricultural commodities, but he was overborne.

[45] Abroad the Hawley-Smoot act was interpreted as a declaration of economic war. It met such prompt retaliatory tariffs, quotas and anti-American embargoes that by 1932 twenty-five governments had joined in the reprisal, thus halving the volume of United States exports. The vicious spiral held another twist. To escape this threat of boycott, American manufacturers during the first two years of the Hawley-Smoot act set up two hundred and fifty-eight separate factories in foreign countries, including seventy-one across the Canadian line.

[46] What the average American thought about these matters depended largely upon his region, politics and business. Southerners had always been taught to regard high tariffs as iniquitous, but in the industrial North and agricultural Midwest "protection" still exercised its charm. No doubt many solid citizens would have echoed an editorial in Middletown's press: "The difference between good times and bad times in the United States, so far as history indicates, is the difference between an adequate protective tariff for the products of our farms and our factories and an inadequate tariff." When regression rather than improvement followed, Middletown's editor stuck doggedly to his line, ridiculing the "mistaken" view that "conditions in Europe have something to do with America's coming out of the depression."

[47] Within the United States the twenties had seen a remarkable in-

crease in the number and influence of trade associations, by which rival producers pooled statistical information, credit standards, cost formulae, and the like, and sought to curb unfair marketing practices. To this extent they were beneficent, and so impressed Hoover as secretary of commerce and as president. But not infrequently they sought by their definition of "fair" and "unfair" price policies to achieve price control while sailing to the leeward of the Sherman antitrust act, and sometimes the effect was to eliminate the small independent operator. Their growth was further indulged by a series of Supreme Court decisions which an earlier progressivism would have eyed with suspicion as entering wedges for native cartels and capitalist syndicalism.[8]

[48] Although domestic cartels remained illegal under federal law, in the international sphere certain American concerns benefiting by the concentration of economic power—Du Pont, United States Steel, General Electric, Westinghouse, Bendix Aviation, Diamond Match, Anaconda Copper, Standard Oil of New Jersey—entered into agreements in the twenties and the thirties with foreign producers often to restrict production in order to raise prices and increase profits, and still more commonly to divide world markets and exchange patents. In hampering free enterprise cartels tended to constrict the flow of supplies, retard foreign and domestic trade and prevent the introduction of new products and improvements (such, for example, as the "everlasting" match usable many times).

[49] Their effect upon prices may be illustrated by the fact that in 1914 the cost of quinine sulfate was twenty-five cents an ounce, but after Merck joined the international cartel the price rose to seventy-five cents by 1941. The imposition of production quotas is suggested by the fact that, while in 1930 domestic aluminum production exceeded a hundred thousand metric tons and that of Germany was only thirty thousand, in 1934, three years after Alcoa entered the cartel, the American output had fallen to thirty-three thousand tons and the German had risen to thirty-seven.[9] In the Depression their effect apparently was to aggravate unemployment and underconsumption.

[8] For example, the cracking patents pool in the oil industry (282 U. S., 163, 1931) and the organization of a joint sales agency among major producers in the Appalachian Coals case (288 U. S., 344, 1933).

[9] U. S. *v.* Aluminum Co. of America, 148 Fed. Rep., ser. 2, 416, an action which resulted on March 12, 1945, in a decision adverse to the aluminum interests, holding that they had violated the Sherman act.

Later in the thirties cartels began to attract unfavorable notice from Senate investigating committees and the antitrust division of the justice department because of their alleged threat to the national security.[10] On the whole, the shapes assumed by the internationalism of Big Business seemed as futile as those of economic nationalism in promoting the greatest good for the greatest number.

50. Lurking in the background of the ordinary American's insularity remained the old issue of unpaid debts from the First World War. Here, he believed, was proof that in dealing with foreigners he and his compatriots always got trimmed. Isolation was best. Other persons saw the urgency of war debts and reparations as strangling the economy of Europe and ultimately harming the creditor as well. President Hoover's decision in June, 1931, to sponsor a moratorium on intergovernmental war debts was hailed in some circles as a great contribution to good will and recovery, by others as a ruse to help the bankers and holders of foreign bonds. By the time of Franklin D. Roosevelt's inauguration, practically all the war debts were in hopeless default. Popular grievance over these unpaid bills did much to feed the pacifism of the mid-thirties and impede the international education of Americans.

51. The period 1929-1941 began with a domestic débâcle which stemmed from many causes, but perhaps the most basic was selfish blindness to the bond between group welfare and the satisfactions of the individual. Disaster helped Americans to recollect that they were one nation and that only through coöperation could the cart be pulled from the mire. This period closed upon the eve of American participation in a global war which had been bred largely by the equally stubborn refusal of many nations to admit the tie between their security and the good estate of all—the concept of one world. About the commonalty of man and the commonweal of nations revolved the

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[10] Most notably the cartel under which Standard Oil of New Jersey had promised the German firm, I. G. Farben, "the benefit of all its know-how in the oil and chemical fields." Special Committee Investigating the National Defense Program, *Hearings on Senate Resolution 71*, pt. xi, 4698 (77 Cong., 1 sess., March 1942). Wendell Berge, assistant attorney-general, declared in retrospect: "The good-neighbor policy, which is supposed to govern our relations with Latin America, the reciprocal trade treaties, our alien-property policy, and other basic principles of America's conduct of foreign affairs have in many instances been seriously weakened by the interference of cartel activities." Subcommittee of the Committee on the Judiciary, *U. S. Senate Hearings on S. 11*, 47 (79 Cong., 1 sess., May 1945). Cartels in the Great Depression are discussed by Louis Domeratzky, "Cartels and the Business Crisis," *Foreign Affairs*, X (1931), 34-53.

great debates, the most significant activity, of these dozen years. Even in his daily life the average American could not help being profoundly affected by the outcome.

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Commentary and Questions

Dixon Wecter is the author of a number of books exploring American social and literary history. The selection here reprinted is the opening chapter in *The Age of the Great Depression 1929-1941*, which surveys the 1930's as Frederick Lewis Allen's *Only Yesterday* surveyed the 1920's. But although the two books have some overlap, and "From Riches to Rags" covers a portion of the same ground as "Crash!" the results are very different. Wecter's discussion has a different aim from Allen's, and he is writing for a different, more scholarly audience. (Thus he includes in an appendix additional, documentary footnotes, not here reprinted.) These facts alone account for a major portion of the contrast between the two selections.

1. Allen began his chapter with the statement of an incident; Wecter begins his with the statement of a situation. What does this suggest about the difference in purpose of the two? Allen reaches the beginning of the great stock market crash in his eleventh paragraph, Wecter in his twenty-third. What does this show about the relative emphasis of the two chapters? Allen's introductory material is largely concerned with the attitude of forecasters and financiers toward stock prices and business prospects. What do Wecter's first twenty-two paragraphs accomplish? Is his tone as well as his content different? Would you say that his emphasis was on financiers who made ludicrous forecasts or on small citizens already trapped in an unsound economy?

2. "Crash!" very naturally followed an essentially chronological pattern. Find time indications in pars. 1 and 23 which together show that the structure of this part of "From Riches to Rags" is not chronological. The chapter is divided by pars. 23 and 24 into a discussion of the situation before the crash and of the situation after. Pars. 25-31 have a certain chronological unity, built around the changing attitude of the public toward the crash and its aftermath. Par. 32 begins a new and non-chronological discussion. How is par. 32 linked to par. 31? Where in par. 32 is stated the subject of the whole group of paragraphs from 32 through 40? Where and how is the second half of this subject introduced? What is the central topic of pars. 41-50 and how

is the transition made from the previous group (pars. 32-40)? Is par. 47 a digression from this topic? What is accomplished by par. 51? (Remember that this selection is the first chapter of a book about a whole decade.)

3. Wecter's style makes use of a number of skillful devices. How many other examples can you find of these: alliteration ("hysterias of hope or panic, or perhaps sun spots"; "guessing was garbed"; "priority over planning"—par. 6); epigrammatic parallelism or contrast ("small fry with little cash but big hopes"—par. 7); the reversal or reworking of clichés ("From Riches to Rags"; "towers of Babel reaching to the skies and equally tremulous at the base"—par. 9). Wecter's style is full of allusions which he assumes the reader will recognize and enjoy. Is the sentence about the luxury liner in par. 25 an invented simile or does it refer in some detail to an actual event? What is the point of the irony in the phrase "heroes all" in par. 4? Guggenheim and Lamont have been noted as beneficent philanthropists as well as financiers. Who were Kreuger and Insull? Which differences in style between Allen and Wecter are the results of their writing for different audiences?

Suggestions for Writing

1. What I have been told about the depression.
2. The psychology of the boom after World War II.
3. The American frame of mind in the present year.

*Who Are You?**

by ALDOUS HUXLEY

I

The most striking fact about human beings is that, in many respects, they are very unlike one another. Their bodies vary enormously in size and shape. Their modes of thought and speech and feeling are startlingly different. Startlingly different, too, are their reactions to even such basic things as food,

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sex, money, and power. Between the most highly gifted and those of least ability, and between persons endowed with one particular kind of talent or temperament and persons endowed with another kind, the gulfs are so wide as to be bridgeable only by the most enlightened charity.

2 These are facts which from time immemorial have been recognized, described in plays and stories, commented on in proverbs, aphorisms, and poems. And yet, in spite of their obviousness and their enormous practical importance, these facts are still, to a very great extent, outside the pale of systematic thought.

3 The first and indispensable condition of systematic thought is classification. For the purposes of pure and applied science, the best classification is comprehensive, covering as many of the indefinitely numerous facts as it is possible for thought to cover without becoming confused, and yet is simple enough to be readily understood and used without being so simple as to be untrue to the essentially complex nature of reality. The categories under which it classifies things and events are easily recognizable, lend themselves to being expressed in quantitative terms, and can be shown experimentally to be meaningful for our specifically human purposes.

4 Up to the present, all the systems in terms of which men have attempted to think about human differences have been unsatisfactory. Some, for example, have conspicuously failed to cover more than a part of the relevant facts. This is especially true of psychology and sociology as commonly taught and practised at the present time. How many of even the best of our psychologists talk, write, think, and act as though the human body, with its innate constitution and its acquired habits, were something that, in an analysis of mental states, could safely be ignored! And even when they do admit, rather reluctantly, that the mind always trails its carcass behind it, they have little or nothing to tell us about the ways in which mental and physical characteristics are related.

5 Sociologists deal with abstractions even more phantasmally bodiless. For example, they will carry out laborious researches into the problems of marriage. But when we read the results, we are flabbergasted to find that the one factor never taken into account by the researchers is who the men and women under investigation actually *are*. We are told every detail about their social and economic back-

ground; nothing at all about their inherited psycho-physical constitution.

6 There are other classificatory systems which claim to be comprehensive, but in which the indispensable process of simplification has been carried so far that they are no longer true to the facts. The interpretation of all human activity in terms of economics is a case in point. Another type of oversimplification is to be found in such theories as those of Helvétius in the eighteenth century and of certain Behaviorists in the twentieth—theories which profess to account for everything that men do or are in terms of environment, education, or conditioned reflexes. At the other extreme of oversimplification we find some of the more rabid Eugenists, who attribute all the observable differences between human beings to hereditary factors, and refuse to admit that environmental influences may also play a part.

7 It may be remarked in passing that most of the hypotheses and classification systems we use in our everyday thinking are grossly oversimplified and therefore grossly untrue to a reality which is intrinsically complex. Popular theories about such things as morals, politics, economics, and religion are generally of the either-or, A-causes-B variety. But in any real-life situation there are almost always more than two valid and workable alternatives and invariably more than one determining cause. That is why the utterances of speech-making politicians can never, in the very nature of things, be true. In half an hour's yelling from a platform it is intellectually impossible for even the most scrupulous man to tell the delicately complex truth about any of the major issues of political or economic life.

8. We come now to the classification systems which attempt to cover the whole ground, but which have proved scientifically unsatisfactory because (though founded, as they often are, upon profound insights into the nature of human reality) they have made use of categories which could not be expressed in quantitative terms. Thus, for several thousands of years, the Hindus have been classifying human beings within the framework of four main psycho-physico-social categories. Because the caste system in India has become petrified into a rigidity that is untrue to the facts of life and therefore often unjust, the whole idea of caste is repellent to Western minds. And yet that special branch of applied psychology which deals with vocational guidance is concerned precisely with assigning individuals to their proper place in the natural caste system. The work of the specialists in "human engineering" has made it quite clear that individuals belong con-

genitally to one kind of caste, and that they hurt themselves and their society if, by some mistake, they get enrolled in another caste. Some time in the next century or two the empirical findings of the vocational guidance experts will be linked up with a satisfactory method of analyzing the total psycho-physical organism. When that happens, society will be in a position to reorganize itself on the basis of a rejuvenated and thoroughly beneficent, because thoroughly realistic, caste system.

9. In the West, for more than two thousand years, men were content with a classification system devised by the Greek physician, Hippocrates. His theory was that one's innate psycho-physical constitution was determined by the relative predominance within one's body of one or other of the four "humors"—blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile. (We still describe temperaments as "sanguine" or "phlegmatic"; we still talk of "choler" and "melancholia.") Humoral pathology persisted into the nineteenth century. Diseases were attributed to a derangement of the normal balance of the individual's humors, and treatment was directed to restoring the equilibrium. This relating of disease to inherited constitution was essentially realistic, and one of the things that modern medicine most urgently needs is a new and sounder version of the Hippocratic hypothesis—a classification of human differences in terms of which the physician may interpret the merely mechanical findings of his diagnostic instruments.

10 Finally we come to those classification systems which are unsatisfactory because the categories they make use of, although susceptible of being expressed in quantitative terms, have not, in practice, turned out to be particularly meaningful. Thus the anthropometrists have measured innumerable skulls, determined the coloring of innumerable heads of hair and pairs of eyes, but have told us very little of genuinely scientific or practical value about human beings. Why? Because, as a matter of empirical fact, these records and measurements could not be related in any significant way to human behavior.

11. And, not content with telling us very little by means of a colossal volume of statistics, the anthropometrists proceeded to confuse the whole issue by trying to think about human differences in terms of fixed racial types—the Nordic, the Alpine, the Mediterranean, and so forth. But the most obvious fact about all the existing groups of human beings, at any rate in Europe and America, is that each one of them exhibits a large number of individual variations. In certain areas, it

is true, a single closely related set of such variations may be more common than in other areas. It is upon this fact that the whole theory of racial types has been built up—a system of classification which has proved extremely unfruitful as an instrument of pure and applied science, and, in the hands of the Nazi ideologists, extremely fruitful as an instrument of discrimination and persecution.

II

12. So much, then, for the classification systems which have proved to be unsatisfactory. Does there exist a more adequate system? This is a question which it is now possible, I think, to answer with a decided yes. A classification system more adequate to the facts and more potentially fruitful than any other devised hitherto has been formulated by Dr. W. H. Sheldon in two recently published volumes, *The Varieties of Human Physique* and *The Varieties of Temperament.*

13. Sheldon's classification system is the fruit of nearly fifteen years of research, during which he and his collaborators have made, measured, and arranged in order many thousands of standardized photographs of the male body, taken from in front, from behind, and in profile. A careful study of these photographs revealed that the most basic (first order) classification system in terms of which the continuous variations of human physique could adequately be described was based upon the discrimination of three factors, present to a varying degree in every individual. To these three factors Sheldon has given the names of *endomorphy, mesomorphy,* and *ectomorphy.*

14 Endomorphy is the factor which, when predominant, expresses itself in a tendency for anabolism to predominate over catabolism, which often results in soft and comfortable roundness of physique. At school the extreme endomorph is called Slob or Fatty. By middle life he or she may be so enormously heavy as to be practically incapable of walking. The endomorphic physique is dominated by its digestive tract. Autopsies show that the endomorphic gut is often more than twice as long and weighs more than twice as much as the intestine of a person in whom there is an extreme predominance of the ectomorphic constituent.

15. Predominant mesomorphy expresses itself in a physique that is hard and muscular. The body is built around strong heavy bones and is dominated by its extraordinarily powerful muscles. In youth, the

extreme mesomorph tends to look older than his years, and his skin, instead of being soft, smooth, and unwrinkled, like that of the endomorph, is coarse and leathery, tans easily, and sets in deep folds and creases at a comparatively early age. It is from the ranks of extreme mesomorphs that successful boxers, football players, military leaders, and the central figures of the more heroic comic strips are drawn.

16 The extreme ectomorph is neither comfortably round nor compactly hard. His is a linear physique with slender bones, stringy unemphatic muscles, a short and thin-walled gut. The ectomorph is a lightweight, has little muscular strength, needs to eat at frequent intervals, is often quick and highly sensitive. The ratio of skin surface to body mass is higher than in endomorphs or mesomorphs, and he is thus more vulnerable to outside influences, because more extensively in contact with them. His body is built, not around the endomorph's massively efficient intestine, not around the mesomorph's big bones and muscles, but around a relatively predominant and unprotected nervous system.

17 Endomorphy, mesomorphy, and ectomorphy occur, as constituting components, in every human individual. In most persons the three components are combined fairly evenly, or at least harmoniously. Extreme and unbalanced predominance of any one factor is relatively uncommon.

18. For example, less than ten boys out of every hundred are sufficiently mesomorphic to engage with even moderate success in the more strenuous forms of athletics, requiring great strength and physical endurance. Hence the almost criminal folly of encouraging all boys, whatever their hereditary make-up, to develop athletic ambitions. By doing this, educators condemn large numbers of their pupils to an unnecessary disappointment and frustration, plant the seed of neurosis among the unsuccessful, and foster a conspicuous bumptiousness and self-conceit in the extreme mesomorph. A rational policy with regard to athletics would be to tell all boys the simple truth, which is that very few of them can expect to excel in the more violent sports, that such excellence depends primarily on a particular inheritance of size and shape, and that persons of other shapes and sizes not suited to athletic proficiency have as good a right to realize their own *natural* capacities as the extreme mesomorph and can contribute at least as much to society.

19. In order to calculate the relative amounts of each component in the total individual mixture, Sheldon divides the body into five regions and proceeds to make a number of measurements in each zone. The records of these measurements are then subjected to certain mathematical procedures, which yield a three-digit formula. This formula expresses the amount of endomorphy, mesomorphy, and ectomorphy present within the organism, as measured on a seven-point scale of values. Thus the formula 7-1-1 indicates that the individual under consideration exhibits endomorphy in its highest possible degree, combined with the lowest degree of mesomorphy and ectomorphy. In practice, he would probably be extremely fat, gluttonous and comfort-loving, without drive or energy, almost sexless, and pathetically dependent on other people. How different from the well-balanced 4-4-4, the formidably powerful and aggressive 3-7-1, the thin, nervous, "introverted" 1-2-7!

20. The relationships between the components are such that only a certain number of the mathematically possible combinations can occur in nature. Thus it is obviously impossible for a human being to be a 7-1-7, or a 7-7-7, or a 1-7-7; for nobody can be simultaneously extremely round and soft and extremely hard and compact or extremely narrow, small-gutted, and stringy-muscled. Sheldon and his collaborators have found that, in terms of their seven-point scale of values for three components, seventy-six varieties of human physique can be clearly recognized. If a value scale of more than seven points were used, the number would of course be correspondingly greater. But they have found empirically that the seven-point scale provides an instrument of analysis sufficiently precise for most practical purposes.

21 The three-digit formula given by an analysis of the basic components tells some of the story, but not all. It needs to be supplemented by additional information in respect to three secondary components present in all individuals—the factor of *dysplasia* or disharmony; the factor of *gynandromorphy,* or the possession of characteristics typical of the opposite sex; and the factor of *texture,* whether fine or coarse, aesthetically pleasing or the reverse.

22 Dysplasia occurs when one region or feature of the body is more or less markedly in disharmony with the rest of the physique. We are all familiar, for example, with the big, barrel-chested man whose legs or arms taper off to an absurdly slender inefficiency. And who has not

had to listen to the despairing complaints of the ladies to whom ironic nature has given an elegantly ectomorphic torso, with hips and thighs on the most amply endomorphic scale? Such disharmonies are significant and must be observed and measured, for they provide many clues to the explorers of human personality.

23 All persons exhibit characteristics of the opposite sex, some to a very slight degree, others more or less conspicuously. Again, the variations are significant. And the same is true of the factor of texture. Of two individuals having the same fundamental pattern one may be markedly fine-textured, the other markedly coarse-textured. The difference is one which cannot be neglected. That is why the basic formula is always supplemented by other descriptive qualifications expressing the amount of dysplasia, gynandromorphy, and fineness of texture observed in the individual under analysis.

III

24 So much for the varieties of physique and the methods by which they can be classified and measured. Inevitably two questions now propound themselves. First, is it possible for an individual to modify his basic physical pattern? Is there any system of dieting, hormone therapy, or exercise by means of which, say, a 1-1-7 can be transformed into a 7-1-1 or a 3-4-3? The answer would seem to be no. An individual's basic formula cannot be modified. True, an endomorph may be undernourished to the point of looking like a thing of skin and bones. But this particular thing of skin and bones will be measurably quite unlike the thing of skin and bones which is an undernourished, or even tolerably well nourished, ectomorph. Our fundamental physical pattern is something given and unalterable, something we can make the best of but can never hope to change.

25. The second question which naturally occurs to us is this: how closely is our fundamental psychological pattern related to our physical pattern? That such a relationship exists is a subject upon which every dramatist and story-teller, every observant student of men and women, has always been agreed. No writer in his senses would dream of associating the character of Pickwick with the body of Scrooge. And when the comic-strip artist wants to portray an athletic hero, he gives him the physique of Flash Gordon, not of Rosie's Beau. Further, men have always clearly recognized that individuals of one psychophysical type tend to misunderstand and even dislike individuals

whose basic psycho-physical pattern is different from their own. Here are the words which Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Julius Caesar:

> Let me have men about me that are fat;
> Sleek-headed men and such as sleep o' nights.
> Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look;
> He thinks too much; such men are dangerous.

Translated into Sheldon's terminology, this means that the mesomorph is one kind of animal, the ectomorph another; and that their mutual incomprehension very often leads to suspicion and downright antipathy.

[26] In a general way all this has been perfectly well known for the past several thousand years. But it has been known only in an intuitive, empirical way. No organized scientific thinking about the subject has been possible hitherto, because (in spite of some valuable work done in Europe and America) nobody had worked out a satisfactory classification system for describing temperamental differences.

[27] Modern chemistry classifies matter in terms of a system of ninety-two first-order elements. In earlier times, men tried to do their thinking about matter in terms of only four elements—earth, air, fire, and water. But earth, air, and water are not first-order elements, but elaborate combinations of such elements; while fire is not an element at all, but something that happens to all kinds of matter under certain conditions of temperature. In terms of so inadequate a classification system it was impossible for scientific thought to go very far.

[28] The problem of psychological analysis is identical in principle with that of the analysis of matter. The psychologist's business is to discover first-order elements, in terms of which the facts of human difference may be classified and measured. The failure of psychology—and it has conspicuously failed to become the fruitful Science of Man which ideally it should be—is due to the fact that it has done its analysis of human differences in terms of entities that were not first-order elements, but combinations of elements. Sheldon's great contribution to psychology consists in this: that he has isolated a number of genuine first-order elements of the basic psychological pattern which we call temperament, and has demonstrated their close correlation with the individual's basic physical pattern.

[29] What follows is a summing up—necessarily rather crude and oversimplified—of the conclusions to which his research has led.

[30] Endomorphy, mesomorphy, and ectomorphy are correlated very closely with specific patterns of temperament—endomorphy with the temperamental pattern to which Sheldon gives the name of *viscerotonia*, mesomorphy with *somatotonia*, and ectomorphy with *cerebrotonia*. Close and prolonged observation of many subjects, combined with an adaptation of the technique known as factor-analysis, resulted in the isolation of sixty descriptive or determinative traits—twenty for each of the main, first-order components of temperament. From these sixty, I select a smaller number of the more striking and easily recognizable traits.

[31] Conspicuous among the elements of the viscerotonic pattern of temperament are relaxation in posture and movement, slow reaction, profound sleep, love of physical comfort, and love of food. With this love of food for its own sake goes a great love of eating in company, an almost religious feeling for the social meal as a kind of sacrament. Another conspicuous viscerotonic trait is love of polite ceremony, with which goes a love of company, together with indiscriminate amiability and marked dependence on, and desire for, the affection and approval of other people. The viscerotonic does not inhibit his emotions, but tends to give expression to them as they arise, so that nobody is ever in doubt as to what he feels.

[32] Somatotonia, the temperament associated with the hard and powerful mesomorphic physique, is a patterning of very different elements. The somatotonic individual stands and moves in an assertive way, loves physical adventure, enjoys risk and loves to take a chance. He feels a strong need for physical exercise, which he hugely enjoys and often makes a fetish of, just as the viscerotonic enjoys and makes a fetish of eating. When in trouble, he seeks relief in physical action, whereas the viscerotonic turns in the same circumstances to people and the cerebrotonic retires, like a wounded animal, into solitude. The somatotonic is essentially energetic and quick to action. Procrastination is unknown to him; for he is neither excessively relaxed and comfort-loving, like the viscerotonic, nor inhibited and 'sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,' like the cerebrotonic. The social manner of the somatotonic is uninhibited and direct. The voice is normally unrestrained, and he coughs, laughs, snores and, when passion breaks through his veneer of civilization, speaks loudly. He is physically courageous in combat and enjoys every kind of competitive activity.

[33] From a sociological point of view, the most significant of the somatotonic traits is the lust for power. The individual who is high in

somatotonia loves to dominate, and since he is (when somatotonia is extreme) congenitally insensitive to other people's feelings, since he lacks the indiscriminate amiability and tolerance of viscerotonia and is devoid of cerebrotonic squeamishness, he can easily become a ruthless bully and tyrant. The somatotonic individual is always an extrovert in the sense that his attention is firmly fixed upon external reality, to such an extent that he is necessarily unaware of what is going on in the deeper levels of his own mind.

[34] It should be noted that somatotonic extroversion is quite different from the extroversion of the viscerotonic; for while the latter is continually spilling the emotional beans and turning for support and affection to his fellows, the former tends to be insensitive to other people, feels little need to confide his emotions, and pursues his trampling course through external reality with an effortless callousness. For him the period of youth is the flower of life; he hates to grow old and often makes desperate efforts, even in advanced middle age, to live as actively as he did at twenty. The viscerotonic, on the other hand, is orientated toward childhood—his own and that of his offspring. He is the great family man. The cerebrotonic, on the other hand, looks forward, even in youth, to the tranquillity and the wisdom which, he hopes or imagines, are associated with old age.

[35] With cerebrotonia we pass from the world of Flash Gordon to that of Hamlet. The cerebrotonic is the over-alert, over-sensitive introvert, who is more concerned with the inner universe of his own thoughts and feelings and imagination than with the external world to which, in their different ways, the viscerotonic and the somatotonic pay their primary attention and allegiance. In posture and movements, the cerebrotonic person is tense and restrained. His reactions may be unduly rapid and his physiological responses uncomfortably intense. It is the cerebrotonic who suffers from nervous indigestion, who gets stage fright and feels nauseated with mere shyness, who suffers from the various skin eruptions often associated with emotional disturbances.

[36] Extreme cerebrotonics have none of the viscerotonic love of company; on the contrary, they have a passion for privacy, hate to make themselves conspicuous, and have none of the exhibitionistic tendencies displayed both by somatotonics and viscerotonics. In company they tend to be shy and unpredictably moody. When they are with strangers they fidget, their glances are shifting, sometimes furtive; their facial expression is apt to change frequently and rapidly. (For all

these reasons no extreme cerebrotonic has ever been a good actor or actress.) Their normal manner is inhibited and restrained and when it comes to the expression of feelings they are outwardly so inhibited that viscerotonics suspect them of being heartless. (On their side, cerebrotonics tend to feel a strong repugnance for the viscerotonic's emotional gush and florid ceremoniousness.)

37. With self-conscious general restraint goes a marked restraint of voice and of all noise in general. To be compelled to raise the voice, as when speaking to the deaf, is, for the cerebrotonic, sheer torture. And it is also torture for him to have to endure noise made by other people. One of the best recipes for an unhappy marriage is to combine a high degree of noise-hating cerebrotonia with a high degree of loud-speaking, loud-laughing, loud-snoring and, in general, noise-making somatotonia. Cerebrotonics are extremely sensitive to pain, sleep poorly, and suffer from chronic fatigue; nevertheless they often live to a ripe old age—provided always that they do not permit themselves to be forced by the pressure of somatotonic public opinion into taking too much violent exercise. They do not easily form habits and are extremely bad at adapting themselves to an active routine, such as military life. They tend to look younger than their age and preserve a kind of youthful intensity of appearance far into middle life. Alcohol, which increases the relaxed amiability of viscerotonics and heightens the aggressiveness of the somatotonic, merely depresses the cerebrotonic and makes him feel thoroughly ill.

38 To determine the degree of viscerotonia, somatotonia, and cerebrotonia present in any given individual, Sheldon makes use of specially designed interviews, supplemented by a medical history and, where possible, by observation over a considerable period. The sixty traits are then assessed on a seven-point scale, in which *one* represents the minimum manifestation and *seven* the most extreme.

39. How do these temperamental assessments compare with the corresponding physical assessments of endomorphy, mesomorphy, and ectomorphy? The answer is that there is a high positive correlation. In some persons the correlation is complete, and the three-digit formula for temperament is identical with the three-digit formula for physique. More frequently, however, there is a slight deviation, as when a *four* in physical endomorphy is correlated with a *three* or a *five* in temperamental viscerotonia. Where there is a deviation, it is seldom of more than one point in any of the three components. Occa-

sionally, however, the discrepancy between physique and temperament may be as much as two points; when this happens, the individual is under very considerable strain and has much difficulty in adapting himself to life. Deviations of more than two points do not seem to occur in the normal population, but are not uncommon among the insane.

40 The discrepancies between physique and temperament are probably due, in the main, to what the French philosopher, Jules de Gaultier, has called "bovarism." Mme. Bovary, the heroine of Flaubert's novel, was a young woman who consistently tried to be what in fact she was not. To a greater or less degree we are all bovarists, engaged from earliest childhood in the process of building up what the psychologists call a *persona,* to suit the tastes of the society surrounding us. The sort of *persona* we try to build up depends very largely upon our environment, physical and mental. Thus, in pioneering days, every Westerner tried to bovarize himself into the likeness of an Indian fighter. This was necessary, partly because people had to be tough, wary, and extroverted if they were to survive under frontier conditions, partly because local public opinion condemned and despised the introverted, the tender-minded, the aesthetes, and the abstract thinkers. Sheldon's researches show exactly how far bovarism can go without risk of compromising the individual's sanity; and the highly significant fact is that the borderline between normal and abnormal is reached pretty quickly. Hence the enormous psychological dangers inherent in such dogmatic and intolerant philosophies of life as Puritanism or Militarism—philosophies which exert an unrelenting pressure on those subjected to their influence, forcing a majority to try to change their fundamental psycho-physical constitution, to become something other than what they basically are.

41. Here a word of warning is necessary. Knowledge of an individual's constitutional make-up is not the same as complete knowledge of his character. Persons with the same temperamental formula may behave in very different ways and exhibit very different characters. Temperamentally similar individuals can make dissimilar uses of their constitutional endowments. It all depends on circumstances, upbringing, and the exercise of free will. Of three men with the same high degree of somatotonia one may become a suavely efficient executive, another a professional soldier of the explosive, blood-and-guts variety, and the third a ruthless gangster. But each in his own way will be aggressive and power-loving, daring and energetic, extroverted and

insensitive to other people's feelings. And no amount of training, no effort of the will, will serve to transform them into relaxed and indiscriminately amiable viscerotonics, or into inhibited, hyperattentional, and introverted cerebrotonics.

IV

42 We are now in a position to consider a few of the things that constitutional analysis and appraisal can do for us. First and most important, it makes it possible for us to know who we and other people really are—of what psychological and bodily elements we and they are composed. Having determined the statics of physique and the closely related dynamics of temperament, we can begin to think in a genuinely intelligent and fruitful way about the environment and the individual's reaction to it. Moreover, to understand is to forgive; and when we realize that the people who are different from us did not get that way out of wickedness or perversity, when we understand that many of the profoundest of such differences are constitutional and that constitution cannot be changed, only made the best of, we may perhaps learn to be more tolerant, more intelligently charitable than we are at present.

43 Passing from the general to the particular, we find that constitutional appraisal has many important practical applications. In medicine, for example, the constitutional approach will undoubtedly prove helpful both in diagnosis and prognosis, in cure and prevention. To some extent, it is true, all physicians make use of the constitutional approach, and have been doing so for twenty-five centuries at least; but considering the importance of the subject, very little systematic research has been undertaken along these lines.

44 Education can never in the nature of things be one hundred per cent efficient. Teaching is an art and, in every field, bad artists vastly outnumber good ones. Great educators are almost as rare as great painters and composers. The best we can hope to do is to improve the system within which teachers of average ability do their work. In this improvement of the system, constitutional analysis is likely to prove extremely helpful. Ideally, there should be several educational systems, one adapted to each of the main varieties of human beings. Of the progressive education which in recent years has largely ousted from our schools the formal, suppressive type of training that was at one time universal, Dr. Sheldon makes the following significant remark. "This vigorous progressive education is actually as suppressive

as was Christian education at its darkest. It suppresses the third instead of the second component. It is as suppressive to a young cerebrotonic to press him to join in the dance or in the swim, and to make noise and mix and socialize, as it is suppressive to a young somatotonic to make him sit still."

45 In the fields of history, sociology, and religion, the concepts of constitutional analysis may turn out to be extremely fruitful. From the constitutional point of view, civilization may be defined as a complex of devices for restraining extreme somatotonics from destroying society by their reckless aggressiveness. Of the great world religions one, Confucianism, has been pre-eminently viscerotonic; it has sought to tame somatotonia by inculcating ceremonious good manners, general amiability, and the cult of the family. Most of the other world religions—Buddhism, the higher forms of Hinduism, and, until recent years, Christianity—have been predominantly cerebrotonic. (The figure of Christ in traditional Christian art is almost always that of a man with a high degree of ectomorphy and therefore of cerebrotonia.) These cerebrotonic religions have tried to keep somatotonics in order by teaching them the virtues of self-restraint, humility, and sensitiveness. At the same time they tried to sublimate somatotonic aggressiveness, or to direct it into channels thought to be desirable, such as crusades and wars of religion. On their side, the somatotonics have often succeeded in modifying the cerebrotonic philosophies and institutions of the prevailing religion. For example, no cerebrotonic or viscerotonic would ever have thought of talking about the Church Militant.

V

46 In recent years there has been, in Sheldon's phrase, a great Somatotonic Revolution, directed against the dominance of cerebrotonic values as embodied in traditional Christianity. Thus, for traditional Christianity, it was axiomatic that the life of contemplation was superior to the life of action. Today the overwhelming majority even of Christians accept without question the primacy of action.

47 For traditional Christianity the important thing was the development of the right state of mind about the environment. Today, the important thing is not the state of the mind, but the state of the environment. We believe that men and women will be happy when they are surrounded with the right kind of gadgets. Our forefathers believed that they would be happy if they achieved what one of the greatest of Christian saints called "a holy indifference" to their ma-

terial surroundings. The change is from a cerebrotonic point of view to the point of view of a somatotonic extrovert.

48 The Somatotonic Revolution has been greatly accelerated by technological advances. These have served to turn men's attention outward, and have encouraged the belief in a material apocalypse, a progress toward a mechanized New Jerusalem. Such beliefs have been carefully fostered by the writers of advertising copy—the most influential of all authors because they are the only ones whose works are read every day by every member of the population. In a world peopled by cerebrotonics, living an inward-turning life in a state of holy, or even unholy, indifference to their material surroundings, mass production would be doomed. That is why advertisers consistently support the Somatotonic Revolution.

49. It is hardly necessary to add that total war is another potent factor in creating and sustaining the Somatotonic Revolution. Nazi education, which was specifically education for war, aimed at encouraging the manifestations of somatotonia in those most richly endowed with it, and making the rest of the population feel ashamed of its tendencies towards relaxed amiability or restrained and inward-looking sensitivity. During the war the enemies of Nazism have had to borrow from the Nazi educational philosophy. All over the world millions of young men and even young women are now being educated to be tough, and to admire toughness beyond every other moral quality. Never has somatotonia been so widely or so systematically encouraged as at the present time. Indeed, most societies in the past systematically discouraged somatotonia, because they did not wish to be destroyed by the unrestrained aggressiveness of their most active minority. What will be the result of the present worldwide reversal of what hitherto has been an almost universal social policy? Time alone will show.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

Aldous Huxley is best known as a very clever British novelist and essayist, now living in the United States. He is, by the way, the grandson of the Thomas Henry Huxley who wrote "The Method of Scientific Investigation" (the next selection); and his brother Julian is well known as a writer and scientist. In this article, Aldous Huxley departs from his usual subjects to explain for the more intelligent class of general reader a system of anthropological and psychological classification developed by Dr. W. H. Sheldon and to explain also the

conclusions necessarily following from this classification. Since the system is accepted by some anthropologists but not by others, Huxley's article is to some extent persuasive or evaluative, for he thinks the system is fruitful and wishes to convince others into thinking so too. As, however, so much of the essay is devoted to explaining what the system is, why it is needed, and how it can be used, we may treat the article here as an example—and a very good one—of explanation of a moderately complex scientific subject.

1. What is the significance of Huxley's opening paragraph? What would have been the effect if the essay had begun with par. 3? The beginning of the article might be analyzed into several groups of paragraphs developing successively the following topics: the need for systematic thought about human differences; the necessity of a system of classification in order to have systematic thought; the unsatisfactoriness of previous systems of classification for human differences; the system of Dr. Sheldon for classifying human differences in physique. What paragraphs compose each group? How does the author connect the groups? Could he have been equally effective with a different structure or order of topics? Par. 24 introduces two questions. Why is the one which requires the more space to answer put second?

2. In a good many of his paragraphs Huxley is setting down the characteristics of the various physical and mental types in Dr. Sheldon's system. These paragraphs might have turned into boresome lists; point out the ways in which Huxley has varied his sentences and means of introducing information to avoid monotony (for example, in par. 16). Note, on the other hand, his effective use of parallelism and balance. What is the effect of saying that "at school the extreme mesomorph is called Slob or Fatty" (par. 14)? Find other places where the author has used concrete references or illustrations of this sort.

3. This essay necessarily introduces a good many strange words, most of them coined by Dr. Sheldon. Newly coined words are not uncommon in a scientific article dealing with new ideas and theories. You will understand and remember such terms more easily if you notice how they are put together. The fact that in this case their components are largely Greek should not be a great handicap to you, since these same components occur in other English words. Take *endomorph, mesomorph,* and *ectomorph* for examples. Look up in a good desk-size dictionary the root *morph* and find out how it is used

in such words as *morphology* and *amorphous.* Do the same with *endo* as in *endocrine, meso* as in *Mesopotamia,* and *ecto* as in *ectoplasm.* What can you find in pars. 14-16 that might show why Dr. Sheldon chose these terms? Look up also the meanings and derivations of the words *tonic, viscera, somatic,* and *cerebral,* and see why Dr. Sheldon chose their roots to coin the terms introduced in par. 30. (*Somatic,* by the way, has been lately used as part of the phrase *psychosomatic medicine,* much talked about but so new as only very recently to have got into the dictionaries.)

Suggestions for Writing

1. Which *morph* am I?
2. How to classify dogs.
3. In par. 18 Huxley speaks of the "almost criminal folly of encouraging all boys, whatever their hereditary make-up, to develop athletic ambitions." Explain why you agree or disagree with this statement.

The Method of Scientific Investigation *

by THOMAS HENRY HUXLEY

The method of scientific investigation is nothing but the expression of the necessary mode of working of the human mind. It is simply the mode at which all phenomena are reasoned about, rendered precise and exact. There is no more difference, but there is just the same kind of difference, between the mental operations of a man of science and those of an ordinary person, as there is between the operations and methods of a baker or of a butcher weighing out his goods in common scales, and the operations of a chemist in performing a difficult and complex analysis by means of his balance and finely-graduated weights. It is not that the action of the scales in the one case, and the balance in the other, differ

* From *Darwiniana* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1896).

in the principles of their construction or manner of working; but the beam of one is set on an infinitely finer axis than the other, and of course turns by the addition of a much smaller weight.

2 You will understand this better, perhaps, if I give you some familiar example. You have all heard it repeated, I dare say, that men of science work by means of induction and deduction, and that by the help of these operations, they, in a sort of sense, wring from Nature certain other things, which are called natural laws, and causes, and that out of these, by some cunning skill of their own, they build up hypotheses and theories. And it is imagined by many, that the operations of the common mind can be by no means compared with these processes, and that they have to be acquired by a sort of special apprenticeship to the craft. To hear all these large words, you would think that the mind of a man of science must be constituted differently from that of his fellow men; but if you will not be frightened by terms, you will discover that you are quite wrong, and that all these terrible apparatus are being used by yourselves every day and every hour of your lives.

3. There is a well known incident in one of Molière's plays, where the author makes the hero express unbounded delight on being told that he had been talking prose during the whole of his life. In the same way, I trust, that you will take comfort, and be delighted with yourselves, on the discovery that you have been acting on the principles of inductive and deductive philosophy during the same period. Probably there is not one here who has not in the course of the day had occasion to set in motion a complex train of reasoning, of the very same kind, though differing of course in degree, as that which a scientific man goes through in tracing the causes of natural phenomena.

4 A very trivial circumstance will serve to exemplify this. Suppose you go into a fruiterer's shop, wanting an apple,—you take up one, and, on biting it, you find it sour; you look at it, and see that it is hard and green. You take up another one, and that too it hard, green, and sour. The shopman offers you a third; but, before biting it, you examine it, and find that it is hard and green, and you immediately say that you will not have it, as it must be sour, like those that you have already tried.

5. Nothing can be more simple than that, you think; but if you will take the trouble to analyse and trace out into its logical elements what has been done by the mind, you will be greatly surprised. In the first place, you have performed the operation of induction. You found

that, in two experiences, hardness and greenness in apples went together with sourness. It was so in the first case, and it was confirmed by the second. True, it is a very small basis, but still it is enough to make an induction from; you generalise the facts, and you expect to find sourness in apples where you get hardness and greenness. You found upon that a general law, that all hard and green apples are sour; and that, so far as it goes, is a perfect induction. Well, having got your natural law in this way, when you are offered another apple which you find is hard and green, you say, "All hard and green apples are sour; this apple is hard and green, therefore this apple is sour." That train of reasoning is what logicians call a syllogism, and has all its various parts and terms,—its major premiss, its minor premiss, and its conclusion. And, by the help of further reasoning, which, if drawn out, would have to be exhibited in two or three other syllogisms, you arrive at your final determination, "I will not have that apple." So that, you see, you have, in the first place, established a law by induction, and upon that you have founded a deduction, and reasoned out the special conclusion of the particular case. Well now, suppose, having got your law, that at some time afterwards, you are discussing the qualities of apples with a friend: you will say to him, "It is a very curious thing,—but I find that all hard and green apples are sour!" Your friend says to you, "But how do you know that?" You at once reply, "Oh, because I have tried them over and over again, and have always found them to be so." Well, if we were talking science instead of common sense, we should call that an experimental verification. And, if still opposed, you go further, and say, "I have heard from the people in Somersetshire and Devonshire, where a large number of apples are grown, that they have observed the same thing. It is also found to be the case in Normandy, and in North America. In short, I find it to be the universal experience of mankind wherever attention has been directed to the subject." Whereupon, your friend, unless he is a very unreasonable man, agrees with you, and is convinced that you are quite right in the conclusion you have drawn. He believes, although perhaps he does not know he believes it, that the more extensive verifications are,—that the more frequently experiments have been made, and results of the same kind arrived at,—that the more varied the conditions under which the same results are attained, the more certain is the ultimate conclusion, and he disputes the question no further. He sees that the experiment has been tried under all sorts of conditions, as to time, place, and people, with the same result; and

he says with you, therefore, that the law you have laid down must be a good one, and he must believe it.

6. In science we do the same thing;—the philosopher exercises precisely the same faculties, though in a much more delicate manner. In scientific inquiry it becomes a matter of duty to expose a supposed law to every possible kind of verification, and to take care, moreover, that this is done intentionally, and not left to a mere accident, as in the case of the apples. And in science, as in common life, our confidence in a law is in exact proportion to the absence of variation in the result of our experimental verifications. For instance, if you let go your grasp of an article you may have in your hand, it will immediately fall to the ground. That is a very common verification of one of the best established laws of nature—that of gravitation. The method by which men of science establish the existence of that law is exactly the same as that by which we have established the trivial proposition about the sourness of hard and green apples. But we believe it in such an extensive, thorough, and unhesitating manner because the universal experience of mankind verifies it, and we can verify it ourselves at any time; and that is the strongest possible foundation on which any natural law can rest.

7 So much, then, by way of proof that the method of establishing laws in science is exactly the same as that pursued in common life. Let us now turn to another matter (though really it is but another phase of the same question), and that is, the method by which, from the relations of certain phenomena, we prove that some stand in the position of causes towards the others.

8 I want to put the case clearly before you, and I will therefore show you what I mean by another familiar example. I will suppose that one of you, on coming down in the morning to the parlour of your house, finds that a tea-pot and some spoons which had been left in the room on the previous evening are gone,—the window is open, and you observe the mark of a dirty hand on the window-frame, and perhaps, in addition to that, you notice the impress of a hob-nailed shoe on the gravel outside. All these phenomena have struck your attention instantly, and before two seconds have passed you say, "Oh, somebody has broken open the window, entered the room, and run off with the spoons and the tea-pot!" That speech is out of your mouth in a moment. And you will probably add, "I know there has; I am quite sure of it!" You mean to say exactly what you know; but in reality you are

giving expression to what is, in all essential particulars, an hypothesis. You do not *know* it at all; it is nothing but an hypothesis rapidly framed in your own mind. And it is an hypothesis founded on a long train of inductions and deductions.

9. What are those inductions and deductions, and how have you got at this hypothesis? You have observed, in the first place, that the window is open; but by a train of reasoning involving many inductions and deductions, you have probably arrived long before at the general law—and a very good one it is—that windows do not open of themselves; and you therefore conclude that something has opened the window. A second general law that you have arrived at in the same way is, that tea-pots and spoons do not go out of a window spontaneously, and you are satisfied that, as they are not now where you left them, they have been removed. In the third place, you look at the marks on the window-sill, and the shoe-marks outside, and you say that in all previous experience the former kind of mark has never been produced by anything else but the hand of a human being; and the same experience shows that no other animal but man at present wears shoes with hob-nails in them such as would produce the marks in the gravel. I do not know, even if we could discover any of those "missing links" that are talked about, that they would help us to any other conclusion! At any rate the law which states our present experience is strong enough for my present purpose. You next reach the conclusion, that as these kinds of marks have not been left by any other animals than men, or are liable to be formed in any other way than by a man's hand and shoe, the marks in question have been formed by a man in that way. You have, further, a general law, founded on observation and experience, and that, too, is, I am sorry to say, a very universal and unimpeachable one,—that some men are thieves; and you assume at once from all these premisses—and that is what constitutes your hypothesis—that the man who made the marks outside and on the window-sill, opened the window, got into the room, and stole your tea-pot and spoons. You have now arrived at a *vera causa;*—you have assumed a cause which, it is plain, is competent to produce all the phenomena you have observed. You can explain all these phenomena only by the hypothesis of a thief. But that is a hypothetical conclusion, of the justice of which you have no absolute proof at all; it is only rendered highly probable by a series of inductive and deductive reasonings.

10. I suppose your first action, assuming that you are a man of ordi-

nary common sense, and that you have established this hypothesis to your own satisfaction, will very likely be to go off for the police, and set them on the track of the burglar, with the view to the recovery of your property. But just as you are starting with this object, some person comes in, and on learning what you are about, says, "My good friend, you are going on a great deal too fast. How do you know that the man who really made the marks took the spoons? It might have been a monkey that took them, and the man may have merely looked in afterwards." You would probably reply, "Well, that is all very well, but you see it is contrary to all experience of the way tea-pots and spoons are abstracted; so that, at any rate, your hypothesis is less probable than mine." While you are talking the thing over in this way, another friend arrives, one of that good kind of people that I was talking of a little while ago. And he might say, "Oh, my dear sir, you are certainly going on a great deal too fast. You are most presumptuous. You admit that all these occurrences took place when you were fast asleep, at a time when you could not possibly have known anything about what was taking place. How do you know that the laws of Nature are not suspended during the night? It may be that there has been some kind of supernatural interference in this case." In point of fact, he declares that your hypothesis is one of which you cannot at all demonstrate the truth, and that you are by no means sure that the laws of Nature are the same when you are asleep as when you are awake.

11. Well, now, you cannot at the moment answer that kind of reasoning. You feel that your worthy friend has you somewhat at a disadvantage. You will feel perfectly convinced in your own mind, however, that you are quite right, and you say to him, "My good friend, I can only be guided by the natural probabilities of the case, and if you will be kind enough to stand aside and permit me to pass, I will go and fetch the police." Well, we will suppose that your journey is successful, and that by good luck you meet with a policeman; that eventually the burglar is found with your property on his person, and the marks correspond to his hand and to his boots. Probably any jury would consider those facts a very good experimental verification of your hypothesis, touching the cause of the abnormal phenomena observed in your parlour, and would act accordingly.

12. Now, in this suppositious case, I have taken phenomena of a very common kind, in order that you might see what are the different steps

in an ordinary process of reasoning, if you will only take the trouble to analyse it carefully. All the operations I have described, you will see, are involved in the mind of any man of sense in leading him to a conclusion as to the course he should take in order to make good a robbery and punish the offender. I say that you are led, in that case, to your conclusion by exactly the same train of reasoning as that which a man of science pursues when he is endeavouring to discover the origin and laws of the most occult phenomena. The process is, and always must be, the same; and precisely the same mode of reasoning was employed by Newton and Laplace in their endeavours to discover and define the causes of the movements of the heavenly bodies, as you, with your own common sense, would employ to detect a burglar. The only difference is, that the nature of the inquiry being more abstruse, every step has to be most carefully watched, so that there may not be a single crack or flaw in your hypothesis. A flaw or crack in many of the hypotheses of daily life may be of little or no moment as affecting the general correctness of the conclusions at which we may arrive; but, in a scientific inquiry, a fallacy, great or small, is always of importance, and is sure to be in the long run constantly productive of mischievous, if not fatal results.

13. Do not allow yourselves to be misled by the common notion that an hypothesis is untrustworthy simply because it is an hypothesis. It is often urged, in respect to some scientific conclusion, that, after all, it is only an hypothesis. But what more have we to guide us in nine-tenths of the most important affairs of daily life than hypotheses, and often very ill-based ones? So that in science, where the evidence of an hypothesis is subjected to the most rigid examination, we may rightly pursue the same course. You may have hypotheses and hypotheses. A man may say, if he likes, that the moon is made of green cheese: that is an hypothesis. But another man, who has devoted a great deal of time and attention to the subject, and availed himself of the most powerful telescopes and the results of the observations of others, declares that in his opinion it is probably composed of materials very similar to those of which our own earth is made up: and that is also only an hypothesis. But I need not tell you that there is an enormous difference in the value of the two hypotheses. That one which is based on sound scientific knowledge is sure to have a corresponding value; and that which is a mere hasty random guess is likely to have but little value. Every great step in our progress in discovering causes has been made in exactly the same way as that

which I have detailed to you. A person observing the occurrence of certain facts and phenomena asks, naturally enough, what process, what kind of operation known to occur in Nature applied to the particular case, will unravel and explain the mystery? Hence you have the scientific hypothesis; and its value will be proportionate to the care and completeness with which its basis had been tested and verified. It is in these matters as in the commonest affairs of practical life: the guess of the fool will be folly, while the guess of the wise man will contain wisdom. In all cases, you see that the value of the result depends on the patience and faithfulness with which the investigator applies to his hypothesis every possible kind of verification.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

This little essay has been very often reprinted, because it is one of the simplest and clearest expositions of the basic principles of scientific discovery and rational thought. Written by the grandfather of the author of the preceding selection, it was originally given in 1862 as part of a series of *Six Lectures to Working Men on Our Knowledge of Causes of the Phenomena of Organic Nature.* Huxley, an excellent scientist himself, gained even more fame as the expounder and defender of biological science, particularly the theories of Charles Darwin, to the nineteenth-century British public. His success as writer and lecturer was due to his clarity of mind and more especially to his power of stating scientific facts and hypotheses in language easily understood by the technically untrained, such as the "working men" to whom this lecture was first addressed. So plain and simple is the style that this selection might well have been placed much earlier in Part II of this collection, except that its discussion of scientific induction and hypotheses is particularly pertinent to the selections by Zahl and Barnett which follow.

1. This essay achieves its purpose largely by stating abstract ideas in concrete terms. Point out several abstractions which are thus stated and comment on the appropriateness and effectiveness of the concrete illustrations.

2. Discuss the appropriateness and effectiveness of Huxley's style for the audience and purpose intended. Look up the dictionary definitions of *induction, deduction, syllogism,* and *hypothesis* and compare them to the definitions stated or implied in Huxley's essay. Which are you the more likely to remember?

Suggestions for Writing

1. An induction made on my daily walk to class.
2. Hypotheses I have known.
3. Can all problems be solved by scientific method?

Cancer Research: Integrator of the Sciences[*]

by PAUL A. ZAHL

Cancer is tissue growth that defies the body's status quo . . . a growth that expands autonomously, pushing and disseminating into areas often far remote from its site of origin. The malignancy of any cancer is proportional to the degree to which it manifests these characteristics.

[2] The fundamental and as yet unsolved problem is: What causes cells occasionally to revert from normalcy to an autonomy which defies authority? Why do they not remain consistently faithful to the laws prevailing within the organism?

[3] The present-day broadside attack on this basic biological problem has revealed inadequacies in the empirical approach; and the problem of cancer has ceased to be the exclusively medical one of years past. Frustration is being hopefully relieved by research specialists from practically all the natural and physical sciences, who are stepping in to augment and vitalize the attack.

[4] In order to understand the rationale basic to modern cancer research, it may be desirable to define the problem in terms of its underlying biological theory.

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[*] From *The American Scholar*, Vol. 17 (Spring, 1948). By permission of the publishers and the author. Copyright 1948 by the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa.

II

5. The earliest cells of the growing embryo are unspecialized, perhaps like the prototype single-cell creatures (or minute clusters of them) that appeared on this planet a billion years ago. As the embryo develops, these cells are impelled by chemical and genic forces to begin what the embryologist calls differentiating. By this is meant that there occurs a division of labor, a definition of function. The subsequent progress of the embryo is too familiar to the reader to warrant detailed description: the formation and multiplication of muscle cells, nerve, bone, gland, digestive, and blood cells—comprising finally the many tissue specialties to be found in the body. The successive spatial and functional arrangements of these cellular specialists into the various tissues and organs during embryonic development is believed to represent a one-generation recapitulation of the billion-year epic of animal evolution.

6 In passing through its embryonic growth stage, every multicellular organism living on this earth today becomes an integration whose cellular components blindly and obediently accede to rigid chemogenetic forces aimed at the good of that organism. When, for example, a muscle cell contracts, it is not subserving its own ends, but those of the body; and so with almost every other cell type and tissue. This sort of cell subjugation represents a process almost as old as life itself; indeed, without it the existence of man or any other multicellular system would be quite impossible.

7 However successful cellular altruism and division of labor are in producing the intricate biological mechanism, there appears now and then a very curious counter-element. Occasionally a few cells somewhere in the body are gripped by an inexplicable reversion, perhaps to embryo days when they existed as relatively unspecialized individuals. Or it may be that the controls within the system become relaxed or defective. Or perhaps some exciting agent is invisibly at work. In any case, these dissenting cells approach a condition of autonomy and seeming independence; they begin dividing and metabolizing freely, unlike their normal brother cells, which continue to divide and metabolize only at a rate and in a manner prescribed by the body's general control agencies.

8. The "rebellion" gathers strength until at last it may blind the cells to their previous fidelity to the organism, and they begin to function in a manner suggestive of their more primitive forebears, casting

aside the laws of benign subjugation under which they had been serving the body. The vagrant cells begin reproducing themselves in an abnormal manner and, in fact, often change structurally—so that under the microscope they may even exhibit embryonic characteristics. By the time the body's control forces are aware that something dangerous is afoot, the cells may have reproduced into multitudes of their sort, all now imbued with the spirit of anarchy. They wallow in the energy-bearing fluids of the host, become deficient in the performance of their specialized functions (although usually not wholly), and thrive at the expense of the cellular society of which they were previously obedient members.

9. Clinically the thing may look like an innocuous lesion. But microscopically such tissue is disclosed to comprise an increasing mass of cellular terrorists in the process of throwing off the shackles. If the disturbance has occurred among liver cells—it is liver cancer. If it has occurred among breast tissues—breast cancer. If among brain cells—brain cancer. There are just as many cancers clinically as there are cell specialties in the body. Each variety of such growth—each type of cancer—has its own secret set of chemical motivators and excitors, and creates its own variety of symptoms. No matter where the involvement, when the growth has spread into some vital organ or system, death to the entire body-organization must inevitably ensue. The anarchists have not only destroyed the state of their former allegiance, but they themselves have gone down to an ignominious end.

10 This atavistic reversion to a primitive state may show up in any multicellular organism. Plants may develop cancer, as may fish, amphibia, birds and mammals. It is a fundamental manifestation, and one not limited to the tissues of man.

11. Why do these cells relax in their fidelity to the body? Why this backward harking to an individualism earlier renounced? Or why have the otherwise rigid control agencies become defective? The composite of these questions is what in modern biological research is called the cancer problem. Fascinating as this problem may be in terms of theoretical biology, it is above all one of prime personal interest to each of us—for one out of seven human beings must die because of this as yet unexplained "revolt" within the body.

III

[12] Much of what is called cancer research today is merely a quest for means by which to destroy or to limit the growth of anarchistic tissues. Successful therapy must be destructive to malignant cells without harming normal tissues. Attempts at therapy have been made since the days of Hippocrates. The medical literature, both ancient and modern, is virtually glutted with "cures," none of which has stood up under close analysis. Today only a few partially effective clinical measures exist. Of these, surgery is the oldest, the crudest, but perhaps still the most useful. X-rays, neutrons, and the like get into deep tissues beyond the reach of the knife; and various radioactive materials may be applied even closer to the site of the trouble—but the ever-present hazard in the use of these potent energies lies in the grave possibility of damaging normal tissues. The search for better killing agents goes on, and is obviously justified from the clinical point of view. Yet fundamental research is not concerned so much with "what to do about cancer" as with "why does it occur?" In implacably pressing this question, almost all the laboratory sciences have been drawn into the fray.

[13] The modern approach to this "why?" involves one or all of several basic operating hypotheses.

[14] The first holds that—preceding cancer—something changes within the culpable cells, rendering them resistant to agencies that normally keep the cells and tissues of the body under tight physiological control. It is possible, but certainly not proved, that random radiant energies (perhaps cosmic rays and the like) strike a somatic chromosome now and then and cause genic rearrangements leading to abnormal cellular behavior. All the descendants of any cell so altered will bear the fatal mark. Mutations are also known to be caused, under some conditions, by strictly chemical energies.

[15] In connection with the subject of mutations, it should be mentioned that a vast amount of experimental work has been done on the problem of heredity and cancer. As yet no sweeping generalizations may be drawn. There are many pure bred strains of mice and rats in which cancer develops generation after generation, in strict accordance with known laws of heredity. Susceptibility to growth aberrancy in the tissues involved is obviously passed from parent to offspring. On the other hand, there are mouse strains inherently immune to cancer. The nature of the mechanism behind this susceptibility in one

strain, and resistance in another, continues to be one of the most pressing as well as most baffling problems in modern genetics. Essentially nothing is known as to whether or how heredity affects human cancer.

16. A second broad working hypothesis under test by the laboratory investigator suggests that something has changed within the rigid control systems of the body. For example, it is known that cells of breast tissue are subject to at least partial control by hormones passed into the blood stream from the pituitary and ovarian glands. If the chemical temperaments of these hormones change but slightly, so will the control that they have over breast tissues. A corresponding, but in most cases still obscurely understood, regulatory system must exist for every tissue type in the body; and defects in such systems may similarly permit cells under their jurisdiction to revert to laxity—and cancer. The problem viewed from this angle becomes: What has gone wrong with the controlling agencies?

17. A third operating hypothesis holds that an irritating agent enters the body or is possibly released by some subtly malfunctioning tissue. This agent may be in the form of an abnormal chemical excitor, as distinguished from a mutation inducer. For example, we know many chemicals which, when applied to the skin, will cause the cells with which they come into contact to react malignantly. A classic example is the case of chimney sweeps in eighteenth-century England who, because of certain chemicals in the soot with which their skin came into daily contact, developed a high incidence of skin cancer. Many chemical, physical, and biological agents, known to irritate living tissues cancerously, are being intensively studied. Although much is understood of their nature, nothing is as yet established as to how they induce this cellular disobedience.

18. A fourth hypothesis is similar to the third, except that the irritating agent is considered to be of so complex a nature as actually to resemble a living virus. Such viruses, when and where they exist, are so fragile and unstable that, with few exceptions, they have defied isolation or even detection. Of the four known today, one produces cancer in chickens, one in rabbits, and one in frogs—curiously, in a different organ of each species. The fourth, and perhaps most striking, has been found in several strains of laboratory mice, and is transmitted from generation to generation through the mother's milk. This virus causes no immediate sickness upon entering the body; in fact, its presence can scarcely be detected by laboratory methods. The

real evidence for its lethal action is that mice getting the infected milk invariably develop mammary carcinoma during the second half of their lives, and die. If, instead, they are suckled by foster mothers of a cancer-free strain, no cancer develops. In many laboratories throughout the world, men are examining the fingerprints of other such elusive agents for evidence of their identity and nature.

19 A final theory, and one having its origin far back in the nineteenth century, holds that in various tissue recesses of the adult body are scattered tiny clumps of cells which during the embryo stage resisted organizational forces. While other cells are taking on their special assignments, the loiterers cling to their embryonic mores and sink into a state of dormancy. But late in the life of the organism—the theory claims—these cells suddenly spring to life and begin multiplying unrestrainedly, giving rise to tumorous growths. The notion, ancient as it is, has never been proved either valid or false. Even if it were true, however, and if such embryonic fragments do indeed produce cancer, the question would persist: Why do they resist specialization in the first place, and what excites them to growth so late in the life of the host?

20 Modern research is approaching the cancer problem from all these theoretical angles. One school of investigators is looking for clues concerning changes within the body cells themselves. Another is looking for changes in the general integrative physiology of the entire organism. A third and fourth are looking for growth-exciting agents that may enter the body from the outside or develop from defective conditions on the inside.

21. There is no immediate hope for a general explanation of, or an over-all cure for, cancer—mainly because there are so many varieties of the manifestation. To discover, for example, that a virus causes breast cancer in the mouse is no reason for supposing that a virus exists, say, for bone cancer. Possibly the latter type of cancer will be found to result from some sort of physiological malfunctioning. Or because breast carcinoma in mice is transmitted by a virus is no reason for assuming that a comparable virus causes human breast cancer. Each type of malignancy has its own cause or complex of causes, and is likely to have its own explanation and treatment. Only one variety of cancer, for example, is known (carcinoma of the prostate gland) that will yield temporarily to a specific physiological therapy. All the others are still so obscurely understood that, in treatment, only surgery or some type of irradiation are effective.

IV

22. The recognition of cancer as a fundamental growth disorder, rather than as a specific disease, is of far-reaching significance. In its developmental history, each basic science has tended slowly to build a wall around itself, enclosing a honeycomb of further subdivisions or specialties. Chemistry, at first a simple discipline, was divided into organic, inorganic, physical, biological, etc. Physics remained unitary only until the fields of optics, mechanics, thermionics, electricity, nucleonics, etc., took discrete form. Biology—the life science—was broken up into zoology, botany, medicine, embryology, morphology, evolution, genetics, etc. Specialists in each field and in each discipline have inclined to become myopic, even to closely adjoining camps of knowledge.

23 Cancer research, more than any other modern intellectual quest, has inspired the opposite trend. Go into any large cancer research laboratory—for example, the National Cancer Institute, in Bethesda, Maryland. There you will observe physicists contributing their knowledge of radiation; chemists studying the behavior and characteristics of complex organic molecules in relation to the processes within cells and tissues; metabolism experts analyzing energy changes and conversions within the body; animal biologists probing the mores of experimental tumors; geneticists pondering hereditary resistances and susceptibilities; physiologists attempting to interpret the functionings of organs and tissues as related to growth; pathologists, cytologists and tissue culturists tracing microscopic changes within malignant and normal tissues; even perhaps botanists, bacteriologists, protozoologists and embryologists studying factors that enhance or depress the growth of the organisms within their laboratory bailiwicks; and finally clinicians, whose aim essentially is to appraise newly garnered information in respect to its applicability to the stricken patient.

24 So perhaps for the first time in the history of experimental science have highly diverse laboratory specialists dissolved their academic barriers and united their efforts in a common cause. It is evident that before really effective progress can be made in the matter of curing or preventing cancer, the basic physiological and biochemical patterns of each type of growth abnormality will have to be understood more clearly. The gigantic haystack which for so many years has hidden the elusive needle—doubtless, many of them—is now being

combed by all known rational methods of detailed and painstaking analysis.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

This essay by a medical researcher aims to explain briefly the nature of one of the most mysterious and widespread of diseases and to show what kind of problems must be solved in fighting it. It is written straightforwardly, without sensationalism, and for readers on a relatively high level of intelligence and education, as may be judged from the fact that it originally appeared in the quarterly journal published by Phi Beta Kappa. It is, however, clear and able writing on this level.

1. What is the significance of the title in indicating the real subject of this essay? Find three places before section IV where the idea implicit in the title is restated. What is the relation of section II to par. 2? Why is the problem of *curing* cancer discussed so briefly (in par. 12)? What is the function of section III? Why must the main discussion of the idea suggested in the title be postponed till section IV?

2. If you had not been told that this article was written for a rather restricted group of readers, how would you know? How does the style differ from that of "The Kick of an Electric Eel" and "Winds That Blow Straight Up"? In spite of a more highly technical vocabulary, Zahl occasionally uses metaphors and illustrations to make clearer what he is explaining. Note particularly the sustained metaphor in pars. 6-11. Pick out the words and phrases which suggest and maintain it. Find examples of other, less complicated metaphors: for instance, the "culpable" cells that will "bear the fatal mark" in par. 14.

Suggestions for Writing

1. Rebels in the body politic.

2. Explain how several individuals or organizations in your high school, college, or home town worked together to solve a common problem.

The Universe and Dr. Einstein[*]

by LINCOLN BARNETT

I

In his great treatise *On Human Understanding* philosopher John Locke wrote three hundred years ago: "A company of chessmen standing on the same squares of the chessboard where we left them, we say, are all in the same place or unmoved: though perhaps the chessboard has been in the meantime carried out of one room into another. . . . The chessboard, we also say, is in the same place if it remain in the same part of the cabin, though perhaps the ship which it is in sails all the while; and the ship is said to be in the same place supposing it kept the same distance with the neighboring land, though perhaps the earth has turned around; and so chessmen and board and ship have every one changed place in respect to remoter bodies."

2. Embodied in this little picture of the moving but unmoved chessmen is one principle of relativity—relativity of position. But this suggests another idea—relativity of motion. Anyone who has ever ridden on a railroad train knows how rapidly another train flashes by when it is traveling in the opposite direction, and conversely how it may look almost motionless when it is moving in the same direction. A variation of this effect can be very deceptive in an enclosed station like Grand Central Terminal in New York. Once in a while a train gets under way so gently that passengers feel no recoil whatever. Then if they happen to look out the window and see another train slide past on the next track, they have no way of knowing which train is in motion and which is at rest; nor can they tell how fast either one is moving or in what direction. The only way they can judge their situation is by looking out the other side of the car for some fixed body of reference like the station platform or a signal light.

[*] From *The Universe and Dr. Einstein* (New York: William Sloane Associates, Inc., 1948). By permission of the publishers. Copyright 1948 by Harper & Brothers; copyright 1948 by Lincoln Barnett.

Sir Isaac Newton was aware of these tricks of motion, only he thought in terms of ships. He knew that on a calm day at sea a sailor can shave himself or drink soup as comfortably as when his ship is lying motionless in harbor. The water in his basin, the soup in his bowl, will remain unruffled whether the ship is making five knots, 15 knots, or 25 knots. So unless he peers out at the sea it will be impossible for him to know how fast his ship is moving or indeed if it is moving at all. Of course if the sea should get rough or the ship change course abruptly, then he will sense his state of motion. But granted the idealized conditions of a glass-calm sea and a silent ship, nothing that happens below decks—no amount of observation or mechanical experiment performed *inside* the ship—will disclose its velocity through the sea. The physical principle suggested by these considerations was formulated by Newton in 1687. "The motions of bodies included in a given space," he wrote, "are the same among themselves, whether that space is at rest or moves uniformly forward in a straight line." This is known as the Newtonian or Galilean Relativity Principle. It can also be phrased in more general terms: mechanical laws which are valid in one place are equally valid in any other place which moves uniformly relative to the first.

3. The philosophical importance of this principle lies in what it says about the universe. Since the aim of science is to explain the world we live in, as a whole and in all its parts, it is essential to the scientist that he have confidence in the harmony of nature. He must believe that physical laws revealed to him on earth are in truth universal laws. Thus in relating the fall of an apple to the wheeling of the planets around the sun Newton hit upon a universal law. And although he illustrated his principle of relative motion by a ship at sea, the ship he actually had in mind was the earth. For all ordinary purposes of science the earth can be regarded as a stationary system. We may say if we choose that mountains, trees, houses, are at rest, and animals, automobiles, and airplanes move. But to the astrophysicist, the earth, far from being at rest, is whirling through space in a giddy and highly complicated fashion. In addition to its daily rotation about its axis at the rate of 1000 miles an hour, and its annual revolution about the sun at the rate of 20 miles a second, the earth is also involved in a number of other less familiar gyrations. Contrary to popular belief the moon does not revolve around the earth; they revolve around each other—or more precisely, around a common

center of gravity. The entire solar system, moreover, is moving within the local star system at the rate of 13 miles a second; the local star system is moving within the Milky Way at the rate of 200 miles a second; and the whole Milky Way is drifting with respect to the remote external galaxies at the rate of 100 miles a second—and all in different directions!

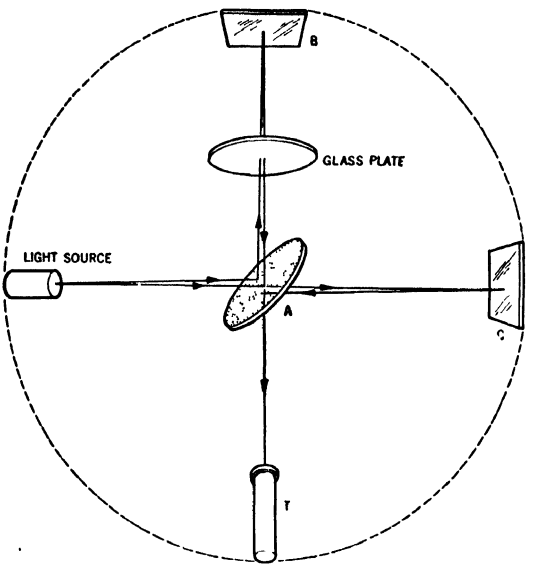
4. Although he could not then know the full complexity of the earth's movements, Newton was nevertheless troubled by the problem of distinguishing relative motion from true or "absolute" motion in a confusingly busy universe. He suggested that "in the remote regions of the fixed stars or perhaps far beyond them, there may be some body absolutely at rest," but admitted there was no way of proving this by any celestial object within man's view. On the other hand it seemed to Newton that space itself might serve as a fixed frame of reference to which the wheeling of the stars and galaxies could be related in terms of absolute motion. He regarded space as a physical reality, stationary and immovable; and while he could not support this conviction by any scientific argument, he nevertheless clung to it on theological grounds. For to Newton space represented the divine omnipresence of God in nature.

5. In the next two centuries it appeared probable that Newton's view would prevail. For with the development of the wave theory of light scientists found it necessary to endow empty space with certain mechanical properties—to assume, indeed, that space was some kind of substance. Even before Newton's time the French philosopher, Descartes, had argued that the mere separation of bodies by distance proved the existence of a medium between them. And to eighteenth and nineteenth century physicists it was obvious that if light consisted of waves, there must be some medium to support them, just as water propagates the waves of the sea and air transmits the vibrations we call sound. Hence when experiments showed that light can travel in a vacuum, scientists evolved a hypothetical substance called "ether" which they decided must pervade all space and matter. Later on Faraday propounded another kind of ether as the carrier of electric and magnetic forces. When Maxwell finally identified light as an electromagnetic disturbance the case for the ether seemed assured.

6. A universe permeated with an invisible medium in which the stars wandered and through which light traveled like vibrations in a bowl of jelly was the end product of Newtonian physics. It provided a

mechanical model for all known phenomena of nature, and it provided the fixed frame of reference, the absolute and immovable space, which Newton's cosmology required. Yet the ether presented certain problems, not the least of which was that its actual existence had never been proved. To discover once and for all whether there really was any such thing as ether, two American physicists, A. A. Michelson and E. W. Morley, performed a classic experiment in Cleveland in the year 1881.

7. The principle underlying their experiment was quite simple. They reasoned that if all space is simply a motionless sea of ether, then the earth's motion through the ether should be detectable and measurable in the same way that sailors measure the velocity of a ship through the sea. As Newton pointed out, it is impossible to detect the movement of a ship through calm waters by any mechanical experiment performed *inside* the ship. Sailors ascertain a ship's speed by throwing a log overboard and watching the unreeling of the knots on the log line. Hence to detect the earth's motion through the ether sea, Michelson and Morley threw a "log" overboard, and the log was a beam of light. For if light really is propagated through the ether, then its velocity should be affected by the ether stream arising from the earth's movement. Specifically a light ray projected in the direction of the earth's movement should be slightly retarded by the ether flow, just as a swimmer is retarded by a current when going upstream. The difference would be slight, for the velocity of light (which was accurately determined in 1849) is 186,284 miles a second, while the velocity of the earth in its orbit around the sun is only 20 miles a second. Hence a light ray sent *against* the ether stream should travel at the rate of 186,264 miles a second, while one sent *with* the ether stream should be clocked at 186,304 miles a second. With these ideas in mind Michelson and Morley constructed an instrument of such great delicacy that it could detect a variation of even a fraction of a mile per second in the enormous velocity of light. This instrument, which they called an "interferometer," consisted of a group of mirrors so arranged that a light beam could be split in two and flashed in different directions at the same time. The whole experiment was planned and executed with such painstaking precision that the result could not be doubted. And the result was simply this: there was no difference whatsoever in the velocity of the light beams regardless of their direction.



The Michelson-Morley interferometer consisted of an arrangement of mirrors, so designed that a beam transmitted from a light source (above left) was divided and sent in two directions at the same time. This was done by a mirror, A, the *face* of which was only thinly silvered, so that part of the beam was permitted to pass through to mirror C (right) and the remainder reflected at right angles toward mirror B. Mirrors B and C then reflected the rays back to mirror A where, reunited, they proceeded to an observing telescope T. Since the beam ACT had to pass three times through the thickness of glass behind the reflecting face of mirror A, a clear glass plate of equal thickness was placed between A and B to intercept beam ABT and compensate for this retardation. The whole apparatus was rotated in different directions so that the beams ABT and ACT could be sent with, against, and at right angles to the postulated ether stream. At first glance it might appear that a trip "downstream," for example from B to A, should compensate in time for an "upstream" trip from A to B. But this is not so. To row a boat one mile upstream and another mile downstream takes longer than rowing two miles in still water or across current, even with allowance for drift. Had there been any acceleration or retardation of either beam by the ether stream, the optical apparatus at T would have detected it.

8. The Michelson-Morley experiment confronted scientists with an embarrassing alternative. On the one hand they could scrap the ether theory which had explained so many things about electricity, magnetism, and light. Or if they insisted on retaining the ether they had to abandon the still more venerable Copernican theory that the earth is in motion. To many physicists it seemed almost easier to believe that the earth stood still than that waves—light waves, electromagnetic waves—could exist without a medium to sustain them. It was a serious dilemma and one that split scientific thought for a quarter century. Many new hypotheses were advanced and rejected. The experiment was tried again by Morley and by others, with the same conclusion; the apparent velocity of the earth through the ether was zero.

II

9. Among those who pondered the enigma of the Michelson-Morley experiment was a young patent office examiner in Berne, named Albert Einstein. In 1905, when he was just twenty-six years old, he published a short paper suggesting an answer to the riddle in terms that opened up a new world of physical thought. He began by rejecting the ether theory and with it the whole idea of space as a fixed system or framework, absolutely at rest, within which it is possible to distinguish absolute from relative motion. The one indisputable fact established by the Michelson-Morley experiment was that the velocity of light is unaffected by the motion of the earth. Einstein seized on this as a revelation of universal law. If the velocity of light is constant regardless of the earth's motion, he reasoned, it must be constant regardless of the motion of any sun, moon, star, meteor, or other system moving anywhere in the universe. From this he drew a broader generalization, and asserted that the laws of nature are the same for all uniformly moving systems. This simple statement is the essence of Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity. It incorporates the Galilean Relativity Principle which stated that mechanical laws are the same for all uniformly moving systems. But its phrasing is more comprehensive; for Einstein was thinking not only of mechanical laws but of the laws governing light and other electromagnetic phenomena. So he lumped them together in one fundamental postulate: all the phenomena of nature, all the laws of nature, are the same for all systems that move uniformly relative to one another.

10. On the surface there is nothing very startling in this declaration. It simply reiterates the scientist's faith in the universal harmony of

natural law. It also advises the scientist to stop looking for any absolute, stationary frame of reference in the universe. The universe is a restless place: stars, nebulae, galaxies, and all the vast gravitational systems of outer space are incessantly in motion. But their movements can be described only with respect to each other, for in space there are no directions and no boundaries. It is futile moreover for the scientist to try to discover the "true" velocity of any system by using light as a measuring rod, for the velocity of light is constant throughout the universe and is unaffected either by the motion of its source or the motion of the receiver. Nature offers no absolute standards of comparison; and space is—as another great German mathematician, Leibnitz, clearly saw two centuries before Einstein—simply "the order or relation of things among themselves." Without things occupying it, it is nothing.

11 Along with absolute space, Einstein discarded the concept of absolute time—of a steady, unvarying, inexorable universal time flow, streaming from the infinite past to the infinite future. Much of the obscurity that has surrounded the Theory of Relativity stems from man's reluctance to recognize that sense of time, like sense of color, is a form of perception. Just as there is no such thing as color without an eye to discern it, so an instant or an hour or a day is nothing without an event to mark it. And just as space is simply a possible order of material objects, so time is simply a possible order of events. The subjectivity of time is best explained in Einstein's own words. "The experiences of an individual," he says, "appear to us arranged in a series of events; in this series the single events which we remember appear to be ordered according to the criterion of 'earlier' and 'later.' There exists, therefore, for the individual, an I-time, or subjective time. This in itself is not measurable. I can, indeed, associate numbers with the events, in such a way that a greater number is associated with the later event than with an earlier one. This association I can define by means of a clock by comparing the order of events furnished by the clock with the order of the given series of events. We understand by a clock something which provides a series of events which can be counted."

12. By referring our own experiences to a clock (or a calendar) we make time an objective concept. Yet the time intervals provided by a clock or a calendar are by no means absolute quantities imposed on the entire universe by divine edict. All the clocks ever used by man have been geared to our solar system. What we call an hour is actu-

ally a measurement in space—an arc of 15 degrees in the apparent daily rotation of the celestial sphere. And what we call a year is simply a measure of the earth's progress in its orbit around the sun. An inhabitant of Mercury, however, would have very different notions of time. For Mercury makes its trip around the sun in 88 of our days, and in that same period rotates just once on its axis. So on Mercury a year and a day amount to the same thing. But it is when science ranges beyond the neighborhood of the sun that all our terrestrial ideas of time become meaningless. For Relativity tells us there is no such thing as a fixed interval of time independent of the system to which it is referred. There is indeed no such thing as simultaneity, there is no such thing as "now," independent of a system of reference. For example a man in New York may telephone a friend in London, and although it is 7:00 P.M. in New York and midnight in London, we may say that they are talking "at the same time." But that is because they are both residents of the same planet, and their clocks are geared to the same astronomical system. A more complicated situation arises if we try to ascertain, for example, what is happening on the star Arcturus "right now." Arcturus is 38 light years away. A light year is the distance light travels in one year, or roughly six trillion miles. If we should try to communicate with Arcturus by radio "right now" it would take 38 years for our message to reach its destination and another 38 years for us to receive a reply.[1] And when we look at Arcturus and say that we see it "now," we are actually seeing a ghost—an image projected on our optic nerves by light rays that left their source in 1910. Whether Arcturus even exists "now" nature forbids us to know until 1986.

[13] Despite such reflections it is difficult for earthbound man to accept the idea that *this very instant* which he calls "now" cannot apply to the universe as a whole. Yet in the Special Theory of Relativity Einstein proves by an unanswerable sequence of example and deduction that it is nonsense to think of events taking place simultaneously in unrelated systems. His argument unfolds along the following lines. [14] To begin with one must realize that the scientist, whose task it is to describe physical events in objective terms, cannot use subjective words like "this," "here," and "now." For him concepts of space and time take on physical significance only when the relations between

[1] Radio waves travel at the same speed as light waves.

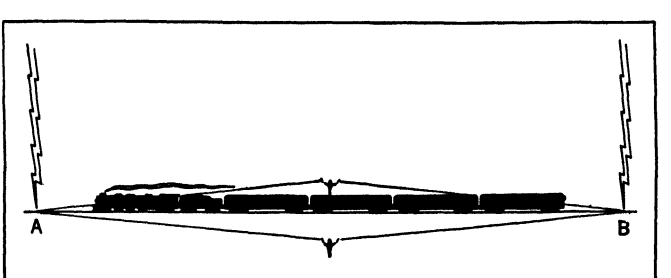
events and systems are defined. And it is constantly necessary for him, in dealing with matters involving complex forms of motion (as in celestial mechanics, electrodynamics, etc.) to relate the magnitudes found in one system with those occurring in another. The mathematical laws which define these relationships are known as laws of transformation. The simplest transformation may be illustrated by a man promenading on the deck of a ship: if he walks forward along the deck at the rate of 3 miles an hour and the ship moves through the sea at the rate of 12 miles an hour, then the man's velocity with respect to the sea is 15 miles an hour; if he walks aft his velocity relative to the sea is of course 9 miles an hour. Or as a variation one may imagine an alarm bell ringing at a railway crossing. The sound waves produced by the bell spread away through the surrounding air at the rate of 400 yards a second. A railroad train speeds toward the crossing at the rate of 20 yards a second. Hence the velocity of the sound relative to the train is 420 yards a second so long as the train is approaching the alarm bell and 380 yards a second as soon as the train passes the bell. This simple addition of velocities rests on obvious common sense, and has indeed been applied to problems of compound motion since the time of Galileo. Serious difficulties arise, however, when it is used in connection with light.

[15] In his original paper on Relativity Einstein emphasized these difficulties with another railway incident. Again there is a crossing, marked this time by a signal light which flashes its beam down the track at 186,284 miles a second—the constant velocity of light, denoted in physics by the symbol c. A train steams toward the signal light at a given velocity v. So by the addition of velocities one concludes that the velocity of the light beam relative to the train is c plus v when the train moves toward the signal light, and c minus v as soon as the train passes the light. But this result conflicts with the findings of the Michelson-Morley experiment which demonstrated that the velocity of light is unaffected either by the motion of the source or the motion of the receiver. This curious fact has also been confirmed by studies of double stars which revolve around a common center of gravity. Careful analysis of these moving systems has shown that the light from the approaching star in each pair reaches earth at precisely the same velocity as the light from the receding star. Since the velocity of light is a universal constant it cannot in Einstein's railway problem be affected by the velocity of the train. Even if we imagine that the train is racing toward the signal light at a speed

of 10,000 miles a second, the principle of the constancy of the velocity of light tells us that an observer aboard the train will still clock the speed of the oncoming light beam at precisely 186,284 miles a second, no more, no less.

[16] The dilemma presented by this situation involves much more than a Sunday morning newspaper puzzle. On the contrary it poses a deep enigma of nature. Einstein saw that the problem lay in the irreconcilable conflict between his belief in (1) the constancy of the velocity of light, and (2) the principle of the addition of velocities. Although the latter appears to rest on the stern logic of mathematics (i.e., that two plus two makes four), Einstein recognized in the former a fundamental law of nature. He concluded, therefore, that a new transformation rule must be found to enable the scientist to describe the relations between moving systems in such a way that the results satisfy the known facts about light.

[17] Einstein found what he wanted in a series of equations developed by the great Dutch physicist, H. A. Lorentz, in connection with a specific theory of his own. Although its original application is of interest now chiefly to scientific historians, the Lorentz transformation lives on as part of the mathematical framework of Relativity. To understand what it says, however, it is first necessary to perceive the flaws in the old principle of the addition of velocities. These flaws Einstein pointed out by means of still another railway anecdote. Once again he envisaged a straight length of track, this time with an observer sitting on an embankment beside it. A thunderstorm breaks, and two bolts of lightning strike the track simultaneously at separate



points, A and B. Now, asks Einstein, what do we mean by "simultaneously"? To pin down this definition he assumes that the observer is sitting precisely half way between A and B, and that he is equipped

with an arrangement of mirrors which enable him to see A and B at the same time without moving his eyes. Then if the lightning flashes are reflected in the observer's mirrors at precisely the same instant, the two flashes may be regarded as simultaneous. Now a train roars down the track, and a second observer is sitting precariously perched atop one of the cars with a mirror apparatus just like the one on the embankment. It happens that this moving observer finds himself directly opposite the observer on the embankment at the precise instant the lightning bolts hit A and B. The question is: will the lightning flashes appear simultaneous to him? The answer is: they will not. For if his train is moving away from lightning bolt B and toward lightning bolt A, then it is obvious that B will be reflected in his mirrors a fraction of a second later than A. Lest there be any doubt about this, one may imagine temporarily that the train is moving at the impossible rate of 186,284 miles a second, the velocity of light. In that event flash B will never be reflected in the mirrors because it can never overtake the train, just as the sound from a gun can never overtake a bullet traveling with supersonic speed. So the observer on the train will assert that only one lightning bolt struck the track. And whatever the speed of the train may be the moving observer will always insist that the lightning flash ahead of him has struck the track first. Hence the lightning flashes which are simultaneous relative to the stationary observer are *not* simultaneous relative to the observer on the train.

[18] The paradox of the lightning flashes thus dramatizes one of the subtlest and most difficult concepts in Einstein's philosophy: the relativity of simultaneity. It shows that man cannot assume that his subjective sense of "now" applies to all parts of the universe. For, Einstein points out, "every reference body (or coordinate system) has its own particular time; unless we are told the reference body to which the statement of time refers, there is no meaning in a statement of the time of an event." The fallacy in the old principle of the addition of velocities lies therefore in its tacit assumption that the duration of an event is independent of the state of motion of the system of reference. In the case of the man pacing the deck of a ship, for example, it was assumed that if he walked three miles in one hour as timed by a clock on the moving ship, his rate would be just the same timed by a stationary clock anchored somehow in the sea. It was further assumed that the distance he traversed in one

hour would have the same value whether it was measured relative to the deck of the ship (the moving system) or relative to the sea (the stationary system). This constitutes a second fallacy in the addition of velocities—for distance, like time, is a relative concept, and there is no such thing as a space interval independent of the state of motion of the system of reference.

[19] Einstein asserted, therefore, that the scientist who wishes to describe the phenomena of nature in terms that are consistent for all systems throughout the universe must regard measurements of time and distance as variable quantities. The equations comprising the Lorentz transformation do just that. They preserve the velocity of light as a universal constant, but modify all measurements of time and distance according to the velocity of each system of reference.[2]

[20] So although Lorentz had originally developed his equations to meet a specific problem, Einstein made them the basis of a tremen-

[2] The Lorentz transformation relates distances and times observed on moving systems with those observed on systems relatively at rest. Suppose, for example, that a system, or reference body, is moving in a certain direction, then *according to the old principle of the addition of velocities,* a distance or length x', measured with respect to the moving system along the direction of motion, is related to length x, measured with respect to a relatively stationary system, by the equation $x' = x \pm vt$, where v is the velocity of the moving system and t is the time. Dimensions y' and z', measured with respect to the moving system at right angles to x' and at right angles to each other (i.e., height and breadth), are related to dimensions y and z on the relatively stationary system by $y' = y$, and $z' = z$. And finally a time interval t', clocked with respect to the moving system, is related to time interval t, clocked with respect to the relatively stationary system, by $t' = t$. In other words, distances and times are not affected, *in classical physics,* by the velocity of the system in question *But it is this presupposition which leads to the paradox of the lightning flashes.* The Lorentz transformation reduces the distances and times observed on moving systems to the conditions of the stationary observer, keeping the velocity of light c a constant for all observers. Here are the equations of the Lorentz transformation which have supplanted the older and evidently inadequate relationships cited above:

$$x' = \frac{x - vt}{\sqrt{1 - (v^2/c^2)}}$$
$$y' = y$$
$$z' = z$$
$$t' = \frac{t - (v/c^2)x}{\sqrt{1 - (v^2/c^2)}}$$

It will be noted that, as in the old transformation law, dimensions y' and z' are unaffected by motion. It will also be seen that if the velocity of the moving system v is small relative to the velocity of light c, then the equations of the Lorentz transformation reduce themselves to the relations of the old principle of the addition of velocities. But as the magnitude of v approaches that of c, then the values of x' and t' are radically changed.

dous generalization, and to the edifice of Relativity added another axiom: the laws of nature preserve their uniformity in all systems when related by the Lorentz transformation. Stated thus, in the abstract language of mathematics the significance of this axiom can scarcely be apparent to the layman. But in physics an equation is never a pure abstraction; it is simply a kind of shorthand expression which the scientist finds convenient to describe the phenomena of nature. Sometimes it is also a Rosetta Stone in which the theoretical physicist can decipher secret realms of knowledge. And so by deduction from the message written in the equations of the Lorentz transformation, Einstein discovered a number of new and extraordinary truths about the physical universe.

III

21. These truths can be described in very concrete terms. For once he had evolved the philosophical and mathematical bases of Relativity, Einstein had to bring them into the laboratory, where abstractions like time and space are harnessed by means of clocks and measuring rods. And so translating his basic ideas about time and space into the language of the laboratory, he pointed out some hitherto unsuspected properties of clocks and rods. For example: a clock attached to any moving system runs at a different rhythm from a stationary clock; and a measuring rod attached to any moving system changes its length according to the velocity of the system. Specifically the clock slows down as its velocity increases, and the measuring rod shrinks in the direction of its motion. These peculiar changes have nothing to do with the construction of the clock or the composition of the rod. The clock can be a pendulum clock, a spring clock, or an hour glass. The measuring rod can be a wooden ruler, a metal yardstick, or a ten-mile cable. The slowing of the clock and the contraction of the rod are not mechanical phenomena; an observer riding along with the clock and the measuring rod would not notice these changes. But a stationary observer, i.e., stationary relative to the moving system, would find that the moving clock has slowed down with respect to his stationary clock, and that the moving rod has contracted with respect to his stationary units of measurement.

22. This singular behavior of moving clocks and yardsticks accounts for the constant velocity of light. It explains why all observers in all systems everywhere, regardless of their state of motion, will always

find that light strikes their instruments and departs from their instruments at precisely the same velocity. For as their own velocity approaches that of light, their clocks slow down, their yardsticks contract, and all their measurements are reduced to the values obtained by a relatively stationary observer. The laws governing these contractions are defined by the Lorentz transformation and they are very simple: the greater the speed, the greater the contraction. A yardstick moving with 90 per cent the velocity of light would shrink to about half its length; thereafter the rate of contraction becomes more rapid; and if the stick could attain the velocity of light, it would shrink away to nothing at all. Similarly a clock traveling with the velocity of light would stop completely. From this it follows that nothing can ever move faster than light, no matter what forces are applied. Thus Relativity reveals another fundamental law of nature: *the velocity of light is the top limiting velocity in the universe.*

[23] At first meeting these facts are difficult to digest but that is simply because classical physics assumed, unjustifiably, that an object preserves the same dimensions whether it is in motion or at rest and that a clock keeps the same rhythm in motion and at rest. Common sense dictates that this must be so. But as Einstein has pointed out, common sense is actually nothing more than a deposit of prejudices laid down in the mind prior to the age of eighteen. Every new idea one encounters in later years must combat this accretion of "self-evident" concepts. And it is because of Einstein's unwillingness ever to accept any unproven principle as self-evident that he was able to penetrate closer to the underlying realities of nature than any scientist before him. Why, he asked, is it any more strange to assume that moving clocks slow down and moving rods contract, than to assume that they don't? The reason classical physics took the latter view for granted is that man, in his everyday experience, never encounters velocities great enough to make these changes manifest. In an automobile, an airplane, even in a V-2 rocket, the slowing down of a watch is immeasurable. It is only when velocities approximate that of light that relativistic effects can be detected. The equations of the Lorentz transformation show very plainly that at ordinary speeds the modification of time and space intervals amounts practically to zero. Relativity does not therefore contradict classical physics. It simply regards the old concepts as limiting cases that apply solely to the familiar experiences of man.

[24] Einstein thus surmounts the barrier reared by man's impulse to define reality solely as he perceives it through the screen of his senses. Just as the Quantum Theory demonstrated that elementary particles of matter do not behave like the larger particles we discern in the coarse-grained world of our perceptions, so Relativity shows that we cannot foretell the phenomena accompanying great velocities from the sluggish behavior of objects visible to man's indolent eye. Nor may we assume that the laws of Relativity deal with exceptional occurrences; on the contrary they provide a comprehensive picture of an incredibly complex universe in which the simple mechanical events of our earthly experience are the exceptions. The present-day scientist, coping with the tremendous velocities that prevail in the fast universe of the atom or with the immensities of sidereal space and time, finds the old Newtonian laws inadequate. But Relativity provides him in every instance with a complete and accurate description of nature..

[25] Whenever Einstein's postulates have been put to test, their validity has been amply confirmed. Remarkable proof of the relativistic retardation of time intervals came out of an experiment performed by H. E. Ives of the Bell Telephone Laboratories in 1936. A radiating atom may be regarded as a kind of clock in that it emits light of a definite frequency and wavelength which can be measured with great precision by means of a spectroscope. Ives compared the light emitted by hydrogen atoms moving at high velocities with that emitted by hydrogen atoms at rest, and found that the frequency of vibration of the moving atoms was reduced in exact accordance with the predictions of Einstein's equations. Someday science may devise a far more interesting test of the same principle. Since any periodic motion serves to measure time, the human heart, Einstein has pointed out, is also a kind of clock. Hence, according to Relativity, the heartbeat of a person traveling with a velocity close to that of light would be relatively slowed, along with his respiration and all other physiological processes. He would not notice this retardation because his watch would slow down in the same degree. But judged by a stationary timekeeper he would "grow old" less rapidly. In a Buck Rogers realm of fantasy, it is possible to imagine some future cosmic explorer boarding an atom-propelled space ship, ranging the void at 167,000 miles per second, and returning to earth after ten terrestrial years to find himself physically only five years older.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

The name of Albert Einstein has long been a popular symbol for complicated theories and abstruse thought unintelligible to any but the most advanced scientist. While his theories often are necessarily complicated, many of the most significant of his conclusions, together with the line of reasoning upon which they are based, can nevertheless be at least partly explained in terms understandable to the non-scientist. To do just this was the task Lincoln Barnett set himself in *The Universe and Dr. Einstein,* from which this selection (Chapters 5, 6, and 7 in the book) was taken. His success is due largely to the combination of a thorough understanding of the concepts he is explaining with a more than ordinarily lucid expository style.

1. To work from the familiar to the unfamiliar (or the less familiar) is an old and indeed almost unavoidable rule in explaining complicated subjects. Find examples of this in pars. 1 and 2. Where else does the author use the ship illustration? Why does he use this illustration more than once?

2. For parts of his explanation, Barnett reverses the process suggested in question 1 by asking the reader to discard his sense of the familiar lest it be an obstacle to his grasping the new concepts being presented. What is the meaning of *subjective* and *objective* (pars. 11, 12, 14)? Why is man called *earthbound* in par. 13? What irony is there in the use of the phrase *common sense* in par. 14 in the light of par. 23? Note how Barnett is careful in pars. 23 and 24 to re-unite in the reader his sense of the familiar and his awe at the unfamiliar by showing that the former is merely a special case of the latter. What is the effect of the peculiar combination of familiar and unfamiliar in the last half of par. 25?

3. Barnett in his book often achieves a certain dramatic quality by explaining a particular theory in some detail and then citing an exact experiment that either disproves or spectacularly confirms it. Why are the two such passages occurring in this selection placed near the ends of sections (that is, of chapters in the book)?

4. The publisher's jacket for this book asserts that it "can be understood by the high-school student of physics or chemistry and be read with admiration—as it has been—by Dr. Einstein." Defend or attack this statement.

5. Why is the moving observer in par. 17 said to be *precariously*

perched atop the train? Why are the adjectives *sluggish* and *indolent* used (in par. 24)? Do they have more or less to do with the theory being explained than *precariously* in par. 17? Find examples of Barnett's phrasing or choice of illustrations that seem to you particularly helpful. Compare Barnett's style with that of Coates (pp. 118-127), Langewiesche (pp. 129-141), and Zahl (pp. 211-218). Explain which likenesses and differences are due to variations in purpose and intended audience and which are due to variations in type of subject.

Suggestions for Writing

1. Possible implications of a recent scientific theory.
2. Seeing ten years of sights in five years.
3. The limitations of man's senses.
4. "Common sense is actually nothing more than a deposit of prejudices laid down in the mind prior to the age of eighteen" (par. 23).

Part Three

Evaluation

Contents — *Part Three*

EDITORS OF "FORTUNE" ..... *The Class of '49*

RUTH BENEDICT ..... *Are Families Passé?*

PETER F. DRUCKER ..... *Henry Ford: Success and Failure*

GILBERT HIGHET ..... *The American Student as I See Him*

E. B. WHITE ..... *Here Is New York*

RUSSELL LYNES ..... *Highbrow, Lowbrow, Middlebrow*

WINTHROP SARGEANT ..... *In Defense of the Highbrow*

EDITORS OF "LIFE"
Lana Turner's Fourth and Positively Last Time

LOUIS B. WRIGHT
A Review of George Washington: A Biography *by Douglas Southall Freeman*

HOWARD MUMFORD JONES
A Review of Raintree County *by Ross Lockridge, Jr.*

JOHN MASON BROWN ..... *Olivier's* Hamlet

ROBERT HATCH ..... *Olivier's* Hamlet

C. A. LEJEUNE .... *"The Bard" Competes with "The Body"*

MAXWELL ANDERSON ..... *The Essence of Tragedy*

Evaluation

Evaluation is that type of writing which is concerned with judgment and interpretation, with criticism and appreciation. In contrast to the material of explanation, which is objective, factual, and provable, the material of evaluation is subjective and necessarily an expression of an individual point of view, which cannot be absolutely verified and must ultimately remain "a matter of opinion," but which does impress the reader with its soundness and justice or with its lack of these qualities.

This is not to say that the writer of evaluation does not use facts. Facts must be offered in support of an opinion if the expression of that opinion is to convince the reader, but in an evaluation the writer goes beyond the facts because the facts in themselves are not as important to him as the judgment or interpretation which he draws from them.

For example, E. B. White, in his evaluation of New York, gives his reader a great many objective details, some of which would doubtless be used by a geographer presenting a purely informative treatment of the same subject; but White's essay is personal and individual. From it the reader learns much about New York, but he also comes to know the author, his interests, his likes and dislikes, his opinions and his scale of values.

Evaluation is not an abstruse art. The baby in his crib expressing a preference for one rattle over another or the college student explaining to his roommate why he likes or dislikes a movie is evaluating. But if one's evaluation is to be any more than an expression of a personal whim it must be soundly based on facts; if it is not to seem a mere expression of prejudice it must give evidence that the writer has

attempted to be fair, is not narrowly partisan, has considered the various significant qualities or characteristics of whatever he is discussing, and above all has not ignored evidence that would invalidate his appraisal or weaken the opinion that he is presenting.

The ability to make evaluations that are sound and just and are at the same time an individual expression of one's preference is surely one of the most important elements of intellectual maturity, regardless of the age of its fortunate possessor. "I trust his judgment" is praise indeed, and the writer who merits such praise has acquired a skill of the highest order.

The Class of '49[*]

by THE EDITORS OF *FORTUNE*

During these next few weeks of June there will be graduated from some 1,200 campuses what may be the most significant class in our history. Few earlier classes have aroused such wide interest, or provoked such dissimilar conclusions. To most of those who have worked closely with it—from the professors and the placement directors to the recruiters for industry—'49 is the best class the country has ever produced. To a small, and worried, minority, it is the most portentous.

2. In almost every respect, '49 is remarkable. It is one of the biggest classes of all time: some 150,000 (including midyear graduates) men —40,000 more than in the largest prewar class. It is the most mature: the average male senior is twenty-four, 70 per cent are veterans, and 30 per cent are married. It is the most responsible: where the men of the first postwar class—'46—were apt to be restless, hard to handle, and, later, job skippers, '49 has proved to be the most self-disciplined group the colleges have ever had. Mentally, it is admirably adjusted to the now tightened job market; employers, faced only a year ago with an "interest-me-if-you-dare" attitude, report that they have never seen a class more eager to make itself useful to business.

3. But it is in a different respect that the character of '49 is really extraordinary. For '49—and, in varying degrees, its companion classes of '48 and '50—has turned its back on what its elders automatically assume is—and *should* be—one of the most cherished prerogatives of youth. Forty-nine is taking no chances.

4. It is what they don't want rather than what they do that the men

[*] Reprinted from the June, 1949 issue of *Fortune* Magazine by special permission of the editors. Copyright 1949 by Time Inc.

of '49 know best. And what they don't want is risk. Bulling about the future, the state of the economy, and their place in it, they seem, to a stranger from another generation, somehow curiously old before their time. Above everything else security has become the great goal.

5 Security, of course, can mean many things. In '49's case it is bound up in people. Spiritually, it means working *for* people, in the sense of service, of justifying one's place in the community. Materially, it is, simply, working *under* them. The class of '49 wants to work for somebody else—preferably somebody big. No longer is small business the promised land. As for the idea of going into business for oneself, the idea is so seldom expressed as to seem an anachronism. "I never saw a bunch that so wanted to make this free-enterprise system work," says a professor of business administration, "but they are interested in the system rather than the individual enterprise. They will be technicians—not owners."

The Vanishing Entrepreneur

6. The search for security is not new among college men—certainly the senior of the thirties dreamed far more cautiously than his brother of the twenties. But never has it been so overriding, or so obvious. Each campus has its peculiarities, but on the great question of security the U.S. college senior has become almost homogeneous. From the huge metropolitan universities to the small-town campuses the men of '49 everywhere seem haunted by the fear of a recession. "I know A.T. & T. might not be very exciting," explains a senior, with a phraseology that has become almost standard on U.S. campuses, "but there'll always be an A.T. & T." The "always" is a key word, for the principal criterion of the job-seeking senior is now the question of longevity. How well protected is the firm with a cash reserve? Is its product depression-proof? On more than one campus the most popular reference book is not the dictionary, but Moody's.

7. For similar reasons the advanced degree is more sought after than ever before; this summer and fall, upwards of 35,000 members of '49 will go on to graduate schools—roughly half for degrees other than law, medicine, and dentistry. The G.I. Bill, of course, is greatly responsible, but so is the fact that postgraduate work offers a continuation, a chance to postpone the entry into the arena. The college man, moreover, is beginning to belittle the bachelor's degree. Since "everybody's going to college now," he wonders if the B.A. or B.S. of today

has any better cash value than the high-school diploma of the twenties or thirties.

[8] The role of the entrepreneur is not coveted, nor, for that matter, does it seem properly understood. In the colleges canvassed by *Fortune* an average of only 2 per cent of the seniors have any intention of going into business for themselves; similarly, many shy from any line of work that, because of its demand for the entrepreneurial spirit, is generally associated with coronary thrombosis or high blood pressure. On this score American literature has performed a disservice; the entrepreneur as a young man has been made singularly unappealing and in the postwar dissections, particularly those detailing the big operator in New York, even he has so lost stomach for enterprise that he finds happiness only when he stops being an entrepreneur, chucks "21" and the boss's wife, and heads for the country. Citing *The Hucksters* as a definitive work, it is easy for the student to moralize on his distaste for economic battle; his heel quotient, he explains, simply isn't big enough. If '49 has a class bogey, it is ulcers.

[9] This distaste might be written off as simple prudence—certainly '49 has been well schooled in the fact that the mortality rate of small business is due in large part to inexperience. There is little evidence, however, that any sizable number are joining big business with the idea of preparing themselves for a later fling on their own, or that they seek it as a temporary haven from the economic storm so many appear to expect. The relationship is to be for keeps: it is the floor, not the ceiling, that the men of '49 are concerned about.

[10] Not so, however, in the Southwest; to judge from the seniors of two of its universities the region would appear to be the last great reservoir of the gambling spirit. At Texas A.&M. 75 per cent of the senior class want to go into business for themselves. "Few expect to go in immediately," the university reports, "but many of the veterans have some money saved and expect to hold it for the day when they can go on their own. They have been bossed as long as they want to be . . ." At the University of Tulsa, the figures are almost identical; of 109 seniors polled, 80 per cent plan to go into business for themselves. And almost all of them want big money.

The Good Life

[11] Forty-nines in the Southwest may talk of big money, but in less cocky regions they do not. One business recruiter has gone through 300 interviews without once hearing a senior mention salary, and

the experience is not unusual. This in itself is not so surprising; it is evidence, among other things, of '49's frequently expressed faith that industry does not intend to exploit it. What is surprising is the almost complete absence of speculation among '49s as to how much money they may make twenty or thirty years hence—and the few figures that are mentioned rarely surpass $10,000. For the most part '49s simply will not talk of the future in terms of the dollar. In terms of the Good Life, however, they are most articulate.

12 This life is, first of all, calm and ordered; many a senior confesses a desire to teach, not that he likes teaching but that he likes the sort of life he associates with it—there is a touch of elms and quiet streets in the picture. Basically, he wants a good wife—and if he does not have one already he hopes to have one within the year; he wants a comfortable home, about three children, one, maybe two cars ("a little knockabout for the wife"), and later, perhaps, a summer cottage. True, one might have to stretch $10,000 a bit to do it, but the point is that, in seniors' plans at least, the figure is not even incidental.

13. This urge to sink roots has had the effect of making '49 in some ways one of the most immobile of classes. The great trek of ambitious college men to the East is over. For one thing, a great many don't particularly want to go there. For another, the economic pull has slackened; as industry has been branching out and decentralizing, so too have the job opportunities. For many areas the combination has been a blessing. Kentucky, for example, recently so concerned over the export of its youth that leading citizens had directed a stay-at-home campaign at the state's undergraduates, now reports a marked increase in the number of seniors who plan to stick there. Similarly, in other southern colleges an increasing majority of seniors plan to stay in their home state or in the Southeast rather than seek jobs in the traditionally higher-paying North.

14 The class of '49, patently, is a settling-down generation. And while it may seem ironical that the one generation perhaps most buttressed with economic security should hunger for it most, it could hardly have been otherwise. Looking back, the men of '49 see a life compounded of insecurity. Born, for the most part, between 1924 and 1926, they went through the early thirties at the most impressionable time of youth; and in their adolescence through a period of civil ferment, which, by its very preoccupation with security, seems to '49 in retrospect a time of chaos. Then, finally, the war.

Safety in Numbers

15 The armed services, so many predicted, would send back to civilian life a youth permanently impatient with authority. They did quite the opposite. The teen-ager in uniform may have chafed, but he was malleable, and in an organization in which conformity was emphasized and reward de-emphasized, he learned easily how to keep his nose clean. And he has not forgotten it. He is not afraid of bigness; where his brother of the twenties, fearful of anonymity, was repelled by hugeness in an organization, he is attracted.

16 To a '49 conditioned to organization, big business spells security. Of those seniors going into business on graduation (roughly one-half the class) about 15 per cent expect to go into their fathers' business; except for them, however, only a few want to go into anything other than a large concern. In the majority view, the small firm is small mainly because it doesn't deserve to be large, and it suffers from nepotism, shaky finances, and a roll-top-desk philosophy of management. "Perhaps we in the colleges are a bit to blame," says the head of a department of business administration. "So much of our curriculum is in terms of the big corporation that the student doesn't appreciate the opportunities that there are in small business."

17 Even if small business does offer opportunities, '49 feels, it offers them too soon. The class of '49 is used to *formal* training and it is wary of stepping out without a good deal more. Big business, therefore, with its reassuringly institutionalized schools, sometimes complete with classrooms, dormitories, and graduating classes, is the ideal next step. To the senior of '49, the training program itself implies a high degree of security; it should make him more valuable not only as a technician but also as a company investment. The more the company spends on him, goes an increasingly popular line of thought, the less likely it is to let him go. Finally, the training program, like postgraduate work, offers the student a continuation of a comfortable role. To those worried because they don't yet know what they want to do, the prospect is sedative. " 'You don't have to make up your mind,' we tell them, in effect," says one executive. " 'Come with us and you will find out while you're in training.' "

18 Another cogent reason why college seniors prefer big business is the simple fact that the big companies go after them and the small ones don't. Of the 450,000-odd incorporated firms in the U.S., only about 1,000 actively recruit on the campuses, while roughly another

3,000 recruit by correspondence. And it is the active 1,000 firms that get the cream. Not all are "ten percenters"—some, indeed, will not take an "A" man for fear he might be antisocial; but by and large they manage to sign up the campus leaders. "I can see it on the recruiters' faces when they come in the door," says the dean of a school of commerce. "Will they be lucky enough to get one of the three or four of my top men? What does it mean? It means the top 10 per cent of the class are automatically led to the big firms. An offer from one firm, a better one from another. They can't resist."

[19] Backing up their great spring recruiting drives, the large firms direct a stream of brochures at the college man. These are more important documents than one would suspect, for often it is on the first impression created by them that the senior—and now, increasingly, the junior—will select the four or five firms he wishes to aim for. They are good brochures; where before the war they were prone to expound on the romance of the company, they now are meaty, straightforward documents. Sales work is still prettied up a bit in the telling, but generally the text is without euphemism, and it bears down heavily on the appeals that count. Pointed references to the firm's sales growth during the last depression are frequent, and almost always underscored are the firm's low executive turnover, liberal pension and annuity plans, and its "family" aspects. ("After hours, G.E. men and women relax . . . enjoy the most up-to-date recreation facilities in all General Electric communities throughout the country.") To a class at once gregarious and security-minded, it is a persuasive package.

[20] Small business, of course, could make some good sales points of its own; frequently it can offer equal security and, sometimes, a great deal more opportunity. College placement directors are well aware of this, but even when they do line up a small company with a position to offer they find the students apathetic. "Funny," says one placement director, echoing many another, "the only kind I can interest in the small-company job are the dynamic sort—the one type that's least likely to get lost in a big company. I'd sooner interest the other kind; I point out to the shy, diffident fellows that in a small outfit where they'd be something of a jack-of-all-trades they'd get a better chance to express themselves, to grow out of their shell. They still don't want it."

[21] The new graduate can argue that this is plain horse sense, and that far from being afraid of taking chances, he is simply looking for the

best place to take them in. Big business, the argument goes, has borrowed the tools of the classroom and the library and made them pay off. It has its laboratories, its market-research departments, and the time and patience to use them; small business does not. The odds, then, favor the men who join big business. "They wouldn't hesitate to risk adopting a new industrial technique or product," explains a proponent of this calculated-risk theory, "when in a positon to do same—but only after they'd subjected it to tests of engineers, market researchers, and so on." With big business, in short, risk taking would be a cinch.

"I Like People"

[22] What kind of job do the seniors ask of Big Business? Merchandising is still the number one choice, but in the last few years a relatively new field, personnel, has been building up to a phenomenal—and illuminating—popularity. The field itself can be dismissed in a few words: it is one of the most overcrowded; the work is semiprofessional and it is rarely open to new recruits. Why, then, '49's enthusiasm? Wearily, recruiters report an explanation that, from campus to campus, varies by hardly a syllable: "Because I like people."

[23] Forty-nine's concept of the job is a mirage, but it is a revealing one. In reality the job is connected more with time studies, Wonderlic tests, and stop watches than with being nice to people, but to '49 it seems to promise the agreeable role of a sort of combination Y.M.C.A. worker, office Solomon, and father confessor to the men at the lathes. Looking back on their military careers, whether they "handled" a squad or a company, '49s feel themselves admirably equipped for the work, and many, indeed, were confirmed in this belief by the Army and Navy's vocational counselors.

[24] In many cases, the college curriculum has also been responsible. Increasingly, departments of economics and business administration have been expounding "human relations" in industry; today there is a wide selection of courses on the subject, many of them highly specialized, cutting across such fields as psychology and physical education. The colleges can put up an extremely good case for this new emphasis on industrial relations, but too frequently the result is a senior disillusioned by a seeming lack of comparable interest on the part of business. "In the field of personnel," says a professor at a large state university, "education is miles ahead of industry." Which, in at least one respect, it is.

[25] Forty-nine's mirage of the personnel field—which, for all the re-

cruiters' discouragements, many a senior is drawn to until the last interview—is especially enticing for another, if infrequently expressed, reason. Personnel work is somewhat out of the main stream; much like the service life, it seems to offer a certain freedom from competition. It is a technician's job, the job of one who *services* industry; and, rightly or wrongly, a large part of '49 equates that niche with security.

Service Without Tears

[26] To '49, this security encompasses something more than mere safety. At a recent Temple University round table on the pursuit of happiness, one student put it this way: "People who are just selfish and wrapped up in themselves have the most trouble, and people who are interested in other people . . . are the type of person that is not too much concerned about security. Somehow the security is provided in the things they do and they are able to reach out beyond themselves."

[27] On every campus the same theme is rephrased, and with an intensity that would astound the somewhat more mercenary senior of the thirties. Not infrequently the terms border on the mawkish—as if the goal was simply to defend the little people, in the fashion of a Frank Capra hero—but generally, they boil down to the question of doing something *worth while.* Worth-whileness, like security, is open to considerable definition, but to most '49's it seems to mean service to others. More extroverted than his predecessors, the average '49 has a highly developed sense of community; he is fascinated by human relationships, and the place of the individual in the group. He will tend, accordingly, to lubricate rather than to build, and thus to evaluate success less on the basis of concrete achievement than on services performed.

[28] Certainly, this kind of thinking is to be welcomed. But to what degree is it a rationalization—a self-ennobling excuse for turning away from the more riskful life? One would assume that that most selfless of occupations, the ministry, was attracting an increasing number of college men. It is not; an average of less than 2 per cent of the seniors in the colleges covered by *Fortune* planned to go into the ministry, and in some of the colleges this represents a decline from 1939. Nor is there any stampede to government service. "There is so little public spirit among our applicants," one state employment director reports of '49, "that we all comment on it when we find it." Politics is scarcely mentioned at all.

[29] Perhaps the answer is that the class of '49, more reconciled than any other recent college generations to the place of big business, sees in it the most effective vehicle for community service; in the eyes of the senior the same attribute, efficiency, that makes the large corporation appealing as a sanctuary from depression, also makes it, on a foot-pounds-of-energy basis, by far the best stage for being *useful* to other people. Thus, again, we are back to the personnel job, for here, then, is the optimum career. In '49's conception, not only does it promise economic security; it promises spiritual security as well. To a class intent on the happy mean, it resolves everything.

The Market

[30] Thanks to the law of supply and demand, on the average, only about 10 per cent of the seniors going into business—to judge from rough estimates gathered in April—persist in their quest for the personnel job, but the other preferences are in character. For 40 per cent, the largest single category, sales and merchandising, has become the number one choice. It is, however, sales with a difference. The class of Forty-nine's interest is less accumulative than administrative; "sales engineering," whatever that may be, is a favored term, and those few who want to sell in the old, vulgar sense of the word want to sell on salary, *not* commission. For this reason, insurance, favored by only 5 per cent, has dropped in popularity. Actually the jobs offered are more often for home-office administrative work than for selling, but to the average senior insurance still appears to mean high pressure and low drawing accounts, and he wants no part of it.

[31] Similarly, there is an almost complete disinterest in investment and brokerage work. Fifteen per cent have marked down finance as their first preference, but here again, as in sales, the interest is administrative rather than accumulative. "Unlike the class of 1940," says John L. Munschauer, director of placement at Cornell, "no one mentions speculating or investing in stocks and bonds as a method of acquiring a fortune; nor have I heard them mention stocks and bonds as a method of saving and supplementing income. Those considering banking and finance are primarily interested in such things as credit, mortgage loan work, trust-and-estate work, and financial analysis." Elsewhere, the same is true.

[32] In selecting a field, the senior of '49 has had to pay much more attention to the actual needs of industry than did the senior of last year. The seller's market in junior executive material is over, and no

longer, as in '48, are corporations' recruiting staffs bidding against each other like so many fraternities in a rushing season. The effect, as many a senior will admit, has been salutary for all concerned; and by comparison with prewar standards, the market is still quite healthy. From all estimates, the great majority of the seniors seeking jobs in business should be placed by midsummer.

33. Despite the slackened demand, starting salaries remain at an all-time high. With little variation from college to college, the average going rate for '49's ranges between $55 and $60 a week. Certainly the figure suggests none of the downgrading of the bachelor's degree so many college men complain of. In 1939 the average starting salary was about $25 a week; thus, even after allowing for the increased cost of living, the 1949 figure represents a considerable jump in real income. Has it been too great? Most employers appear to think not, but there are a few dissenters. "We have done almost irreparable damage to the men we have so hired," says H. Paul Abbott, of the Insurance Co. of North America Companies. "They have gained a false sense of their values. . . . Many of these men will go through the rest of their business careers believing themselves to be underpaid. They have drunk of a heady brew . . . the hangover will soon be upon them."

Prepping for Industry

34. What kind of student does business want? The engineer, of course, is in demand. So, presumably, should be the general student, for by far the largest single classification for which business seeks college men for non-engineering jobs is that of "general business trainee." But while on the one hand it asks for the well-rounded man, on the other it asks for the man who isn't so well-rounded after all, for it demands that he has been specialized at the same time. According to a survey of fifty-eight top U.S. firms made by The Johns Hopkins University, business' specifications are heavily loaded against the general student: out of every 100 solicitations, thirty-seven are for engineering students; twenty-four for other technical students; twenty-nine for business administration students; for liberal-arts men, ten.

35. The students have adapted themselves, and so have the colleges. Since 1939 the colleges have been setting up more and more of what might be called "content" and "how-to" courses; today a man can major in radio journalism, pictorial journalism, advertising, photography, industrial and labor relations, public relations, business management in the furniture industry, insect control, the fertilizer

industry, real estate, ceramic engineering, airport management and operation—and many another specialty on which the dollar sign is equally visible. As a result, the emphasis on the humanities has declined far more drastically than most laymen suspect; in 1929, 27 per cent of the students in the colleges surveyed by *Fortune* majored in either English, philosophy, the classics, modern languages, or history; ten years later the figure had dropped to 17; today, it is down to 10.

[36] By any commercial standards, '49 should be an eminently "practical" class. Yet, for some businessmen, it is still not practical enough. In too many cases, as corporations have developed closer ties with the campus, often with grants and scholarships, they have come to regard the function of the U.S. college as little more than the preparation of students for industry's own schools. In one recent if somewhat extreme example of this attitude, an executive of the Ford Motor Co. proposed that colleges remedy a deficiency in their curriculums by setting up a course in "the psycho-socio dynamics of industrial organization." This, among other things, would instruct the pre-business student in the personality pattern of industry "into which he must merge his individual personality."

[37] When this proposal was made at a conference of recruiters and placement directors, the latter with quite enough troubles already in selling the liberal-arts man, the response was an involuntary gasp of horror. For one of the most signal features of the conference had been the suggestion by the recruiters themselves that, for business' own sake, perhaps it was time business asked the colleges to bear down a little more heavily on the liberal arts—though not, of course, at the expense of business courses. Westinghouse Electric's Manager of University Relations, for one, proposed that the technical schools include more social sciences and humanities: their graduates, the company felt, were altogether too specialized and narrow in their thinking.

[38] There are signs others are beginning to feel the same way. One firm, for example, which in the past has leaned heavily to engineering majors for its general trainees, has found that the engineers are inclined to treat every problem as an engineering problem; since many are not, the firm is now looking around for liberal-arts men. Similarly, a large Detroit advertising agency says it prefers men who have *not* specialized in advertising. "We can teach them advertising," it says. "We can't teach them how to use their minds."

[39] Compounded with '49's natural gregariousness, this vocationalized schooling has produced a class that on the whole has little regard for

the arts—either as spectators or participants. The work of the artist satisfies few of '49's criteria for spiritual security; the artist is "too much wrapped up in himself" and his contribution to the community too obscure. Even for the intellectual of the class the creative role seems unrewarding. "Culturally," writes Elliot E. Cohen, the editor of *Commentary,* in a penetrating sketch of today's young intellectual, "he feels himself the survivor of a long series of routs and massacres. Insecurity is his portion, and doom and death are to him familiar neighbors . . . There is very little in him of that lust for life and experience, of the joy of living for its own sake, of a sense of wide horizons, or worlds to conquer, or much of that early curiosity that drove his older brother expansively over the realms of knowledge."

[40] As in everything else, so in business '49's energies promise to be analytical rather than creative; if ever there was one, this will be a generation of managers. What will be its impact on business? On a few points at least, the indications are clear. Competence, certainly, '49 will supply in abundant measure, and never has there been a class so absorbed with the techniques—and the desirability—of making business more efficient. Its approach augurs well indeed for the future of industrial relations, and not merely in the narrow sense of management's relations with labor, but of its relations with government and the community as well. In every application of business '49's should make good neighbors.

[41] Too good? Here lie the more unanswerable questions. Will this community-conscious group furnish any quota of free-swinging s.o.b.'s we seem to need for leavening the economy? Or will it be so intent on achieving a super-lubricated, integrated private enterprise—a sort of socialization by big business instead of government—that it will prefer a static, and thus more manageable, economy to a dynamic one? Will '49's, in short, be so tractable and harmonious as to be incapable, twenty or thirty years hence, of making provocative decisions? The answers will be a long time in coming.

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Commentary and Questions

This article, like most of those which appear in *Fortune,* is the product of much careful research, of reading, questioning, and observing. The material used in a *Fortune* article is generally collected by more than one researcher and the writing of an article itself is often a joint enterprise.

Although an essay written by a college student cannot ordinarily be the product of such exhaustive research as that which precedes the writing of the typical article in *Fortune,* you can observe in this essay the tone of authority achieved by the use of sufficient facts to support judgments, opinions, and points of view. Many people express opinions about graduating classes and the younger generation in general, but all too often these opinions are worthless because they are merely glib generalizations, unsupported by evidence. In contrast, your opinions will command respect if you have the facts before you write.

1. The reader of such an essay as "The Class of '49" wants facts, but he wants more than facts; he wants to know what the facts add up to; in short, he wants an interpretation. How early in this essay do we find a statement of the basic interpretation of the facts that the essay presents? Is this interpretation over-stressed? Justify your answer. Do the authors strengthen or weaken their interpretation by including the material contained in par. 10?

2. Pars. 37-38 might easily appear in an essay on a different subject. Do they seem to be a digression here or do they have an organic relationship to the problem being discussed?

3. Direct quotations are used in many parts of this article. Note particularly the ways in which quotations are woven into pars. 16-21. What effect is achieved here by the use of quotations?

4. Note the final sentence of par. 8 and then find other examples of the way in which a phrase can sum up an attitude.

5. The concluding paragraph of this essay is built around a series of questions and is not a summary paragraph. What purpose does it serve?

6. Which of the opposing points of view presented in pars. 36-38 do you accept? Why?

Suggestions for Writing

1. A college student considers his high-school graduating class.
2. The freshman class as I see it.
3. The class of .... does (does not) resemble the class of '49.
4. Security vs. adventure.
5. The unchanging characteristics of college classes.
6. The advantage of being a large frog in a small puddle.

*Are Families Passé?**

by RUTH BENEDICT

A great many people today speak as if the family were in some special sort of danger in our times. We hear a great deal about "saving the family" and about "preserving the home." Authors and lecturers describe how the family is threatened by divorce, or by mothers who work outside of the home, or by unemployment, or by lack of religious training of children. Each of them, depending on his experience in his own home and on his observations in the families he knows, selects something which he thinks should be changed—or should be preserved—and says that, if this or that were done, the family would be "saved."

2. To an anthropologist such phrasings are dangerously misleading. He has studied the family among naked savages and in contemporary civilizations and he knows that it has survived in all human societies known in the record of mankind. Just as surely he knows that the family takes all kinds of different forms. It is not merely that unlettered primitive nomads have family arrangements different from Western industrial nations; even in Western nations around the Atlantic shores the family differs profoundly. The ethics of marriage, the specific close emotional ties which the family fosters, the disciplines and freedoms for the child, the nature of the dependency of the children upon the parents, even the personnel which makes up the family—all these differ in Western civilized nations. The anthropologist knows that the changes taking place in the home in any decade in any country do not mean that the family is now about to disintegrate under our eyes unless we do something about it. The problem as he states it is quite different: how do legal and customary arrangements in the family tally with the arrangements

* Chapter IX, "The Family: *Genus Americanum*," from *The Family: Its Function and Destiny*, edited by Ruth Nanda Anshen. By permission of Harper & Brothers, publishers. Copyright 1949 by Harper & Brothers. Published in slightly condensed form under the title "Are Families Passé?" in *The Saturday Review of Literature*, December 25, 1948.

and premises of the whole way of life which is valued in any tribe or nation? If, for instance, the father has a heavy, authoritarian hand upon his children, the anthropologist asks: Is this in keeping with authoritarianism in the state and in industry? Or is it at odds with a society which values non-authoritarianism and the pursuit of happiness? He asks the same kind of question about a nation's laws of inheritance from father to son, about the divorce laws, about the architectural layout of the house, about the reasons that are given to children when they are told to be good.

3. Customs enshrined in the family in any tribe or nation are likely to be sensitively adjusted to the values and customs of each particular people. This is no mystic correspondence; the persons who make up the family are the same people who are the citizens of that nation—the business men, the farmers, the churchgoers or non-churchgoers, the readers of newspapers, and the listeners to the radio. In all their roles they are molded more or less surely into a people with certain habits, certain hopes, and a certain *esprit de corps.* Americans come to share certain slogans, behavior, and judgments which differ from those of Frenchmen or Czechs. This is inevitable. And in the process the role of the family also becomes different. By the same token, just as economic and political changes occur over a period of time in the United States or in France or in Czechoslovakia, the family also changes.

4. An anthropologist, therefore, when he reads about the failure of the family, finds in such criticism a somewhat special meaning. He remembers how often the family is made a convenient whipping boy among many peoples who disapprove of the way their world is going. He has seen it in Amazon jungles and on the islands of the Pacific. The author remembers an American Indian tribe which used to talk about the family in a most uncomplimentary fashion. They were a people who, not long before, had roamed over the great plains hunting buffalo and proving their courage by war exploits. Now they lived on a reservation, and tending crops was no adequate substitute for their old way of life. Their old economic arrangements of boastful gift giving, their political life, and their religious practices had either been destroyed by circumstances or had lost their old meaningfulness. Life had become pointless to them. These men talked with gusto about the failure of the family. They said that in the family the children no longer learned manners, or religion, or generosity, or whatever it was the individual Indian favored as a cure-all. The family, too, weighed a man down, they said; it was a burden to him.

5. To the anthropologist studying this tribe, however, the family was precisely the best arranged, most trustworthy institution in their whole culture. It was hard beset and it had not escaped the tragic effects of the general disintegration of tribal life, but it was what provided the warm, human ties and the dependable security which were left in that Indian tribe. The children were loved and cared for, the husbands and wives often had comfortable relations with each other, and family hospitality had a graciousness that was absent in more public life. At birth and marriage and death the family still functioned as an effective institution. And there seemed to be no man or woman of childbearing age who was not married or would not have preferred to be.

6 The writer thinks of this Indian tribe when she hears Americans talk about the decay of the family. Instead of viewing the family with such alarm, suppose we look at it as it exists in this decade in this country and see how it is arranged to fulfill its functions in American schemes of life. Let us leave aside for the moment the questions of whether conditions are provided that would keep it from preventable overstrain and of whether as human beings we are able to get all the satisfaction we might out of this institution; let us consider only the arrangements of the family as we know it and how these fit in with our values and with the way we should like to plan our lives.

7 Suppose we take marriage first. Marriage sets up the new family, and it seems to make a great deal of difference whether a society dictates that the new home shall be begun in tears and heartache or with rejoicing. Many human societies would not recognize a marriage without a wailing bride and a sullen groom. Often the bride has to be surrounded by her mourning women, who lament her coming lifelong separation from her parents and her brothers and sisters, as well as her future misery as she goes to work for her mother-in-law. Often they cut her long hair and remove her jewelry as a sign that she is now a worker and no longer alluring. The groom's role, too, may be that of an unwilling victim. Often marriages are arranged by the parents without giving the two young people any chance to know each other.

8. All these circumstances are absent in marriage in the United States. The young people are hardly hampered in their choice of a mate; if occasionally parents deplore their choice, public opinion allows the young couple to outface them and expects the parents to accept the inevitable with as much decency as they can muster. We expect that the bride and groom will be in love or will have chosen

each other for reasons known to themselves. Whether they marry for love or for money or to show they can win a sought-after mate from a rival, in any case they are making a personal choice and are not acting on command. Because in every field of life American culture puts such a high value on this kind of freedom and so bitterly resents its curtailment in peace time, the fact that young people do make their own choice of a mate is an important and auspicious arrangement. The arranged marriage which is traditional in France or the careful class restrictions which have been observed in Holland would be difficult to manage in the United States. The wide range of choice of a mate and the fact that the young people make their own selection are conditions which could hardly be made more satisfactory for Americans with their particular habits and demands.

9 After marriage, too, the new family has a wide range of choices about where to live, how the wife shall occupy herself, when to start a family, and a host of other important matters. Such freedom is extremely unusual in the world. Sometimes the couple must live with the husband's family, sometimes with the wife's. Often in other countries, until one or two children are born, the young man continues to work for his father and has no say about the farm or the flock and no money which he can control. But in the United States a young couple plans the family budget before the wedding and what they earn is theirs to spend.

10 The way the new family in this country sets up its own separate home makes possible a rare and delightful circumstance: the two of them can have an incomparable privacy. No matter how hard it has been to arrange for privacy before marriage, as soon as the wedding is over everybody expects them to have their own latch key and their own possessions around them. If they cannot manage this, they feel cheated and other people think something is wrong. It is the same if they have to give a home to a parent. In most civilized countries this is a duty to which as a good son and good daughter they are bound, but if it is necessary in the United States their friends and neighbors will regard them as exceptionally burdened. Even the scarcity and high wages of domestic servants give the young family a greater privacy. Considering that they have chosen each other to their own liking, this privacy in the home is made to order to gratify them; the only problem is whether they can use it to their own happiness.

11. When they cannot, and when they find that their choice of a mate was not fool-proof just because they made it on their own, there is

in the United States great freedom to get a divorce. Our growing divorce rate is the subject of much viewing-with-alarm; yet in a culture built as ours is on ever expanding personal choice, an important goal of which is the pursuit of happiness, the right to terminate an unhappy marriage is the other side of the coin of which the fair side is the right to choose one's spouse. Weak and stunted individuals will of course abuse both privileges, yet it is difficult to see how divorce could consistently be denied in a culture like ours. Certainly if we accepted it more honestly as a necessary phase of our way of life, however sorrowful, and put honest effort and sympathy into not penalizing the divorced, we should be acting more appropriately and in our own best interests. At any rate, the high divorce rate in the United States is no attack on marriage, for it is precisely the divorced —those who have failed in one or two attempts—who have the highest rate of marriage. Between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-five not even the unmarried or the widowed marry at so great a rate as the divorced.

12 Besides free choice and privacy, the American family has unusual potential leisure because of the labor-saving devices, prepared foods, and ready-made clothes available under modern conditions. The basic labor-saver is running water in the sink, and Americans have little idea how many millions of homes in civilized countries do not have it. Thus we are saved an endless round of drudgery that ties down women—and men also—in countries where homes have no running water, no gas and electricity, no farm tools but those which are driven into the earth by human hands or are swung in human arms, and no use of ready-made soaps and foods and clothes. Americans put high value on lessened drudgery, but they deprecate having free spaces of truly leisure time; the more time they save the more they fill up their days and nights with a round of engagements and complications. They are unwilling to admit that they have leisure, but the schedules of their lives prove clearly how much they have.

13. Universal schooling in the United States also frees the family of many duties when children have come. It is hard for Americans to imagine the difference which regular school hours make in a mother's role. For a great part of the working day, American children are the responsibility of the teacher and not of the mother. As nursery schools spread over the country, younger and younger children get trained care outside the home and the mother's labors are correspondingly relieved. As the children grow older the mother's leisure increases,

until finally she reaches that idle middle age with its round of card parties and clubs and window shopping and movies which engross and waste the energy of so many millions of American women. Her husband is earning more money now than when he was younger, and her children have flown; she has a plethora of privileges and freedom and leisure. In one sense she has everything.

14. It is obviously unfair to talk about the incomparable freedom from drudgery which the American home offers without emphasizing that interval of a few years when there is no leisure for the mother in the home—the years when the babies are little. In our great cities where each family is strange to all the others, a mother is likely to have to be baby tender every hour of the day, with no one to relieve her. Along with these duties she must do all her cooking and washing and cleaning. And, as all our magazines and women's pages reiterate, she must make efforts to keep her husband. She must keep herself looking attractive, must keep up social contacts, and be a companion to him. To European wives this program looks formidable. "I was always told that American women were so free," a Polish woman said to me, "but when I came here and saw how they had to manage with the babies and the house without any older women of the family to help, and then how they had to play around with their husbands in the evening to keep them happy, I decided I wouldn't change places with them for anything. In Poland a woman doesn't have to 'keep' her husband; it's all settled when they're married."

15 The striking fact about the nursery years in the United States is that in comparison with those in other countries they are so short and that nevertheless we do not really treat them as an interim. Mothers who are going through this period give remarkably little thought to the leisure that will come soon. They are often vocal enough about the turmoil of their present lives, and sometimes bitter, but the fact that the nursery years last so short a time in the United States and could be treated as an interim—like a professor's going into the government during war time—is all too seldom part of their thinking. No doubt this is due in part to a lag in our culture, since even with our grandparents conditions were different; but in part it is a result of the sentiment which selects this period, no matter how short, as the fulfillment of a woman's chief duty in life. A social engineer looking at the family, however, would certainly put his major effort into better arrangements for the overburdened mother during these years and into thinking about effecting some transition from this period into

that next one during which, in the United States, millions of women become idle parasites upon society—and dull and unhappy into the bargain.

[16] Another notable feature of the American family is its peculiarly non-authoritarian character. The old rules that a child should be seen and not heard and the adage, "Spare the rod and spoil the child," are anachronistic in the United States; they are dispensed with even in immigrant groups which honored them in their native country. The rule of the father over the family is still a reality in some European nations, but in the United States the mother is the chief responsible agent in bringing up her children; here the father's opinions are something the children are more likely to play off against the mother's, to their own advantage, rather than a court of last authority from which there is no appeal. Children take the noisy center of the stage at the breakfast table and in the living room in a way that is quite impossible in European countries. The fact that they are expected to know right from wrong in their tenderest years and to act upon it on their own is often commented on by European mothers who have lived here. A Dutch mother once spoke to the author about how hard we are on our children because we expect this of them; she said, "I don't expect it of my children before they are seven; until then, I am there to see that they act correctly." But an American mother expects a child of three or four to be a responsible moral agent, and she gives him great latitude in which to prove that he can manage his little affairs by himself.

[17] All this lack of strong authoritarianism in American families accords well with the values that are chiefly sought after in this country. No strong father image is compatible with our politics or our economics. We seek the opportunity to prove that we are as good as the next person, and we do not find comfort in following an authoritarian voice—in the state or in the home, from the landowner or the priest—which will issue a command from on high. We learn as children to measure ourselves against Johnny next door, or against Mildred whose mother our mother knows in church, and this prepares us for living in a society with strongly egalitarian ideals. We do not learn the necessity of submitting to unquestioned commands as the children of many countries do. The family in the United States has become democratic.

[18] These free-choice and non-authoritarian aspects of the family, along with its privacy and potential leisure, evidence only a few of

the many ways in which it has become consistent with major emphases in our national life. They seem, when one compares them with arrangements in other civilized nations, to be quite well fitted to the role the family must play in a culture like the United States. This does not mean, however, that Americans capitalize to their own advantage upon all these consistently contrived arrangements which are institutionalized in the family as we know it. At the beginning of this essay two subjects were left for later discussion—how well our society protects the family from dangerous overstrain, and how well as human beings with special insights and blind spots we are able to get all the satisfactions we might out of our version of the home. These two subjects cannot be omitted.

[19] In spite of all our American sentiment about the home and the family, we do not show great concern about buttressing it against catastrophe. Any well-considered national program must have regard for the children; if they are housed and fed below a certain minimum, if their health is not attended to, the nation suffers in the next generation. The lack of a tolerable economic floor under the family is especially crucial in a society like that of the United States, where competition is so thoroughly relied upon as an incentive and where so few families have anything but the weekly pay envelope to use for food and doctors' bills. When factories close, when inflation comes, the family gets little consideration in the United States. Especially in economic crises it gets the little end of the horn. Today the necessity of providing tens of thousands of new homes is of the greatest importance for healthy family life in the United States, but adequate housing programs are notoriously unsupported. Sickness insurance, too, which would provide preventive care as well as relieve the family budget of all expenses in a crisis, needs high priority in a national program. When one reads about families in trouble, it is clear that many of the reefs which are threatening shipwreck are avoidable by intelligent local, state, or national programs. Such programs have worked satisfactorily in non-communist countries—as, for instance, in the Scandinavian nations. But they cost money, and Americans have not been willing to be taxed for the sake of taking the excessive strain off the family and providing better circumstances for growing children. It could be done, and if it were done the incidental disadvantages of our highly competitive and unregulated economic system would be largely removed; it should be the surest way to ensure the successful continuance of what is known as the democratic way of life.

20. Besides this American political attitude toward the family, there is also a very different difficulty which threatens it. We have seen how as an institution it is particularly tailored to American ways of living. But the very best suit of clothes may be badly worn by a careless and irresponsible person. So, too, people may abuse a home well designed to suit them. It is no less true of marriage and the family. These exist as institutions remarkably well adjusted to American life. But many Americans are miserably unable to achieve happiness within them.

21 It is of course easy to say that a culture like that of the United States, which allows individuals so much free choice among alternatives, is asking a great deal of human beings. In social life, as in literature, some of the finest human achievements have been within restrictions as rigid as those of the sonnet form. Our American culture is more like a sprawling novel where every page may deal with a new encounter and with a special choice. We ask a great deal of individuals when we give them such wide latitude and so little respected authority. But the United States is built on the premise that this is possible, and if ever we as a people decide otherwise our nation will change beyond recognition. We shall have lost the very thing we have been trying to build in this country.

22. It must not be imagined that this craving for individual freedom is what prevents Americans from enjoying the family as much as it might be enjoyed. In so far as the family is an overheavy economic burden on some wage earners, a more careful welfare program could take care of this complaint. Certainly women and children have a freedom in the American family which is hard to match elsewhere in the world, and from all portents this will probably increase rather than diminish.

23 The crucial difficulty in American happiness in marriage is, rather, a certain blind spot which is especially fostered in our privileged United States. An extreme instance of this was mentioned in connection with the millions of idle, middle-aged wives in this country. These are women who as a group are well set up and favored beyond any such great numbers of women in any other part of the world. But privilege to them is separate from responsibility. Comparatively few of them feel that it is compatible with their status to do responsible work in which they have had experience in their own households and which must now be done outside their homes, and few take the initiative in getting the training they would need in jobs which they can

see need to be done—except in war time. In periods of peace they have a blind spot about what it takes to live happily. For that the motto is *noblesse oblige*, or, "Privilege obligates one to do something in return."

[24] It is not only the middle-aged woman who accepts privilege without a sense of obligation. In marriage, the right of both men and women to choose their mates freely is a privilege which carries with it, if they are to live happily, an accompanying conviction that when things go wrong it is doubly their obligation—to themselves as well as to their spouses—to deal tolerantly. Perhaps a young man realizes that his wife is more petulant than he knew; exactly because he chose her, however, she is "a poor thing; but his own." Privileged as he was to choose her, he has a corresponding responsibility.

[25] It is the same with children. In the United States the reason for having children is not, as it is in most of the world, the perpetuation of the family line down many generations. In most countries people have children because there must be someone to till the piece of land in the village where the family has lived for centuries, there must be an heir to inherit the *Hof*, or there must be a son to perform the ancestral rites. In our atomistic American families these motivations seldom arise. We have children, not because our parents are sitting in judgment, not because of the necessity of having an heir, but because we personally want them—whether as company in the home or to show our friends we can have them. It is a privileged phase of parenthood, and if it is to bring us happiness it implies an acceptance of responsibility. Nothing is all pleasure in this life, and bringing up two or three noisy children in our small urban apartments is no exception to the rule. But with us it is based on choice—far more than it is elsewhere in the world—and we can only make the most of a choice if we follow it through wholeheartedly in all its implications.

[26] It is partly because of this blind spot in the American family, this walling off of privilege from responsibility and tolerance, that we so often ask of life an average happiness—as if it could be presented to us on a platter. Full normal happiness only comes to men and women who give as well as take—who, in this instance, give themselves warmly to their family life, and do not merely arrogate to themselves the rights they are so freely allowed in our society. In the United States, if happiness proves impossible they can get a divorce; but, until they have made this decision, they can capitalize on their privi-

leges only if they bind around their arms the motto "Privilege has its obligations."

27. The family in the United States is an institution remarkably adapted to our treasured way of life. The changes that are occurring in it do not mean that it is decaying and needs to be saved. It offers a long array of privileges. It needs more consideration in political tax-supported programs, by means of which many difficulties that beset it could be eradicated. Finally, Americans, in order to get the maximum happiness out of such a free institution as the family in the United States, need to parallel their privileges with an awakening responsibility. It is hard to live up to being so privileged as we are in the United States, but it is not impossible.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

1. This essay was written by one of America's most distinguished anthropologists. The title of the selection, as it appears in a book of essays by various authorities on the family, is "The Family: *Genus Americanum.*" Do you think that this is or is not a better title than the one we have used here, which is the title under which the essay appeared in *The Saturday Review of Literature*? Why?

2. In pars. 1-5 appears a contrast between two ways of looking at the same thing. How does this contrast serve as an introduction to the body of the essay?

3. Note other comparisons and contrasts in the first eighteen paragraphs of this essay. What purpose do they serve? How do they help to answer the question asked by the title?

4. What is the purpose of pars. 6 and 18?

5. Often an author, having presented an evaluation of a subject, wishes to persuade his readers that certain actions should be taken. Pars. 14 and 23 are on the same topic. Is there any difference in the way the author is handling her material in the two paragraphs? Why could the order of the two paragraphs not be reversed?

6. What purpose is served by the concluding paragraph?

7. How does the style of this essay differ from that described in "How to Write Like a Social Scientist" (pp. 560-565)?

Suggestions for Writing

1. Is the small town passé?
2. Is the large city passé?

3. The family as I see it.
4. Democracy vs. authoritarianism in school and home.
5. The advantages and disadvantages of the American emphasis on individual, personal freedom.

Henry Ford: Success and Failure[*]

by PETER F. DRUCKER

Henry Ford's hold on America's imagination—indeed on the imagination of the world's masses—was not due to his fabulous financial success. And it can only partly be explained by the overwhelming impact of the automobile on our way of life. For Henry Ford was less the symbol and embodiment of new wealth and of the automobile age than the symbol and embodiment of our new industrial mass-production civilization.

[2] He perfectly represented its success in technology and economics; he also perfectly represented its political failure so far, its failure to build an industrial order, an industrial society. The central problem of our age is defined in the contrast between the functional grandeur of the River Rouge plant, with its spotless mechanical perfection, and the formlessness and tension of the social jungle that is Detroit. And the two together comprise Henry Ford's legacy

[3] Both his success and his failure can be traced to his being thoroughly representative of that most native and most dominant of all American traditions, the one which in Populism found its major political expression. Indeed, Henry Ford was both the last Populist and perhaps the greatest one. He owed all his basic convictions to Bryan: pacifism, isolationism, hatred of monopoly and of "Wall Street" and of "international bankers," firm belief in a sinister international conspiracy, and so forth. He also made true the great dream of the politi-

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[*] From *Harper's Magazine*, July, 1947. By permission of the publishers and the author. Copyright 1947 by Harper & Brothers.

cal crusaders of 1896: that industrial production might be made to serve the common man. This dream had obsessed the American people since Brook Farm and Robert Owen's New Lanark, half a century before Bryan.

4. The Populists had believed that a Jeffersonian millennium would result automatically from eliminating "monopoly" and the "money power" and the "satanic mills" of crude industrialism—as these terms were understood in the nineteenth century. Ford fulfilled the dream. He succeeded without benefit of monopoly, he defied the big bankers, he gave his factories a clean and airy efficiency which would have delighted nineteenth-century reformers. But in fulfilling the dream he dispelled it. And in the place of the old enemies which he vanquished we have today, in the industrial system which Ford did so much to develop, new problems to face: the long-term depression, and the political and social problems of industrial citizenship in the big plant. Henry Ford's solution of the industrial problems with which the nineteenth century had wrestled unsuccessfully constituted his success, his achievement. His inability to solve the problems of the new industrial system, his inability to see even that there were such problems, was the measure of his final and tragic failure.

5. It may seem paradoxical to interpret Henry Ford's importance in terms of a concept—especially a political concept such as Populism. He himself had nothing but contempt for concepts and ideas, and prided himself on being neither a theoretician nor a politician but a "practical man." And the main criticism which has been leveled against him and against everything he stood for—the criticism embodied in, for instance, Charlie Chaplin's "Modern Times"—has been that he made mechanical perfection an end in itself. But even his contribution to technology was not really a technical but a conceptual one—superb production man and engineer though he was. For he invented nothing, no new technique, no new machine, not even a new gadget. What he supplied was *the idea of mass production itself* —organization of man, machines, and materials into one productive whole.

6. In economics too Ford discovered no new facts; the data showing the effect of volume production on costs had all been collected and analyzed. But Ford was the first manufacturer to understand that these data disproved the traditional theory that restricted production and a high profit margin—that is, monopoly—provided the most profitable form of industrial production. He demonstrated that one could

raise wages, cut prices, produce in tremendous volume, and still make millions.

7 Above all Ford himself regarded his technical and economic achievements primarily as means to a social end. He had a definite political and social philosophy to which he adhered to the point of doctrinaire absurdity. Concern with the social effects of his actions determined every one of his steps and decisions throughout his entire life. It underlay the break with his early partners who wanted to produce a luxury car for the rich rather than follow Ford's harebrained idea of a cheap utility car for the masses. It motivated the radical wage policy of the early Ford who in 1914 fixed his minimum wage at the then utopian figure of $5.00 a day for unskilled labor. It showed in Ford's lifelong militant pacifism, of which the tragicomic Peace Ship episode of 1915-16 was only one manifestation. It showed in his isolationism, in his hostility to Wall Street, and in the raucous pamphleteering of the Dearborn *Independent* in the twenties. This social philosophy explains the millions he poured into "chemurgy" or into utopian village communities of self-sufficient, sturdy, yeoman farmers. It was responsible for his belief in decentralization, and for his nostalgic attempt to recreate the atmosphere of an earlier and simpler America in a museum community—right next door to the River Rouge plant.

8 It might almost be said that Henry Ford's life work, despite these moves of his, brought about the opposite kind of world from the one he hoped for and believed in. Thus Ford, the pacifist, built up one of the world's greatest armament plants and helped to make possible the mechanized warfare of our age. Ford, the isolationist, more than any other man has made it impossible for this country to stay out of international politics and international wars: for he made this country the most powerful industrial nation on earth. Ford, the agrarian decentralist, left as his life's work the River Rouge plant, the most highly centralized and most completely mechanized concentration of industrial power in the world. The enemy of finance-capital and bank credit, he made installment buying a national habit. An orthodox Jeffersonian, he has come to stand for the extreme application of the assembly-line principle, with its subordination of the individual to the machine. And the very workers at the Ford Motor Company whose mass production was to give economic security and full industrial citizenship to all, are today organized in the most class-conscious union in America—and in a Communist-dominated local at that.

9. Yet it would be wrong to argue from the failure of Ford's social ideas that they never were anything but "eccentric hobbies," as the obituaries rather condescendingly called them. The tragic irony with which his every move turned against him in the end does not alter the fact that his was the first, and so far the only, systematic attempt to solve the social and political problems of an industrial civilization. There is also little doubt that Ford himself believed—certainly until 1941 when the Ford workers voted for the CIO, and perhaps even afterward—that he had actually found the answer for which the American people had been searching for almost a century: the realization of the Jeffersonian society of independent equals through industrial technology and economic abundance.

10 Nor was he alone in this appraisal of the meaning of his work. It was shared by the American people as a whole in the years immediately following the first World War—witness Wilson's urging in 1918 that Ford run for the Senate, and the powerful "Ford for President" boom of 1923. The view was also held abroad, especially in the Europe of the early twenties and in Lenin's Russia—perhaps even more generally there than here. Indeed, it was the performance of Henry Ford's America which in 1918 and 1919 gave substance to Wilson's promise of the millennium of peace, democracy, and abundance, and which established America's moral and political authority in those years. And the Ford spell remained potent long after Wilson's promise had faded under the cold light of the international realities of the nineteen-twenties.

11. The postwar world of today is at least as much under the spell of Franklin D. Roosevelt's name as an earlier generation was under that of Wilson. But Henry Ford today no longer symbolizes an America that has successfully solved the basic social problems of an industrial world. He stands instead for the lack of a solution. And that surely accounts in large measure for the difference between 1919 and 1947 in the acceptance and the effectiveness of America's moral and economic leadership.

II

12 Henry Ford took the conveyor belt and the assembly line from the meat-packing industry where they had been in general use as early as 1880. The interchangeability of precision-made parts was an even older principle; it went back to the rifle plant which Eli Whitney built in Bridgeport for the War of 1812. The idea of breaking down

a skilled job into the constituent elementary motions, so that it could be performed by unskilled men working in series, had been thoroughly explored—by Taylor among others—and had been widely used in American industry twenty years before Ford came on the scene, as for example by Singer Sewing Machine and National Cash Register. Yet we associate all these principles with Henry Ford, and rightly so. For each of them had been employed only as an auxiliary to the traditional manufacturing process. It was Ford who first combined them and evolved out of them consciously and deliberately a new concept of industrial production, a new technology. It is this new concept of mass production which in scarcely more than one generation has given us a new industrial civilization.

[13] To Ford the importance of this new principle lay in its impact upon society—as the means for producing an abundance of cheap goods with the minimum of human effort and toil. Mass production itself, however, he considered as something purely technical, as simply a new method of organizing *mechanical* forces. Ford disciples, heirs, and imitators, the engineers and production men who today run our big industries, are certainly as convinced as their master that mass production is a mechanical technique; many use it as if it were a mere gadget. And Charlie Chaplin took the same view when, in "Modern Times," he caricatured our modern industrial civilization.

[14] But if mass production were indeed only a technique, and primarily mechanical—if it were different in degree but not in kind from pulley, lever, or wheel—it could be applied only to mechanical tasks similar to the ones for which it was first developed. But long before the recent war, mass-production principles were used for such jobs as the sorting and filling of orders in a mail-order house or the diagnosis of patients in the Mayo Clinic. Henry Luce even used it successfully to organize writers—traditionally regarded as extreme individualists —for the mass production of interchangeable "formula-writing." And during the war we applied mass-production principles to thousands of new products and processes and to such problems as the selection and training of men in the armed services. In all these uses the mechanisms of the assembly line are purely subordinate if indeed applied at all. In other words, mass production is not, fundamentally, a mechanical principle but *a principle of social organization.* It does not co-ordinate machines or the flow of parts; it organizes men and their work.

15. Ford's importance lies precisely in the fact that his principle of mass production substitutes the co-ordination of human beings for the co-ordination of inanimate parts and of mechanical forces on which industry was originally based. When we talk of the Industrial Revolution, we think at once of Watt's steam engine. It is true that there was a lot more to the Industrial Revolution than new machines; but the steam engine is a good symbol for it because the essence of early industry was the new organization of mechanical forces. Mass production is based, however, on the organization of human beings and of human work—something radically different from anything that was developed in the early days of industry. Indeed it has brought about a new Industrial Revolution. The assembly line is a symbol for a new principle of social organization, a new relationship between men who work together in a common task, if not for a common purpose.

16. On what basis does this mass-production principle organize men? What kind of society does it either assume or create? It assumes or creates a society in which things are produced by the co-operation of individuals, not by a single individual. By himself the individual in modern mass-production industry is completely unproductive and ineffectual. But the organized group produces more, better, and more effectively than any individual or any number of individuals working by themselves ever could. In this society the whole—the organized group—is clearly not only more than, but different from, the sum of its parts.

17. Proof of this is what happens when a man loses his place in the organized group, or his access to the productive organism; when, in other words, he becomes unemployed. Under modern mass-production conditions, the man who has lost his job is not just out of luck economically; in fact, in a rich country such as ours, the direct economic consequences of unemployment can be minimized almost to the vanishing point. But he is incapable of producing anything, of being effective in society; in short, he is incapable of being a citizen, he is cast out. For he derives his productiveness, his function in the community, his citizenship—at least his effective rather than purely formal citizenship—from his position in the group effort, in the team, in the productive organism.

18. It is this social effect of unemployment, incidentally, rather than the economic effect, that makes it the major catastrophe it is. That unemployment endangers people's standards of living is, of course,

bad enough; but that it endangers their citizenship and self-respect is its real threat and explains our panicky fear of the "next depression."

19. In the society of the modern mass-production plant everyone derives his effectiveness from his position in an organized group effort. From this follow some important consequences. One is that such a society needs a government, a direction, a management responsible to no one special-interest group, to no one individual but to the over-all purpose, the over-all maintenance and strengthening of the whole without which no individual, no special-interest group could be effective. It also follows that in such a society there must be rank: a difference of authority and prestige based on the differentiation of functions. But at the same time, in such a society no one individual is less important or more important than another. For while no one individual is irreplaceable—only the organized relationship between individuals is irreplaceable and essential—every single operation, every single function is equally necessary; the whole order would collapse, the entire productive machine would come to a stop, were one to take out one function, one job—just as the whole chain becomes useless if one takes out one link. That is why, in such a society, there should be simultaneously an inequality of subordination and command based on the differentiation of functions, and a basic equality based on membership and citizenship.

20. This is by no means a new type of social organization; on the contrary, it is a very old one. It was described in the old Roman fable retold in Shakespeare's "Coriolanus" which likened society to the human body, none of whose organs—neither feet, nor hands, nor heart, nor stomach—could exist or work by itself, while yet the body could not properly work without any of them. It was expressed in the medieval metaphors of the order of the spheres and of the chain of being. And even as a practical way of organizing men for economic production, the mass-production principle is not new. Indeed, the first thorough applications of mass production and the assembly line were not in the Ford plant in Detroit, but hundreds of years earlier and thousands of miles away, in the workshops of the medieval stone masons who built the great cathedrals. In short, mass-production society, of which the assembly line is the symbol, is a hierarchical one.

21. This shows clearly when we analyze what popularly passes for a clear expression of the essence of mass production: the saying that it replaces skilled by unskilled labor. That is pure nonsense, if taken

literally. Of course, in mass production manual skill is eliminated by breaking up each operation into the component simple operations, with each worker performing only one unskilled operation or a series of such. But this presupposes a fantastic skill in analyzing and breaking up the operation. The skill that is taken out of the manual operation has to be put back again further up the line, in the form of much greater knowledge, much more careful planning for the job; for there is such a thing as a law of the preservation of skill. And in addition mass production needs a new skill: that of organizing and leading the human team. Actually "unskilled" mass production needs proportionately more and more highly skilled men than "skilled" production. The skills themselves have changed from those of the craftsman to those of engineer, draftsman, and foreman; but the number of trained and skilled men in American industry has been growing twice as fast since 1910 as that of unskilled and semiskilled men.

22. Above all, the co-operation and co-ordination which are needed to make possible the elimination of manual skill presuppose an extraordinarily high level of social skill and social understanding, of experience in working together. The difficulties that our war plants had with new labor showed that very graphically. And contrary to popular belief, it is no more difficult to export the old methods of industrial production to a new industrial country, even though those methods require considerable manual skill on the part of the worker, than it is to export mass-production techniques where no manual but a great deal of social skill is required.

23 What we mean when we say that mass production is based on unskilled labor is simply that the individual becomes effective and productive only through his contribution to the whole, and not if viewed separately. While no individual does the job, each one is necessary to get the job done. And the job, the end-product of cooperative effort, is more skilled than anything the most skilled person could have produced by himself. As in every hierarchical society, there is no answer in the mass-production plant to the question who does the job; but there is also no answer to the question who does not do the job. For everybody has a part in it.

24 There are a good many industries today which do not use the mass-production principle. Among them are some of the most efficient ones, for instance, the modern cotton mills (in which one worker may manage a great many looms) and a good many of our chemical industries (in which one worker may perform a number of different

functions). Nevertheless, the mass-production industries are representative of our American industry as a whole because they express in the purest form the essence of industrial production, *i.e.*, a principle of social organization. The real Industrial Revolution of our day—the one which Henry Ford led and symbolized—was not a technological one, was not based on this or that machine, this or that technique, but on the hierarchical co-ordination of human efforts which mass production realizes in its purest form.

III

[25] It is understandable that Henry Ford's disciples and imitators failed to see the political and social implications of mass production until they were confronted by them in the form of an aggressive union movement—and very often not even then. For most of these men were really only concerned with technical problems, and really believed in mechanical efficiency as an end in itself. But Henry Ford's own blindness cannot be so simply explained as due to a lack of social or political concern—not even as due to a lack of social or political imagination. The real explanation is that Ford was concerned exclusively with the solution of the *social and political problems of the pre-Ford, the pre-mass-production industrial civilization.* And because his answers really did solve these problems, or at least the more important of them, it never entered his mind to subject this answer of his in turn to a social and political analysis. His gaze was firmly fixed on the industrial reality of his own youth, the industrial reality against which Populism had revolted in vain. He never even saw what he himself had called into being. As a high official of his own company once said: "What Mr. Ford really sees when he looks at River Rouge is the machine shop in which he started in 1879."

[26] Though Henry Ford may never have heard of Brook Farm, of Robert Owen's New Lanark, or of any of the many other utopian communities that had dotted the Midwest not so many years before his birth in 1863, they were his intellectual ancestors. He took up where they had left off; and he succeeded where they had failed. Colonel McCormick's Chicago *Tribune* called him an "anarchist" in the red-hunting days of 1919 when the term meant more or less what "Communist" would mean today in the same paper. But in spite of the obvious absurdity of the charge, the jury awarded Ford only six cents in damages when he sued for libel; for he was undeniably a radical. He turned into a stand-patter after 1932, when his life's work

had shown itself a failure in its inability to produce the stable and happy society of which he had dreamed. But the Henry Ford of the earlier Model T days was an iconoclast attacking in the name of morality and science the established order of J. P. Morgan and of Mark Hanna's Republican party.

27. The Utopias of the 1830's and 1840's were in themselves the reaction to a failure: the abortive attempt during Jackson's administration to bring back to America the lost innocence of the Jeffersonian society of self-sufficient independent farmers. The Utopians no longer hoped to be able to do away with the modern division of labor or even with industry. On the contrary, they promised to obtain for mankind the full benefits of industrial productivity, but without its having to pay the price of subjecting itself to the "money power" or to "monopoly," or of having to work in the "satanic mills" of Blake's great and bitter poem. These were to be eliminated by a blend of pious sentiment, community regulations, and social science.

28 Of all the Utopians only the Mormons survived—and they only by flight from the land of the Gentiles. But though they failed, Brook Farm, New Zion, New Lanark, and all the other attempts at the American industrial Jerusalem left a very deep imprint on the consciousness of the American people. Neither Fourier, whose ideas fathered Brook Farm, nor Robert Owen was an American. Yet it is possible, indeed probable, that the mixture of earnest, semireligious sentiment and trust in a "scientific" principle which is so typical of the American "reformer" or "radical" has its roots in much older and deeper layers in our history than the Utopias. But it is certain that the Utopias determined the specific form which American radicalism was to take for a whole century. They provided the targets, the battle cries, and the weapons for Populism, for Wilson's New Freedom, and even for much of the early New Deal (such as the "scientific" gold magic of 1933). They fathered Henry George, Bellamy, and the anti-trust laws. They molded the beliefs and the hopes of America's inland empire in the Midwest. But they remained a futile gesture of revolt until Henry Ford came along.

29 Today we know that in depression and unemployment we have as serious an economic problem as "monopoly" and the "money power" ever were. We see very clearly that mass production creates as many new social and political questions as it answers. Today we realize that as a *final* solution to the problems of an industrial civilization Henry Ford's solution is a failure.

[30] But Ford's mass production was not aimed at these new dangers but at the traditional devils of American radicalism. And these it actually did exorcise. Ford succeeded in showing that industrial production can be production *for* the masses—instead of production for the benefit of monopolist or banker. Indeed, he showed that the most profitable production is production for the masses. He proved that industrial production could give the workers increasing purchasing power to buy industrial products and to live on a middle-class standard; that was the meaning of his revolutionary $5.00-a-day minimum wage.

[31] Finally—and to him most importantly—he proved that, properly analyzed and handled, industrial production would free the workers from arduous toil. Under modern mass-production conditions, the worker is confined to one routine operation requiring neither skill nor brawn nor mental effort. This fact would not have appeared to Henry Ford as a fatal defect but as a supreme achievement; for it meant that —in contrast to the tradition of the "satanic mills"—the worker's skill, intelligence, and strength would be fully available for his community life as an independent Jeffersonian citizen outside of the plant and after working hours.

[32] At Brook Farm, too, the "real life" was supposed to come in the "communion of the spirits" in the evening after the day's work had been done; but the day's work took so much time and effort that the "real life" could be lived only by neglecting the work. Mass production cuts both time and energy required for the day's work so as to give the worker plenty of scope for this "real life." No wonder that Ford—the Ford of 1919—thought he had built the "New Jerusalem" on a permanent foundation of steel, concrete, and four-lane highways.

IV

[33] It was Ford's personal tragedy to live long enough to see his Utopia crumble. He was forced to abandon his basic economic principle—the principle of the cheapest possible production of the most utilitarian commodity. First he scrapped the Model T. That was in 1927. Then, five years later, he abandoned the Model A and adopted the annual model change which substitutes the appeal of prestige and fashion for the appeal of cheapness and utility. When he did this he became just another automobile manufacturer. Even so his share in the market dropped from nearly half in 1925 to less than twenty per cent in 1940. Even more decisively proven was his failure to give the

worker industrial citizenship; in 1941 the Ford workers voted to join the CIO almost three to one.

[34] Up to the hour when the results were announced, the old man is said to have firmly believed that "his" workers would never vote for a union. All along he had fought off realization of his defeat by pretending to himself that his downfall was being caused by sinister conspiracies rather than by faults in the structure of the community which he had built. This tendency to look for personal devils—itself a legacy from the Utopians—had shown itself quite early in the tirades of the Dearborn *Independent* against international bankers, Wall Street, and the Jews during the nineteen-twenties. It became the basis on which he fought the unions all through the thirties. It also probably explains why Harry Bennett, starting as the plant's chief cop, rose to be the most powerful single individual in the Ford organization of the thirties, and the only one who really seemed to enjoy the old man's confidence. But the union victory—followed shortly by the unionization of the foremen—must have hit Henry Ford as a repudiation of all he had thought he had achieved, and had achieved primarily for the workers. The last years of the old man must have been very bitter ones indeed.

[35] The lesson of Ford's ultimate failure is that we cannot hope to solve the problems of the mass-production society by technological devices or by changing the economics of distribution. These were the two approaches on which all nineteenth-century thought had relied, whether orthodox or rebel. Henry Ford went as far along these lines as it is possible to go.

[36] For the time being, the political results of Ford's achievement were extraordinary. It took the wind out of the sails of the socialist critique of capitalist society. In this country it brought about the change from the fiery political action of Eugene Debs to the politically impotent moralism of Norman Thomas; in continental Europe it converted social democracy from a millennial fighting creed into a respectable but timid bureaucracy. Even more telling was the reaction of Communist Russia to Ford. In the twenties the Russians had to add to the messianic hopes of Karl Marx the promise of achieving eventually in a socialist society what Ford had already achieved in a capitalist one: a chance for the worker to drive to the plant in his own car and to work in collar and tie, and without getting calluses on his hands. And until 1929—as every meeting of the Third International affirmed—the Communists were completely convinced that Ford's

America had actually solved the basic problems of capitalism and had restored it to ascendancy all the world over. Not until the great depression were the Communist leaders able to revitalize their creed, by making it appear to do what it cannot do: to solve, by the sheer force of the police state, the new, the post-Ford problems of industrial society as they appeared after 1929.

[37] As we in America confront these problems, the economic ones will not be the most difficult. Indeed the chief economic problem of our time—the prevention of depressions—should be solvable by basically mechanical means: by adapting our employment, fiscal, and budgeting practices to the time-span of industrial production—that is, to the business cycle. Much more baffling, and more basic, is the political and social problem with which twentieth-century industrialism confronts us: the problem of developing order and citizenship within the plant, of building a free, self-governing industrial society.

[38] The fact that Henry Ford, after his superb success, failed so signally—that there is today such a grim contrast between his social utopia and our social reality—emphasizes the magnitude of the political task before us. But however treacherous the social jungle of our present mass-production society, however great the danger that it will fester into civil war and tyranny, the twentieth-century evils which Henry Ford left to us may well be less formidable than the nineteenth-century evils which he vanquished.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

At the time of the original publication of the article its author was at work on a book-length biography of Henry Ford and before that he had written a number of important articles on various aspects of our industrial society. Ford and the industrial society are appropriately considered together in this article, where the author's references to the individual give force and clarity to his generalizations about our mass-production civilization and these in turn heighten the significance of the specific information presented about Ford. This blending of the general with the particular, of the abstract with the concrete, is especially useful in writing that evaluates and interprets, for here facts are not enough in themselves; they must serve as the basis of evaluations and judgments if the validity of these is to be made apparent to the reader.

1. Do pars. 1 and 2 present the main point of the whole essay or

of just the first section? Note the effective use of contrasting symbols in par. 2.

2. Much historical background is given in this essay, especially in pars. 3, 4, 15, 26-28. Is all of this material needed here? In what ways would the essay be weakened if pars. 26-28 were omitted?

3. Is the tone of Drucker's evaluation of Ford in harmony with the title of the essay? Justify your answer, giving particular attention to pars. 3, 4, and 38. Would Drucker's interpretation be more or less convincing if he had offered only adverse criticism of Ford? Why?

4. Do you think that Drucker should have considered Ford's successes in one part of the essay and his failures in another? What would he have gained or lost by doing so?

5. Par. 12 repeats and develops the point stated in the final three sentences of par. 5. Why do you think that the author placed par. 12 where he did instead of placing it immediately after par. 5?

6. In sentence 1 of par. 21 Drucker states an interpretation that he disagrees with and then explains his disagreement with it. Is this an effective method of developing one's own idea?

7. In pars. 14-16, 20, 23, and 24 Drucker either implies or states that a mass-production civilization is necessarily a co-operative enterprise. Does the repetition of this point bore you or does it strengthen the essay? Explain your answer.

8. Why does Drucker point out (in par. 24) that there are many important industries in which the mass-production principle is not used? Does his including this material give you a favorable impression of his willingness to take into account facts that do not support his generalizations?

9. How can you justify the inclusion of par. 37 in this essay?

10. What is the basic pattern of all the sentences in par. 8 except the first? Is this repetition of the same sentence structure effective here?

Suggestions for Writing

1. Is individualism passé?
2. The Industrial Revolution: success or failure?
3. Drucker's conclusions are (are not) still valid.
4. Great-grandfather was better off.
5. Co-operation in a democratic state.
6. Evaluate the achievement of an individual, giving attention to both his successes and his failures.

The American Student as I See Him[*]

by GILBERT HIGHET

The American scholar I have long known and long respected. The American student I met first as an ambitious but depressed graduate working in the hard Scottish medical schools; then as an exotic graft on Oxford's gnarled trunk (like Vergil's tree, "admiring strange new leaves and fruit unlike her own"); and finally in several of the great universities of his own country. I like studying him, and he, by now inured to the fads of his preceptors, supports with surprising affability the endless process of being studied.

2. As far as I can judge, he is unlike any other student in the whole world. For one thing, he often works three or four hours a day at some job which is at least extra-curricular, if not extra-mural. My friends at St. Andrews and Glasgow were often poor—much poorer than the freshmen whom I see cheerfully filing clippings or toting luncheon trays—but in term-time they never worked at anything outside their studies. The vast mythology of Scottish education is full of stories about the crofter's son who lived all term in half a room on a barrel of oatmeal and a barrel of herrings brought from home, and then walked a hundred miles back to Inverquharity with the gold medal. And that ideal still persists. Occasionally British and French undergraduates do a little tutoring, and a dozen or two are bookshifters in the libraries or demonstrators in the labs; but they don't *work*. James Joyce's miserable Stephen Dedalus in Dublin, drinking watery tea and eating fried bread while he fingered his parents' pawn tickets, would have been far better for a decent meal earned by honest work.

3. But it is not, or seldom, done. The feeling is that it would interfere with real work and equally real play: that it would keep the under-

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[*] From *The American Scholar*, Vol. 10 (Autumn, 1941). By permission of the publishers and the author. Copyright 1941 by the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa.

graduate from having his full share in the life of the university. And there is some truth in this. To spend three or four hours a day on something wholly unacademic nearly always narrows the student's interest in his academic work. He is apt to feel that it too can be done in the same way: two lectures, four hours at his job, four hours' study, and then stop. This therefore is one of the reasons why so few undergraduates in the universities here aspire to honors, compete for prizes, carry their interest in their courses further than the term paper. In France and Britain, on the other hand, it is common for lecturers to get notes from their undergraduate hearers questioning some statement, seeking a reference, asking for extended treatment of some difficulty. A not very intelligent pupil of my own at Oxford handed me a verse translation of six idylls of Theocritus, which he had made in his spare time during the two winter terms; in Jules Romains' *Les Hommes de Bonne Volonté* a student at the École Normale Supérieure translates and annotates the choric odes of Sophocles, just for fun; and, at all the British universities, essay and poem competitions are nearly always burdensome to mark, there are so many competitors. But they would not have the energy, or even the interest, to do all that, if they had to manage a laundry agency for four hours a day.

4 The American student himself feels this; for when he becomes a graduate student, a radical change comes over him—a change far greater than the corresponding change in other countries. He will doggedly set himself to read and classify every Elizabethan sonnet, or memorize every decision arising out of the Snite Act; he will plunge into labyrinthine bibliographies, from whose depths he can be heard faintly crying, as if he battled with unseen monsters, and from which he emerges through the gate of ivory, pale but uplifted, like Aeneas from the world of the dead; and when you and I make jokes to him, he will copy them and write "laughter" in the margin. It is scarcely too much to say that he then feels himself for the first time to be a whole-time student; and the only thing to be regretted about this metamorphosis is that it often keeps him from being a whole-time member of the university, that he is so often debarred by it from games and societies and other junior academic activities. He feels, not without a certain justice, that he is paying for the comparative diffuseness of his undergraduate days. There is another way of putting this. No European country thinks that education is, or ought to be, wholly democratic. Not even the United States does, in the

last resort—for, in awarding fellowships and scholarships, its universities base their distribution not on *need* but on *achievement*. The principle of competition, thus tacitly acknowledged, is carried much further in Europe. In France [1] the A. B. examination is a national contest, whose winners are rewarded not only with the civic tributes which the French know so well how to dispense, but with prizes, money, trips to Cambodia and certainty of a favorable start in their careers. The bad side of this is obvious—suicides are not at all uncommon among disappointed or overworked candidates, and a man's whole life can be darkened by a sense of his own inescapable inferiority, publicly and competitively demonstrated. But it makes the students read, and read hard. All scholarships in Britain (except a very few assigned to localities or family names) are awarded on the basis of a long and difficult competitive examination. And there are very many more scholarships there than there are in this country: scholarships are endowed and awarded by cities, counties, prep schools, "public" schools, colleges, universities, alumni societies, guilds and national associations. Besides those, there are hundreds upon hundreds of rich scholarships dependent on the wills of long-dead benefactors. I went through one university on money left by a thread manufacturer who died about 1850, and through another on the rentals of farms bequeathed for the purpose by a Court official of King James the First. It would not be too much to say that the rich man who, in the United States, gives $50,000 for cancer research, gives £10,000 in Britain to support "a student who desires to enter the medical profession, said student to be selected by an examination on the fundamentals of. . . ." The University of Oxford is thought to be full of the leisure class. Yet in 1937 60 per cent of its students were wholly or partially supported by scholarships; and all those scholarships had to be won by keen and difficult competition. From a certain Scots university there is one, and only one, scholarship which will take you to Oxford; and it is competed for by every student who wants it: pre-lawyers, chemists, historians, economists, mathematicians, philologists, they all sit there glowering at one another in the same examination room, and furiously laboring at the twelve three-hour papers on which their future depends. It is a painful ordeal; but

[1] This refers of course to France before it was invaded by the Germans, and before its government determined to assist its conqueror in attaining his own ideal, *die Vernichtung Frankreichs*, "the destruction of France."

it makes you study! Not only in France but in Britain too, enormous emphasis is laid on the exact position of a student in his class. Those who simply collect their grades and their clubs and leave are little regarded; must, practically speaking, have jobs waiting for them; find the higher careers closed. Those who try for honors find themselves arranged into a natural hierarchy, which, *ceteris paribus,* represents their comparative chances of getting a good position when they graduate.

5. The American student, if I know him, would not care for this system. He would, I think, feel that it too highly rewarded the "grind" and undervalued the character-building and social qualities of college life; he would conclude it was unfair to boys who happened to attend schools which gave them less careful preparation for academic competition; ultimately he would think that, by subjecting him to a constant implied pressure, it deprived him of a good deal of his liberty. And yet, it seems to me that it would do him good, and improve the service of schools and universities to individuals and to the state.

6. Take only one broad consideration. The development of government all over the world, in the democracies as well as in the despotisms, is towards a more numerous, more elaborate, and more highly trained bureaucracy. For good or bad, every national government now interests itself in the lives of its citizens far more closely than at any time since the Byzantine empire. Therefore it is necessary, year by year, for it to command a great supply of diverse and well-trained officials, mostly specialists of one kind or another. In the despotisms these officials are produced by the Party machine, selected and trained by a system which is at least methodically similar to education. In the democracies they are at present produced and trained by no system, except in a few fields like jurisprudence and public health. In Great Britain the diplomatic service, the higher branches of the civil service, and certain other administrative departments are recruited by rigorous competitive examinations for which, in practice, candidates prepare throughout the universities and even during their last years at school. That system is thought to work well, although it is limited in extent. But many educators feel that the bureaucracies, both local and national, ought to be wholly staffed by men and women trained *on purpose,* and that in the democracies the schools and universities ought to be the organizations which produce and train them. Many a large store will not engage salesmen and saleswomen unless they are college graduates with noticeably good records; it is ludi-

crous that states and colleges should be less careful about choosing their executives. If we are to have a mandarinate, let us be as sensible as the Chinese in selecting our mandarins. If we want intelligent officials let us train them and discipline them and sift them by competitive examination and reward them with good, appropriate jobs, instead of letting our universities annually pour out a huge undifferentiated mass of graduates, from which only luck or exceptional perseverance will direct the right man to the right place in the social machine.

[7] However, at present that is not done; and the American student, except in a few eccentric universities, estimates his achievement by time spent, which is quantitative, rather than by competitive achievement, which is qualitative. And yet he is at heart emulous. If it is presented civilly and winningly to him, he will welcome authority. He would welcome it still more if it were organized: if he felt that in school and at college its consistent purpose was to make him fit for a career which depended not entirely on his own whim, but on a long series of tests of his abilities and a constructive estimate of his character and capacity.

[8] Another unique attribute characterizes the American student: his huge numbers. Can four real universities exist in one city? Can it be possible that in one state fifty or sixty thousand youths and maidens are capable of the activity required to absorb a university education? Are the inhabitants of California (whose very name derives from a romance describing the Earthly Paradise) so talented that they can every year produce a myriad of university graduates? And what educators could be at once so inspiring and so industrious as to teach, effectively, this enormous horde? Or, finally, can the vast multitudes of adolescents in the United States all be so much more talented than their coevals in Canada, in France, in Sweden?

[9] The paradox, of course, conceals a dichotomy. To put it bluntly and generally, the American student who is not preparing for a profession does not often go to the university in pursuit of higher education. He goes to complete the education which his school left incomplete. He has been badly schooled. It is not his fault, and not wholly the fault of the school. But it is a pity. It sometimes strikes me with a sense of pathos to read the grave works on education, ranging all the way from Mortimer Adler's *How to Read a Book* to the bulletins of the Carnegie Institute for Educational Research, which treat the Ameri-

can school system in total detachment from all others, as if it could learn nothing from Europe, and teach Europe nothing—still less other continents. Mr. Adler, in his efforts to teach his patients how to read books, makes one or two cursory references to the situation in Europe, and throughout the rest of his prescription treats the American student as a chimera bombinating in the void. But of course he finds it difficult to read Locke or Dante when he gets to college. He has seldom been compelled to read anything difficult in school. And a comparison, however invidious, would demonstrate that. I went to a perfectly ordinary school in Scotland, P.S. 93 as it were. In my last three years (ages 15-18) we were forced to read and understand *Hamlet, Macbeth, Henry IV,* Chaucer's *Prologue* and *Knight's Tale, Polyeucte, Le Cid, Le Misanthrope, Eugénie Grandet, Seven Against Thebes, The Persians, Iliad* XVI and XVIII, *Aeneid* II, IV, and VI, Livy IX and several other books. And we read them. (Dickens and Scott and Thackeray and so on, we had read long before.) We had to, under that stringent discipline. We could write a character of Macduff or Célimène, we could reproduce the various explanations and emendations of the "dram of eale" in *Hamlet,* we could compare the shields of Achilles and Aeneas, we could write little essays on Balzac's idea of realism. They were not very good; but they proved that we had read the books. And we were not alone. In Edinburgh they were doing the same. Bristol Grammar School was doing even more. Sheffield and Manchester and London and Newcastle were doing at least as much. French schools are still more arduous, although they concentrate more closely on the classics of their own tongue; and so, in a more limited way, were Scandinavian and Dutch schools, and even German schools before the despotism.

10. Now why does the average American student need to learn how to read a book? Why does he approach *Hamlet* or *Crime and Punishment* with a mixture of awe and bravado, and usually look up from it with such puzzled delight and half-understood emotion? Manifestly because he has been ill taught at school. And, so far, that is nobody's fault: certainly not his; but there are two main reasons for the fact.

11. For one thing, the system of mass-education has nowhere else been applied to a population so huge and so various. Only a nation so gallant and so confident as the United States would have dreamt of administering approximately the same education to the children of long-settled western Europeans, recent central European immigrants, and many millions of emancipated Negroes, of whom Bigger Thomas

with his revolt and his tragedy may well be partially symbolic. Whenever I ask my pupils about their schooling they invariably say, if they went to public school, that they were held back by the size of the classes or by lazy and recalcitrant classmates. One of the best students I have ever had praised the history master at his public school most highly, but added that he was forced to devote himself almost wholly to the upper one third of his class. In one of his more frankly autobiographical essays Mr. James Thurber describes a tough school in Columbus, Ohio, as it was a generation ago; and even if we allow for humorous exaggeration there is still the ring of truth in the sentence about his enormous Negro protector, Floyd: "I was one of the ten or fifteen male pupils in Sullivant School who always, or almost always, knew their lessons, and I believe Floyd admired the mental prowess of a youngster who knew how many continents there were and whether or not the sun was inhabited." And the problem is complicated by the almost inevitable rigidity of the school system. It is true that many high schools have recently endeavored to work out special courses of study for pupils who are more intelligent than the average; but such readjustments are not yet common, are nearly everywhere tentative, and often meet with opposition. It is a task of almost inconceivable difficulty to raise the educational standards of an entire population; for at least two thirds of the boys and girls now leaving American schools are much more highly educated than their parents were. This difficulty does not exist in western European countries, and it fills me with admiration to see the courage and tenacity with which it is being faced here. But, in education more than in other things, each generation stands on the shoulders of its predecessor, and in another decade or so a great part of this difficulty will have been removed.

[12] The other reason is the comparatively lax discipline of schools in the United States. High school pupils spend appreciably less time in school here than they do in Britain, and much less than they do in France. In school they spend less time on actual study, because of the surprising amount of attention paid to extra-curricular activities. They spend far less time on preparation at home. And there is much less *drive* behind their learning than there is in western European schools. In the last two years at an ordinary British city school, corresponding to a good high school here, the ordinary pupil averages at least five and a half hours of actual classroom work in school and three hours' preparation at home, with a minimum of six hours' preparation at

week ends. The working hours of two good provincial lycées in France, where friends of mine taught during the early '30s, are literally almost double those of an American high school.[2] Any extra-curricular occupation, like producing the school magazine, or football practice, or rehearsing in the school orchestra, takes place outside working hours. And there is a constant disciplinary pressure to keep the pupils at work, to keep them actively attentive, to pull up the laggards and push on the leaders. Attendances are rigidly kept: an incident such as that reported in the New York papers in 1940, when a squad of policemen and truant officers "combed" the cinemas on two different mornings and rounded up nearly two thousand school children A.W.O.L., is frankly inconceivable. If anything like it occurred in Europe it would be instantly followed by the discharge or demotion of dozens of school teachers. It may not be unfair to suggest that some of the laxity observable in American schools is due to the much higher proportion of women acting as teachers. Adolescent boys cannot be properly disciplined by women, and adolescent girls only with much difficulty. But there are other reasons, which are too well known or too controversial to be discussed here. The fact remains. The American high school student has a far better time, but he does far less work than his European counterpart.

13. Accordingly the American student, when he reaches college, is not so well prepared as the average European freshman. He has not read so much, and he does not know how to read and write so well. He does not buy nearly so many books for his own enjoyment, if indeed he buys any at all. One distinction seems to me particularly significant. English and French undergraduates are apt to publish little magazines in which they practise fine writing: the first sonnet, the first political manifesto, chapters from the first autobiographical novel and so on. The American student hardly ever produces an imitation literary review. Instead, he produces an imitation of a daily newspaper, or occasionally an imitation of a comic weekly. Almost every distinguished contemporary French and British writer wrote his first publishable work when he was an undergraduate; almost no distinguished American writer wrote anything at college which in any way prefigured his later work.

14. If I have not misunderstood the fairly widespread movement

[2] The same system at an earlier date is admirably described by the Abbé Ernest Dimnet in his autobiography, *My Old World* (Simon and Schuster, New York: 1935). Arduous as it was, he has nothing but praise for it.

towards establishing "junior colleges" and the frequently emphasized distinction between the first biennium of college work and the second, they are based on this same fact: that some fairly intensive work is required to make up the deficiencies of the schools. Viewed in this light, the multitudinousness of the American student becomes (although still a little bewildering) intelligible and sympathetic.

15. The third quality which forces itself on the observer of the American student is his freedom. He will, without great heart-searching, move from one university to another—a thing almost never done in France or Britain, and in Germany chiefly by very earnest undergraduates in search of a particular kind of specialized teaching or even of a particular professor. He will give up college altogether with a facility which still amazes me, although the dean's office usually knows exactly what proportion of the student body can be expected to drop out annually. He will in college drop subjects on which he spent four years in school; and he will take eccentric subjects or anomalous combinations of subjects with complete nonchalance. He is infinitely less cut to pattern (even allowing for his numbers) than the European student. In an English university it is often possible to tell what particular college an undergraduate attends, and even what school he came from, after five minutes' general conversation; but seldom in the United States.

16 This has its good side and its bad. It makes the American student far more self-reliant—one of my chief difficulties in Oxford was handling the timid, sheltered, hampered boy who might prove to be brilliant and might almost equally well be defeated and crushed; such difficulties hardly ever present themselves here. But, on the other hand, it makes him rather irresponsible, and even restless and discontented. Far too much is left to his own choice, at a time when he is scarcely capable of making a choice. Thanks to the kindly laxity initiated by President Eliot, he is free to take astronomy 17, comparative religion 1, government 33, Spanish drama in translation 21 and hygiene 2A (hygiene 2A is compulsory). A semester of that would, at best, produce a healthy cross between Sir Isaac Newton and the Duke of Plaza-Toro. It is no wonder that the mixture sometimes fails to act, and discourages him that gives and him that takes. The opposite extreme is seen in the English "public" schools, where a schoolboy good at history will be tutored from the age of fifteen till the age

of eighteen to win a history scholarship at a good college specializing in history, will spend three or four years reading history for a first class in the final examinations, and then take history at his examination for entrance to the home civil service. (Usually, he will spend most of his time on the same period of history—e.g. medieval history, with special emphasis on the 12th century.)[3] Both extremes are dangerous. The British extreme is often as narrowing as the other is bewildering: it needs, as an offset, the manifold external interests which only a great university and experienced tutors can give. But it has one merit in itself: it sets a premium on unremitting hard work and the long view. The other extreme broadens the student's mind; but it often broadens it without deepening it.

[17] Thus it is that the American student in his last two years at school does not often know what he is going to be, and still less often knows what he will learn in his university; and in the first two years at the university (if he is not firmly steered by his parents into a profession) seldom knows how he will spend his junior and senior years, and how they will dovetail into his future. From one point of view, this shows a genuine, disinterested love of learning, a magnificent belief in the virtues of the university; but from another it means waste of good effort, waste of priceless time, waste of irreplaceable enthusiasm. The task of the university is to cast such a light on a man's youth as will illuminate him through his life, and yet to keep the light unblurred by the shadows of the temporary and the inessential. This task is always supremely difficult, but its difficulty is here enhanced by the inadequateness of the liaison between schools and universities and the lack of emphasis on the essentials of education. The schools have more than enough to do. They cannot tackle this job. It is for the American universities to look, like the wise man, before and after: to induce the student to surrender most of his freedom of choice for a more stable set of patterns in education. Wherever such compulsory patterns have been introduced he needs little persuasion to accept them; at Columbia he looks back on the arduous humanities course with feelings of pleasure and gratitude, not unmingled with surprise. He is a good fellow, the American student: he is energetic and ambitious; but he lacks direction, as the young do everywhere. "For," says Thomas Burton, "as he that plays for nothing will not heed his game;

[3] An interesting document showing one boy's revolt against this system is Christopher Isherwood's autobiography, *Lions and Shadows*, Hogarth Press, London: 1938.

no more will voluntary employment so thoroughly affect a student, except he be very intent of himself." And, in these bad days, few of us are very intent of ourselves.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

In writing an evaluation there is some advantage in being apart from your subject, outside of it, where you can obtain an accurate perspective, undistorted by prejudice. Of course, when you are in this position you run the risk of making an evaluation that is thin or inaccurate because of its not being based on an adequate body of information, but this is a risk which can be avoided if you are willing to spend the time, energy, and thought necessary to obtain a real understanding of your subject.

1. Do you think that the author of this essay is sufficiently well acquainted with American students to write an evaluation of them? Justify your answer. How does Highet attempt in par. 1 to forestall the shallow criticism that he is not qualified to discuss his subject because he is a foreigner?

2. Highet writes at some length concerning educational practices in European countries. Is this material irrelevant to an evaluation of the American student? Justify your answer.

3. How and why does Highet attempt to make it clear that he is not prejudiced against the American system and that he is not blind to the faults of European education?

4. This essay originally appeared in *The American Scholar,* a quarterly journal published by Phi Beta Kappa. Do you think that Highet's style is more appropriate to such a magazine than is the style of Drucker's "Henry Ford: Success and Failure"? Consider such things as paragraph length, use of literary allusions, diction, figures of speech, and sentence construction.

5. Would you have broken par. 4 after the fourth sentence? Why or why not?

6. Highet discusses three characteristics of the American student in corresponding groups of paragraphs beginning respectively with pars. 2, 8, and 15. How has he marked the introduction of the second and third groups? Would you have found the discussion easier to follow if he had marked the beginning of the first group as clearly?

7. Par. 17 begins by considering the effect of what has been discussed in pars. 15-16. In the rest of the paragraph is the author merely

summarizing the essay as a whole? What is the relation of the third sentence to the rest of the essay?

8. This essay was originally published in 1941. Would there be reason for Highet to modify his evaluation if he were writing at the present time?

9. Define the following words as Highet has used them: *inured* (par. 1), *metamorphosis* (par. 4), *mandarinate* (par. 6), *eccentric* (par. 7), *emulous* (par. 7), *dichotomy* (par. 9), *invidious* (par. 9), *recalcitrant* (par. 11), *anomalous* (par. 15).

Suggestions for Writing

1. The American student as I see him.
2. Students should (should not) have jobs.
3. Extra-curricular activities are (are not) an important part of one's education.
4. The deficiencies of my high-school education.

*Here Is New York**

by E. B. WHITE

On any person who desires such queer prizes, New York will bestow the gift of loneliness and the gift of privacy. It is this largess that accounts for the presence within the city's walls of a considerable section of the population; for the residents of Manhattan are to a large extent strangers who have pulled up stakes somewhere and come to town, seeking sanctuary or fulfillment or some greater or lesser grail. The capacity to make such dubious gifts is a mysterious quality of New York. It can destroy an individual, or it can fulfill him, depending a good deal on luck. No one should come to New York to live unless he is willing to be lucky.

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2. New York is the concentrate of art and commerce and sport and religion and entertainment and finance, bringing to a single compact arena the gladiator, the evangelist, the promoter, the actor, the trader and the merchant. It carries on its lapel the unexpungeable odor of the long past, so that no matter where you sit in New York you feel the vibrations of great times and tall deeds, of queer people and events and undertakings. I am sitting at the moment in a stifling hotel room in 90-degree heat, halfway down an air shaft, in midtown. No air moves in or out of the room, yet I am curiously affected by emanations from the immediate surroundings. I am twenty-two blocks from where Rudolph Valentino lay in state, eight blocks from where Nathan Hale was executed, five blocks from the publisher's office where Ernest Hemingway hit Max Eastman on the nose, four miles from where Walt Whitman sat sweating out editorials for the Brooklyn Eagle, thirty-four blocks from the street Willa Cather lived in when she came to New York to write books about Nebraska, one block from where Marceline used to clown on the boards of the Hippodrome, thirty-six blocks from the spot where the historian Joe Gould kicked a radio to pieces in full view of the public, thirteen blocks from where Harry Thaw shot Stanford White, five blocks from where I used to usher at the Metropolitan Opera and only a hundred and twelve blocks from the spot where Clarence Day the Elder was washed of his sins in the Church of the Epiphany (I could continue this list indefinitely); and for that matter I am probably occupying the very room that any number of exalted and somewise memorable characters sat in, some of them on hot, breathless afternoons, lonely and private and full of their own sense of emanations from without.

3 When I went down to lunch a few minutes ago I noticed that the man sitting next to me (about eighteen inches away along the wall) was Fred Stone. The eighteen inches were both the connection and the separation that New York provides for its inhabitants. My only connection with Fred Stone was that I saw him in *The Wizard of Oz* around the beginning of the century. But our waiter felt the same stimulus from being close to a man from Oz, and after Mr. Stone left the room the waiter told me that when he (the waiter) was a young man just arrived in this country and before he could understand a word of English, he had taken his girl for their first theater date to *The Wizard of Oz.* It was a wonderful show, the waiter recalled—a man of straw, a man of tin. Wonderful! (And still only eighteen inches away.) "Mr. Stone is a very hearty eater," said the waiter thought-

fully, content with this fragile participation in destiny, this link with Oz.

4. New York blends the gift of privacy with the excitement of participation; and better than most dense communities it succeeds in insulating the individual (if he wants it, and almost everybody wants or needs it) against all enormous and violent and wonderful events that are taking place every minute. Since I have been sitting in this miasmic air shaft, a good many rather splashy events have occurred in town. A man shot and killed his wife in a fit of jealousy. It caused no stir outside his block and got only small mention in the papers. I did not attend. Since my arrival, the greatest air show ever staged in all the world took place in town. I didn't attend and neither did most of the eight million other inhabitants, although they say there was quite a crowd. I didn't even hear any planes except a couple of westbound commercial airliners that habitually use this air shaft to fly over. The biggest ocean-going ships on the North Atlantic arrived and departed. I didn't notice them and neither did most other New Yorkers. I am told this is the greatest seaport in the world, with six hundred and fifty miles of water front, and ships calling here from many exotic lands, but the only boat I've happened to notice since my arrival was a small sloop tacking out of the East River night before last on the ebb tide when I was walking across the Brooklyn Bridge. I heard the *Queen Mary* blow one midnight, though, and the sound carried the whole history of departure and longing and loss. The Lions have been in convention. I've seen not one Lion. A friend of mine saw one and told me about him. (He was lame, and was wearing a bolero.) At the ballgrounds and horse parks the greatest sporting spectacles have been enacted. I saw no ballplayer, no race horse. The governor came to town. I heard the siren scream, but that was all there was to that—an eighteen-inch margin again. A man was killed by a falling cornice. I was not a party to the tragedy, and again the inches counted heavily.

5 I mention these merely to show that New York is peculiarly constructed to absorb almost anything that comes along (whether a thousand-foot liner out of the East or a twenty-thousand-man convention out of the West) without inflicting the event on its inhabitants; so that every event is, in a sense, optional, and the inhabitant is in the happy position of being able to choose his spectacle and so conserve his soul. In most metropolises, small and large, the choice is often not with the individual at all. He is thrown to the Lions. The

Lions are overwhelming; the event is unavoidable. A cornice falls, and it hits every citizen on the head, every last man in town. I sometimes think that the only event that hits every New Yorker on the head is the annual St. Patrick's Day parade, which is fairly penetrating—the Irish are a hard race to tune out, there are 500,000 of them in residence, and they have the police force right in the family.

6 The quality in New York that insulates its inhabitants from life may simply weaken them as individuals. Perhaps it is healthier to live in a community where, when a cornice falls, you feel the blow; where, when the governor passes, you see at any rate his hat.

7 I am not defending New York in this regard. Many of its settlers are probably here merely to escape, not face, reality. But whatever it means, it is a rather rare gift, and I believe it has a positive effect on the creative capacities of New Yorkers—for creation is in part merely the business of forgoing the great and small distractions.

8 Although New York often imparts a feeling of great forlornness or forsakenness, it seldom seems dead or unresourceful; and you always feel that either by shifting your location ten blocks or by reducing your fortune by five dollars you can experience rejuvenation. Many people who have no real independence of spirit depend on the city's tremendous variety and sources of excitement for spiritual sustenance and maintenance of morale. In the country there are a few chances of sudden rejuvenation—a shift in weather, perhaps, or something arriving in the mail. But in New York the chances are endless. I think that although many persons are here from some excess of spirit (which caused them to break away from their small town), some, too, are here from a deficiency of spirit, who find in New York a protection, or an easy substitution.

9 There are roughly three New Yorks. There is, first, the New York of the man or woman who was born here, who takes the city for granted and accepts its size and its turbulence as natural and inevitable. Second, there is the New York of the commuter—the city that is devoured by locusts each day and spat out each night. Third, there is the New York of the person who was born somewhere else and came to New York in quest of something. Of these three trembling cities the greatest is the last—the city of final destination, the city that is a goal. It is this third city that accounts for New York's high-strung disposition, its poetical deportment, its dedication to the arts, and its incomparable achievements. Commuters give the city its tidal

restlessness; natives give it solidity and continuity; but the settlers give it passion. And whether it is a farmer arriving from Italy to set up a small grocery store in a slum, or a young girl arriving from a small town in Mississippi to escape the indignity of being observed by her neighbors, or a boy arriving from the Corn Belt with a manuscript in his suitcase and a pain in his heart, it makes no difference: each embraces New York with the intense excitement of first love, each absorbs New York with the fresh eyes of an adventurer, each generates heat and light to dwarf the Consolidated Edison Company.

[10] The commuter is the queerest bird of all. The suburb he inhabits has no essential vitality of its own and is a mere roost where he comes at day's end to go to sleep. Except in rare cases, the man who lives in Mamaroneck or Little Neck or Teaneck, and works in New York, discovers nothing much about the city except the time of arrival and departure of trains and buses, and the path to a quick lunch. He is desk-bound, and has never, idly roaming in the gloaming, stumbled suddenly on Belvedere Tower in the Park, seen the ramparts rise sheer from the water of the pond, and the boys along the shore fishing for minnows, girls stretched out negligently on the shelves of the rocks; he has never come suddenly on anything at all in New York as a loiterer, because he has had no time between trains. He has fished in Manhattan's wallet and dug out coins, but has never listened to Manhattan's breathing, never awakened to its morning, never dropped off to sleep in its night. About 400,000 men and women come charging onto the Island each week-day morning, out of the mouths of tubes and tunnels. Not many among them have ever spent a drowsy afternoon in the great rustling oaken silence of the reading room of the Public Library, with the book elevator (like an old water wheel) spewing out books onto the trays. They tend their furnaces in Westchester and in Jersey, but have never seen the furnaces of the Bowery, the fires that burn in oil drums on zero winter nights. They may work in the financial district downtown and never see the extravagant plantings of Rockefeller Center—the daffodils and grape hyacinths and birches and the flags trimmed to the wind on a fine morning in spring. Or they may work in a midtown office and may let a whole year swing round without sighting Governors Island from the sea wall. The commuter dies with tremendous mileage to his credit, but he is no rover. His entrances and exits are more devious than those in a prairie-dog village; and he calmly plays bridge while buried in the mud at the bottom of the East River. The Long Island Rail Road

alone carried forty million commuters last year; but many of them were the same fellow retracing his steps.

[11] The terrain of New York is such that a resident sometimes travels farther, in the end, than a commuter. Irving Berlin's journey from Cherry Street in the lower East Side to an apartment uptown was through an alley and was only three or four miles in length; but it was like going three times around the world.

[12] A poem compresses much in a small space and adds music, thus heightening its meaning. The city is like poetry: it compresses all life, all races and breeds, into a small island and adds music and the accompaniment of internal engines. The island of Manhattan is without any doubt the greatest human concentrate on earth, the poem whose magic is comprehensible to millions of permanent residents but whose full meaning will always remain illusive. At the feet of the tallest and plushiest offices lie the crummiest slums. The genteel mysteries housed in the Riverside Church are only a few blocks from the voodoo charms of Harlem. The merchant princes, riding to Wall Street in their limousines down the East River Drive, pass within a few hundred yards of the gypsy kings; but the princes do not know they are passing kings, and the kings are not up yet anyway—they live a more leisurely life than the princes and get drunk more consistently.

[13] New York is nothing like Paris; it is nothing like London; and it is not Spokane multiplied by sixty, or Detroit multiplied by four. It is by all odds the loftiest of cities. It even managed to reach the highest point in the sky at the lowest moment of the depression. The Empire State Building shot 1250 feet into the air when it was madness to put out as much as six inches of new growth. (The building has a mooring mast that no dirigible has ever tied to; it employs a man to flush toilets in slack times; it has been hit by an airplane in a fog, struck countless times by lightning, and been jumped off of by so many unhappy people that pedestrians instinctively quicken step when passing Fifth Avenue and 34th Street.)

[14] Manhattan has been compelled to expand skyward because of the absence of any other direction in which to grow. This, more than any other thing, is responsible for its physical majesty. It is to the nation what the white church spire is to the village—the visible symbol of aspiration and faith, the white plume saying that the way is up. The summer traveler swings in over Hell Gate Bridge and from the window of his sleeping car as it glides above the pigeon lofts and back

yards of Queens looks southwest to where the morning light first strikes the steel peaks of midtown, and he sees its upward thrust unmistakable: the great walls and towers rising, the smoke rising, the heat not yet rising, the hopes and ferments of so many awakening millions rising—this vigorous spear that presses heaven hard.

15 It is a miracle that New York works at all. The whole thing is implausible. Every time the residents brush their teeth, millions of gallons of water must be drawn from the Catskills and the hills of Westchester. When a young man in Manhattan writes a letter to his girl in Brooklyn, the love message gets blown to her through a pneumatic tube—*pfft*—just like that. The subterranean system of telephone cables, power lines, steam pipes, gas mains and sewer pipes is reason enough to abandon the island to the gods and the weevils. Every time an incision is made in the pavement, the noisy surgeons expose ganglia that are tangled beyond belief. By rights New York should have destroyed itself long ago, from panic or fire or rioting or failure of some vital supply line in its circulatory system or from some deep labyrinthine short circuit. Long ago the city should have experienced an insoluble traffic snarl at some impossible bottleneck. It should have perished of hunger when food lines failed for a few days. It should have been wiped out by a plague starting in its slums or carried in by ships' rats. It should have been overwhelmed by the sea that licks at it on every side. The workers in its myriad cells should have succumbed to nerves, from the fearful pall of smoke-fog that drifts over every few days from Jersey, blotting out all light at noon and leaving the high offices suspended, men groping and depressed, and the sense of world's end. It should have been touched in the head by the August heat and gone off its rocker.

16 Mass hysteria is a terrible force, yet New Yorkers seem always to escape it by some tiny margin: they sit in stalled subways without claustrophobia, they extricate themselves from panic situations by some lucky wisecrack, they meet confusion and congestion with patience and grit—a sort of perpetual muddling through. Every facility is inadequate—the hospitals and schools and playgrounds are overcrowded, the express highways are feverish, the unimproved highways and bridges are bottlenecks; there is not enough air and not enough light, and there is usually either too much heat or too little. But the city makes up for its hazards and its deficiencies by supplying its citizens with massive doses of a supplementary vitamin—the sense

of belonging to something unique, cosmopolitan, mighty and unparalleled.

17 To an outlander a stay in New York can be and often is a series of small embarrassments and discomforts and disappointments: not understanding the waiter, not being able to distinguish between a sucker joint and a friendly saloon, riding the wrong subway, being slapped down by a bus driver for asking an innocent question, enduring sleepless nights when the street noises fill the bedroom. Tourists make for New York, particularly in summertime—they swarm all over the Statue of Liberty (where many a resident of the town has never set foot), they invade the Automat, visit radio studios, St. Patrick's Cathedral, and they window shop. Mostly they have a pretty good time. But sometimes in New York you run across the disillusioned—a young couple who are obviously visitors, newlyweds perhaps, for whom the bright dream has vanished. The place has been too much for them; they sit languishing in a cheap restaurant over a speechless meal.

18 The oft-quoted thumbnail sketch of New York is, of course: "It's a wonderful place, but I'd hate to live there." I have an idea that people from villages and small towns, people accustomed to the convenience and the friendliness of neighborhood over-the-fence living, are unaware that life in New York follows the neighborhood pattern. The city is literally a composite of tens of thousands of tiny neighborhood units. There are, of course, the big districts and big units: Chelsea and Murray Hill and Gramercy (which are residential units), Harlem (a racial unit), Greenwich Village (a unit dedicated to the arts and other matters), and there is Radio City (a commercial development), Peter Cooper Village (a housing unit), the Medical Center (a sickness unit) and many other sections each of which has some distinguishing characteristic. But the curious thing about New York is that each large geographical unit is composed of countless small neighborhoods. Each neighborhood is virtually self-sufficient. Usually it is no more than two or three blocks long and a couple of blocks wide. Each area is a city within a city within a city. Thus, no matter where you live in New York, you will find within a block or two a grocery store, a barbershop, a newsstand and shoeshine shack, an ice-coal-and-wood cellar (where you write your order on a pad outside as you walk by), a dry cleaner, a laundry, a delicatessen (beer and sandwiches delivered at any hour to your door), a flower shop, an undertaker's parlor, a movie house, a radio-repair shop, a stationer, a

haberdasher, a tailor, a drugstore, a garage, a tearoom, a saloon, a hardware store, a liquor store, a shoe-repair shop. Every block or two, in most residential sections of New York, is a little main street. A man starts for work in the morning and before he has gone two hundred yards he has completed half a dozen missions: bought a paper, left a pair of shoes to be soled, picked up a pack of cigarettes, ordered a bottle of whisky to be dispatched in the opposite direction against his home-coming, written a message to the unseen forces of the wood cellar, and notified the dry cleaner that a pair of trousers awaits call. Homeward bound eight hours later, he buys a bunch of pussy willows, a Mazda bulb, a drink, a shine—all between the corner where he steps off the bus and his apartment. So complete is each neighborhood, and so strong the sense of neighborhood, that many a New Yorker spends a lifetime within the confines of an area smaller than a country village. Let him walk two blocks from his corner and he is in a strange land and will feel uneasy till he gets back.

19 Storekeepers are particularly conscious of neighborhood boundary lines. A woman friend of mine moved recently from one apartment to another, a distance of three blocks. When she turned up, the day after the move, at the same grocer's that she had patronized for years, the proprietor was in ecstasy—almost in tears—at seeing her. "I was afraid," he said, "now that you've moved away I wouldn't be seeing you any more." To him, *away* was three blocks, or about seven hundred and fifty feet.

20 I am, at the moment of writing this, living not as a neighborhood man in New York but as a transient, or vagrant, in from the country for a few days. Summertime is a good time to re-examine New York and to receive again the gift of privacy, the jewel of loneliness. In summer the city contains (except for tourists) only die-hards and authentic characters. No casual, spotty dwellers are around, only the real article. And the town has a somewhat relaxed air, and one can lie in a loincloth, gasping and remembering things.

21. I've been remembering what it felt like as a young man to live in the same town with giants. When I first arrived in New York my personal giants were a dozen or so columnists and critics and poets whose names appeared regularly in the papers. I burned with a low steady fever just because I was on the same island with Don Marquis, Heywood Broun, Christopher Morley, Franklin P. Adams, Robert C. Benchley, Frank Sullivan, Dorothy Parker, Alexander Woollcott, Ring

Lardner and Stephen Vincent Benét. I would hang around the corner of Chambers Street and Broadway, thinking: "Somewhere in that building is the typewriter that Archy the cockroach jumps on at night." New York hardly gave me a living at that period, but it sustained me. I used to walk quickly past the house in West 13th Street between Sixth and Seventh where F.P.A. lived, and the block seemed to tremble under my feet—the way Park Avenue trembles when a train leaves Grand Central. This excitation (nearness of giants) is a continuing thing. The city is always full of young worshipful beginners—young actors, young aspiring poets, ballerinas, painters, reporters, singers—each depending on his own brand of tonic to stay alive, each with his own stable of giants.

[22] New York provides not only a continuing excitation but also a spectacle that is continuing. I wander around, re-examining this spectacle, hoping that I can put it on paper. It is Saturday, toward the end of the afternoon. I turn through West 48th Street. From the open windows of the drum and saxophone parlors come the listless sounds of musical instruction, monstrous insect noises in the brooding field of summer. The Cort Theater is disgorging its matinee audience. Suddenly the whole block is filled with the mighty voice of a street singer. He approaches, looking for an audience, a large, cheerful Negro with grand-opera contours, strolling with head thrown back, filling the canyon with uninhibited song. He carries a long cane as his sole prop, and is tidily but casually dressed—slacks, seersucker jacket, a book showing in his pocket.

[23] This is perfect artistic timing; the audience from the Cort, where *The Respectful Prostitute* is playing, has just received a lesson in race relations and is in a mood to improve the condition of the black race as speedily as possible. Coins (mostly quarters) rattle to the street, and a few minutes of minstrelsy improves the condition of one Negro by about eight dollars. If he does as well as this at every performance, he has a living right there. New York is the city of opportunity, they say. Even the mounted cop, clumping along on his nag a few minutes later, scans the gutter carefully for dropped silver, like a bird watching for spilt grain.

[24] It is seven o'clock and I re-examine an ex-speakeasy in East 53rd Street, with dinner in mind. A thin crowd, a summer-night buzz of fans interrupted by an occasional drink being shaken at the small bar. It is dark in here (the proprietor sees no reason for boosting his light

bill just because liquor laws have changed). How dark, how pleasing; and how miraculously beautiful the murals showing Italian lake scenes—probably executed by a cousin of the owner. The owner himself mixes. The fans intone the prayer for cool salvation. From the next booth drifts the conversation of radio executives; from the green salad comes the little taste of garlic. Behind me (eighteen inches again) a young intellectual is trying to persuade a girl to come live with him and be his love. She has her guard up, but he is extremely reasonable, careful not to overplay his hand. A combination of intellectual companionship and sexuality is what they have to offer each other, he feels. In the mirror over the bar I can see the ritual of the second drink. Then he has to go to the men's room and she has to go to the ladies' room, and when they return, the argument has lost its tone. And the fan takes over again, and the heat and the relaxed air and the memory of so many good little dinners in so many good little illegal places, with the theme of love, the sound of ventilation, the brief medicinal illusion of gin.

25. Another hot night I stop off at the Goldman Band concert in the Mall in Central Park. The people seated on the benches fanned out in front of the band shell are attentive, appreciative. In the trees the night wind stirs, bringing the leaves to life, endowing them with speech; the electric lights illuminate the green branches from the under side, translating them into a new language. Overhead a plane passes dreamily, its running lights winking. On the bench directly in front of me, a boy sits with his arm around his girl; they are proud of each other and are swathed in music. The cornetist steps forward for a solo, begins, "Drink to me only with thine eyes. . . ." In the wide, warm night the horn is startlingly pure and magical. Then from the North River another horn solo begins—the *Queen Mary* announcing her intentions. She is not on key; she is a half tone off. The trumpeter in the bandstand never flinches. The horns quarrel savagely, but no one minds having the intimation of travel injected into the pledge of love. "I leave," sobs Mary. "And I will pledge with mine," sighs the trumpeter. Along the asphalt paths strollers pass to and fro; they behave considerately, respecting the musical atmosphere. Popsicles are moving well. In the warm grass beyond the fence, forms wriggle in the shadows, and the skirts of the girls approaching on the Mall are ballooned by the breeze, and their bare shoulders catch the lamplight. "Drink to me only with thine eyes." It is a magical occasion, and it's all free.

[26] On week ends in summer the town empties. I visit my office on a Saturday afternoon. No phone rings, no one feeds the hungry IN-baskets, no one disturbs the papers; it is a building of the dead, a time of awesome suspension. The whole city is honeycombed with abandoned cells—a jail that has been effectively broken. Occasionally from somewhere in the building a night bell rings, summoning the elevator—a special fire-alarm ring. This is the pit of loneliness, in an office on a summer Saturday. I stand at the window and look down at the batteries and batteries of offices across the way, recalling how the thing looks in winter twilight when everything is going full blast, every cell lighted, and how you can see in pantomime the puppets fumbling with their slips of paper (but you don't hear the rustle), see them pick up their phone (but you don't hear the ring), see the noiseless, ceaseless moving about of so many passers of pieces of paper: New York, the capital of memoranda, in touch with Calcutta, in touch with Reykjavik, and always fooling with something.

[27] In the café of the Lafayette, the regulars sit and talk. It is busy yet peaceful. Nursing a drink, I stare through the west windows at the Manufacturers Trust Company and at the red brick fronts on the north side of Ninth Street, watching the red turning slowly to purple as the light dwindles. Brick buildings have a way of turning color at the end of the day, the way a red rose turns bluish as it wilts. The café is a sanctuary. The waiters are ageless and they change not. Nothing has been modernized. Notre Dame stands guard in its travel poster. The coffee is strong and full of chicory, and good.

[28] Walk the Bowery under the El at night and all you feel is a sort of cold guilt. Touched for a dime, you try to drop the coin and not touch the hand, because the hand is dirty; you try to avoid the glance, because the glance accuses. This is not so much personal menace as universal—the cold menace of unresolved human suffering and poverty and the advanced stages of the disease alcoholism. On a summer night the drunks sleep in the open. The sidewalk is a free bed, and there are no lice. Pedestrians step along and over and around the still forms as though walking on a battlefield among the dead. In doorways, on the steps of the savings bank, the bums lie sleeping it off. Standing sentinel at each sleeper's head is the empty bottle from which he drained his release. Wedged in the crook of his arm is the paper bag containing his things. The glib barker on the sight-seeing bus tells his passengers that this is the "street of lost souls," but the Bowery does not think of itself as lost; it meets its peculiar problem in

its own way—plenty of gin mills, plenty of flophouses, plenty of indifference, and always, at the end of the line, Bellevue.

29. A block or two east and the atmosphere changes sharply. In the slums are poverty and bad housing, but with them the reassuring sobriety and safety of family life. I head east along Rivington. All is cheerful and filthy and crowded. Small shops overflow onto the sidewalk, leaving only half the normal width for passers-by. In the unshaded lights gleam watermelons and lingerie. Families have fled the hot rooms upstairs and have found relief on the pavement. They sit on orange crates, smoking, relaxed, congenial. This is the nightly garden party of the vast Lower East Side—and on the whole they are more agreeable-looking hot-weather groups than some you see in bright canvas deck chairs on green lawns in country circumstances. It is folksy here with the smell of warm flesh and squashed fruit and fly-bitten filth in the gutter, and cooking.

30. At the corner of Lewis, in the playground behind the wire fence, an open-air dance is going on—some sort of neighborhood affair, probably designed to combat delinquency. Women push baby carriages in and out among the dancers, as though to exhibit what dancing leads to at last. Overhead, like banners decorating a cotillion hall, stream the pants and bras from the pulley lines. The music stops, and a beautiful Italian girl takes a brush from her handbag and stands under the street light brushing her long blue-black hair till it shines. The cop in the patrol car watches sullenly.

31. The Consolidated Edison Company says there are eight million people in the five boroughs of New York, and the company is in a position to know. Of these eight million, two million are Jews—or one person in every four. Among this two million who are Jewish are, of course, a great many nationalities—Russian, German, Rumanian, Austrian, and so forth. The Urban League of Greater New York estimates that the number of Negroes in New York is about 700,000. Of these, about 500,000 live in Harlem, a district that extends northward from 110th Street. The Negro population has increased rapidly in the last few years. There are half again as many Negroes in New York today as there were in 1940. There are about 230,000 Puerto Ricans living in New York. There are half a million Irish, half a million Germans. There are 900,000 Russians, 150,000 English, 400,000 Poles, and there are quantities of Finns and Czechs and Swedes and Danes and Norwegians and Latvians and Belgians and Welsh and Greeks,

and even Dutch, who have been here from away back. It is very hard to say how many Chinese there are. Officially there are 12,000, but there are many Chinese who are in New York illegally and who don't like census takers.

32 The collision and the intermingling of these millions of foreign-born people representing so many races and creeds make New York a permanent exhibit of the phenomenon of one world. The citizens of New York are tolerant not only from disposition but from necessity. The city has to be tolerant, otherwise it would explode in a radio-active cloud of hate and rancor and bigotry. If the people were to depart even briefly from the peace of cosmopolitan intercourse, the town would blow up higher than a kite. In New York smolders every race problem there is, but the noticeable thing is not the problem but the inviolate truce. Harlem is a city in itself, and being a city Harlem symbolizes segregation; yet Negro life in New York lacks the more conspicuous elements of Jim Crowism. Negroes ride subways and buses on terms of equality with whites, but they have not yet found that same equality in hotels and restaurants. Professionally, Negroes get on well in the theater, in music, in art and in literature; but in many fields of employment the going is tough. The Jim Crow principle lives chiefly in the housing rules and customs. Private owners of dwellings legally can, and do, exclude Negroes. Under a recent city ordinance, however, apartment buildings that are financed with public moneys or that receive any tax exemption must accept tenants without regard to race, color or religion.

33 To a New Yorker the city is both changeless and changing. In many respects it neither looks nor feels the way it did twenty-five years ago. The elevated railways have been pulled down, all but the Third Avenue. An old-timer walking up Sixth past the Jefferson Market jail misses the railroad, misses its sound, its spotted shade, its little aerial stations, and the tremor of the thing. Broadway has changed in aspect. It used to have a discernible bony structure beneath its loud bright surface; but the signs are so enormous now, the buildings and shops and hotels have largely disappeared under the neon lights and letters and the frozen-custard façade. Broadway is a custard street with no frame supporting it. In Greenwich Village the light is thinning: big apartments have come in, bordering the Square, and the bars are mirrored and chromed. But there are still in the Village the lingering traces of poesy, Mexican glass, hammered brass, batik, lamps made of whisky bottles, first novels made of fresh memories—

the old Village with its alleys and ratty one-room rents catering to the erratic needs of those whose hearts are young and gay.

34. Grand Central has become honky-tonk, with its extradimensional advertising displays and its tendency to adopt the tactics of a travel broker. I practically lived in Grand Central Terminal at one period (it has all the conveniences and I had no other place to stay) and the great hall always seemed to me one of the more inspiring interiors in New York, until Lastex and Coca-Cola got into the temple.

35 All over town the great mansions are in decline. Schwab's house facing the Hudson on Riverside is gone. Gould's house on Fifth Avenue is an antique shop. Morgan's house on Madison Avenue is a church administration office. What was once the Fahnestock house is now Random House. Rich men nowadays don't live in houses; they live in the attics of big apartment buildings and plant trees on the setbacks, hundreds of feet above the street.

36 There are fewer newspapers than there used to be, thanks somewhat to the late Frank Munsey. One misses the *Globe,* the *Mail,* the *Herald;* and to many a New Yorker life has never seemed the same since the *World* took the count.

37 Police now ride in radio prowl cars instead of gumshoeing around the block swinging their sticks. A ride in the subway costs ten cents, and the seats are apt to be dark green instead of straw yellow. Men go to saloons to gaze at televised events instead of to think long thoughts. It is all very disconcerting. Even parades have changed some. The last triumphal military procession in Manhattan simply filled the city with an ominous and terrible rumble of heavy tanks.

38. The slums are gradually giving way to the lofty housing projects—high in stature, high in purpose, low in rent. There are a couple of dozens of these new developments scattered around; each is a city in itself (one of them in the Bronx accommodates 12,000 families), sky acreage hitherto untilled, lifting people far above the street, standardizing their sanitary life, giving them some place to sit other than an orange crate. Federal money, state money, city money and private money have flowed into these projects. Banks and insurance companies are in back of some of them. Architects have turned the buildings slightly on their bases, to catch more light. In some of them, rents are as low as eight dollars a room. Thousands of new units are still needed and will eventually be built, but New York never quite catches up with itself, is never in equilibrium. In flush times the population mushrooms and the new dwellings sprout from the rock.

Come bad times and the population scatters and the lofts are abandoned and the landlord withers and dies.

39 New York has changed in tempo and in temper during the years I have known it. There is greater tension, increased irritability. You encounter it in many places, in many faces. The normal frustrations of modern life are here multiplied and amplified—a single run of a crosstown bus contains, for the driver, enough frustration and annoyance to carry him over the edge of sanity: the light that changes always an instant too soon, the passenger that bangs on the shut door, the truck that blocks the only opening, the coin that slips to the floor, the question asked at the wrong moment. There is greater tension and there is greater speed. Taxis roll faster than they rolled ten years ago—and they were rolling fast then. Hackmen used to drive with verve; now they sometimes seem to drive with desperation, toward the ultimate tip. On the West Side Highway, approaching the city, the motorist is swept along in a trance—a sort of fever of inescapable motion, goaded from behind, hemmed in on either side, a mere chip in a millrace.

40 The city has never been so uncomfortable, so crowded, so tense. Money has been plentiful and New York has responded. Restaurants are hard to get into; businessmen stand in line for a Schrafft's luncheon as meekly as idle men used to stand in soup lines. (Prosperity creates its bread lines, the same as depression.) The lunch hour in Manhattan has been shoved ahead half an hour, to 12:00 or 12:30, in the hopes of beating the crowd to a table. Everyone is a little emptier at quitting time than he used to be. Apartments are festooned with No Vacancy signs. There is standing-room-only in Fifth Avenue buses, which once reserved a seat for every paying guest. The old double-deckers are disappearing—people don't ride just for the fun of it any more.

41 At certain hours on certain days it is almost impossible to find an empty taxi and there is a great deal of chasing around after them. You grab a handle and open the door, and find that some other citizen is entering from the other side. Doormen grow rich blowing their whistles for cabs; and some doormen belong to no door at all—merely wander about through the streets, opening cabs for people as they happen to find them. By comparison with other less hectic days, the city is uncomfortable and inconvenient; but New Yorkers temperamentally do not crave comfort and convenience—if they did they would live elsewhere.

42 The subtlest change in New York is something people don't speak much about but that is in everyone's mind. The city, for the first time in its long history, is destructible. A single flight of planes no bigger than a wedge of geese can quickly end this island fantasy, burn the towers, crumble the bridges, turn the underground passages into lethal chambers, cremate the millions. The intimation of mortality is part of New York now: in the sound of jets overhead, in the black headlines of the latest edition.

43 All dwellers in cities must live with the stubborn fact of annihilation; in New York the fact is somewhat more concentrated because of the concentration of the city itself, and because, of all targets, New York has a certain clear priority. In the mind of whatever perverted dreamer might loose the lightning, New York must hold a steady, irresistible charm.

44 It used to be that the Statue of Liberty was the signpost that proclaimed New York and translated it for all the world. Today Liberty shares the role with Death. Along the East River, from the razed slaughterhouses of Turtle Bay, as though in a race with the spectral flight of planes, men are carving out the permanent headquarters of the United Nations—the greatest housing project of them all. In its stride, New York takes on one more interior city, to shelter, this time, all governments, and to clear the slum called war. New York is not a capital city—it is not a national capital or a state capital. But it is by way of becoming the capital of the world. The buildings, as conceived by architects, will be cigar boxes set on end. Traffic will flow in a new tunnel under First Avenue. Forty-seventh Street will be widened (and if my guess is any good, trucks will appear late at night to plant tall trees surreptitiously, their roots to mingle with the intestines of the town). Once again the city will absorb, almost without showing any sign of it, a congress of visitors. It has already shown itself capable of stashing away the United Nations—a great many of the delegates have been around town during the past couple of years, and the citizenry has hardly caught a glimpse of their coattails or their black Homburgs.

45 This race—this race between the destroying planes and the struggling Parliament of Man—it sticks in all our heads. The city at last perfectly illustrates both the universal dilemma and the general solution, this riddle in steel and stone is at once the perfect target and the perfect demonstration of nonviolence, of racial brotherhood, this

lofty target scraping the skies and meeting the destroying planes halfway, home of all people and all nations, capital of everything, housing the deliberations by which the planes are to be stayed and their errand forestalled.

[46] A block or two west of the new City of Man in Turtle Bay there is an old willow tree that presides over an interior garden. It is a battered tree, long suffering and much climbed, held together by strands of wire but beloved of those who know it. In a way it symbolizes the city: life under difficulties, growth against odds, sap-rise in the midst of concrete, and the steady reaching for the sun. Whenever I look at it nowadays, and feel the cold shadow of the planes, I think: "This must be saved, this particular thing, this very tree." If it were to go, all would go—this city, this mischievous and marvelous monument which not to look upon would be like death.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

The author of an evaluation does not always limit himself to presenting an appraisal of his subject or an opinion about it; frequently he goes a step further, as does E. B. White in this essay, and communicates a feeling for the thing he is writing about. Here is certainly an expression of the author's personality, evidence of his zest for what he is writing about, of his eye for the significant detail, of his sensitiveness to the life about him, and of his gift for picturesque statement.

1. How do such expressions in par. 1 as *queer prizes* and *dubious gifts* set the tone of the essay? How is this tone reinforced by the other details of the paragraph? Is this tone maintained throughout the essay?

2. The effectiveness of White's style is based on its richness in significant detail and appropriate example. What gives force to par. 11? In par. 14, how does the phrase *pigeon lofts and back yards of Queens* contrast with the rest of the paragraph? How many details in par. 14 emphasize *upwardness*? Is the suggestion merely physical?

3. An effective writer must be a keen observer, but he must select words that suggest as well as state if he is to convince the reader of the reality of his observation, if he is to make the reader feel the same distinctive quality he felt. What would be lost in the fourth sentence of par. 14 if *crosses* had been used instead of *swings in over* and *goes* had been substituted for *glides*?

4. Sometimes we mistakenly think of metaphors and similes as being characteristic of poetry rather than of prose, but the writer of prose as well as the poet can secure an emotional response by the use of forceful figures of speech that are appropriate and not mere decoration. Do you find such figures of speech to be characteristic of White's style? Note, for example, pars. 9, 12, and 15.

5. The following sentences are unusually long: the concluding sentence of par. 2; the first sentence of par. 17; and, in par. 18, sentence 4 ("There are, of course, the big districts . . ."), sentence 9 ("Thus, no matter where you live . . ."), and sentence 11 ("A man starts for work . . ."). Why is the reader not confused by these unusually long sentences? The sentences in pars. 31 and 32 are relatively short. Is the length of these relatively short sentences and that of the unusually long ones equally appropriate to their content and context?

6. By contrasting one thing with another, an author can often make the individual quality of each element in the contrast more apparent than he could by treating each separately. What basic contrasts are developed in pars. 10 and 26?

7. In various parts of this essay, particularly in pars. 2-4 and 20-30, the author includes much personal experience and observation. Does the inclusion of this material interfere with the author's purpose, which is to interpret and evaluate? Support your answer.

8. Skillful punctuation can often be used to increase the effectiveness of a sentence. What would be lost if *because* were to be substituted for the dash in the final sentence of par. 5?

9. Think of a meaningful heading for pars. 42-46. Is this group of paragraphs primarily a summary of the rest of the essay? Explain your answer. In the final paragraph White tells of how an old willow tree symbolizes New York. Discuss the appropriateness and effectiveness of this symbol. Would it have been equally effective if it had been used as an introduction instead of as a conclusion?

Suggestions for Writing

"Here Is New York" is a lively answer to anyone who thinks that it is impossible to write about a time-worn subject without being trite and dull. Write an evaluation of some community or region that you are familiar with, including plenty of information but making your essay a reflection of your own sense of values and your own point of view. The following are some suitable topics:

1. Here is my home town.
2. The Midwest as I see it.
3. The personality of a place I have known.
4. A college or university community.

Highbrow, Lowbrow, Middlebrow[*]

by RUSSELL LYNES

I

My wife's grandmother, the wife of a distinguished lawyer, once declined to dine with the Cartiers of jewelry fame because they were, as she put it "in trade." Life for grandmother was relatively simple where social distinctions were concerned, but while there are still a few people who think and act much as she did, the passage of time has eliminated a great deal of that particular kind of snobbishness from American society. We are replacing it with another kind. The old structure of the upper class, the middle class, and the lower class is on the wane. It isn't wealth or family that makes prestige these days. It's high thinking.

2. Our heroes now are not the Carnegies or the Morgans but the intellectuals—the atomic scientists, the cultural historians, the writers, the commentators, the thinkers of global thoughts who, we assume for lack of another faith, know better than anyone else how we should cope with what we call with new resonance our national destiny. What we want are oracles, and the best substitutes we can find are the intellectuals. Einstein makes headlines as Milliken never did. Toynbee's popularity is to be reckoned with as Spengler's never was. Even Calvert whiskey has selected as Men of Distinction more artists, architects, writers, and commentators than it has industrialists or

[*] From *Harper's Magazine*, February, 1949. By permission of the publishers and the author, illustration by permission of Saul Steinberg. Copyright 1949 by Harper & Brothers.

financiers. What we are headed for is a sort of social structure in which the highbrows are the elite, the middlebrows are the bourgeoisie, and the lowbrows are *hoi polloi.*

[3] For the time being this is perhaps largely an urban phenomenon, and the true middlebrow may readily be mistaken in the small community for a genuine highbrow, but the pattern is emerging with increasing clarity, and the new distinctions do not seem to be based either on money or on breeding. Some lowbrows are as rich as Billy Rose, and as flamboyant, some as poor as Rosie O'Grady and as modest. Some middlebrows run industries; some run the women's auxiliary of the Second Baptist Church. Some highbrows eat caviar with their Proust; some eat hamburger when they can afford it. It is true that most highbrows are in the ill-paid professions, notably the academic, and that most middlebrows are at least reasonably well off. Only the lowbrows can be found in about equal percentages at all financial levels. There may be a time, of course, when the highbrows will be paid in accordance with their own estimate of their worth, but that is not likely to happen in any form of society in which creature comforts are in greater demand than intellectual uplift. Like poets they will have to be content mostly with prestige. The middlebrows are influential today, but neither the highbrows nor the lowbrows like them; and if we ever have intellectual totalitarianism, it may well be the lowbrows and the highbrows who will run things, and the middlebrows who will be exiled in boxcars to a collecting point probably in the vicinity of Independence, Missouri.

[4] While this social shift is still in its early stages, and the dividing lines are still indistinct and the species not yet frozen, let us assume a rather lofty position, examine the principal categories, with their subdivisions and splinter groups, and see where we ourselves are likely to fetch up in the new order.

II

[5] The highbrows come first. Edgar Wallace, who was certainly not a highbrow himself, was asked by a newspaper reporter in Hollywood some years ago to define one. "What is a highbrow?" he said. "A highbrow is a man who has found something more interesting than women."

[6] Presumably at some time in every man's life there are things he finds more interesting than women; alcohol, for example, or the World Series. Mr. Wallace has only partially defined the highbrow.

Brander Matthews came closer when he said that "a highbrow is a person educated beyond his intelligence," and A. P. Herbert came closest of all when he wrote that "a highbrow is the kind of person who looks at a sausage and thinks of Picasso."

7 It is this association of culture with every aspect of daily life, from the design of his razor to the shape of the bottle that holds his sleeping pills, that distinguishes the highbrow from the middlebrow or the lowbrow. Spiritually and intellectually the highbrow inhabits a precinct well up the slopes of Parnassus, and his view of the cultural scene is from above. His vision pinpoints certain lakes and quarries upon which his special affections are concentrated—a perturbed lake called Rilke or a deserted quarry called Kierkegaard—but he believes that he sees them, as he sees the functional design of his razor, always in relation to the broader cultural scene. There is a certain air of omniscience about the highbrow, though that air is in many cases the thin variety encountered on the tops of high mountains from which the view is extensive but the details are lost.

8 You cannot tell a man that he is a lowbrow any more than you can tell a woman that her clothes are in bad taste, but a highbrow does not mind being called a highbrow. He has worked hard, read widely, traveled far, and listened attentively in order to satisfy his curiosity and establish his squatters' rights in this little corner of intellectualism, and he does not care who knows it. And this is true of both kinds of highbrow—the militant, or crusader, type and the passive, or dilettante, type. These types in general live happily together; the militant highbrow carries the torch of culture, the passive highbrow reads by its light.

9 The carrier of the torch makes a profession of being a highbrow and lives by his calling. He is most frequently found in university and college towns, a member of the liberal-arts faculty, teaching languages (ancient or modern), the fine arts, or literature. His spare time is often devoted to editing a magazine which is read mainly by other highbrows, ambitious undergraduates, and the editors of middlebrow publications in search of talent. When he writes for the magazine himself (or for another "little" magazine) it is usually criticism or criticism *of* criticism. He leaves the writing of fiction and poetry to others more bent on creation than on what has been created, for the highbrow is primarily a critic and not an artist—a taster, not a cook. He is often more interested in where the arts have been, and where they are going, than in the objects themselves. He is devoted to the

proposition that the arts must be pigeon-holed, and that their trends should be plotted, or as W. H. Auden puts it—

> Our intellectual marines,
> Landing in Little Magazines,
> Capture a trend.

10 This gravitation of the highbrows to the universities is fairly recent. In the twenties, when the little magazines were devoted to publishing experimental writing rather than criticism of exhumed experimental writing, the highbrows flocked to Paris, New York, and Chicago. The *transatlantic review*, *transition*, and the *Little Review*, of the lower-case era of literature, were all published in Paris; BROOM was published in New York; *Poetry* was (and still is) published in Chicago. The principal little magazines now, with the exception of *Partisan Review*, a New York product but written mostly by academics, are published in the colleges—the *Kenyon Review*, the *Sewanee Review*, the *Virginia Quarterly*, and so on—and their flavor reflects this. But this does not mean that highbrows do not prefer the centers in which cultural activities are the most varied and active, and these are still London, Paris, New York, and more recently Rome. Especially in the fine arts, the highbrow has a chance to make a living in the metropolis where museums are centered and where art is bought and sold as well as created. This is also true of commercial publishing, in which many highbrows find suitable, if not congenial, refuge.

11. But no matter where they may make their homes, all highbrows live in a world which they believe is inhabited almost entirely by Philistines—those who through viciousness or smugness or the worship of materialism gnaw away at the foundations of culture. And the highbrow sees as his real enemy the middlebrow, whom he regards as a pretentious and frivolous man or woman who uses culture to satisfy social or business ambitions; who, to quote Clement Greenberg in *Partisan Review*, is busy "devaluating the precious, infecting the healthy, corrupting the honest, and stultifying the wise."

12. It takes a man who feels strongly to use such harsh words, but the militant highbrow has no patience with his enemies. He is a serious man who will not tolerate frivolity where the arts are concerned. It is part of his function as a highbrow to protect the arts from the culture-mongers, and he spits venom at those he suspects of selling the Muses short.

[13] The fact that nowadays everyone has access to culture through schools and colleges, through the press, radio, and museums, disturbs him deeply; for it tends to blur the distinctions between those who are serious and those who are frivolous. "Culturally what we have," writes William Phillips in *Horizon*, "is a democratic free-for-all in which every individual, being as good as every other one, has the right to question any form of intellectual authority." To this Mr. Greenberg adds, "It becomes increasingly difficult to tell who is serious and who not."

[14] The highbrow does not like to be confused, nor does he like to have his authority questioned, except by other highbrows of whose seriousness he is certain. The result is precisely what you would expect: the highbrows believe in, and would establish, an intellectual elite, "a fluid body of intellectuals . . . whose accepted role in society is to perpetuate traditional ideas and values and to create new ones." Such an elite would like to see the middlebrow eliminated, for it regards him as the undesirable element in our, and anybody else's, culture.

[15] "It must be obvious to anyone that the volume and social weight of middlebrow culture," Mr. Greenberg writes, "borne along as it has been by the great recent increase in the American middle class, have multiplied at least tenfold in the past three decades. This culture presents a more serious threat to the genuine article than the old-time pulp dime novel, Tin Pan Alley, *Schund* variety ever has or will. Unlike the latter, which has its social limits clearly marked out for it, middlebrow culture attacks distinctions as such and insinuates itself everywhere. . . . Insidiousness is of its essence, and in recent years its avenues of penetration have become infinitely more difficult to detect and block."

[16] By no means all highbrows are so intolerant or so desperate as this, or so ambitious for authority. Many of them, the passive ones, are merely consumers totally indifferent to the middlebrows or supercilious about them. Others without a great deal of hope but in ardent good faith expend themselves in endeavor to widen the circle of those who can enjoy the arts in their purest forms. Many museums, colleges, and publishing houses are at least partly staffed by highbrows who exert a more than half-hearted effort to make the arts exciting and important to the public. But they are aware that most of their labors are wasted. In his heart of hearts nearly every highbrow believes with Ortega y Gasset that "the average citizen [is] a creature

incapable of receiving the sacrament of art, blind and deaf to pure beauty." When, for example, the Metropolitan Museum planned to expand its facilities a few years ago, an art dealer who can clearly be classified as a highbrow remarked: "All this means is less art for more people."

17. There are also many highbrows who are not concerned in the least with the arts or with literature, and who do not fret themselves about the upstart state of middlebrow culture. These are the specialized highbrows who toil in the remote corners of science and history, of philology and mathematics. They are concerned with their investigations of fruit-flies or Elizabethan taxation or whatever it may be, and they do not talk about them, as the dilettante always talks of the arts, to the first person they can latch onto at a cocktail party. When not in their laboratories or the library, they are often as not thoroughly middlebrow in their attitudes and tastes.

18 The real highbrow's way of life is as intellectualized as his way of thinking, and as carefully plotted. He is likely to be either extremely self-conscious about his physical surroundings and creature comforts or else sublimely, and rather ostentatiously, indifferent to them. If he affects the former attitude, he will within the limits of his income surround himself with works of art. If he cannot afford paintings he buys drawings. Color reproductions, except as casual reminders tucked in the frame of a mirror or thrown down on a table, are beneath him. The facsimile is no substitute in his mind for the genuine, and he would rather have a slight sketch by a master, Braque or Picasso or even Jackson Pollock, than a fully-realized canvas by an artist he considers not quite first-rate. Drawings by his friends he hangs in the bathroom. His furniture, if it is modern, consists of identifiable pieces by Aalto, or Breuer, or Mies van der Rohe, or Eames; it does not come from department stores. If he finds modern unsympathetic, he will tend to use Biedermaier or the more "entertaining" varieties of Victorian, which he collects piece by piece with an eye to the slightly eccentric. If he has antiques, you may be sure they are not maple; the cult of "early American" is offensive to him.

19. The food that he serves will be planned with the greatest care, either very simple (a perfect French omelette made with sweet butter) or elaborate recipes from *Wine and Food* magazine published in London and edited by André Simon. If he cannot afford a pound of butter with every guinea fowl, he will in all probability resort to the casserole, and peasant cookery with the sparer parts of animals and

birds seasoned meticulously with herbs that he gets from a little importer in the wholesale district. His wine is more likely to be a "perfectly adequate little red wine" for eighty-nine cents a half-gallon than an imported French vintage. (Anybody with good advice can buy French wines, but the discovery of a good domestic bottle shows perception and educated taste.) He wouldn't dream of washing his salad bowl. His collection of phonograph records is likely to bulk large at the ends and sag in the middle—a predominance of Bach-and-before at one end and Stravinsky, Schönberg, Bartok, and New Orleans jazz at the other. The nineteenth century is represented, perhaps, by Beethoven quartets and late sonatas, and some French "art songs" recorded by Maggie Teyte. His radio, if he has one, is turned on rarely; he wouldn't have a television set in the house.

20. The highbrow who disregards his creature comforts does it with a will. He lives with whatever furniture happens to come his way in a disorganized conglomeration of Victorian, department store, and Mexican bits and pieces. He takes care of his books in that he knows where each one is no matter in what disorder they may appear. Every other detail of domestic life he leaves to his wife, of whose taste he is largely unaware, and he eats what she gives him without comment. If he is a bachelor, he eats in a cafeteria or drugstore or diner and sometimes spills soup on the open pages of his book. He is oblivious to the man who sits down opposite him, and if Edgar Wallace is right, to the woman who shares his table. He is not a man without passions, but they have their place. Dress is a matter of indifference to him.

21. The highbrows about whom I have been writing are mainly consumers and not creators—editors, critics, and dilettantes. The creative artists who are generally considered highbrows—such men as T. S. Eliot, E. M. Forster, Picasso, and Stravinsky—seem to me to fall in another category, that of the professional man who, while he may be concerned with communicating with a limited (and perhaps largely highbrow) audience, is primarily a doer and not a done-by. When Eliot or Forster or Picasso or Stravinsky sits down at his work-table, I do not know whether he says to himself, "I am going to create Art," but I very much doubt if that is what is in his mind. He is concerned rather with the communication of ideas within the frame of a poem, a novel, a painting, or a ballet suite, and if it turns out to be art (which many think it frequently does) that is to him a by-product of creation. an extra dividend of craftsmanship, intelligence, and sensibility. But when this happens he is taken up by the highbrow consumer and

made much of. In fact he may become, whether he likes it or not, a vested interest, and his reputation will be every bit as carefully guarded by the highbrows as a hundred shares of Standard Oil of New Jersey by the middlebrows. He will be sold—at a par decided upon by the highbrows—to the middlebrows, who are natural gamblers in the commodities of culture.

[22] In a sense it is this determination of par that is the particular contribution of the highbrow. Others may quarrel with his evaluations, but the fact remains that unless there were a relatively small group of self-appointed intellectuals who took it upon themselves to ransack the studios of artists, devour the manuscripts of promising writers, and listen at the keyholes of young composers, many talented men and women might pass unnoticed and our culture be the poorer. Their noncommercial attitude toward discovery of talent is useful, though they have an obsession with the evils of the monetary temptations with which America strews the artist's path. They stand as a wavering bulwark against the enticements of Hollywood and the advertising agencies, and they are saddened by the writers and painters who have set out to be serious men, as Hemingway did, and then become popular by being taken up by the middlebrows. They even go so far as to say that a story published in *Partisan Review* is a better story than if it were published in the *New Yorker* or *Harper's Bazaar,* for the reason that "what we have is at once a general raising and lowering of the level, for with the blurring of distinctions new writing tends to become more and more serious and intellectual and less and less bold and extreme. . . ."

[23] This attitude, which is the attitude of the purist, is valuable. The ground in which the arts grow stays fertile only when it is fought over by both artists and consumers, and the phalanx of highbrows in the field, a somewhat impenetrable square of warriors, can be counted on to keep the fray alive.

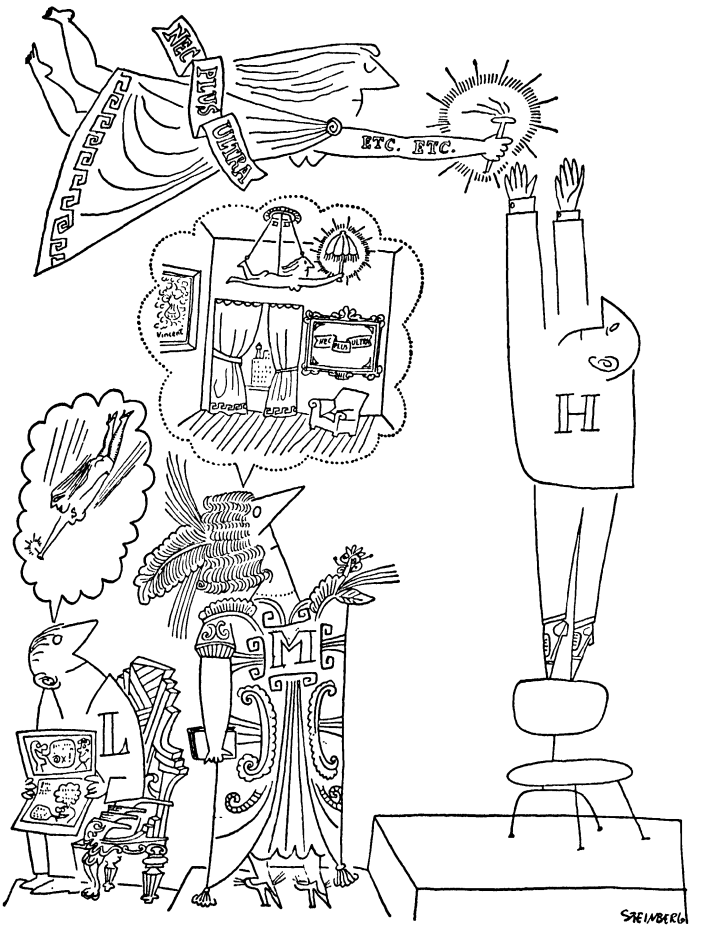
III

[24] The highbrow's friend is the lowbrow. The highbrow enjoys and respects the lowbrow's art—jazz for instance—which he is likely to call a spontaneous expression of folk culture. The lowbrow is not interested, as the middlebrow is, in pre-empting any of the highbrow's function or in any way threatening to blur the lines between the serious and the frivolous. In fact he is almost completely oblivious of the highbrow unless he happens to be taken up by him—as many jazz

musicians, primitive painters, and ballad writers have been—and then he is likely to be flattered, a little suspicious, and somewhat amused. A creative lowbrow like the jazz musician is a prominent citizen in his own world, and the fact that he is taken up by the highbrows has very little effect on his social standing therein. He is tolerant of the highbrow, whom he regards as somewhat odd and out-of-place in a world in which people do things and enjoy them without analyzing why or worrying about their cultural implications.

[25] The lowbrow doesn't give a hang about art *qua* art. He knows what he likes, and he doesn't care why he likes it—which implies that all children are lowbrows. The word "beautiful," which has long since ceased to mean anything to the highbrow, is a perfectly good word to the lowbrow. Beautiful blues, beautiful sunsets, beautiful women, all things that do something to a man inside without passing through the mind, associations without allusions, illusions without implications. The arts created by the lowbrow are made in the expression of immediate pleasure or grief, like most forms of jazz; or of usefulness, like the manufacturing of a tool or a piece of machinery or even a bridge across the Hudson. The form, to use a highbrow phrase, follows the function. When the lowbrow arts follow this formula (which they don't always do), then the highbrow finds much in them to admire, and he calls it the vernacular. When, however, the lowbrow arts get mixed up with middlebrow ideas of culture, then the highbrow turns away in disgust. Look, for example, at what happened to the circus, a traditional form of lowbrow art. They got in Norman Bel Geddes to fancy it up, and now its special flavor of authenticity is gone—all wrapped up in pink middlebrow sequins. This is not to say that the lowbrow doesn't like it just as much as he ever did. It is the highbrow who is pained.

[26] Part of the highbrow's admiration for the lowbrow stems from the lowbrow's indifference to art. This makes it possible for the highbrow to blame whatever he doesn't like about lowbrow taste on the middlebrow. If the lowbrow reads the comics, the highbrow understands; he is frequently a connoisseur of the comics himself. But if he likes grade-B double features, the highbrow blames that on the corrupting influence of the middlebrow moneybags of Hollywood. If he participates in give-away quiz programs, it is because the radio pollsters have decided that the average mental age of the listening audience is thirteen, and that radio is venal for taking advantage of the adolescent.


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27. The lowbrow consumer, whether he is an engineer of bridges or a bus driver, wants to be comfortable and to enjoy himself without having to worry about whether he has good taste or not. It doesn't make any difference to him that a chair is a bad Grand Rapids copy of an eighteenth-century *fauteuil* as long as he's happy when he sits down in it. He doesn't care whether the movies are art, or the radio improving, so long as he has fun while he is giving them his attention and getting a fair return of pleasure from his investment. It wouldn't occur to him to tell a novelist what kind of book he should write, or a movie director what kind of movie to make. If he doesn't like a book he ignores it; if he doesn't like a movie he says so, whether it is a "Blondie" show or "Henry V." If he likes jive or square-dancing, he doesn't worry about whether they are fashionable or not. If other people like the ballet, that's all right with him, so long as he doesn't have to go himself. In general the lowbrow attitude toward the arts is live and let live. Lowbrows are not Philistines. One has to know enough about the arts to argue about them with highbrows to be a Philistine.

IV

28. The popular press, and also much of the unpopular press, is run by the middlebrows, and it is against them that the highbrow inveighs.

29. "The true battle," Virginia Woolf wrote in an unmailed letter to the *New Statesman*, ". . . lies not between highbrow and lowbrow, but between highbrows and lowbrows joined together in blood brotherhood against the bloodless and pernicious pest who comes between."

30 The pests divide themselves into two groups: the Upper Middlebrows and the Lower Middlebrows. It is the upper middlebrows who are the principal purveyors of highbrow ideas and the lower middlebrows who are the principal consumers of what the upper middlebrows pass along to them.

31. Many publishers, for example, are upper middlebrows—as are most educators, museum directors, movie producers, art dealers, lecturers, and the editors of most magazines which combine national circulation with an adult vocabulary. These are the men and women who devote themselves professionally to the dissemination of ideas and cultural artifacts and, not in the least incidentally, make a living along the way. They are the cultural do-gooders, and they see their mission clearly and pursue it with determination. Some of them are

disappointed highbrows; some of them try to work both sides of the street; nearly all of them straddle the fence between highbrow and middlebrow and enjoy their equivocal position.

32. The conscientious publisher, for instance, believes in the importance of literature and the dignity of publishing as a profession. He spends a large part of his time on books that will not yield him a decent return on his investment. He searches out writers of promise; he pores over the "little" magazines (or pays other people to); he leafs through hundreds and hundreds of pages of manuscript. He advises writers, encourages them, coaxes them to do their best work; he even advances them money. But he is not able to be a publisher at all (unless he is willing to put his personal fortune at the disposal of financially naïve muses) if he does not publish to make money. In order to publish slender volumes of poetry he must also publish fat volumes of historical romance, and in order to encourage the first novel of a promising young writer he must sell tens of thousands of copies of a book by an old hand who grinds out one best seller a year. He must take the measure of popular taste and cater to it at the same time that he tries to create a taste for new talent. If he is a successful publisher he makes money, lives comfortably, patronizes the other arts, serves on museum boards and committees for the Prevention of This and the Preservation of That, contributes to the symphony, and occasionally buys pictures by contemporary painters.

33. The highbrow suspects that the publisher does not pace his book-lined office contriving ways to serve the muses and that these same muses have to wait their turn in line until the balance sheet has been served. He believes that the publisher is really happy only when he can sell a couple of hundred thousand copies of a novel about a hussy with a horsewhip or a book on how to look forty when forty-five. To the highbrow he is a tool to be cultivated and used, but not to be trusted.

34 The museum director is in much the same position, caught between the muses and the masses. If he doesn't make a constant effort to swell the door-count, his middlebrow trustees want to know why he isn't serving the community; if he does, the highbrows want to know why he is pandering to popular taste and not minding his main business—the service of scholarship and the support of artists currently certified to be "serious." Educators are in the same position, bound to be concerned with mass education often at the expense of the potential scholar, and editors of all magazines except those sup-

ported by private angels or cultural institutions know that they must not only enlighten but entertain if they are to have enough readers to pay the bills. To the highbrow this can lead to nothing but compromise and mediocrity.

35 The upper-middlebrow consumer takes his culture seriously, as seriously as his job allows, for he is gainfully employed. In his leisure hours he reads Toynbee or Sartre or Osbert Sitwell's serialized memoirs. He goes to museum openings and to the theater and he keeps up on the foreign films. He buys pictures, sometimes old masters if he can afford them, sometimes contemporary works. He has a few etchings and lithographs, and he is not above an occasional color reproduction of a Van Gogh or a Cézanne. Writers and painters are his friends and dine at his house; if, however, his own son were to express an interest in being an artist, he would be dismayed ("so few artists ever really pull it off")—though he would keep a stiff upper lip and hope the boy would learn better before it was too late. His house is tastefully decorated, sometimes in the very latest mode, a model of the modern architect's dream of functionalism, in which case he can discourse on the theory of the open plan and the derivations of the international style with the zest and uncertain vocabulary of a convert. If his house is "traditional" in character, he will not put up with Grand Rapids copies of old pieces; he will have authentic ones, and will settle for Victorian if he cannot afford Empire. He, or his wife, will ransack second-hand shops for entertaining bibelots and lamps or a piece of Brussels carpet for the bedroom. He never refers to curtains as "drapes." He talks about television as potentially a new art form, and he listens to the Saturday afternoon opera broadcasts. His library contains a few of the more respectable current best sellers which he reads out of "curiosity" rather than interest. (Membership in any sort of book club he considers beneath him.) There are a few shelves of first editions, some of them autographed by friends who have dined at his house, some of them things (like a presentation copy of *Jurgen*) that he "just happened to pick up" and a sampling of American and British poets. There is also a shelf of paper-bound French novels—most of them by nineteenth-century writers. The magazines on his table span the areas from *Time* and the *New Yorker* to *Harper's* and the *Atlantic*, with an occasional copy of the *Yale* and *Partisan Reviews*, and the *Art News*.

36. From this it can be seen that he supports the highbrows—buys some of the books they recommend and an occasional picture they

have looked upon with favor—and contributes to organized efforts to promote the arts both by serving on boards and shelling out money. In general he is modest about expressing his opinion on cultural matters in the presence of highbrows but takes a slightly lordly tone when he is talking to other middlebrows. If he discovers a "little" painter or poet the chances are excellent that the man has already been discovered and promoted by a highbrow or by an upper-middlebrow entrepreneur (art dealer or publisher). Once in a while he will take a flyer on an unknown artist, and hang his picture inconspicuously in the bedroom. He takes his function as a patron of the arts seriously, but he does it for the pleasure it gives him to be part of the cultural scene. If he does it for "money, fame, power, or prestige," as Virginia Woolf says he does, these motives are so obscured by a general sense of well-being and well-meaning that he would be shocked and surprised to be accused of venality.

V

[37] If the upper middlebrow is unsure of his own tastes, but firm in his belief that taste is extremely important, the lower middlebrow is his counterpart. The lower middlebrow ardently believes that he knows what he likes, and yet his taste is constantly susceptible to the pressures that put him in knickerbockers one year and rust-colored slacks the next. Actually he is unsure about almost everything, especially about what he likes. This may explain his pronouncements on taste, which he considers an effete and questionable virtue, and his resentment of the arts; but it may also explain his strength.

[38] When America and Americans are characterized by foreigners and highbrows, the middlebrows are likely to emerge as the dominant group in our society—a dreadful mass of insensible back-slappers, given to sentimentality as a prime virtue, the willing victims of slogans and the whims of the bosses, both political and economic. The picture painted by middlebrow exploiters of the middlebrow, such as the advertisers of nationally advertised brands, is strikingly similar to that painted by the highbrow; their attitudes and motives are quite different (the highbrow paints with a snarl, the advertiser with a gleam), but they both make the middlebrow out to be much the same kind of creature. The villain of the highbrow and the hero of the advertisers is envisaged as "the typical American family"—happy little women, happy little children, all spotless or sticky in the jam pot, framed against dimity curtains in the windows or decalcomania

flowers on the cupboard doors. Lower-middlebrowism is a world pictured without tragedy, a world of new two-door sedans, and Bendix washers, and reproductions of hunting prints over the living-room mantel. It is a world in which the ingenuity and patience of the housewife are equaled only by the fidelity of her husband and his love of home, pipe, and radio. It is a world that smells of soap. But it is a world of ambition as well, the constant striving for a better way of life—better furniture, bigger refrigerators, more books in the bookcase, more evenings at the movies. To the advertisers this is Americanism; to the highbrows this is the dead weight around the neck of progress, the gag in the mouth of art.

[39] The lower middlebrows are not like this, of course, and unlike the highbrows and the upper middlebrows, whose numbers are tiny by comparison, they are hard to pin down. They live everywhere, rubbing elbows with lowbrows in apartment houses like vast beehives, in row houses all alike from the outside except for the planting, in large houses at the ends of gravel driveways, in big cities, in medium cities and suburbs, and in small towns, from Boston to San Francisco, from Seattle to Jacksonville. They are the members of the book clubs who read difficult books along with racy and innocuous ones that are sent along by Messrs. Fadiman, Canby, Beecroft *et al.* They are the course-takers who swell the enrollments of adult education classes in everything from "The Technique of the Short Story" to "Child Care." They are the people who go to hear the lecturers that swarm out from New York lecture bureaus with tales of travel on the Dark Continent and panaceas for saving the world from a fate worse than capitalism. They eat in tea shoppes and hold barbecues in their backyards. They are hell-bent on improving their minds as well as their fortunes. They decorate their homes under the careful guidance of *Good Housekeeping* and the *Ladies' Home Journal*, or, if they are well off, of *House and Garden*, and are subject to fads in furniture so long as these don't depart too radically from the traditional and the safe, from the copy of Colonial and the reproduction of Sheraton. In matters of taste, the lower-middlebrow world is largely dominated by women. They select the furniture, buy the fabrics, pick out the wallpapers, the pictures, the books, the china. Except in the selection of his personal apparel and the car, it is almost *infra dig* for a man to have taste; it is not considered quite manly for the male to express opinions about things which come under the category of "artistic."

40. Nonetheless, as a member of the school board or the hospital board he decides which design shall be accepted when a new building goes up. The lower middlebrows are the organizers of the community fund, the members of the legislature, the park commissioners. They pay their taxes and they demand services in return. There are millions of them, conscientious stabilizers of society, slow to change, slow to panic. But they are not as predictable as either the highbrows or the bosses, political or economic, think they are. They can be led, they can be seduced, but they cannot be pushed around.

VI

41. Highbrow, lowbrow, upper middlebrow, and lower middlebrow —the lines between them are sometimes indistinct, as the lines between upper class, lower class, and middle class have always been in our traditionally fluid society. But gradually they are finding their own levels and confining themselves more and more to the company of their own kind. You will not find a highbrow willingly attending a Simon & Schuster cocktail party any more than you will find an upper middlebrow at a Rotary Club luncheon or an Elks' picnic.

42. The highbrows would like, of course, to eliminate the middlebrows and devise a society that would approximate an intellectual feudal system in which the lowbrows do the work and create folk arts, and the highbrows do the thinking and create fine arts. All middlebrows, presumably, would have their radios taken away, be suspended from society until they had agreed to give up their subscriptions to the Book-of-the-Month, turned their color reproductions over to a Commission for the Dissolution of Middlebrow Taste, and renounced their affiliation with all educational and other cultural institutions whatsoever. They would be taxed for the support of all writers, artists, musicians, critics, and critics-of-criticism whose production could be certified "serious"—said writers, artists, musicians, and critics to be selected by representatives of qualified magazines with circulations of not more than five thousand copies. Middlebrows, both upper and lower, who persisted in "devaluating the precious, infecting the healthy, corrupting the honest, and stultifying the wise" would be disposed of forthwith.

43. But the highbrows haven't a chance; things have gone too far. Everybody but the genuine lowbrow (who is more wooed than wedded by the highbrow) is jockeying for position in the new cultural class order. *Life* magazine, sensing the trend, has been catching

us up on the past of Western Civilization in sixteen-page, four-color capsules. *Mademoiselle* walks off with the first prizes in the annual short-story contests. The Pepsi-Cola Company stages the most elaborate and highest-paying art competition in the country. Even *Partisan Review*, backed by a new angel, runs full-page ads in the *New York Times* Book Review. The Book-of-the-Month Club ships out a couple of hundred thousand copies of Toynbee's *A Study of History* as "dividends."

[44] If life for grandmother, who wouldn't dine with the Cartiers, was simple in its social distinctions, life is becoming equally simple for us. The rungs of the ladder may be different, it may even be a different ladder, but it's onward and upward just the same. You may not be known by which fork you use for the fish these days, but you will be known by which key you use for your *Finnegans Wake.*

* * *

Commentary and Questions

The interpretation of American society and culture has always been a subject very attractive to writers and critics, the more so because no such evaluation can ever be final. In this essay one of the senior editors of *Harper's Magazine* interprets American life in terms of intellectual classes and evaluates the contribution of each class.

1. What prediction does Lynes make in pars. 1-4? Is this the subject of the essay?

2. Why are the assertions made in pars. 1-4 restated in pars. 41-44? What new generalization is added in par. 43? Why was it not included in pars. 1-4? What is the effect of the return in par. 44 to the subject of par. 1?

3. Does Lynes place a higher value on any one of his groups than on the other two? Support your answer.

4. Why does he discuss the lowbrow after the highbrow instead of after the middlebrow?

5. In par. 27 the author makes a general statement and supports this statement with a series of specific examples. Find other paragraphs in which this method is used. What does Lynes gain by this technique?

6. Par. 38 tells what many persons think lower middlebrows are like. Par. 39 attempts to refute the view presented in par. 38. Does the evaluation of the lower middlebrows gain or lose from the inclusion of par. 38? Why?

Suggestions for Writing

1. Defend or attack the validity of Lynes's analysis of cultural classes.

2. Select a group of persons or things; classify the component parts of this group under appropriate headings; evaluate these parts, as Lynes does in "Highbrow, Lowbrow, Middlebrow," or interpret the significance of the classification you have made. Some suitable topics are:

a. Social classes in my home town.
b. A college student classifies his contemporaries.
c. Types of high-school students I have known.
d. Holders of public office.
e. Varieties of teachers.

In Defense of the High-brow[*]

by WINTHROP SARGEANT

Though I have some middle-brow tendencies I am, I think, fundamentally a high-brow. I take my culture with a capital C. I wear baggy tweeds. I eschew Roquefort in my salad. I like ballet and Picasso. Sports bore me to death. Aside from a few symphony and opera broadcasts, I consider the sounds that issue from my radio a personal affront. The thing that really stamps me as a high-brow, however, is my attitude toward tobacco. I belong to the distinguished minority of chain pipe smokers. I smoke a somewhat obscure but "adequate" tobacco which, I am convinced, is the best in America. But that is not the reason I smoke it. I smoke it because its maker has never insulted my intelligence a) by claiming it is good for my throat, b) by assuring me that countless millions of my fellow men smoke it and therefore it is good. I

[*] From *Life*, April 11, 1949. By permission of the publishers. Copyright 1949 by Time Inc.

admit that there is more emotion than common sense in this attitude. I would even smoke an inferior tobacco if that was the only way I could have the pleasure of ignoring mass opinion and mass salesmanship. Low-brows would call me a sorehead, and middle-brows would say I was leaning over backward to prove a point. Most high-brows are, in fact, soreheads, and nearly all of them lean over backward.

2 But look at what they are sore at and what they are leaning away from: in considering Mr. Lynes's categories, one fact about our contemporary environment is obvious. What culture and civilized living we have today is provided by the interaction of two groups—the esthetically radical high-brows and the somewhat more conservative and stable upper middle-brows. Beneath the upper middle-brows there yawns an awful chasm peopled by masses whose cultural life is so close to that of backward children that the difference is not worth arguing about. Lower middle-brows and low-brows may be bank presidents, pillars of the church, nice fellows, good providers or otherwise decent citizens, but, culturally speaking, they are oafs. Unfortunately these cultural oafs make up some 90% of the population.

3 The thing that burns up high-brows like me is that the dominant feature of our mental and spiritual life is the overwhelming flood of cultural sewage that is manufactured especially for the tastes of the low-brow and lower middle-brow. It is difficult even for a high-brow to escape its influence. Only eternal vigilance keeps it from converting us into 100% low-brow people. This flood exists for only one reason. The oafish classes, being overwhelmingly numerous, are the biggest consumers of everything from salad to music, and an investment in their tastes is correspondingly profitable. They therefore dominate taste in nearly all our big industries where taste is a factor, the most horrible examples in point being the radio and the Hollywood movies. It is, of course, true that good things sometimes appear by accident even among the products of these industries. But this happens so seldom that high-brows are apt to assume that widespread commercial success is a sure sign of inferiority. Ninety per cent of the time they are right. High-brows therefore devote themselves to fostering a type of culture that is not commercially successful. It is lucky they do. Without them this type of culture would probably not exist.

4. I am not wholly uncritical of my fellow high-brows. Their opinions are sometimes preposterous. They are inveterate faddists. But I find their opinions interesting even when they are wrong. I find them continually turning up new facets of culture that would never occur

to their esthetically duller-witted contemporaries. I find them responsible for many of the influences that guide things like the ballet, opera, poetry, modern art, the high-brow novel and the higher-browed productions of the theater—and these things are very important to me. I sometimes get irritated by the preciousness and perversity of my fellow high-brows' ideas and conclude that, after all, my brow may be slipping. But one look at the sheer mass and volume of what we euphemistically call our popular culture suffices to put me squarely back in their camp.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

Winthrop Sargeant is a senior editor for *Life*. When the magazine published an illustrated condensation of Russell Lynes's "Highbrow, Lowbrow, Middlebrow," Sargeant was moved to make his own position clear. By what means and in what tone does he do this?

Suggestions for Writing

1. In defense of the middlebrow.
2. In defense of the lowbrow.
3. How high is my brow?

*Lana Turner's Fourth and Positively Last Time**

by THE EDITORS OF *LIFE*

Lana Turner, for all her success in Hollywood, has had a sad time of it. She once married Band Leader Artie Shaw but had to divorce him after seven months because, as the testimony showed, he was very cruel. Then she married a broker named Crane, only to discover that he was insufficiently divorced at

* From *Life*, May 10, 1948. By permission of the publishers. Copyright 1948 by Time Inc.

the time. She remarried him as soon as this embarrassment was removed but after one short year decided that he too was cruel. She was left with nothing but her $226,000-a-year salary, a daughter named Cheryl and half a dozen casual beaux.

2 Tinplate Heir Bob Topping has also been plagued by misfortune. He is considered very talented by the cafe-society, or cocktail-and-hotfoot, set of New York and Hollywood, for he inherited $7 million and plays a fine game of golf. But his marriages have always turned out badly. In rapid succession he tried a chorus girl, an heiress and finally Actress Arline Judge, who had once been wed to his brother. (This marriage made him stepfather to his own nephew, but fortunately the confusion was cleared up when he and Arline decided to call it quits before he had much time to get acquainted with the boy.)

3 Last week—to the great delight of millions of Americans who somehow get a vicarious pleasure out of the social events in the higher-priced restaurants on the two coasts—Lana Turner, now 27, and Bob Topping, 34, finally found lasting happiness. Their wedding was performed under the finest auspices. The host and best man was Billy Wilkerson, who moves in the upper circles by virtue of having risen from speakeasy manager to publisher of the *Hollywood Reporter*, a trade paper which carries considerable profitable advertising from movie people who like to be mentioned favorably in its news columns. Mr. Wilkerson is an expert on marriages, having engaged in five of them himself.

4 At the end of the ceremony the select circle of guests distinctly heard Bob Topping say, "This is forever." Lana said, "Yes, darling." Nobody with a spark of romance could help being touched.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

Evaluation may sometimes be found in writing that purports to be merely a narrative of fact or fiction. For instance, Jonathan Swift evaluates the accepted customs and institutions of his time by pretending to be merely telling the story of Captain Gulliver's travels among the Lilliputians. One of the most devastating weapons used by Swift is irony, the implying of something which is markedly different from, and frequently the reverse of, the literal meaning of the words used. The concluding sentence of "Lana Turner's Fourth and Positively Last Time" is an example of this stylistic device. Point out

other examples of the use of irony here. What is the really important evaluation made by this "news story"?

Suggestions for Writing

1. Hollywood reflects the U.S.A.
2. Hollywood is a world unto itself.
3. Write an account of a recent event in which you make an evaluation indirectly by the use of irony.

A Review of George Washington: A Biography *by Douglas Southall Freeman**

by LOUIS B. WRIGHT

Dr. Douglas Freeman's latest work brings further distinction to one of the greatest biographers and military historians of our time. In undertaking a new biography of Washington, Dr. Freeman deliberately set himself a task of immense difficulty. The story of Washington's career has been often told in biographies which reflect various fashions and moods from hero worship to the debunking tendencies of the 1920's. Although the present volumes bring the story of Washington's career no later than his twenty-seventh year, the pattern of Dr. Freeman's treatment is clear. With a detachment that nowhere fails to perceive the man in his entirety, he coolly analyzes all the evidence and presents a clear and accurate picture of Washington as he undoubtedly was.

2. So careful is Dr. Freeman to project himself into the spirit of colonial Virginia that he tries to avoid even words not generally used

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* From *The Yale Review*, Winter, 1949. By permission of the editors. Copyright 1948 by Yale University Press. Quotations reprinted by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers of *George Washington: A Biography*.

in that period. For example, when he writes of military affairs, he writes in the terminology of eighteenth-century America and does not trouble the reader with the jargon of the Pentagon.

3 He has assimilated a vast amount of detail and winnowed truth from obscure documents and treatises. In his preface he gives generous credit to his chief research assistant, Dr. Gertrude R. B. Richards, and in his footnotes—which he sensibly and fearlessly puts at the bottom of the page where footnotes belong—he displays a skilful control of printed sources and secondary works. In short Dr. Freeman has produced a work which might well be envied by the most conscientious academic historian bent upon illustrating a method for future Ph.D.'s.

4 In style, Dr. Freeman writes with economy, vigor, and clarity, at times with humor, and occasionally with a suppressed excitement as in the description of Braddock's defeat. Nowhere does he descend to cheap tricks of style, to wisecracks, or to the use of carefully garnered phrases—the stock-in-trade of authors who plume themselves on writing history with "popular appeal." Had Dr. Freeman been a college professor some smart critic would have accused him of being academic in style and tone. Actually he is academic in the best sense of that word: careful in construction, careful in the choice of words, disdainful of shoddy rhetoric.

5. The George Washington who emerges from these first two volumes is not the person familiar to most Americans. He is an average Virginia planter, typical of his age. He has the faults, virtues, and potentialities of many of his class. He is, above all, intent upon establishing himself as a wealthy landowner, with a greed for land which persisted throughout his life. Land was the symbol of wealth, power, and prestige, and Washington intended to have his share. His ambition, however, was not sordid. Like the gentry whom he represented, he had a sense of the responsibilities and obligations which privilege entailed. But his zeal for public service at first was somewhat tempered by his desire to get ahead in the world—a perfectly understandable dilemma for a young man not yet securely established. In a letter to Augustine Washington, written after Braddock's defeat, George complains of past services unrewarded: "I was employed to go a journey in the winter (when I believe few or none would have undertaken it) and what did I get by it? My expenses borne! I then was appointed with trifling pay to conduct a handful of men to the Ohio. What did I get by this? Why, after putting myself to a consid-

erable expense by equipping and providing necessaries for the campaign, I went out, was soundly beaten, lost them all—came in, and had my commission taken from me or, in other words, my command reduced, under pretence of an order from home." If this does not sound proper from the future father of his country, it at least makes Washington a more comprehensible and a more human character.

6. Throughout these two volumes, Dr. Freeman preserves an attitude that is calmly judicial. In appraising the battle in which Braddock lost his life, Freeman writes: "George, then, was correct in urging pack animals, though shortage of transport was not decisive. He did all that a volunteer young aide-de-camp could do in warning his seniors concerning the dangerous tactics of their forest foe. In advising Braddock to divide the army and to hasten forward with a small light column, George was incorrect in some of his reasoning; but Braddock's acceptance of George's plan did not give him inferiority of force on the day of battle, nor, probably, would rejection by Braddock of the advice of Washington, and the consequent employment of the entire army, have changed the outcome. George's military conscience was clear." Thus calm analysis destroys pious legend, and history gains in truth.

7. In Washington's complex character, and in Washington's times, Dr. Freeman has found an interest and excitement which he transmits to his readers. "A twentieth-century student who has conducted his researches in the mid-Victorian age is apt to be excited when first he makes the acquaintance of eighteenth-century Americans," he writes. "They resemble those among whom one lives at present far more than the conspicuous men of the nineteenth century seem akin to their grandsons of today." That observation is eminently correct and the student of present-day America will be wiser for his study of the age of Washington's youth. Some of Dr. Freeman's most valuable chapters are those which synthesize earlier studies of colonial civilization. These two volumes are a major contribution to an understanding, not only of Washington, but of colonial history.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

In considering an evaluation of a literary work or of any other artistic creation, you should ask the same basic question that you ask about an evaluation of a person, an institution, a place, or a social group: does the writer of the evaluation reveal that he has a knowl-

edge of his subject, an awareness of its significance, a sufficient detachment from it to be able to see both its merits and its weaknesses, and a willingness to examine it fairly before expressing a judgment or presenting an interpretation?

The evaluation of a book, whether it be a scientific textbook or a novel, calls for a consideration of the author's intention, of the extent to which he has achieved what he set out to accomplish, of the particular respects in which he has succeeded or failed in accomplishing his objective, and, if the evaluation is to be truly complete, some consideration of the value and difficulty of what the author attempted to achieve.

1. At the end of par. 1 Wright states by implication what Freeman set out to do in his biography of Washington. Where does he indicate the particular ways in which Freeman has achieved his objective? Where does he evaluate the significance and worth of Freeman's accomplishment?

2. Book reviews written for newspapers and for popular magazines generally contain a high proportion of material that merely summarizes the content of the book being reviewed. The reasons are obvious: many readers of book reviews want to know what's in a book without reading it and many reviewers find it easier to summarize content than to evaluate and interpret it. Do you think that Wright devotes a just proportion of his review to summarizing content? Support your answer.

3. What does Wright have to say about Freeman's prose style? What purposes are served by the quotations in pars. 5 and 6 that could not be as well served by a skillful summary of the quoted material?

Suggestions for Writing

1. An evaluation of a non-fictional book or article I have recently read.

2. The value of biography.

A Review of Raintree County *by Ross Lockridge, Jr.*[*]

by HOWARD MUMFORD JONES

Latest candidate for that mythical honor, the Great American Novel, "Raintree County" displays unflagging industry, a jerky and sometimes magnificent vitality, a queer amalgam of pattern and formlessness, and an ingenuity of structure that is at once admirable and maddening. The engineering of this huge volume arouses one's admiration, although the problem of organic form is by no means solved.

2. Let us examine the engineering, or physical, structure of this enormous edifice. The work is an amalgam of at least four major elements: events in a day in the life of the Shawnessy family, living in Waycross, Indiana, and proud of their county; biographical and autobiographical memories and narratives of the past of this family, but principally of John Shawnessy, the father, poet, and family man; Esther his wife, and their daughter Eva Alice (named from "Uncle Tom's Cabin" and "Alice in Wonderland"); a subjective and lyrical history of the United States from 1844 to 1892, seen principally from an Indiana angle of vision; and the ironic interpretative comments on all this by one "Perfessor" Jerusalem Webster Stiles, a character whose function is that of Enobarbus in "Antony and Cleopatra" and whose name springs from the nomenclature of frontier humorists.

3. The frame which contains the whole and from which, as drying corn hangs from a crossbeam in a barn, some fifty-two "flashbacks" depend is the events of a Fourth of July celebration at Waycross in 1892, in which J. W. Shawnessy plays a leading part. To this celebration there return (among others) two boyhood companions of his youth, a local politico, Garwood B. Jones, now become a pompous

[*] From *The Saturday Review of Literature*, January 3, 1948. By permission of the publishers and the author. Copyright 1947 by Saturday Review Associates, Inc. *Raintree County* was published in 1948 by Houghton Mifflin Co.

U. S. Senator, and a local entrepreneur, one "Cash" Carney, become one of the predatory financiers of the nation. Both in 1892 and during events preceding this day conversations among the four principal male characters illumine action and value—that is, Jones brings to the problem of interpretation the views of a practical politician in America, Carney those of finance, the "Perfessor" the view of an uprooted intellectual (he becomes a newspaper reporter), and Shawnessy the optimism of the shy idealist-teacher, poet, lover, and writer.

4. More than half a hundred flashbacks of varying length tell us of past events in domestic and public life. The author has obligingly furnished a list of these in chronological order, for they are not in chronological order in the body of the book, and, in fact, one is sometimes a little puzzled to know why they are arranged as they are and not otherwise. Through these flashbacks we watch the parallel histories of a series of private lives, North and South, and of crucial public events like the anti-slavery agitation, the Civil War, the assassination of Lincoln, the Philadelphia Exposition, the Homestead Riots, and the like. Each of these episodes is attached to the main frame by an ingenious mechanical device resembling what the Japanese in their poetry call a "pillow word"—that is, a sentence uttered or meditated by a character in 1892 contains a characteristic word which becomes the first word (in altered meaning) of the flashback. Furthermore, the titles of the flashbacks are sometimes a carry-over of these sentences. Jointure of history and fiction is, I think, more smoothly made here than in the case of John Dos Passos.

5 Despite these mechanical neatnesses, the novel (in the old tradition of English fiction) is fundamentally amorphous. There are dramatic episodes; narrative episodes; lyrical meditations reminiscent of Tom Wolfe; dream distortions like the verbal ballets in the third part of "Ulysses"; long passages of interpretative comment; frequent selections from a prose epic supposed to be under construction by the hero; pieces from imaginary country newspapers; a small anthology of popular songs of the American nineteenth century, and much more. Characters must be clearly conceived to keep their outline and depth against this mounting flood of words, and it cannot be said that they always do so. They display only a fitful vitality.

6. John Shawnessy is the principal character. His boyhood, youth, and young manhood are clearly seen, the village life of Midwest America rises around him in these earlier scenes, and one rejoices in his three-dimensional solidity. But he is pushed by his creator into

an improbable marriage with a Louisiana girl, Susanna Drake ("Susanna" from the Foster song, and "Drake," I assume, because of overtones from the name of Temple Drake in Faulkner's "Sanctuary"); the girl, fearful that she is herself the product of miscegenation, goes mad and disappears with her baby; and the grief-stricken husband enlists in the Union Army under U. S. Grant, fights at Chickamauga, and marches with Sherman to the sea. But he ceases thereupon to be an individual, becoming merely another citizen soldier. In sum, the symbolism of this dark marriage of North and South swallows up Shawnessy's private character about two-thirds of the way through the book, and Shawnessy never recaptures it.

7. Shawnessy is haunted by a dream of woman's flesh. We are to understand, both from his erotic experiences and from comments by the "Perfessor" and others, that life in America is an uneasy union of public decorum and private paganism; and the sweet, soft flesh of women (never was there a book in which nakedness was so persistently employed as a symbol of emotional longing) becomes for the poet in Shawnessy a symbol of what American life ought to be. But the flesh is tricky; and in scenes of comic power, sudden melodrama, or psychological upset, Mr. Lockridge reminds us that in the American small town a dream of the flesh is often described by shorter and uglier words.

8. There is great narrative and comic power in about half of these 1,066 pages. (Such is the historical symbolism throughout, one begins to wonder whether the Battle of Hastings isn't involved with the page numbers!) But in the last third of the volume his characters cease to be individuals and become in too many cases individualized symbols. A single exception is the "Perfessor," whose language, it is evident, Mr. Lockridge had particular pleasure in creating. Stiles is consistently himself throughout; and though the heart of his formula is the newspaper cynic, he is a genuine comic invention. And it must be said even of Susanna Drake that she has the same haunting vitality of melodrama that Miss Haversham has in "Great Expectations." If there was never any such person, there should have been.

9. Whether in 1947 the fragmentation method of Laurence Sterne can profitably be resumed in American fiction will be generally debated as this book is read. For read it will be, read and discussed. The writing is everywhere competent and often distinguished; and for those who are bored by subjective lyricism or who do not care for Platonic dialogues among Shawnessy, Garwood Jones, and their

friends, other particular episodes have high imaginative power. The book is full-blooded, it has gusto, ribaldry, vision, beauty, and narrative skill. It is also repetitious, overly "organized," reminiscent of a variety of predecessors, "literary" in the wrong sense, and too dependent upon source material. But the breath of life sweeps through its voluminous pages; and it may be that "Raintree County" marks at last the end of a long slump in American fiction.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

According to Joseph Wood Krutch, one of the outstanding literary critics of our time, a review should adequately describe the book, communicate something of its quality, and pass a judgment upon it—a judgment supported by evidence included in the review.

1. Does this review of *Raintree County* follow the pattern suggested by Krutch? Support your answer.

2. Do you think that this review is more or less successful than Wright's in communicating something of the individual quality of the book being discussed? Offer evidence to support your opinion.

3. Do you find the simile in the first sentence of par. 3 informative and appropriate? What are the implications of the word *engineering* in the first sentence of par. 2?

4. Is the tone of this review that of a writer who is striving to be impartial? Be sure to take into consideration the final paragraph.

Suggestions for Writing

1. An evaluation of a novel or short story I have recently read.
2. Why I read fiction.
3. My idea of a good book review.

Olivier's Hamlet*

by JOHN MASON BROWN

If and when they build houses for us, architects usually reflect our tastes, hence our personalities. Even if they fail to do so, one thing is certain. They determine the physical pattern of our living, once their blueprints, realized in terms of brick and mortar, have become our homes.

2. The new film version of "Hamlet" [1] is, of course, billed as Laurence Olivier's. Since he directed it and plays the Prince, it is as the Laurence Olivier "Hamlet" that the picture will always be identified. Yet, while sitting before it, as filled with admiration as with misgivings, I could not help wondering if this cinematic "Hamlet," so fine in some respects, so unsatisfactory in others, should not more accurately be described as Roger Furse's.

3. It is Mr. Furse who served the production as its architect. It is he who designed the huge, drafty structure, part conch shell, part labyrinth, part courtyard, part lighthouse staircase, part Simmons bed window exhibit, part Cloisters, part ziggurat, part Danish pueblo, but mainly movie setting, which is the most recent Elsinore. By so doing Mr. Furse has conditioned the whole performance. He has provided its terrain, created its mood, charted its action, steered its actors, and, sometimes, smothered the play in the *cloche* which is his castle.

4. Mr. Furse's interest, understandably, is the camera. He would be in the wrong if it were not. Transferring the drama to a different medium, he is bound to have thought in terms of close-ups, long shots,

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* From *The Saturday Review of Literature,* October 2, 1948. By permission of the publishers and the author. Copyright 1948 by Saturday Review Associates, Inc.

[1] HAMLET, a film version of William Shakespeare's tragedy. Directed by Laurence Olivier. Text editor, Alan Dent. Designed by Roger Furse. Music composed by William Walton and played by the Philharmonia Orchestra. With a cast including Laurence Olivier, Eileen Herlie, Basil Sydney, Jean Simmons, Felix Aylmer, Norman Wooland, Terence Morgan, Stanley Holloway, Peter Cushing, etc. A J. Arthur Rank Enterprise. Sponsored by the Theatre Guild. A Universal-International Release. At the Park Avenue Theatre.

fade-outs, and all those supposedly liberating technical devices which the screen enjoys and the stage does not. His problem, a sizable one, is external. It has been to find an outward form for an inward tragedy. Not such a form, mind you, as a stage designer would have evolved. No, a form three-dimensional, spacious, filmworthy. A form intended to dispense with the scene divisions of the theatre, to occupy the eye, and add those free-ranging elements impossible behind the footlights.

5 Almost inevitably, Mr. Furse's problem becomes not only Olivier's but ours, too. The final "Hamlet," if indeed there be such a thing in the case of a text so endlessly self-extending, exists in the mind and achieves its most satisfying visualization in the mind's eye. What Shakespeare wanted to say, what he felt necessary to get said, with all its subtleties, tantalizing depths, and inter-relationships, is said by him in his uncut text. How exciting that text can be when its wonders are untampered with, the Maurice Evans production made clear in 1938. The play, in that instance, was indeed the thing; the thing it was plainly meant to be, and in many stirring moments is, in the film. Yet in the film much that is valuable is lost, and needlessly lost, because of the swollen dimensions of Mr. Furse's Elsinore. The paradox is that the screen text finds itself confined instead of freed by the very space now at its disposal.

6. To have "Hamlet" hacked at in order to compress it within the theatre's regulation playing time is the common experience. Even when so dismembered, the results can be incomparable. Everyone knows this who has responded to the tattered texts acted by Walter Hampden, John Barrymore, Basil Sydney, John Gielgud, or, for that matter, by Mr. Evans in his oddly truncated GI version. To sacrifice great language, however, for meaningless pantomime; to have complexity and innuendo dispensed with in favor of camera angles; and to lose key speeches, characters, or scenes merely because so much time is wasted getting the actors from one part of the castle to another is to encounter a "Hamlet" in many ways dislocated by being on location.

7. The film runs two hours and thirty-three minutes. In other words, since the performance is continuous, its playing time is about the same as that required for the cut stage versions which, with one or two intermissions, usually take three hours. These cut versions in the theatre, incidentally, have always found room for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern; for so pivotal a speech as "O what a rogue and peasant

slave am I"; for the second gravedigger (who is not greatly missed); sometimes, and rightly, for "How all occasions do inform against me"; usually for Fortinbras; and as a rule for many lines or speeches not to be found in this new "Hamlet."

8. The film's cuts are not in every instance wise or logical even in view of the camera's needs. The transposition of "To be or not to be" until after Hamlet's scene with Ophelia does not, I suppose, really matter. But, surely, the Fortinbras sub-plot and the scene of Hamlet's embarkation for England, in addition to contributing to our understanding of the Prince, are compounded of ideal stuffs for the movies. And certainly it makes little sense to have the First Player express his willingness to learn a "speech of some dozen or sixteen lines" for the play-within-the-play and then have that play acted entirely in dumb-show.

9. One trouble with the picture is that it squanders at least forty precious minutes in stage crosses, in slow fade-outs, in travelogues up and down the stairs of Mr. Furse's palace, or in such a long and pointless sequence as the concluding one in which, after a superb duel and a very moving death scene, the Prince's body is carried up endless flights of steps for no good reason (except perhaps to honor Cecil B. DeMille) to the castle's highest tower. In short, the film is as conditioned in its physical movements (hence in the scope of the text it uses) by Mr. Furse's ungainly setting as we are in our daily living by the blueprints of our architects. This is why I, for one, hold Mr. Furse responsible for some of the picture's more perplexing omissions rather than Mr. Olivier or his able script editor, Alan Dent.

10 All this, however, is more than enough of reservations. It is overlooking, and most unfairly, the fact that even a lame man can also claim a leg which is both good and strong. What matters in the case of Mr. Olivier's "Hamlet" is its virtues. These are many. They are sufficient to live down the sad and utterly unnecessary introductory moment when, as a prologue to the film and in the worst radio-narrator manner, Mr. Olivier's voice is heard explaining "This is the tragedy of a man who could not make up his mind." That is a depressing and disastrous start. Nevertheless the merits of this "Hamlet," considering its intentions, compensate for the lacks.

11. Mr. Olivier's production is meant for the "groundlings"; for people who come to it fresh. In other words, it is intended for moviegoers and radio listeners far removed from theatrical centers; people uncon-

cerned with too many niceties and unhaunted by memories of Barrymore's dynamic brilliance, Gielgud's vibrant neuroticism, or Evans's eloquent justification of a prince legionnaire in spirit.

12 For such an audience Mr. Olivier's "Hamlet" is certain to be an eye-opener as well as an experience. It has a bounce, an urgency, a fascination, and an emotional impact which are hard to resist. Measured by the Shakespeare the majority of Americans see, when they are lucky enough to see any pretending to be professional, it is a masterpiece. Compared to most films, childish as they are in intelligence, range, taste, or ambition, it is as full grown as was Pallas Athena at birth. Every school teacher in the land should be grateful for it. So should every student not hostile to learning.

13 Even when seen on Manhattan at previews attended by persons freighted with recollections, it commands, word for word and scene for scene, that utter silence which is the perfect tribute to its compulsion. Make no mistake about it. It is a film not to be missed, regardless of what the long-memoried, the captious, or informed hopefuls may miss in it.

14. Mr. Olivier's "Hamlet" is bound to raise comparisons with his "Henry V." His "Henry" was one of the best pictures I have ever seen or expect to see. It had a magnificent sweep. It combined personalities and pageantry so that neither was lost sight of. Its spirit was as stirring as the drums summoning a regiment to battle in bygone days. The love duet in which England's Harry wooed Katherine of France was played with such miraculous skill that it managed to cap in interest even the glories of Agincourt. As for Mr. Olivier, he was so complete a Harry, both as a man and an ideal of kingship, that England's victory, like the film's, was easy to explain.

15 But there's the rub. The qualities of manliness which made Mr. Olivier Henry "cap-a-pie" are not necessarily attributes fitting him for Hamlet. The Dane is a man condemned to vacillation. Were he as resolute as Mr. Olivier and his will the servant of so firm a mouth and buttressed a chin, "Hamlet" would be a one-act play. Mr. Olivier brings no new understanding of the Prince to his interpretation. His innovations stop with the bleaching of his hair. They do not come from within. He does not reverse tradition as Mr. Evans did when he bounded into Elsinore as an extrovert princeling. Neither does he heighten tradition as did Mr. Gielgud when he laid bare the torments of a neurotic prince. He takes Hamlet as the single speeches come

instead of integrating them into an original pattern of his own planning.

16 Though this represents a deficiency, the simple and exciting truth is that no player now alive can read Shakespearean verse as he does. He is a master of the pause, of underscoring, of illumination. He may at times be tempted to throw lines away, regrettably, as when he rushes to the end of the great hall to scream "The play's the thing." He may surrender to acrobatics and send his body hurtling to the floor more often than necessary. Once or twice, too, his very virtuosity may mislead him into spewing forth more words than a single breath can hope to project. But, even when Mr. Olivier is by temperament at odds with what he is saying, he remains a great actor.

17. To judge how inspired is his reading, one has only to read to oneself the introductory verses thrown on the screen while Mr. Olivier's voice is heard reading them aloud. What he does with them, to break them, to give them meaning, to explore and ignite them, would have caused Elia to swallow his harsh words about the losses Shakespeare suffers when performed.

18 In spite of his lack of a definite interpretation; in spite, too, of the way in which his own temperament may clash with Hamlet's, Mr. Olivier achieves his extraordinary single moments. These include his delivery of "To be or not to be" (here, as in the other soliloquies, the illusion of eavesdropping on his thoughts is suggested by our hearing his voice on the sound track and yet seeing him move his lips to speak only an occasional line); the easy naturalness of his speech to the players; his uninhibited ribaldry with Ophelia at the play; his acid humor in all his dealings with Polonius, and with the King when referring to the dead counselor's whereabouts; his entire relationship with Horatio; his apostrophe to Yorick; his asking forgiveness of Laertes; and the athletic fury of his duel.

19. As a director, Mr. Olivier faces a far more difficult task than he did with "Henry V." The tragedy of "Hamlet" is internal; its final action within the mind. If this interior struggle is not totally realized in the film, the melodrama—the grand, gory, breath-taking melodrama which is also "Hamlet"—is made the most of. When not slowed down by Mr. Furse's setting, Mr. Olivier and his fellow-players keep it lunging on its bloodstained way.

20. As in the case of his "Henry," all the members of the supporting cast speak Shakespearean verse uncommonly well. When it comes

to their characterizations, that is a different matter. Personally I was disappointed in Felix Aylmer's Polonius. He seemed to be lacking in humor, if for no other reason than that he took no pleasure in his own garrulity. Unaccountably but typically, the famous "tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral" speech was not even spoken by him as if he were a windy old man toying with words. Instead, it was read by him supposedly from a handbill taken from the Players.

[21] I was disappointed, too, in Peter Cushing's Osric and was especially distressed to see him, when backing and swishing his way out of Hamlet's presence, fall downstairs in order to win a laugh. Eileen Herlie I found too young for the Queen. To me she appeared to be playing by rote rather than from passion. Her Gertrude had none of the tempting uxoriousness Mady Christians brought to the part. Nor could I understand why Mr. Olivier, as a director, should have elected to have Gertrude and Claudius wander throughout almost the whole play as attached to their crowns as if they were a playing-card queen and king.

[22] But for Basil Sydney's superlatively well read and deftly drawn Claudius I felt unbounded admiration. I was touched by the sweet innocence and plausibility of Jean Simmons's Ophelia, though I could not help wishing for her sake that the Court of Denmark had boasted a different hairdresser. I found genuine satisfaction in Norman Wooland's sympathetic Horatio, Terence Morgan's manly Laertes, and Stanley Holloway's Gravedigger.

[23] Mixed in its merits this "Hamlet" may be, but this seems clear. Even Mr. Furse's setting cannot imprison Shakespeare's text. In spite of what is arguable in the production or the cutting and notwithstanding many severe disappointments, the film always aims at the best and sometimes achieves it thrillingly.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

Undoubtedly the most frequent contacts that most Americans in the mid-twentieth century have with drama is in the motion picture theater. It is therefore particularly unfortunate that so many reviews of films are almost as uncritical as the advertisements that usually appear on the same pages. But occasionally a film is produced that is worthy of serious treatment in a truly critical review. Such a film is Olivier's *Hamlet.*

1. Most reviews of a film or of a stage drama consider acting, staging, and production as well as the script itself. How does the author evaluate each of these elements here?

2. For how long does Brown sustain the analogy that he introduces in par. 1? What is your opinion of par. 1 as an introductory paragraph?

3. A critic owes it to the work under review to make his criticism impartial and complete; he owes it to the reader to make his judgment definite and a reflection of his individual opinion. Show how well Brown fulfills or fails to fulfill these obligations.

4. Note the use of comparison in par. 14. What other parts of his evaluation are supported by comparisons?

5. Why is the fifth sentence of par. 5 particularly appropriate?

6. Note the effective use of parallel structure in the final sentence of par. 6. Find two other examples of parallel structure in the early part of this review.

Suggestions for Writing

1. My opinion of Olivier's *Hamlet.*
2. An evaluation of a recent film.

Olivier's Hamlet*

by ROBERT HATCH

The critical approach that attempts to divorce content from execution—to say that while the story is moving, the writing is vulgar; that though the composition is hackneyed, the brushwork is intriguing—assumes that good artists can be poor craftsmen, that inferior creative insights can be excellently expressed. This is so rarely the case that on being confronted with one of these distinctions you can with confidence anticipate a

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miscarriage of judgment. Nevertheless, something of the sort must be attempted in the case of Laurence Olivier's "Hamlet." The film he has made is an astonishing, and I expect a most influential, adventure in movie technique, regardless of its merits as an interpretation of the play.

2 It is difficult to define the physical effect of this "Hamlet," but perhaps the best way is to say that it is overwhelmingly visual; it assaults your eyes. I do not mean just that it is beautiful or striking, though it is of course both; it pours out images and impressions with a prodigal richness that you would suppose exceeded your capacity to assimilate.

3 Olivier has produced a tactile intensity that recalls Aldous Huxley's bear rug; he hurls perspective at you like a banner; his film sweeps and plunges and hovers. Partly his effects are achieved by the use of deep-focus photography which penetrates with icy clarity into the most distant reaches of his scenes, partly by the use of sets that are at once unreal and superbly tangible, partly by directing himself and his company in a flowing rhythm of action. He has freed himself not only of the physical but of the mental limitations of the stage, and works and thinks completely through the camera.

4. But for all its beguilements, this seduction by photography was undertaken for the purpose of interpreting "Hamlet," and once we become accustomed to the exhilaration, it is to "Hamlet" that we must return. Olivier has set down in a brief essay (published with those of his colleagues in the venture by the Saturn Press, London) the principles that guided his treatment of the play. After "Henry V," he says, "Hamlet" "seemed the obvious choice" for a second Shakespeare film. It was necessary, though, to "simplify" the play, and he asks us to regard what he has done "as an 'Essay on Hamlet' and not as a film version of a necessarily abridged classic."

5 "Hamlet" is almost always "obvious" when Shakespeare's plays are being discussed, but that doesn't mean that it is the best for a given purpose, as Olivier admits when he talks of simplifying it. It wasn't only a matter of playing time that troubled him; that what he has done goes far beyond cutting he recognizes in his modest disclaimer. I'm not sure what he means by an "essay" in this context, for surely what he has given us is a version—and a very powerful version —of the play. I suspect him of planting alibis against the cry that violence has been done.

6. Perhaps I approach "Hamlet" too solemnly; it is no longer good dogma to call it the supreme play or even the best of Shakespeare's tragedies. One thing is certain: "Hamlet" is still preëminently the work of art in our culture with which each individual must come to terms. It is not necessary, nor probably even possible, to prove what Shakespeare meant to convey, but we do have to work out a solution (over a lifetime, very likely a hierarchy of solutions) that satisfies us personally. It is the play's particular glory that it gives us this work to do, and I am afraid that Olivier's simplification would relieve us of the effort.

7 The interpretation he places on the character of Hamlet is evident from the fact that he lifts out of context and uses as a prologue the speech about the corrupting influence of a single defect, the "vicious mole of nature"; and by the fact that he announces the play as the story of a man who couldn't make up his mind. I don't wish to quarrel with this not uncommon interpretation, but I object to the attempt to limit me to it. The impulse to clarity is persuasive, particularly to an actor as rational as Olivier, but the effort to make "Hamlet" clear implies sacrifices I don't want to see made.

8. If in this sense, however, Olivier's "Hamlet" offers too little, in another it provides too much. By volume of sound, by extravagances of lighting and spectacle, by the violence often of its visual impacts, it supplies not only the stimulus but the emotional response as well. To come to grips with "Hamlet" at all you must participate in it; Olivier bombards you into passivity.

9. Olivier reads his part beautifully. For some tastes, he reads it too beautifully, with a kind of relish in rhetoric; but it is good to have the lines spoken so precisely and with such understanding. As a performer, he dislocates the role by continually changing the key. At one moment he is a rich college boy at home on holiday and gently patronizing of his companions; at the next he is Prometheus and makes the heavens ring. Certainly, Hamlet is a man of moods, but by both underplaying and overplaying as the opportunity presents, Olivier seems to direct attention toward himself and away from the part. His essay, by the way, contains the perplexing information that he dyed his hair blond so that the audience would not say, "There is Laurence Olivier dressed like Hamlet," but rather, "That is Hamlet." The audience around me seemed to be saying, "There's Olivier with his hair turned white."

10. I cannot here undertake an appraisal in detail of the supporting cast, for they all have earned more than passing adjectives. As a generalization, they build their roles with a thoughtfulness and an appreciation of incident that provide an environment for Hamlet more full-bodied than I have ever seen before. The play suffers when it is visualized in the terms of a "great role" and Olivier's direction of a talented cast holds the relationship of personalities in most effective balance.

11. It is also almost hopeless to begin a recitation of striking details in the handling of text and action. Every line, every gesture of "Hamlet" has been weighed for generations and each man is his own director and actor. The decision to throw Rosencrantz, Guildenstern and Fortinbras out of the play completely seems to me both unnecessary and unwise, part again of Olivier's desire to keep everything shipshape. The relationship between Hamlet and his mother is underlined with such a strong Viennese hand that it becomes almost overtly incestuous; the relationship with Ophelia becomes that of a lover retaliating against the rejection of his love.

12. The delivery of the soliloquies from the sound track but not from Olivier's mouth; the creation of new scenes (notably the death of Ophelia); the projection of the action into a vast space that mitigates the play's fever; Hamlet's eavesdropping on the conspiracy of the arras; the play given as dumb show; the appearance of a very palpable ghost out of Doré (with Olivier's voice mechanically distorted); and so on scene by scene; present individual challenges to private judgments. The one point on which I feel like being arbitrary is Olivier's curious habit of omitting very familiar single lines. I can see no reason for it and the effect is a good deal like having a chair pulled out from under you. It may be that he feels these lines dominate too much by their currency; they are even more assertive in their absence.

13. But picking flaws minimizes the picture improperly. It is a strong and serious and invigorating creation; it has the virtue of challenging your conceptions, throwing them into new perspectives, and making you discover them again. Assuming, of course, that you have already created your own version of the play. If you have not, Olivier will almost certainly persuade you to accept his, and the gift will look much richer than it is.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

1. In this review and in the review of *Hamlet* by John Mason Brown, we have evaluations of the same thing by two very able critics. It is instructive to note similarities and differences of opinion and emphasis. Point out these in respect to setting and photography, Olivier's handling of Shakespeare's material, and Olivier's performance in the role of Hamlet. Which review did you find the more difficult to read? Why?

2. Does the first paragraph of Hatch's review inform you what point of view he is going to develop? What is your opinion of this first paragraph as an introduction? Does the final sentence of par. 13 accurately summarize the point of view that Hatch developed in the review as a whole?

3. On the basis of par. 12, what standard do you think Hatch sets up for himself as a reviewer?

4. Hatch's style is generally compact and sometimes subtle. Explain the meaning of the final sentence in par. 12. In the final sentence of par. 11 what does Hatch gain by using the phrase "is underlined with such a strong Viennese hand" instead of writing "is so obviously based on Freudian psychology"?

Suggestions for Writing

1. A review of a stage play.
2. A review I liked and why I liked it.

*"The Bard" Competes with "The Body"**

by C. A. LEJEUNE

LONDON

And now we come, ladies and gentlemen, to today's question. What celebrated Englishman stated, in a published interview, "I don't really like Shakespeare on the screen at all: the shot is too big for the camera"? No, sir, not George Bernard Shaw (although he is alleged to have said of "Henry V," "Fifteen minutes of cinema and the rest just Shakespeare"). No, madam, not Noel Coward, and no again, madam, not Mr. J. Arthur Rank, although he must have had his moments of temptation. Sir Laurence Olivier, in the days before he had a handle to his name.

2. There is something rather piquant, not to say sinister, in recalling this candid avowal from the man who, above all others, has been responsible for the current screen vogue in Shakespeare. Make no mistake about it, it is the star's share in the production of "Henry V" and "Hamlet," not the Bard's, that has caught the public's volatile imagination. Producers have been making films out of Shakespeare's plays for upward of thirty years, and until the darling of the Old Vic, and the idol of London's West End, came along to sponsor the job, only the people who wanted another stick to beat the movies with stopped to bother about it.

3. A useful script writer, Will Shakespeare was one of the earliest scenario boys on the screen. In the days when motion pictures took a day to shoot, and production was done on an open lot with ball games for a break, they were already grinding out movie versions of "Romeo and Juliet" and "Hamlet," "The Merchant of Venice" and "Henry VIII." Long before the first World War, a British studio offered a super-Hamlet in twenty-two scenes; each scene built inside

* From *The New York Times Magazine*, December 12, 1948. By permission of the publishers and the author. Copyright 1948 by The New York Times Company.

the next like a nest of Chinese boxes, to save shooting time; a primitive example, one might also say, of Alfred Hitchcock's "wild walls" and his celebrated nine-minute take.

4 The only piece of casting done in advance was Hamlet, for whom it was thought expedient to use an actor who had at some time read the role. The rest of the cast turned up casually as a result of postcards, announcing an audition at 8:30 A. M., and those who wanted more than $2 a day need not apply. The producer picked a tall man for the Ghost, and then, passing his pencil down the list until he came to the name "Ophelia," asked hopefully, "Can any lady swim?" The finished film took fifteen minutes to show, and there is no record of riot at the box office by infuriated pundits.

5 Even when the talkies came in, and Mr. and Mrs. Fairbanks offered their version of "The Taming of the Shrew," "with additional dialogue by William Shakespeare," the public maintained an imperturbable calm, only suggesting diffidently that an Italian shrew was possibly not the World's Sweetheart's line of country. The Warner Brothers' "A Midsummer Night's Dream," with Mickey Rooney as a Warwickshire fairy, caused an academic grunt or two, but our Mr. Basil Dean, who stood for the classic English theatre at that time, had only just got around to sending telegrams to the press—"Shakespeare was an Englishman"—when Elisabeth Bergner came along, with "As You Like It," to suggest that he was an Austrian, and Norma Shearer turned up in "Romeo and Juliet" to hint that he was a Canadian, with high Hollywood priority.

6. None of these films, however, did more than idly entertain the public—"As You Like It," I think I am correct in saying, was one of the biggest box-office flops on record—and provide a passing topic for the newspaper correspondents. It was not until Laurence Olivier came along with his "Henry V" project, that anybody bothered his head very seriously over the suitability of Shakespeare for the screen.

7. Mr. Olivier was a different proposition from any other producer who had tried to feed the public Shakespeare. Mr. Olivier was, and is, the god of the British theatre. The Old Vic was his temple: worship of him among the younger set was already mounting to fanaticism. Young men and women who had stood, not once but scores of times, all night and day on the sidewalk, to get a glimpse of Mr. Olivier striding from his car to the stage door, and swooned at the sound of his voice across the footlights, were not likely to pass up his star appearance in his own movie version of Shakespeare.

8. To add to "Henry V's" chances, the actor had just won himself a big picture following with his work in "Wuthering Heights" and "Pride and Prejudice." To see such a romantic actor in a big heroic role and in Technicolor, even if it meant sitting through a lot of dreary talk about nothing, was a chance that young England found it hard to miss.

9. "Henry V" made a fine, rousing film, gathered critical awards wherever it was shown, and won over most of the die-hards who had hitherto opposed the filming of Shakespeare, even though it did not make especially big news at the box office. Nevertheless, it did well enough to justify Mr. Rank in allowing Olivier to have a second try, and "Hamlet" came to London last summer to find West End audiences already on their toes.

10 It proved to be a maturer work than "Henry V"; more certain in its touch, infinitely more ambitious in technique and conception, but also less exciting. "Henry V," when all is said and done, is not major Shakespeare, but it has all the pictorial qualities of pageantry and showmanship that unite it to the screen. "Hamlet" is a close psychological study of a man's mind, and a man's mind, however ardently the producers may try to experiment with it, is not photogenic. When the film is over, the real essence of "Hamlet" remains untouched, untranslated and untranslatable.

11. Nobody can possibly tell, until the books are finally balanced, what the evidence of "Hamlet" will do for the case against screen Shakespeare. The film has had no general release yet in this country. It played to packed houses, with particularly heavy advance booking, on its first run at the Odeon, Leicester Square, and the customers never wholly neglected it during an extended season. There is nervous speculation, however, as to what may happen at the box office as a result of "draining the suburbs," and the view has been advanced that the distributors have hung on to the film a mite too long to catch the top of the market.

12. The critics, as a whole, were less cordial to "Hamlet" than they were to "Henry," and various aspects of the production—the Ghost, the cut and transposed speeches, the startling blond hair-do that secured for Sir Laurence Olivier the effect of playing in a permanent spotlight—have come in for comment somewhat less than kind.

13. Taking it by and large, the film has been best liked by people who admit to an indifference to Shakespeare in the theatre; in the main these are literate folk who find the stage medium for which Shake-

speare wrote confined and archaic, but who like to curl up in a corner with a copy of the Bard. To these people, the argument of the play means more than the swell of its music, and for them Sir Laurence Olivier has a peculiar gift, a special knack of simplification and clarity.

[14] In reducing "Hamlet" to manageable length, and casting it in a form readily understandable to large mixed audiences, he was faced with much the same problem as Charles and Mary Lamb when they collected their tidy little "Tales from Shakespeare." The play runs four and one-half hours in its original form: Olivier had to reduce it to two hours and three-quarters. In order to do this, he was forced to take great liberties with the text, cutting whole passages of dialogue and even some of the more famous soliloquies, transposing the speakers' lines, changing the order of events, and eliminating several characters altogether. That he has managed to do so without making nonsense of the text is a fine achievement, but produces a "Hamlet" that gives the sense of being organically unsound.

[15] Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, for example, are not mere supernumeraries in the play, although one might be pardoned for thinking so from the way the roles are customarily performed in the theatre. They are part of Hamlet's student world, as much an aspect of his youth as Horatio, and they help to fill in the picture of a social order and a generation. Fortinbras has much more than a political significance in the chronicles of the time; he gives the end of the play its balance, and suggests the healing and unifying force that provides Hamlet's death with its justification. A soliloquy such as "Oh what a rogue and peasant slave am I" is not a slab of beautifully empty words, designed to fill a gap in the action; it is an integral part of the development, and in its matter lies the key to a man's whole character.

[16] Shakespeare knew very well what he was doing when he wrote "Hamlet" as he wrote it: furthermore, he wrote it for popular audiences just as simple and uninstructed as the modern movie audience. Allowing for the changes in diction, Shakespeare's text is just as quick and lively today as Sir Laurence Olivier's and cannot be violated without loss.

[17] It is periodically argued by the high-browed and hopeful that a Shakespeare play filmed in its entirety would command as eager an audience as a Shakespeare play performed in the theatre; to which the immediate answer is, of course, that $4,000,000 movie productions do not get their money back from an audience that's eager. Nor

has it been financially established that any play screened in extenso, even the best, is utterly satisfactory entertainment; for howsoever closely the two forms coincide, the play remains primarily something to listen to and the movie something to look at.

18 The great snag that every producer who tries to screen Shakespeare strikes sooner or later is the soliloquies, without which there is no play and with which there is apt to be no picture. The device employed by Olivier when he records his soliloquies as thoughts on the soundtrack while the camera moves right along and frequently in a close-up with the silent speaker, has not really solved the problem effectively.

19. Shakespeare had the knack of cramming a world of action as well as argument into his big speeches, and a medium as free of time and space as the movies is only disputably justified in telling the customers what it could just as readily show.

20 One clear gain in translating Shakespeare for the cinema on the scale and with the quality that Sir Laurence Olivier brings to his productions is the opportunity it gives to out-of-town customers to see the best work of the best actors and technicians in comfortable seats at reasonable prices. Not one moviegoer in a million has a chance ordinarily to watch players of the caliber of Olivier, Eileen Herlie, Basil Sydney and the others in a major work conceived with care and displayed to perfection. Films like "Hamlet" and "Henry V" are comparable to the best phonograph disks of the greatest artists and as such they merit their place in the culture of the day.

21. There has been no hint, yet, either from Mr. Rank or Sir Laurence Olivier, that the Shakespearean series is likely to continue, and although Hollywood, panicked with the fear that somebody else may sign up a rising author, has several times threatened to give us the major masterpieces, only Orson Welles' "Macbeth" has so far materialized. There has been, or at least I have heard, no public outcry for more Shakespeare in the cinemas, as there is a periodic outcry for more "good" music, more French pictures, more films about the English countryside, and more Garbo. It seems likely that saturation point has been reached, and that fresh audiences will have to be conscripted if Shakespeare is to become a profitable business on the screen.

22 It would be nice to think that there were large numbers of potential customers waiting with ill-concealed impatience for some film producer to offer them the Complete Works of Shakespeare, but I'm afraid that neither the Shakespeare fans nor the movie fans really fall

into this category. It is not possible to deny, after the brilliant experiment with "Henry V," that a certain number of the plays have the color, the pageantry, the swift and marked vigor of action that make them not wholly inappropriate to the film medium.

23. But broadly speaking, Shakespeare can do very well without the movies, and the movies can get along nicely without Shakespeare. Those of us who already love the plays may accept the spectacle in some cases as an added, though not necessary, diversion; those who do not love Shakespeare will enjoy the action sequences and spectacle, and frequent changes of scene, and fidget unhappily through the rest of the piece.

24. There are two forces that militate against the general acceptance of Shakespeare on the screen: the plots and the diction. It is generally conceded that the dialogue of the plays is tough for audiences trained to the literary standard of lyrics by You-Know-Who, but I don't think the critics have really got around to studying the toughness of the plots. The majority of Shakespeare's stories are mere Elizabethan novelettes, and nothing dates like your novelette, especially when it is a really full-blooded sample of the type.

25. The sort of work the family cook would slide into the bureau drawer of a Victorian kitchen would arouse hoots of mirth from the bobby-soxers of today. It is not really sensible to expect the modern generation to sit enthralled by the story of a college student who can't make up his mind to run a rapier through his uncle, or of a lady attorney who contemplates carving a meat ration off her client. That the plays are all costume plays is bad enough, but that the people in them act kinda crazy, and are all plain cases for a psychiatrist, is even worse.

26 When you add to the problem of an archaic plot the extra problem of archaic dialogue, you begin to understand the circuits' sales resistance to Shakespeare. The blunt truth is that it is impossible in these days for a person without some literary training to make sense of, let alone appreciate, the most human playwright in our language. Obsolete words, or words charged with a different modern meaning; unfamiliar constructions; esoteric simile; all these combined, and spoken with an accent that is not common to all of us, through the medium of an often ill-used sound-track, may make the play unintelligible to a moviegoer who does not know what Shakespeare would be up to.

27. But the difficulty goes deeper than the problem of archaic lan-

guage; the average moviegoer does not care for poetry in its proper sense at all, for the simple reason that he never reads or hears any.

[28] The people who appreciate Shakespeare today have for the most part acquired their affection in the first place through the medium of print. It is true, as Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch has pointed out somewhere, that Shakespeare is written to be acted, not to be read (though he does not deny us the additional pleasure of reading). But I submit that the initial affection for Shakespeare is born of familiarity with the printed word, and that the people who enjoy him best today are the people who studied him at school.

[29] It is a pleasant dream to suppose that, deep down in the hearts of all English-speaking people, there is an instinctive passion for the playwright that only demands his plays should be enacted before them to be warmly embraced. But the fact remains that the ordinary modern customer in the loges is far less concerned with The Bard than he is with The Body or The Voice, and there seems little point in trying to adapt Shakespeare to the people, until the people can be adapted to Shakespeare.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

A complete evaluation does not end with a consideration of what an author is attempting and of how well he has succeeded in the attempt. There remain to be answered the important questions of whether his objective is worthwhile and whether it can be achieved.

1. As this article is not a review but a critical essay on a point suggested by Olivier's production of *Hamlet*, Miss Lejeune is not obligated to consider the separate elements of the production, as did Hatch and Brown. Which elements does she consider? Do you find any marked similarities or differences between her opinions of this particular film and those expressed by Brown and by Hatch? Note particularly par. 10 of Miss Lejeune's article.

2. Miss Lejeune is film critic for *The London Observer* and London film correspondent for *The New York Times*, the newspaper in which this essay appeared. Why do you think that in several places in this essay she used the style that is represented by the first sentence of par. 1, the first sentence of par. 3, and the final sentence of par. 25? Point out other places in the essay where this style was used. Do you think it serves the purpose that the author intended it to serve? Why? Can you suggest any other ways of achieving the same objective?

Suggestions for Writing

1. In defense of popularizations.
2. A stage play or a novel that should be made into a movie.

The Essence of Tragedy[*]

by MAXWELL ANDERSON

Anybody who dares to discuss the making of tragedy lays himself open to critical assault and general barrage, for the theorists have been hunting for the essence of tragedy since Aristotle without entire success. There is no doubt that playwrights have occasionally written tragedy successfully, from Aeschylus on, and there is no doubt that Aristotle came very close to a definition of what tragedy is in his famous passage on catharsis. But why the performance of tragedy should have a cleansing effect on the audience, why an audience is willing to listen to tragedy, why tragedy has a place in the education of men, has never, to my knowledge, been convincingly stated. I must begin by saying that I have not solved the Sphinx's riddle which fifty generations of skillful brains have left in shadow. But I have one suggestion which I think might lead to a solution if it were put to laboratory tests by those who know something about philosophical analysis and dialectic.

2. There seems no way to get at this suggestion except through a reference to my own adventures in playwriting, so I ask your tolerance while I use myself as an instance. A man who has written successful plays is usually supposed to know something about the theory of playwriting, and perhaps he usually does. In my own case, however, I must confess that I came into the theater unexpectedly, without preparation, and stayed in it because I had a certain amount of rather accidental success. It was not until after I had fumbled my way

[*] From *Off Broadway: Essays about the Theater* (New York: William Sloane Associates, Inc., 1947). By permission of the publishers. Copyright 1939, 1947 by Maxwell Anderson.

through a good many successes and an appalling number of failures that I began to doubt the sufficiency of dramatic instinct and to wonder whether or not there were general laws governing dramatic structure which so poor a head for theory as my own might grasp and use. I had read the *Poetics* long before I tried playwriting, and I had looked doubtfully into a few well-known handbooks on dramatic structure, but the maxims and theories propounded always drifted by me in a luminous haze—brilliant, true, profound in context, yet quite without meaning for me when I considered the plan for a play or tried to clarify an emotion in dialogue. So far as I could make out every play was a new problem, and the old rules were inapplicable. There were so many rules, so many landmarks, so many pitfalls, so many essential reckonings, that it seemed impossible to find your way through the jungle except by plunging ahead, trusting to your sense of direction and keeping your wits about you as you went.

3. But as the seasons went by and my failures fell as regularly as the leaves in autumn I began to search again among the theorists of the past for a word of wisdom that might take some of the gamble out of playwriting. What I needed most of all, I felt, was a working definition of what a play is, or perhaps a formula which would include all the elements necessary to a play structure. A play is almost always, probably, an attempt to recapture a vision for the stage. But when you are working in the theater it's most unsatisfactory to follow the gleam without a compass, quite risky to trust "the light that never was on sea or land" without making sure beforehand that you are not being led straight into a slough of despond. In other words you must make a choice among visions, and you must check your chosen vision carefully before assuming that it will make a play. But by what rules, what maps, what fields of reference can you check so intangible a substance as a revelation, a dream, an inspiration, or any similar nudge from the subconscious mind?

4 I shan't trouble you with the details of my search for a criterion, partly because I can't remember it in detail. But I reread Aristotle's *Poetics* in the light of some bitter experience, and one of his observations led me to a comparison of ancient and modern playwriting methods. In discussing construction he made a point of the recognition scene as essential to tragedy. The recognition scene, as Aristotle isolated it in the tragedies of the Greeks, was generally an artificial device, a central scene in which the leading character saw through a disguise, recognized as a friend or as an enemy, perhaps as a lover

or a member of his own family, some person whose identity had been hidden. Iphigeneia, for example, acting as priestess in an alien country, receives a victim for sacrifice and then recognizes her own brother in this victim. There is an instant and profound emotional reaction, instantly her direction in the play is altered. But occasionally, in the greatest of the plays, the recognition turned on a situation far more convincing, though no less contrived. Oedipus, hunting savagely for the criminal who has brought the plague upon Thebes, discovers that he is himself that criminal—and since this is a discovery that affects not only the physical well-being and happiness of the hero, but the whole structure of his life, the effect on him and on the direction of the story is incalculably greater than could result from the more superficial revelation made to Iphigeneia.

5. Now scenes of exactly this sort are rare in the modern drama except in detective stories adapted for the stage. But when I probed a little more deeply into the memorable pieces of Shakespeare's theater and our own I began to see that though modern recognition scenes are subtler and harder to find, they are none the less present in the plays we choose to remember. They seldom have to do with anything so naïve as disguise or the unveiling of a personal identity. But the element of discovery is just as important as ever. For the mainspring in the mechanism of a modern play is almost invariably a discovery by the hero of some element in his environment or in his own soul of which he has not been aware—or which he has not taken sufficiently into account. Moreover, nearly every teacher of playwriting has had some inkling of this, though it was not until after I had worked out my own theory that what they said on this point took on accurate meaning for me. I still think that the rule which I formulated for my own guidance is more concise than any other, and so I give it here: A play should lead up to and away from a central crisis, and this crisis should consist in a discovery by the leading character which has an indelible effect on his thought and emotion and completely alters his course of action. The leading character, let me say again, must make the discovery; it must affect him emotionally; and it must alter his direction in the play.

6. Try that formula on any play you think worthy of study, and you will find that, with few exceptions, it follows this pattern or some variation of this pattern. The turning point of *The Green Pastures*, for example, is the discovery by God, who is the leading character, that a God who is to endure must conform to the laws of change. The

turning point of *Hamlet* is Hamlet's discovery, in the play scene, that his uncle was unquestionably the murderer of his father. In *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* Lincoln's discovery is that he has been a coward, that he has stayed out of the fight for the Union because he was afraid. In each case, you will note, the discovery has a profound emotional effect on the hero, and gives an entirely new direction to his action in the play.

7. I'm not writing a disquisition on playwriting and wouldn't be competent to write one, but I do want to make a point of the superlative usefulness of this one touchstone for play structure. When a man sets out to write a play his first problem is his subject and the possibilities of that subject as a story to be projected from the stage. His choice of subject matter is his personal problem, and one that takes its answer from his personal relation to his times. But if he wants to know a possible play subject when he finds it, if he wants to know how to mold the subject into play form after he has found it, I doubt that he'll ever discover another standard as satisfactory as the modern version of Aristotle which I have suggested. If the plot he has in mind does not contain a playable episode in which the hero or heroine makes an emotional discovery, a discovery that practically dictates the end of the story, then such an episode must be inserted—and if no place can be found for it the subject is almost certainly a poor one for the theater. If this emotional discovery is contained in the story, but is not central, then it must be made central, and the whole action must revolve around it. In a three-act play it should fall near the end of the second act, though it may be delayed till the last; in a five-act play it will usually be found near the end of the third, though here also it can be delayed. Everything else in the play should be subordinated to this one episode—should lead up to or away from it.

8. Now this prime rule has a corollary which is just as important as the rule itself. The hero who is to make the central discovery in a play must not be a perfect man. He must have some variation of what Aristotle calls a tragic fault; and the reason he must have it is that when he makes his discovery he must change both in himself and in his action—and he must change for the better. The fault can be a very simple one—a mere unawareness, for example—but if he has no fault he cannot change for the better, but only for the worse, and for a reason which I shall discuss later, it is necessary that he must become more admirable, and not less so, at the end of the play. In other words,

a hero must pass through an experience which opens his eyes to an error of his own. He must learn through suffering. In a tragedy he suffers death itself as a consequence of his fault or his attempt to correct it, but before he dies he has become a nobler person because of his recognition of his fault and the consequent alteration of his course of action. In a serious play which does not end in death he suffers a lesser punishment, but the pattern remains the same. In both forms he has a fault to begin with, he discovers that fault during the course of the action, and he does what he can to rectify it at the end. In *The Green Pastures* God's fault was that he believed himself perfect. He discovered that he was not perfect, that he had been in error and must make amends. Hamlet's fault was that he could not make up his mind to act. He offers many excuses for his indecision until he discovers that there is no real reason for hesitation and that he has delayed out of cowardice. Lincoln, in *Abe Lincoln in Illinois*, has exactly the same difficulty. In the climactic scene it is revealed to him that he had hesitated to take sides through fear of the consequences to himself, and he then chooses to go ahead without regard for what may be in store for him. From the point of view of the playwright, then, the essence of a tragedy, or even of a serious play, is the spiritual awakening, or regeneration, of his hero.

9 When a playwright attempts to reverse the formula, when his hero makes a discovery which has an evil effect, or one which the audience interprets as evil, on his character, the play is inevitably a failure on the stage. In *Troilus and Cressida* Troilus discovers that Cressida is a light woman. He draws from her defection the inference that all women are faithless—that faith in woman is the possession of fools. As a consequence he turns away from life and seeks death in a cause as empty as the love he has given up, the cause of the strumpet Helen. All the glory of Shakespeare's verse cannot rescue the play for an audience, and save in *Macbeth* Shakespeare nowhere wrote so richly, so wisely, or with such a flow of brilliant metaphor.

10. For the audience will always insist that the alteration in the hero be for the better—or for what it believes to be the better. As audiences change the standards of good and evil change, though slowly and unpredictably, and the meanings of plays change with the centuries. One thing only is certain: that an audience watching a play will go along with it only when the leading character responds in the end to what it considers a higher moral impulse than moved him at the

beginning of the story, though the audience will of course define morality as it pleases and in the terms of its own day. It may be that there is no absolute up or down in this world, but the race believes that there is, and will not hear of any denial.

11 And now at last I come to the point toward which I've been struggling so laboriously. Why does the audience come to the theater to look on while an imaginary hero is put to an imaginary trial and comes out of it with credit to the race and to himself? It was this question that prompted my essay, and unless I've been led astray by my own predilections there is a very possible answer in the rules for playwriting which I have just cited. The theater originated in two complementary religious ceremonies, one celebrating the animal in man and one celebrating the god. Old Greek Comedy was dedicated to the spirits of lust and riot and earth, spirits which are certainly necessary to the health and continuance of the race. Greek tragedy was dedicated to man's aspiration, to his kinship with the gods, to his unending, blind attempt to lift himself above his lusts and his pure animalism into a world where there are other values than pleasure and survival. However unaware of it we may be, our theater has followed the Greek patterns with no change in essence, from Aristophanes and Euripides to our own day. Our more ribald musical comedies are simply our approximation of the Bacchic rites of Old Comedy. In the rest of our theater we sometimes follow Sophocles, whose tragedy is always an exaltation of the human spirit, sometimes Euripides, whose tragicomedy follows the same pattern of an excellence achieved through suffering. The forms of both tragedy and comedy have changed a good deal in nonessentials, but in essentials—and especially in the core of meaning which they must have for audiences—they are in the main the same religious rites which grew up around the altars of Attica long ago.

12. It is for this reason that when you write for the theater you must choose between your version of a phallic revel and your vision of what mankind may or should become. Your vision may be faulty, or shallow, or sentimental, but it must conform to some aspiration in the audience, or the audience will reject it. Old Comedy, the celebration of the animal in us, still has a place in our theater, as it had in Athens, but here, as there, that part of the theater which celebrated man's virtue and his regeneration in hours of crisis is accepted as having the more important function. Our comedy is largely the Greek New Comedy, which grew out of Euripides' tragicomedy, and is separated

from tragedy only in that it presents a happier scene and puts its protagonist through an ordeal which is less than lethal.

13. And since our plays, aside from those which are basically Old Comedy, are exaltations of the human spirit, since that is what an audience expects when it comes to the theater, the playwright gradually discovers, as he puts plays before audiences, that he must follow the ancient Aristotelian rule: he must build his plot around a scene wherein his hero discovers some mortal frailty or stupidity in himself and faces life armed with a new wisdom. He must so arrange his story that it will prove to the audience that men pass through suffering purified, that, animal though we are, despicable though we are in many ways, there is in us all some divine, incalculable fire that urges us to be better than we are.

14. It could be argued that what the audience demands of a hero is only conformity to race morality, to the code which seems to the spectators most likely to make for race survival. In many cases, especially in comedy, and obviously in the comedy of Molière, this is true. But in the majority of ancient and modern plays it seems to me that what the audience wants to believe is that men have a desire to break the molds of earth which encase them and claim a kinship with a higher morality than that which hems them in. The rebellion of Antigone, who breaks the laws of men through adherence to a higher law of affection, the rebellion of Prometheus, who breaks the law of the gods to bring fire to men, the rebellion of God in *The Green Pastures* against the rigid doctrine of the Old Testament, the rebellion of Tony in *They Knew What They Wanted* against the convention that called on him to repudiate his cuckold child, the rebellion of Liliom against the heavenly law which asked him to betray his own integrity and make a hypocrisy of his affection, even the repudiation of the old forms and the affirmation of new by the heroes of Ibsen and Shaw, these are all instances to me of the groping of men toward an excellence dimly apprehended, seldom possible of definition. They are evidence to me that the theater at its best is a religious affirmation, an age-old rite restating and reassuring man's belief in his own destiny and his ultimate hope. The theater is much older than the doctrine of evolution, but its one faith, asseverated again and again for every age and every year, is a faith in evolution, in the reaching and the climb of men toward distant goals, glimpsed but never seen, perhaps

never achieved, or achieved only to be passed impatiently on the way to a more distant horizon.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

"The Essence of Tragedy" is an essay of evaluation on a large scale in that it assesses the worth of tragedy itself rather than being concerned with one drama or the work of one author. It is also an essay in interpretation, as is indicated by the title. The author of this interpretative evaluation is one of America's most famous playwrights, a Pulitzer Prize winner who has written more than twenty-five plays, including *Anne of the Thousand Days* and *Winterset*. "The Essence of Tragedy" was written to be read at a session of the Modern Language Association, an organization whose membership is composed chiefly of college and university professors of language and literature.

1. What is the tone of the first paragraph of this essay? Does the tone of this paragraph indicate to you that the author had his audience in mind?

2. Why is it appropriate that Anderson should discuss his own experiences in an essay of this sort? Notice the tactful ways in which he mentions himself and his writing experiences in pars. 1-5.

3. Note that par. 6 develops the final sentence of the preceding paragraph by discussing three examples. Do you think that these examples are well chosen? Why?

4. Why is par. 9 important to the development of the author's point of view?

5. The fourth sentence of par. 14 is periodic in structure, in that the main idea is expressed at the end. Why is this sentence effective? What other structural pattern gives the sentence added effectiveness and keeps it from confusing the reader?

6. Do the best plays and films that you have seen support Anderson's statement in par. 8 that the hero of a tragedy must not be a perfect man? Do Anderson's statements about the "recognition scene" and "the tragic flaw" apply to any novels or short stories that you have read?

Suggestions for Writing

1. Drawing on your knowledge of contemporary and earlier drama, attack or defend Anderson's statement (par. 13) that "our

plays, aside from those which are basically Old Comedy, are exaltations of the human spirit."

2. Analyze a drama or motion picture from the standpoint of the "recognition scene."

3. Explain why you read tragic literature or see tragic plays and films.

Part Four

Persuasion

Contents — *Part Four*

ANONYMOUS ..... *Letter to a Seventeen-Year-Old Son*

JAMES BRYANT CONANT .. *Lowering the Economic Barriers*

JOHN MASON BROWN ..... *The Case Against the Comics*

AL CAPP ..... *The Case for the Comics*

DAVID L. COHN ..... *Moonlight and Poison Ivy*

MORRIS BISHOP ..... *The Last Days of Football*

IRWIN EDMAN ..... *The Next Step*

DAVID L. COHN ..... *Who Will Do the Dirty Work?*

JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH ..... *Is Reading Here to Stay?*

GILBERT SELDES ..... *How Dense Is the Mass?*

WINSTON CHURCHILL ..... *Dunkirk*

GERALD W. JOHNSON ..... *It's the English in Us*

WALTER LIPPMANN ..... *The Indispensable Opposition*

EARL DANIELS ..... *Outline for a Defense of Poetry*

VIRGINIA WOOLF ..... *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown*

Persuasion

Though a man be a source of wisdom and a fountainhead of truth, he does no good thereby to the rest of mankind unless he can somehow convey the truth and wisdom from his mind to theirs. And since the rest of mankind are notoriously slow about changing their minds, except under strong urging, it is often not enough for him merely to *convey* his ideas; he must actively push them, present them in their best light, forge unbreakable chains of logic, and pile up impregnable mountains of evidence in their behalf. He may also have to admonish, exhort, and plead in order to impress his audience. In short, he may have to use all the resources of what we call persuasion.

Meanwhile his fellowmen, many of them equally certain that it is they who have truth and wisdom on their side and not he, are mustering counter-arguments and gathering evidence in opposition. They too are attempting persuasion.

Fortunately the world is not quite such a turmoil of controversy as this picture implies; for there *are* large areas of agreement, and men do convince one another. If they did not, persuasion would be a futile occupation. But it is also true, as John Stuart Mill pointed out long ago and as Walter Lippmann so ably reminded us eighty years later, that this clash of opinion is a necessary part of finding truth and wisdom. From the collision of opposing ideas and methods come better ideas and methods. And in a democracy this is the only acceptable way of proceeding; for a democracy assumes, not that all ideas have equal value, but that all ideas have a right to be heard, and that no one man or group has a monopoly on wisdom. If, then, we are to have a selective competition of opinions, a market place of ideas, it be-

hooves those who have ideas which they value at great price to commend them to others as forcefully as possible. Herein lie the reason and the justification for the art of persuasion.

Not all persuasion, of course, is concerned with problems of great moment. It is proper to debate about small things as well as large. Many people have become excited over the commercialization of college football—though few so wittily as Morris Bishop; but this is not an issue on which the nation will stand or fall. On the other hand, Winston Churchill in his "Dunkirk" speech was exhorting his countrymen to stand firm in a back-to-the-wall struggle that proved to be every bit as crucial for Britain as he said it was. Persuasion, then, may be used for many ends, from the trivial to the most profound. Men differ from each other in taste, in opinion, in standards of values; they hold conflicting views on art, morals, and politics; they argue about how to bring up a son and where to build the new waterworks. But it is always their privilege, and sometimes their duty, to try to persuade others to their way of thinking.

The means of persuasion are as various as its ends. Sometimes persuasion draws its conclusions inductively from an accumulation of evidence. Sometimes it starts with certain premises and shows what must be their inescapable inference. More often it combines the two methods. Though assertion unsupported by evidence or logical reasoning is often said to be an improper method of argument, it may be highly and justly effective if the assertion reminds the readers or hearers of real truths which they have overlooked or forgotten. Sometimes persuasion achieves its ends by indirection: in demolishing the argument of the opposition, it suggests the strength of its own. There are, in fact, almost as many successful kinds of persuasion as of persuaders. It must not be supposed, for example, that Irwin Edman is any the less convinced than Walter Lippmann of the value of freedom of speech simply because he chooses a different method of attacking its opponents.

The one essential ingredient in persuasion is sincerity. In the market place of ideas, the man who does not know how to make his opinions pass at their true value is sorry enough, but he who cannot even believe in his own wares is eventually found out as a fraud and a cheat. Whatever the strength of idea and soundness of argument in the following fifteen selections, it is certain that the author of each believed he had truth on his side, and sought to commend it to others as strongly as he knew how.

Letter to a Seventeen-Year-Old Son *

ANONYMOUS

I

Dear Greg:

In one sense I have been planning to write this letter for several years in order to pull together for what they may be worth some notions on your choice of an occupation and how to train yourself for it. In another sense the letter is occasioned by the recent news story about Pearlstein, the Brooklyn College basketballer, who carried a couple of books but never went to class. . . . So you see you're in for a large dose of the Old Man's ideas. . . .

2. In a novel by Bulwer-Lytton, whose books you would not like (which is just as well), a character says: "What a terrible and unfair advantage merely living longer gives a man!" It is both a wise and sad remark, one that can serve as a warning to members of different generations when dealing with each other. The older always know that they know more; the young always know that the old don't know enough to keep from messing up the world. Both, of course, are quite right. Progress would occur if each generation could pass on what it learned to the next and if the next picked up from there and went on. This hardly ever happens. In our day we try to hand over to specialists in schools the responsibility for telling the next generation what preceding generations have learned. On the whole this probably works better than if we tried it ourselves. But it doesn't work very well; there is a machine-like quality about it which lacks the individual touch. What follows in this letter is just an attempt to apply the advantage I have, because I have lived longer, to you, because I know you better than a teacher does, or a college catalogue, or a newspaper, or a recruiting poster.

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* From *Harper's Magazine*, August, 1945. By permission of the publishers and the author. Copyright 1945 by Harper & Brothers.

3. I have not only lived longer, but have had unusual advantages for seeing what's going on in the world. The average man gets a chance to look at the world only when his work is over. My full-time job for almost twenty years has been to try to figure it out. I get paid for the privilege of talking to almost anybody on earth, asking questions about the things they are supposed to know, and I have been given plenty of time to figure out the answers. What's more, I have carried to extremes the habit of reading books (where more answers are to be found than in the heads of one's contemporaries). I'm not sure I know many answers, and anyhow I couldn't expect you to accept the ones I think I know. But now that you are up against decisions that involve very general questions of what kind of a world it is and how to act in it, it would be wrong and lazy of me, I think, if I didn't try to pass on my ideas. . . .

II

4. I go wholeheartedly along with you in judging that your general bent and aptitude are along the line of the physical sciences. That's true of most American boys. Americans as a people have outstanding mechanical aptitude and a tremendous number of them want to work with things rather than with words and ideas. For every American boy who wants to be a lawyer there must be a hundred who want to be aviation and automotive engineers. As a result, most male students in American schools learn the physical sciences a lot better than they learn the word sciences. You are an example of this. The word subjects like history, English, and other languages seem irrelevant nuisances that you'll never use. Partly for this reason and partly because schools and parents do an incredibly bad job of explaining the purpose of the word subjects to boys, American education is sadly off base in terms of future citizenship and in terms of what people need to lead happy, useful lives.

5. Men a lot better than I am have tried to make the points I'm going to make now, but instead of referring you to their writings I'm going to try my own version. People like Hutchins of Chicago go to ridiculous lengths in making claims for the kind of education that stresses the word subjects. They give the impression that just reading Virgil and Homer and studying dead civilizations unlocks the understanding of life. They reduce the "utilitarian subjects" to the level of cooking. But the other extreme is just as bad, and has made a lot more

headway in forming the actual attitude of American youth toward education.

6. To listen to the utilitarians you would think that human progress began with the development of the scientific method about three hundred years ago and that the outstanding achievements of man have been the invention of radio, the harnessing of electricity, and the development of modern medicine. As a matter of fact, the greatest invention of the human race is language (and thought: thinking is just talking to yourself, not out loud. You think with words, and you can't think without words).

7. To realize the relative importance of language suppose first of all that all the doctors in Washington suddenly died. The death rate would go up, maybe epidemics would result, work would be performed less efficiently. Within a month you would probably notice some difference in your daily life. But now suppose everybody in Washington suddenly forgot language. Work, all work, would stop. Transit would stop. All food distribution would stop. People unable to organize their food supply would kill each other to get at what food was available. Within a week most of the population would be dead and the rest would be in Rock Creek Park grubbing for roots to eat. It's a far-fetched example, but you need one like that to point out the obvious.

8. It's a bad thing that there should be people like me around who don't know a volt from a velocity; bad for me and bad for the society of which I'm a part. My education was one-sided, I must admit. But it's a thousand times worse that the world is full of people who can't make a clear statement of a thought, which is another way of saying they can't think straight. Talking (either to yourself or somebody else) is a technique like building dynamos or growing turnips or removing tonsils. Centuries upon centuries went into developing the technique of talking. The finest men who ever lived gave their lives to it—and their contribution is, even in a strictly utilitarian sense, the most important. The radio is useful only because of the words and music that come over it. Radio is a marvel, of course, but compared to a symphony or a poem or a news broadcast it's just a mechanical gadget, a detail that helps us get the all-important sounds faster and more conveniently.

9. Not everybody has to work in words (although there are calculations indicating that in a really advanced civilization like ours about 40 per cent of the people work in, or in support of, the word occupa-

tions, as distinguished from the thing occupations). But everybody has to know a lot about words and how to use them. I can get by without being able to build a dynamo; but the dynamo builder can't get by without words.

10. The next most important human developments are the sciences of politics and economics. They are particular branches of the word sciences. They are the techniques by which people organize their relations with one another. A herd of sheep follows a set of rules that are different from the behavior of an individual sheep and which can't be figured out even if you know all about an individual sheep. Sheep pick leaders, make herd decisions as to where they will graze, whether they will run or walk, and so on. Those rules and decisions, which nobody understands, are sheep politics.

11. Even with the tenderest care by shepherds and dogs, sheep couldn't survive without their politics. Men are their own shepherds and dogs. They don't get any help in working out their politics of how to organize themselves to survive and progress. They have to figure out every hard decision in the light of factors whose interrelation is as much more complex than radar as radar is more complex than a simple lever. Fortunately, each generation doesn't have to start from scratch. The record of politics, economics, and sociology—and of technological development for that matter—is contained in history and in art. (Art, including music, is really a highly intensified kind of history. You may not believe this; sometime if you're interested I'll try to prove it to you. Give me a month's notice to get the evidence together.)

12 Sheep have a herd instinct that tells them to get under a sheltering bank when they smell a blizzard coming. Men have no political instinct to protect them. Instead, we have history, which takes the place of instinct. A people which doesn't know history is like a sheep which can't smell a wolf in the wind. In a democracy a citizen cannot entirely delegate to experts his duty of thinking (language) and his share in exercising the herd instinct for self-preservation (history).

13. Not all history (as I indicated in that crack about art) is contained in history books. Some of the best history is in novels: Lord Wavell, who is a damned good soldier, as Marshal Rommel found out, told the graduating class at Sandhurst, the British West Point, to learn something about history and humanity and to do it by reading good historical and other novels. One of the most important questions of our day, for instance, is what the Russian people are like. If any-

body ever wrote a decent history of Russia, I haven't been able to find it. But there was a crop of magnificent Russian novelists and story-tellers who told the Russians and the rest of the world about the Russian character. Almost all that the world really knows of Russian temperament, personality, and development comes from Tolstoy (try *War and Peace*), Dostoievski (too gloomy for you), Chekhov (you might like him since you liked Saroyan: Saroyan is phony Chekhov).

14. Whether our chances of getting on with the Russians are good or bad, they are a lot better than they would be if there had been no Russian novelists, who made Russians into real, understandable people. Russian temperament has undoubtedly been changing since the Russian revolution; there have been no great writers handling the post-revolutionary period. Russian development and foreign relations in the next fifty years will be partly determined by whether novelists and playwrights arise in Russia who can explain the Russians to themselves and the rest of the world.

15. The ultra-materialists and the utilitarians tend to interpret all history in terms of things. They will explain the British Empire, for instance, by talking about the British coal and iron deposits. Undoubtedly, the British Empire would have been unlikely without the coal and iron. But the Chinese had more coal and iron than the British yet they went downhill during all the period in which coal and iron were most important. If you look for reasons for the difference, one thing worth noticing is that the English language kept getting better and better, more flexible, clearer, better able to express complicated things, during all the period of Britain's growth, while the Chinese language ceased to grow, tended to break up into dialects and to be a less and less useful instrument. A good case can be made for saying that Shakespeare (responsible for the greatest single advance in the English language) had more to do with the growth of the British Empire than his contemporary, Queen Elizabeth (who was a first-rate practitioner of politics), and that either of them was considerably more important than all the scientists and inventors put together.

III

16. I want to repeat for emphasis that this is *not* said to pooh-pooh the physical scientists or to try to talk you out of a field of work where I agree you belong. It is said to redress a balance in present-day American thinking, especially among people of your age. Ultra-

materialism, which concentrates on things, bears a large part of the responsibility for the war and for the mess the peace is quite likely to be. On every side people say the Germans are the way they are because their standard of living was so low. The Germans themselves believe they went to war in order to better a subnormal and unjust living standard imposed on them. Actually their living standard was one of the highest in the world. What ailed them was bad thinking, bad understanding of human nature, including their own, and an inability to present such case as they had in language that would induce other people to listen to them.

17. The German and American educational systems seem to be more alike than a lot of Americans realize. It's one of the things that worry me most about this country. Both our educational systems turn out enormous quantities of people sufficiently educated to be intelligent soldiers, skilled laborers, foremen, engineers, and third-rate lawyers and journalists. But as *people,* as human beings, it is doubtful if these expensively educated Germans and Americans are as wise, as happy, as mentally healthy as a French peasant or a German peasant or an American pioneer of a century ago. Obviously, the answer isn't to go back to illiterate peasantry. An industrialized world requires more education, not less. But—and this is the important thing—it requires an education that gives to a man of our time the simple human understanding that the peasant and the pioneer used to get naturally out of the lives they led and the surroundings in which they grew up.

18 Medicine, for instance, is a pretty good profession, especially for one of your temperament which combines a better-than-average knack of getting along with people and a mechanical and scientific bent. But too many of our American physicians, though expensively trained and full of medical information, are dull fellows and unenlightened citizens because their knowledge of people is limited to their specialty. This fact shouldn't discourage you from being a doctor; it should simply discourage you from being the kind of doctor who thinks human beings are just digestive machines with pocketbooks, or that the circulation of the blood is more important than the Constitution of the United States.

19. That goes for all the other fields open to you. Take farming: in your time that is going to be a far better profession than it has been for three generations. Why? Partly because of scientific advances; but these were making considerable headway in the seventy-five years ending about 1930, during which farming as a way of life kept get-

ting more and more unattractive and insecure. The main reason is because around 1930 some smart people dealing with words and ideas (including a lot of smart dirt farmers) began to figure out what was wrong with farming and began to make some headway in doing something about it. The things that were wrong weren't on the farm itself, they weren't physical things; they were ideas embodied in tariff laws; they were complicated matters like the relation of interest rates to farm prices and the relation of the price of what the farmer sold and what he bought. Farming is a physical science, but it was politics, economics, and the language which finally expressed clearly and effectively what was wrong, that saved the American farmer, and promises to make farming a decent life again. This doesn't mean that you must be an agricultural economist or a farm lobbyist. It means that a farmer has to know enough politics, economics, history, language, and human nature to be a good farmer-citizen. You can apply this to engineering or anything else.

20. The world is full of wonderful technicians making $40 a week and eating their hearts out because the profits of their work and the direction of their work are in the hands of lawyers, bankers, politicians, and other word-artists and organizers. The world, say the technicians, ought not to be like that. So it oughtn't, but the reason why it is lies in the technicians and the way they were trained. Organization—which is done with thoughts, with words—will always be more important, more difficult than any technique in the physical field. The organizers will always get the power because they perform the hardest job. The technicians will always be slaves to the word-artists until the technicians learn how to handle people, how to think logically outside their own narrow fields, how to talk, and how to live.

21. It's worth noticing that in this highly scientific war almost every important leader has been conspicuously a non-scientist. Roosevelt organized the greatest industrial war effort ever seen, yet there are few Americans who know as little about the technical side of industry as F.D.R. did. Churchill is strictly a poet. He looks very deeply into his country's history, into its soul, and puts what he sees in words that make people act. His speech "we will fight in the streets . . . on the hills" is worth more in purely military terms than all the secret weapons that ever came out of German laboratories. Churchill got that way from reading Shakespeare. . . .

IV

22. What does this add up to in terms of the decisions that you must soon make? In the first place, it is an argument against over-specialization at an early age in engineering or any other physical science. It is a plea that in choosing a college, picking courses, and above all in your general reading and interests, you try to develop that side of you which needs most development—namely, what the colleges call liberal arts or the humanities. These are the really practically important achievements of the human race; the ones which determine whether we go ahead or back. An engineer or a farmer, as well as a lawyer or a journalist, who doesn't know a little of them is likely to be frustrated as a person and not very useful as a citizen. . . .

23. What college you go to is important but not as important as the attitude with which you go. I assume you read the Pearlstein story. We all got a laugh at this guy walking around a campus and never attending a class or cracking a book. Probably his Polish ancestors would have given their eye-teeth for his chance to get into a college. Yet in one generation, so bad is our system of explaining education to the young, the Pearlsteins produce an offspring without enough curiosity to sit through a lecture. I think about half our high school and college students are Pearlsteins. Let me say again that it is not the fault of the Pearlsteins but of the schools that the Pearlstein attitude develops. But every individual Pearlstein must accept the responsibility for not learning. Bad as they are, the schools have the stuff on tap. You can get it if you look for it.

24 It may take you quite a while to digest this. Don't try to accept or reject it right away. Let it rattle around a little and jot down some comments or points on which you might like further examples or argument. Above all don't worry about yourself. You're doing fine. If you weren't I wouldn't bother to write such a long letter to you.

Love,

C. B.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

"What profession should I follow, and how should I train for it?" These questions, so often asked by students, lead to the immediate and practical question, "What courses should I take?" To one student asking these queries as he was about to reach college age, his father

offered a tentative answer in the actual letter partly reprinted here. In 1945, when the letter was written, the choice of a career for a seventeen-year-old was complicated by the imminence of various possible forms of military service, actual or proposed. The parts of the letter dealing with this problem have been omitted as no longer of such immediate interest. What remains, however, is an informal but wise and forceful argument against too narrow an education.

1. The immediate retort to a man busy persuading others to take his advice is the query, "What do you know about the matter, anyhow? What are your qualifications to speak on the subject?" How does the author of this letter forestall this objection, and how does he do it tactfully? What is the main purpose of pars. 1-3? Do you find other examples of tact in pars. 4 and 5? In par. 24?

2. A wise controversialist makes clear to his readers just which opinions, attitudes, or courses of action he is upholding and which he is not. In par. 5 this author first makes clear what he is not arguing for. Can you find a later place where he restates this careful limitation? Why is he so emphatic about it?

3. Since the author believes to be false and pernicious the theory of human values which he finds to be widely prevalent in America, the course of his argument is determined by his need to refute the prevailing theory and suggest wherein it needs mending. The ideas he is attacking are stated first at the beginning of par. 6. How does he go about demolishing them and the assumptions underlying them? How is par. 15 linked in idea to pars. 6-9?

4. Pars. 6-15 develop the author's central conclusion about the relative importance of the "word occupations" and the "thing occupations." Pars. 16-21 reinforce this conclusion by applying it to groups of people, some of whom have suffered by lack of word skills and others of whom have profited by the use of word skills. Which are which?

5. Note how the author in par. 22 makes the specific application of his general argument and at the same time sums up that argument. What is the function of par. 23? Does it connect with anything in par. 1?

6. Discuss the appropriateness of the language of this letter to its purpose. Consider on the one hand such expressions as *off base* (par. 4) and *phony* (par. 13), and on the other hand words like *ultra-materialists* and *utilitarians* (par. 15).

Suggestions for Writing

1. A letter to my parents.
2. An answer from the seventeen-year-old son.
3. In par. 6 the author specifies one attitude toward human progress. What is your definition of progress?
4. In par. 11 the author parenthetically remarks that art "is really a highly intensified kind of history." Interpret this statement, drawing examples from your acquaintance with the arts.

Lowering the Economic Barriers *

by JAMES BRYANT CONANT

The report of the President's Commission on Higher Education dated December 1947 recommended that:

> The American people should set as their ultimate goal an educational system in which at no level—high school, college, graduate school or professional school—will a qualified individual in any part of the country encounter an insuperable economic barrier to the attainment of the kind of education suited to his aptitudes and interests.

2. With this general statement of the doctrine of equality of educational opportunity no one who accepts the basic tenets of our American democratic faith can possibly disagree. When it comes to a formulation of the ways and means of lowering the present economic barriers, however, there is ample ground for disagreement even among the most enthusiastic supporters of public education. Take the question of the professions, for example. No one can doubt that before the war many boys and girls who, if properly educated, would

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have become leaders of professions did not proceed with their advanced education. In part this was the failure of our elementary and secondary schools which to a large degree has been a consequence of inadequate financial support. This failure is clearly one type of economic barrier, for relatively well-to-do parents may send their boys and girls to private schools and thus prepare them for eventual professional education.

. . . . .

3. Let us start with the elementary and secondary schools. These institutions are firmly rooted historically in the local community. In spite of a considerable diversity in the development of universal education in the different states, I think it safe to say that the doctrine of local control of the school is one of the beliefs ingrained in the American mind. The connection of this idea with our general theory of the relation of the individual to organized society is evident. Perhaps it springs from a pioneer reluctance to admit the validity of any control by a government official who is not a local personage subject to removal by those who temporarily gave him power. Whatever historians or political theorists may say, the implicit assumption of the average citizen about his school involves the fundamental notion of local control. As far as possible the school should be the direct responsibility of the local people. Only thus can the school serve the community; furthermore, in a nation with great geographic diversity only by adherence to this idea can we have a harmonious development of public education. So far, so good; even the most cautious taxpayer and the most conservative supporter of public schools will subscribe to these premises.

4. The constitutional unit on matters of education, however, is not the town or city, but the state. This fact may be a jolt to some readers, but is obviously a consequence of the nature of our Federal structure. In each one of the forty-eight states of the Union, public education is organized by laws and the state constitution. The degree of supervision of the activities of the local communities in school matters varies enormously from state to state. By and large one may say that the basic notion of the maximum of local control has been adhered to by a delegation of authority: the state has given to the local government or school district the power to raise money to support the schools through taxes primarily on real estate. The sovereign state has likewise granted to local groups the power to elect officials to run the school. Generalizing over a wide and uncertain area, one may say that

to the degree that local taxes can support the schools in any given state, the relation of the local school to the state government is tenuous. In recent years, however, it has become more and more evident that the taxing base of the local community is not broad enough to support the type of school required by our modern society. Even in some of the older and more conservative states it is becoming increasingly clear that the taxing power of the state as such must be invoked in order to provide sufficient funds for the local schools in many cities, towns and rural areas. The relative amount of money raised by state taxes and allocated to local schools varies enormously; in a few states it is as low as 15% of the total school expenditures, and in at least one as high as 90%. The proper percentage depends entirely on the situation in the state in question.

5. The rational method of handling this whole complicated subject of the source of taxes for public schools would seem to be as follows: the legislature should set the standards for all the public schools in the state in general terms and determine a sound program for jointly financing schools through a combination of state and local taxes. The legislature must also determine the fair share in terms of local tax rates which each district will contribute. All local units should be encouraged to support schools beyond the minimum established throughout the state to the extent of their willingness to use their own tax resources for this purpose. Of course, history, traditions, and politics prevent in every state any simplified and logical approach to a complex matter. For one cannot consider raising money for schools without bringing in the whole problem of taxation.

6. Curiously enough there is relatively little interest in this whole question of the relation of the state to the school in many sections of the country where the tradition of local autonomy is strong. Local taxpayers' associations, which at times have been rather hostile critics of the public schools, often assume that the *status quo* must continue as regards the allocation of taxes; assuming that the local real estate must carry the burden, they sometimes argue only in terms of the effect of school expenditures on the local taxes, ignoring the broader issue of increasing state aid. To be sure, the number of different systems in effect throughout the United States is so great and the details so confusing that no clear-cut issue can be dramatized on a national scale. As a consequence, probably not one civic-minded citizen in ten knows how the schools in his town or city are financed or what state laws affect the operations.

7. There is no question, of course, but that the entire state as the sovereign body has a responsibility for all the schools. We have always been a mobile people in geographic terms, and are perhaps more so today than ever before. The boy or girl being educated in a rural school is a future citizen of the state, not just a resident of an isolated village. This is the reason why state funds must increasingly flow to the local schools. This is the reason why the state educational authorities must take a certain degree of responsibility in all school matters. The ideal relationship between the statehouse and the town or city or school district should be not one of control or supervision but of intelligent and broad leadership. There are examples of sound practice in this regard in the United States, and other cases where the situation could and should be improved. A critical comparative study of the relation of the state to the public local school in each of the forty-eight states would be illuminating. Perhaps some citizens' committee or a national group will sponsor the writing of such a document for laymen. If so, it should be put in the hands of all leaders of the nation.

8. We are now ready to tackle the thorny question of Federal aid. Here the disagreement is apt to become violent indeed. But I submit, an analysis of the question of state aid is a prerequisite to an intelligent discussion of this highly controversial topic. Federal aid to the states to assist elementary and secondary education is but the logical extension of state aid for local schools. Federal funds are a necessity in those states where extending the tax base to the state still fails to provide adequate support for the elementary and secondary schools. The fact of the matter is that the resources of certain of our states are simply insufficient to finance the type of school our society requires in the mid-twentieth century. And everyone who has doubts about the principle of Federal aid for our elementary and secondary schools must recall that in every state we are educating future citizens of the entire nation. This is the answer to the question often heard—why should the residents of the wealthy states be taxed by the Federal government to supply funds for the education of children in the poorer states? The reply is that the future citizens of a wealthy state, perhaps of a rich city, are being educated right now in some of the economically backward states, and their education is shockingly inadequate in many instances.

9. Few challenge the statement that the schools in certain sections of this country are very poor, largely because of the small amount of

money expended. In a great number of rural areas, towns, and even cities our public schools are far below any reasonable standard. The proponents of Federal aid readily concede that to some degree this gross inadequacy, reflected in the salaries of the teachers, is due to the failure of the state itself to do its share; in some instances it is the result of corrupt politics; but in at least a dozen states the basic cause is the lack of taxable resources in the state itself. The opponents of Federal aid have a hard time denying this proposition.

10. The figures presented before the Congressional committees considering legislation on this subject since the war show conclusively that some states do not have the resources to provide a satisfactory education from either local or state taxes. For example, one may examine the expenditure per child in average daily attendance and the percentage of the income in the state spent for schools. In 1944-45, thirty states spent for public schools from 1.5 to 2.6 per cent of the total income of their citizens (a figure which is calculated as is the national income and a measure of the state's potential capacity to raise funds by rigorous taxation). Yet in that group of states we find New Jersey by expending 1.74 per cent of its people's income provided $198 per child in school, while North Carolina by expending 1.91 per cent raised only $69 per child in school. And Mississippi provided only $45 per child in school by using 1.64 per cent of its citizens' total income. While few would deny that almost every state should spend a greater per cent of its income for schools, it is clear that in not a few states even raising the figure to the average of the highest half dozen states (2.38 per cent) would still leave a very low figure for the expenditure per child. Thus, in North Carolina 2.38 per cent of the total income of the state's inhabitants in 1945 would have provided $86, and in Mississippi only $65 per child. Compare these figures with the $127 or more per pupil spent in 1944-45 by over half of the states. (Note the figures are per child in school. They are based on the average daily attendance. The average spent per child in each state would be smaller, for in some states many children of school age are not in school.)

11. The ideal pattern of state aid places the maximum responsibility on the local community; this responsibility means local control and likewise a high local tax rate. The ideal pattern for Federal aid should involve the flow of funds only to those states which have already demonstrated that they have done their utmost from their own resources, and where in spite of the state's effort the funds available

per pupil are below a minimum figure. (Detailed formulas for making some such criteria effective were carefully worked out as a basis for the legislation sponsored in 1947-48 by Senator Taft.) Just as the state taxing power should supplement but not supplant a high local tax for local schools, so, too, the Federal taxing power should be a supplement to state and local support. The Federal government should provide additional assistance only to those states which require aid to raise education to a minimum standard, and which have clearly demonstrated their willingness to tax themselves to the limit for this purpose.

12. Federal control is potentially far more dangerous than state control. Indeed, the dangers in this quarter loom so large in some people's minds that they are opposed to all Federal aid. This attitude is one I understand but with which I heartily disagree; on the one hand it fails to appreciate the real need, and on the other is too defeatist about the nature of our democracy. Granted a sufficient number of wide-awake citizens with a *national* interest in public education to act as watch dogs on Congress, we need not be too apprehensive about educational bureaucracies or centralized control. Admittedly we must arouse far greater interest in the welfare of education among our people. But powerful political pressures already exist which guarantee that a stiff fight will always be waged for a decentralized school system. School administrators and school teachers are almost unanimous in their vigorous insistence on the doctrine of local control of education, and they are well organized and well led. As long as their voice is heard (and it will be), I have little fear that Federal funds granted to the states for the use of public schools will lead to Federal control of our local education.

13. There is one aspect of this problem that is not at first apparent, and yet which is of prime importance. Federal funds should flow to the *state* and be dispersed within the state by state authorities acting according to state law. If this principle is adhered to in any plan for Federal aid to schools, control of education from Washington by the most zealous bureaucrat will be almost impossible to achieve. Let it be noted carefully that the points of contact, so to speak, would be kept to forty-eight; no Federal agents would be involved at the school level. Federal funds would be merged with state funds; thus the problem of Federal control merges with the problem of state control, always an issue before the voters.

[14] A bit of history is important in this connection. We have had some experiences with the use of Federal funds spent *locally by Federal administrators* for educational purposes. In the thirties we saw the growth of something approaching a system of Federal vocational schools throughout the country. This was the outgrowth of the vast expenditure of Federal money for relief. Without entering into any argument about the necessity for this program or the general pattern of the administration of such relief, one may say categorically that the educational implications were most serious. A competition developed between schools inadequately financed but locally controlled and parallel institutions amply supplied from Washington and controlled from Washington. The prospects were not pleasant for those who see the necessity for community responsibility for education. The lessons of this period should not be forgotten. If our well-established public schools founded on the doctrine of a high degree of local autonomy are properly supported, there will be no subsequent temptation to repeat this experiment. The pattern will be set for Federal expenditures for school purposes on an indirect, not a direct, basis.

[15] One may hope that if a proper pattern be established, certain practices now in existence can be altered. Over the years there has grown up a piecemeal approach to the whole problem of spending Federal money for education. Congress now votes funds to be expended in our schools for special purposes such as vocational training and school lunches. A review of this whole situation is badly needed; some of the expenditures should be eliminated and others coördinated and fitted into a sound scheme of administration. Washington should deal with state authorities, not with the local schools; Federal agents should be conspicuous by their absence.

[16] Before leaving the whole subject of the support of the elementary and secondary schools, it is worth reiterating the obvious fact that in some areas in almost every state and in almost every area in certain states, the inadequacies of the schools constitute the chief barrier to advanced education. Finding a proper tax base for the schools (local, state, and where necessary Federal) is an essential step in lowering the economic barriers to education. We focus attention too much, perhaps, on the transition from high school to college and often fail to realize how much talent is lost because of the insufficient public support of many of our secondary schools. To be sure, those with sufficient income in some localities can bypass inadequate public schools by sending the children to private schools. And this is done

to an alarming extent throughout the urban centers of the nation—more so than a generation or two ago. That this practice represents a retreat from our goal of equality of opportunity and thus diminishes our national solidarity needs no emphasis. Our free elementary and secondary schools should be the first concern of all thoughtful believers in American democracy. The first call on Federal money should be at this crucial point. . . .

* * *

Commentary and Questions

The president of the oldest, wealthiest, and most famous university in the United States has long looked far beyond the gates of Harvard Yard to consider the educational problems of the whole country at all levels. In Chapter 10 of his *Education in a Divided World,* President Conant asserts the need of more and better public schooling, made available to qualified students without regard to the size of their fathers' pocketbooks. The chapter discusses the financing of elementary and secondary schools, suggests a modified Federal scholarship plan for college students and an increase in two-year community colleges, and points out the necessity for a more realistic attitude toward selecting and counseling students. Only the first portion of the chapter, dealing with elementary and secondary schools, is reprinted here.

1. This selection progresses carefully from recommendations that nearly everyone can agree with to those that are likely to arouse more and more disagreement. Why is the author himself so careful to point this out? Upon which of his recommendations does he spend the most time? How is par. 16 related to par. 2?

2. To persuade people to your point of view, it is often necessary to anticipate their objections. In this selection the author does not always state his opponents' objections specifically, but he is nearly always careful to meet the objections that are likely to be made. In par. 4, for example, he concedes that local tax support was for a long time sufficient for local schools. A natural question is, "If local support has been enough till now, why bring in the state?" How does Conant answer this? Find other places where he similarly anticipates objections and meets them.

3. The author supports some of his assertions by statistics and factual evidence, others by drawing deductions from premises he assumes the reader will accept. Point out examples of each.

4. To what kind of reader is the author addressing his argument? Does the force of his appeal rest on style or on content, on emotion or on fact and logic?

Suggestions for Writing

1. What my state ought to do for its schools.
2. Federal support for the fine arts.
3. The dangers in indiscriminate education.
4. What kind of high schools should we have?
5. A letter to the Board of Education.
6. Subsidies for students.
7. The advantages or disadvantages of junior colleges.

The Case Against the Comics[*]

by JOHN MASON BROWN

The comics, alas, like death and taxes, are very much with us. And, to my way of thinking, they are equally unfunny. Why they are called comics, when people who read them—young and old—almost always look like undertakers, eludes me. But we'll let that pass. Just as most of us as parents have had to let comics pass into our homes—against our wills, against our wishes, against our better judgment.

2. I love comedians, the highest and the lowest. I love cartoons, too. My allergy to comics, however, is complete, utter, absolute. I know there are bad comics, and I presume there are good comics. I have read a few of both—under protest. But I regret them both. I deplore them. And, to continue the understatement, I abhor them. So far as I am concerned, they might just as well be written in a foreign language for which no dictionary was ever published. I wish they had been.

3. Let me quickly admit that I am low enough, and sometimes defeated enough, as a parent, to make use of comics. I mean in desperate moments when, of a rainy Sunday morning or afternoon, I want peace

[*] From *The Saturday Review of Literature*, March 20, 1948. By permission of the publishers and the author. Copyright 1948 by Saturday Review Associates, Inc.

in the home. Or when I am traveling with my two sons on a train and need to subdue them. Then—yes, I'll confess it—then I do resort to comics. Without shame. Without conscience.

4. On such occasions I don't so much distribute comics as I administer them to my sons. Much as a barkeep would pour out a Mickey Finn. Or a doctor employ a hypodermic. As knockout drops for unruly children, as sedatives and Maxim silencers, comics do have their undeniable uses. This much I'll concede, gratefully.

5. I'll also grant that so long as other people's children read comics we have scant hope, and perhaps less right, to keep our own from doing so. It would be unfair for us to deny to our children what is now a group experience and, when they have grown up, will have become a group memory of their generation.

6. If I hate the comics, I have my reasons. I know that, as part of a healthy diet, everyone needs a certain amount of trash. Each generation has always found its own trash. I doubt if our grandfathers were harmed by the dime novels about Kit Carson, Jesse James, etc., on which they fed. I doubt, too, if Little Nemo, Mutt and Jeff, Foxy Grandpa, Buster Brown, or the Katzenjammer Kids did serious damage to those of my vintage when we read them once a week.

7. Give me Henty, "The Rover Boys," "The Motor Boys," or "Tom Swift on the Mississippi," or any books written in words for those who can read, any day in preference to the comic books. The comic books, however, as they are nowadays perpetually on tap, seem to me to be, not only trash, but the lowest, most despicable, and most harmful form of trash. As a rule, their word selection is as wretched as their drawing, or the paper on which they are printed. They are designed for readers who are too lazy to read, and increase both their unwillingness and inability to do so.

8 I won't and can't deny that comic books fascinate the young as, in terms of pigs, rabbits, rodents, morons, and supermen, they tell their illustrated stories. But, as a writer, I resent the way in which they get along with the poorest kind of writing. I hate their lack of both style and ethics. I hate their appeal to illiteracy and their bad grammar. I loathe their tiresome toughness, their cheap thrills, their imbecilic laughter.

9. I despise them for making only the story count and not the HOW of its telling. I detest them, in spite of their alleged thrills and gags, because they have no subtlety, and certainly no beauty. Their power of seduction, I believe, lies in the fact that they make everything too

easy. They substitute bad drawing for good description. They reduce the wonders of the language to crude monosyllables, and narratives to no more than printed motion pictures.

10. What riles me when I see my children absorbed by the comics is my awareness of what they are not reading, and could be reading. In other words, of the more genuine and deeper pleasures that they could be having.

11. To compare Bugs Bunny or Donald Duck with "The Jungle Book" or even "The Travels of Babar"; to set Wanda, the Wonder Woman against "Alice in Wonderland," Batman and Robin, Dick Tracy, and Gene Autry against "Treasure Island," Li'l Abner against "Huck Finn" or "Tom Sawyer," or Superman and Captain Marvel against Jules Verne or "Gulliver's Travels," is to realize that, between the modern cave-drawing (which a comic book is) and a real book, there is—to put it mildly—a difference. A tragic difference, which is hard on the young, and may be harder on the future.

12 Anatole France once described even the best books as being "the opium of the Occident." Well, most comics, as I see them, are the marijuana of the nursery; the bane of the bassinet; the horror of the house; the curse of the kids; and a threat to the future. They offer final and melancholy proof that, even among the young, the mind is the most unused muscle in the United States.

13. I don't care how popular comics are with the young or, worse still, with the old. They seem to me to be sad proofs of arrested undevelopment. Time in the modern world is no longer something to be wasted. The moment has overtaken us, whether we like it or not, and most of us do not, when as a people we must grow up. In order to grow up, we must put behind us that fear of the best and that passion for the mediocre which most Americans cultivate.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

This selection and the one following were presented over the radio on March 2, 1948, as part of the program called "America's Town Meeting of the Air." Two of the four speakers on the program were John Mason Brown, a writer and critic (whose work is represented by two more selections in this volume), and Al Capp, creator of the comic strip "Li'l Abner." The debate took place at a time when certain comic books were under attack by various educators, social workers, and psychologists as having on children ill effects ranging

from disturbance of emotional stability to incitement toward crime and delinquency. It is important to note that, though both of these speeches are capable arguments, they do not attack and defend comics on the same grounds. They are therefore to be considered as opposing arguments on the same subject, but not as answers to each other.

1. After the two opening paragraphs, which state his position very forcefully without as yet giving explicit reasons, John Mason Brown in pars. 3-4 uses an argumentative device which may be called the "devastating concession." What does he concede and why is the concession of no comfort to defenders of the comics? Note that he reminds the audience of this point in par. 12.

2. Par. 6 contains a less devastating though still damaging concession. Pars. 7-11 elaborate and defend the term *trash* and thereby develop the author's main reason for attacking comics. Exactly what is this reason? Show how the author enforces this one central reason with a variety of illustrations and restatements. Note that par. 13 re-applies this same reason as the author's parting shot.

Suggestions for Writing

1. Trash I have liked.
2. Movie magazines.
3. How to develop a child's mind.
4. Are movie cartoons superior to printed comics?

The Case for the Comics[*]

by AL CAPP

This whole thing gives me an idea for one of those daily contributions to juvenile delinquency which I call—rather defiantly—my comic strip.

2. The scene is the typical American home of a typical American family—named Kinsey, of course. Supper is over, and seated in the

[*] From *The Saturday Review of Literature*, March 20, 1948. By permission of the publishers and the author. Copyright 1948 by Saturday Review Associates, Inc.

living room are Mr. and Mrs. Kinsey and their eleven-year-old son, Kingsblood. They're discussing what they've read in that day's typical American newspaper. Mr. Kinsey says he's mighty pleased about the new atomic bomb which can blast the bloody brains out of two or three hundred million irritating foreigners—and then he chats about that prize fight in Chicago that resulted in one of the young athletes being punched to death in front of thousands of happy, cheering, typical American sport lovers. But Mrs. Kinsey is more interested in talking about the latest society divorce and the published front-page excerpts from the fun-loving young matron's diary in which she refers with fine, wholesome frankness to her dates with twenty or thirty of her ever-loving husband's dipsomaniac chums.

3. Well! Little Kingsblood has gone through all that—and, frankly, it bored him. He's reading the one page of the family newspaper where there's real action—the comic page.

4. Mrs. Kinsey, noticing that little Kingsblood is not joining in this uplifting discussion of the front page of their family newspaper, glances over his shoulder and screams a typical horrified-American-mother-type scream.

5. "Look!" she screams to Mr. Kinsey, "Look at what your child is reading."

6 "It's only Dick Gravy," replies little Kingsblood. (I refer here to a great and wonderful detective comic strip which shall remain nameless, because I am too shrewd to give a rival all this valuable publicity.)

7. "Only Dick Gravy my eye!" snarls his mother. "Why, this thing is full of murder, crime, violence—and look—There's even a boy in it who doesn't think a girl in it is repulsive! So . . . it's full of S-E-X, TOO!!"

8. Mr. Kinsey now speaks: "I've been reading several articles lately by several psychologists or psychiatrists, or something, that state that these stories of murder, crime, violence, and S-E-X are very bad stuff for kids, son! Why do you bother with that old comic page anyhow, son? Why don't you read the news, son?"

9. It's his son he's talking to.

10. "I did, Pop," replies the lad. "It's all full of murder, crime, violence—" and he winks, ". . . and S-E-X, too!!"

11. Mr. Kinsey looks over the front page of the newspaper and he's got to admit that the kid is right. He tears the newspaper up, and he

says, "Then, according to those articles by child psychologists, news is bad stuff for kids, and those psychologists must be right, because all the articles ABOUT psychologists all say they're always right and *those* articles must be right, because they're written by other psychologists."

12 "Son!" Mr. Kinsey says, pulling a volume off the bookshelf, "Why don't you read a good book instead? Like 'Oliver Twist'?"

13. "I read it," reports little Kinsey, "it's about a kid who falls in with a criminal named Fagin, who teaches him how to commit crimes, and there's a big ape in it named Sykes, who beats a girl to death, and—"

14 "Stop!" cries his father, "Stop!—I can see now that the works of Charles Dickens are very bad for kids." He tears them all up. He feels he owes this to the child psychologists.

15 Now, Mr. Kinsey, with all those articles by the psychologists in his mind, goes through his typical American-family-bookshelf. He reexamines "Treasure Island" and "Kidnapped" by Robert Louis Stevenson, and finds several very juicy murders, lots of rip-roaring crime and violence in them, and he tears 'em all up!!

16 "Alice in Wonderland" must go, because the Queen in that keeps saying "Off with their heads!!" and that is not only violent, but it often results in death.

17 Well, pretty soon there's nothing left in the house except the phone directory and a volume of the complete works of Shakespeare.

18 With a sigh, li'l Kingsblood picks up the Shakespeare and begins to read.

19 With a loud roar of "No! No! No! my child!!" his father snatches it away from him in the nick of time!!!!!!

20. "This book is full of stories of murder, crime, violence, and S-E-X!" he roars.

21. "But Pop!" says little Kingsblood—"it's Shakespeare!"

22. "Fancy names don't fool me," replies his father. "I've read those articles by those psychologists. If they're right, Shakespeare is poison for kids—if they're right, it's a very bad influence!"

23. Comic strips are nothing new. They're as old a form as the written word itself. Just combinations of pictures and text that tell stories. The Egyptians did 'em, in their own way, in the tombs of the Pharaohs. Milt Caniff and I do 'em now in our own way. Comic strippers are storytellers—just the same as people who write radio shows and books and movies.

24. Some of us are right—some are wrong. It's the same with child psychologists: Some are right—some are wrong! But, don't worry about the kids, they're usually right!

* * *

Commentary and Questions

Al Capp's defense of comics (which should, of course, be read in connection with the preceding selection and the comments at the end of it) is a lively example of the method of argument known as *reductio ad absurdum*—reduction to an absurdity. By this method a debater pushes his opponent's line of reasoning to its logical extreme, hoping thereby to convince his audience that if the extreme is absurd, the reasoning itself is false at every level. Here, of course, Al Capp is poking fun at the assertion that the comics, by exploiting violence, crime, and curvaceous females, tend to impair children's emotional health and predispose them to crime.

1. What is the irony of par. 2?
2. How valid is Capp's method of argument? Are any paragraphs of the selection less effective than the rest?
3. When a controversialist wants to win opponents over to his point of view, he avoids unduly antagonizing them. Is Capp particularly gentle with child psychologists? To whom is he actually addressing his argument?

Suggestions for Writing

1. A distinction between comic books and adventure stories.
2. Are readers of tabloids psychologically healthy?
3. Many subjects lend themselves to treatment by the method of *reductio ad absurdum*. Write an argument of this sort; for example, a defense of coeducation.

Moonlight and Poison Ivy[*]

by DAVID L. COHN

I

There is little doubt that our attitudes toward marriage, stemming as they must from our attitudes toward life and living, are crippling, if not fatal, to the central relationship in men's lives. If we tell the young that life is easy, when it is hard; that it is kind, when it is replete with cruel ironies; that all is to be had for the asking, when every blessing must be paid for singly or doubly; that it is a succession of high moments, when most of it is pedestrian; that it is "romantic," in the sense of affording high adventure, when its glory lies in man's struggle against forces he cannot even comprehend; that bigness is greatness and success is achievement—if we teach all these things, then not only is youth corroded, corrupted, and misled, while its wellsprings are poisoned at the source, but the revulsion when it comes is, and must be, shattering.

2 Yet this is what we do tell the young; what they are told every day by many magazines, the movies, the radio, and national advertisers. It is, apparently, what we believe, or affect to believe. It is also false, it does not square with human experience, and it is disastrous to marriage.

3 More and more, American marriage is coming to be a detour to divorce. The divorce rate alone does not fully illuminate the whole shabby matrimonial scene since it reflects only those cases of discord that are made public, but it is an index to private failure become national failure on a huge scale.

4. Of what significance are miracles of production, our hard work and ingenious gadgets, our cluttered catalogue of things sensible and nonsensical that make up our so-called high standard of living, if millions of men and women take little or no joy in each other; if the house vanishes, the family breaks up, the home is transient? For what does the ordinary man strive if not for a wife, a home, children, permanence of tenure and affection under one roof? And if these prove to be but an illusion, if the husband becomes an alimony payer, the

[*] From *The Atlantic Monthly*, January, 1949. By permission of the publishers and the author. Copyright 1948 by The Atlantic Monthly Company.

father a stranger to his children, the seeker for permanency a wanderer, is not ours a matrimonial anarchy?

5. Why should such anarchy prevail? There is no easy answer to this question. Investigators attribute it to sexual maladjustments, money troubles, friction with in-laws, poor housing, the increasing financial independence of women. These play their part, but some of its causes lie in our national character and attitudes. Marriage and divorce are what they are, to a large degree, because we are what we have become.

6. American marriage is dangerously weakened at its inception because of our preference for moonlight and poison ivy—the lies elders tell the young about marriage, and the hourly elaboration of these lies, cunningly persuasive, by many magazines, the radio, the movies, national advertisers. It is rarely portrayed for what it is: a difficult and demanding exercise in human relationships; a partnership, not without austerity, in which losses as well as profits are shared; an undertaking dynastic as well as individual. More commonly—vulgarly and infantilely—marriage is portrayed as a gumdrop heaven: soft, gooey, chewy, and oh, so sweet.

7. It is, of course, a heaven of huge dimensions—not for us a one-room, walk-up Nirvana—so that the couple attaining it must move about in a Cadillac with a sliding top, and are showered with completely furnished cottages, tickets for trips to Bermuda, whole wardrobes by Christian Dior, television sets, memberships in a country club, and two foam rubber clouds; all delicately scented with Elizabeth Arden's Blue Grass perfume. The country that invented the airplane and the drive-in movie, where you neck while you look, is certainly not going to cling to yesterday's antiquated model of marriage.

8. We are not content, therefore, to marry for reasons that have always moved most people elsewhere. It is not enough that marriage is desirable as a division of labor; that a man wants a woman to run his house and the woman wants a house to run. We scorn the fact that monogamic marriage was born of race experience, the trial-and-error method of centuries having demonstrated that, for most of us, it is the best way for a man and woman to live together and to transmit property through inheritance. We find it repulsive that marriage is no "It must be fate" relationship dreamed up by a bored faun who missed his train at Indianapolis.

9. Nor are we content, even, that marriage should proceed from love

as other men have known it, for this would be to recognize the emotion for what it, in part, is: bitter-sweet, subtly demanding, frequently tempestuous, and capable of vanishing for no apparent reason. It is intolerable to us who dread the tenuous as primitive men dread the evil eye, that love's life might hang upon threads so gossamer as the cadence of a voice, the clasp of hands, the looks of eyes, the word said, the word unsaid. We find it unbearable that love demands constant replenishing and care; as much care indeed as one gives to one's car. But we do not, for these reasons, reject romantic love in marriage. Allegedly we marry for no other reason. We have created our own moonlight and poison ivy image of love and marriage: a handsome couple, forever fair and young, perpetually embracing on the moon-misty shores of a Cytherea that the map reveals to be Deaf Smith County, Texas.

10. So, too, we say "Love is blind." We mean thereby that the lover sees no imperfections or incompatibilities in the beloved, and love's blindness, therefore, will ensure forever love and marriage. Since this is palpably false, and is indeed anti-romantic, lending to the one or the other a wooden perfection suitable for a department store dummy but not for flesh and blood, whose living wonder is its mixture of elements, it follows that when, some morning at the breakfast table, the shuttered eye sees once more, all is disillusion.

11 Other peoples, wiser perhaps than we, if less "romantic," give another interpretation to the same phrase. Love is blind, they say, because the lover consciously closes his eyes to the beloved's failings, content that the good outweighs the bad. These are not our optics, however, since in love we prefer the straight line irresolute, the rounded curve wavy. It is, moreover, a mature point of view that we find shocking because we invariably associate love with immaturity. Hence Hollywood grandmothers are condemned to go on playing ingénue roles, and Hollywood lovers, with arteries of '98, are forever Princeton '41.

12. We do not want to look at life steadily and whole, seeing that it is noble and ignoble, generous and mean, beautiful and ugly, cleanly and filthy, melancholy and joyous; compounded of pain as well as happiness; its gold inextricably mingled with baser metals. Not for us the concept that symmetry derives from asymmetry; or that, in the words of William Blake, "There is a strange disproportion in beauty."

13. Powerful agencies disseminate our deadly notion of marriage as a tinsel heaven on earth, often to the muted music of woodwinds blown

by those quaint people known as parents. For every dealer in reality who languishes for lack of trade, there are a thousand dealers in illusion besieged by anxious customers. Yet they did not invent the moonlight and poison ivy concept of love and marriage. They merely exploit what is in our minds.

II

14. High among our illusions affecting love, marriage, and much else —a natural child of moonlight and poison ivy—is the installment plan mentality. It dictates that you do not have to do anything, or become anything, if you can wangle the small down payment on what you want; the rest "just a few cents a day."

15. Do you want to marry a rich, handsome young man with (as the magazines put it) "lean flanks" and "strong teeth," the better to eat you, mah chile? It's easy. Simply use Princess Mafou's Face Powder. At your next dinner party three men, dead ringers for Winthrop Rockefeller, will trample one another in the rush to marry you.

16. Suppose you have no face. Do not be discouraged. Hands will do the trick as well; or eyelashes, fingernails, hair. There was the girl who could not bring her man to gaff until she discovered Beautress (pronounced Bow-tress). "My date with Bill that night," runs the ad, "found me confident in the new-found glamour of my sparkling Beautress lovely hair . . . His cheek touched its new alluring softness while we danced . . . My heart stood still when he murmured: 'Dream Girl, that gorgeous hair rates a bridal veil.' "

17. They were married in a rented submarine, spent their honeymoon at the Stork Club, occasionally left their Martinis to pick up a peck of emeralds at Cartier's, and because of the housing shortage are now roughing it in a twenty-room hut at Palm Springs. They are deliriously happy and will always be in a state of delirium. For when Bill occasionally looks grumpy, his Dream Girl orders a "festive walnut cake," chockful of genuine Shasta Brand Walnuts. "Imagine getting kissed for your cake!" says the ad.

18. This being the case, why should any woman burden herself with such old-fashioned backbreaking loads as brains, charm, literacy, efficiency, or resemblance to the human race? She can get her man with a shampoo and keep him with walnuts. Go to your favorite drugstore tomorrow, buy yourself a bottle of the American Dream in the new economy size, shake well before using, and live luxuriously ever afterward.

19. If you can read the ads, it is not unlikely that you can read a book, although the strain will be greater. There are dozens of books telling you how to handle every question of love and marriage in this happy world rapidly becoming free of dandruff. It is as simple as finding the recipe for lemon pie in Fannie Farmer. Why, then, be concerned with understanding and patience? Why listen to the shy counsel of the shy heart when the ready-made answer to your perplexities is at hand just as the biscuit mix is on your pantry shelf, leaving little to do except heat and serve?

20. Whence our feverish search for the easy way; our obsession with the opiate dream? Is it that we have no faith except in the infallibility of machinery and so stand incredulous and shaken when the airplane falls? Has ours become a culture from the periphery of the eyelids outward, lacking inner content? Are we, despite our physical energy, an intellectually lazy people, satisfied to take shadow for substance, package for contents, and black or white for truth because we are too lethargic to search out the nuances where truth, ever elusive, lies? Has some malign enchantment unfitted us to face life as it is, so that its essence escapes us and we face eventual destruction from within or from without? Is the high point of our civilization reached when a radio announcer screams to a nation enthralled, "That's right, Mrs. Deffenbaugh!" while $20,000 worth of things, including a houseboat and a wall can-opener, drop into the lap of the lucky winner?

21. Better marriage relations in this country await an extensive revaluation of our attitude towards life and living. If our values are shabby and our attitudes adolescent, how can American marriage, made in our image, be anything but a monumental failure?

* * *

Commentary and Questions

Many observers of American society have attacked its attitude toward marriage and its exploitation of material pleasures through advertising. Few have suggested so clearly and so concisely as David L. Cohn the connection of both attitude and exploitation with a fundamental error in values. In this article he urges his readers to recognize a truer standard of human life than that which we seem bent on upholding.

1. Although the first sentence of par. 1 and the last of par. 2 mention marriage, which is the immediate subject of the essay, the rest of pars. 1 and 2 are not directly concerned with marriage at all. Why? Show that this is fundamental to the author's whole treatment of the

subject. Note that he reminds us at intervals throughout the essay of his belief that the trouble lies deeper than mere maladjustment in marriage. How are pars. 5, 12, 13, 20, and 21 related to pars. 1 and 2?

2. Pars. 6-11 mingle and alternate the author's description of marriage as a wiser people would view it and his picture of marriage as we seem to regard it. What does he gain from setting details of the two pictures side by side? Why is the bitterly satiric sketch of marriage as it appears in American advertising delayed until pars. 14-19?

3. In demonstrating the nightmarish results of the bottled American dream of happiness, Cohn uses a much modified and more subtle version of the *reductio ad absurdum* method illustrated by Al Capp's defense of the comics (pp. 389-392). Here the logic and the characteristics of the system of values Cohn is opposing are only slightly exaggerated—just enough to show up their essential ridiculousness, not enough to let the reader feel that the picture is so overdrawn as to be inapplicable. Point out a few of these conscious exaggerations. Point out details that can be almost exactly paralleled in real life. Cohn means the reader to be amused by his exaggerations; what other feelings does he intend the reader to have?

4. Cohn's style is unusually rich in wit, well-turned sentences, and apt phrasing. What makes the second sentence in par. 1 so effective? Pars. 4, 19, and 20 make extensive use of searching questions. Why? Note how in the last two sentences of par. 11 Cohn translates a general statement into highly pungent concrete illustrations. Find other good examples of this technique. In par. 12 he echoes a well known phrase of Matthew Arnold ("to see life steadily and see it whole"); "forever fair and young" in par. 9 is probably an oblique allusion to Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn." Why are these allusions appropriate to the context? What does Cohn mean in talking about a "one-room, walk-up Nirvana" (par. 7) and "the shores of a Cytherea" (par. 9)? Why "moonlight and poison ivy"?

Suggestions for Writing

1. Mother love on the nation's billboards.
2. Hollywooden romance.
3. Marriage as a career.
4. History as seen through historical novels.

*The Last Days of Football**

by MORRIS BISHOP

The transformation of football may be traced back to the season of 1947, when Pasty Post, coach of South Dakota Wesleyan, first equipped his quarterback with a radio receiver. The device was merely an aviator's headset, surplus property from the war, which fitted neatly under the quarterback's helmet. Pasty Post claimed that this innovation was necessitated by the inability of his quarterback, Yegg Olsen, to remember, ratiocinate, or even count.

2. Pasty Post's little idea accounted, at least in part, for the brilliant success of South Dakota Wesleyan that year. It defeated, successively, New Jersey Christian, Weinberg Secretarial, and Our Lady of Sorrows in post-season games that extended the football season almost to Commencement Day.

3. At the annual coaches' convention, Post's device was bitterly denounced, especially by the coaches of New Jersey Christian, Weinberg Secretarial, and Our Lady of Sorrows. It was, however, upheld by the representatives of the great gas-and-oil companies that owned the football radio rights. For the gas-and-oil companies saw in it an answer to their own problem, one of profound seriousness. They had paid enormous sums for the privilege of broadcasting the games, and a number of the big classics had turned out to be downright dull. One of them, indeed (Death Valley Teachers vs. Dismal Swamp A. and M.), had been nothing but an endless series of ineffectual charges in mid-field for two mortal hours. The broadcast of this encounter had so bored the great radio audience that a number of listeners had actually turned their radios off.

4. The gas-and-oil companies were, therefore, warmly in favor of an innovation which, they felt, would ensure excitement to their listeners. They pointed out that they had too much money invested in

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football to leave the games entirely to chance. While they would not dream of interfering with the legitimate goals of sport, they had, after all, the right to insist that the performances should have that pace which the great radio audience demands, and which, gentlemen, it has a right to demand. They asked only a little friendly consideration of their problem. They argued that a coach who didn't use Post's device had to communicate with his performers by sending in a substitute with a message. Then, gentlemen, what happens? The timekeeper's whistle blows, the substitute runs out, slaps a player on the back. The slapped player runs off, the whistle blows, the team goes into a new huddle. Meanwhile, the announcer ad-libs about the cheerleaders or the lovely day. These delays are wearisome to the listener, are deplorable from the point of view of dramatic structure, and are contrary to all common sense. In these days of instantaneous communication, etc.

5. The coaches' convention accepted the courteous recommendations of the gas-and-oil companies as, in fact, orders. The system of coach-to-team radio communication was legalized in the rules for 1948. Meanwhile, to improve American football, the gas-and-oil companies retained some of the most brilliant radio producers and directors to lay out the strategy of the important games. Carefully refraining from prearranging the outcomes, these men labored to make the contests continuously interesting to the millions of listeners whose pleasure they had at heart. They insisted, for instance, that a big game should have a genuine dramatic structure, that it should not, as it too often had in the past, concentrate its interest in the first half and then trail off in a long, dull anticlimax. They made sure that stars who had captured the public affection should have a proper role in the field, and not be allowed to languish on the sidelines through some caprice of the coach. It was arranged that a radio man, in white knickers, should be constantly on the field, ready, after each sensational play, to broadcast a few words by the player involved.

6. The improvement in broadcast football was immediately noticeable. The season of 1948 was certainly the greatest in football history. But even at that time, it now appears, the seeds of disintegration were being sown.

7. On New Year's Day, 1949, the greatest game of the season was to be played in the Rose Bowl. The contestants were the Alaska Aggies and Panama Tech. The game was the property of Git-There Gas.

8. But just an hour before the game was scheduled to begin, both teams were laid low by food poisoning. A pretty problem was thus put up to Git-There Gas. Some fifty million people were sitting at their radios, demanding a play-by-play account of the classic. Git-There Gas could not fail its public. In a hasty conference, it was decided that the game must go on—in a New York radio studio.

9. Two of the most eminent football strategists in the world were placed opposite each other at a large table, with charts and lists of players before them. An umpire sat at mid-table. By turns, the strategists called their plays and defensive measures. The umpire decided between them—awarded yardage gained or lost, ruled passes complete or incomplete, and from time to time granted a touchdown. The conversation of all three was piped to a second studio, where a famous sports announcer sat before the microphone. The announcer, modulating his celebrated voice to broad amusement, quiet appreciation, agony, exultation, and hysteria, told the world. The sound-effects man used his most effective recordings of college bands, roars of the crowd, comic drunks, screams and moans of ladies epileptic with loyalty.

10 Never had there been such a football game. The strategists, snarling and sweating, produced plays of astounding subtlety and complication, and defenses that were marvels of brilliant improvisation. The deceptions and devices that long ago they had conceived in moments of midnight clairvoyance were now bodied forth. The umpire imperturbably ruled them successful or unsuccessful. Every now and then, he would maim one of the leading players, and half America would groan in unison. At the end, he ruled the game a tie.

11 It was obvious from the fan mail that this was the most successful football broadcast of all time, and the directors of Git-There Gas drew the logical conclusion. As far as radio was concerned, there was no reason why college football games—clumsy, amateurish, inartistic, unstructural—should be played at all. On every count, studio football was an improvement. It was decided that for the season of 1949 the enormous bother of reporting actual college games would be eliminated and that all football would originate in the radio studios.

12 During the 1949 season, most of the football fans stayed at home on Saturday afternoons to listen to the great Git-There Gas series. The colleges, deprived of radio revenue, and with their stadia occupied only by pitiful little bands of college students, were obliged to

curtail or abolish their sports programs. A number of the smaller colleges went bankrupt and were forced to close.

13. When, eventually, all the college athletic associations were disbanded and there were no regularly scheduled football games, the students invented a new game, which came to be called "soft football." It was played everywhere—in abandoned stadia and on vacant lots, and on campus quadrangles between classes—by students dressed in old clothes. Sometimes there were twenty or twenty-five on a side. It was great fun. It was, in fact, the same football that had been played in American colleges in 1870.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

Morris Bishop has written many witty satires for *The New Yorker.* Here he attacks one prevalent attitude toward college football by imaginatively carrying out to their logical conclusion the assumptions underlying that attitude.

1. For each of the following passages show what assumption is implied by it and what opposite assumption (presumably favored by the author) is contradicted by it:

a. "a number of the big classics had turned out to be downright dull" (par. 3).

b. "they had too much money invested in football to leave the games entirely to chance" (par. 4).

c. "his performers" (par. 4).

d. "The game was the property of Git-There Gas" (par. 7).

e. "college football games—clumsy, amateurish, inartistic, unstructural" (par. 11).

f. "their stadia occupied only by pitiful little bands of college students" (par. 12).

2. Is there any connection between the various assumptions satirized by details such as those quoted in question 1? Since Bishop's title is "The Last Days of Football," why doesn't he end with par. 12?

3. Suppose the author had written a serious essay attacking present-day attitudes toward football. In what ways do you think it would have been more effective than this bit of satire in changing the public's mind? In what ways less effective?

Suggestions for Writing

1. Mr. Bishop is unfair to colleges.
2. College football vs. professional football.
3. The last days of radio (when someone invented a machine that could make you laugh or cry at the touch of a button).

The Next Step[*]

by IRWIN EDMAN

"I am asking the Mayor," said Paul, "to appoint a committee on Un-New Yorkish activities." Paul is a perfect watchdog of the public good.

2. "Un-New Yorkish?" I said. "*Un-American* is vague enough, but Un-New Yorkish—what on earth is that?"

3. "That's the trouble," said Paul, "people see this sort of thing going on right under their noses and they haven't the slightest idea. I've met subversive anti-New Yorkers in your own apartment and you've been utterly blind. Even introduced me to some of them as kindred spirits. Of course, most people guilty of Un-New Yorkish activities were born elsewhere, or are the sons of people born elsewhere, but sometimes the worst traitors are bona fide native New Yorkers who have been corrupted. There has been a growing subtle propaganda against our established and traditional New York way of life. It's got into books, into the movies, into the newspapers. It's high time there was an inquiry! The subversive elements ought to be removed from our colleges, our schools, the city services. There are even said to be guards on the subways, mind you, who do all they can to persuade passengers that life in New York is not worth living, and to make things as uncomfortable as possible for those who seem to be happy

[*] From *The Saturday Review of Literature*, November 22, 1947. By permission of the publishers and the author. Copyright 1947 by Saturday Review Associates, Inc.

going to their work. It's later than you think. An inquiry must be started at once."

4. "With subpoenas and all," I said.

5. "Oh, yes, the whole hog," he said; "millionaires and movie stars and press agents and all. This thing is serious."

6. "Can you give me an example or two?" I asked. "I have a feeling you're being a little hysterical."

7. "Oh, am I!" Paul replied bitterly. "That's the trouble with you liberals. You're always tolerant until it's too late. The whole of our time-honored customs and ways of life will be eaten into long before you and the other respectable elements in this town are aware of it. Take the movies. There is that famous film, 'The Lost Weekend,' representing a drunk right on the streets of New York. There's 'The Kiss of Death' in which New York is made the setting for a lot of killers and stool pigeons and gangsters. It's become standard practice lately to place every tough-guy picture on location in New York. And things have got worse than that. Have you seen 'Miracle on Thirty-Fourth Street'? Remember the old gentleman, obviously a New Yorker, who is shown as being a silly old sentimentalist who believes he is Santa Claus? And before the film is over, practically all New York children, and adults, too, believe in him. And in that picture did you notice the subtle attack on Macy's, one of the foundations of our New York life? There's a dirty crack or two at Gimbel's, too. Next thing you know there will be assaults on the automats, and the subways. Think of what people in Kansas will think of us!

8. "Those things are obvious enough," Paul continued. "Even you must have noticed them. But there are less obvious evidences. I wonder if you have noticed how often you see suggestions in magazines and on the radio and in books that life is not worth living in New York, sly questionings of the basic verities of existence in our town."

9. "As for instance?" I said, still dubious.

10. "Well, there are the novels that tell of people in the very prime of life, even people with a cooperative apartment of their own and in the East Seventies, giving up everything and going off to the Maine woods or to Southern California, or even to some small town in upper New York State where perhaps they had grown up. The writer always quietly intimates that the move, *any* such move, is an improvement, and that life anywhere, in Ogdensburg, say, or Watertown, is better than life in New York City."

11. "But," I interrupted, "there are lots and lots of novels about the excitement and glamor of life in New York. I wouldn't take too seriously these few escape books that talk about getting away from it all."
12. "Oh, I wouldn't," said Paul, "if there weren't a good many other symptoms, too. For instance, even people paid to celebrate the so-called advantages of New York are, for reasons of their own, calling into question these very advantages. Everyone knows that New York is the center of the theatre world, and the theatre is one of the great civic arts, has been from the Greeks down. Pericles boasted of the entertainments of Athens as one of the great achievements of civilization, among the things for whose preservation it was proper to die. Is *that* the way our dramatic critics are writing these days? Just look what they are saying about *most* of the plays that are produced, some of them costing thousands of dollars and employing hundreds of local people. It makes no difference to these 'critics.' They would as leave have all the theatres dark, or have none at all. They secretly would like to see New York without any theatres, as in the towns where they were born. Inwardly they hate New York and all its ways, including the theatre. They are gradually persuading even born New Yorkers that it's no longer necessary to see a play the first night or the first week, or at all. Besides, in other columns of the paper you will see skeptical pieces about night clubs, and I saw only recently in two well-known magazines attacks on both the typical New York cocktail party and the dinner party as well."
13 "Well, that's going pretty far, I must say," I said, turning pale. "After all, without the cocktail party and the dinner party the very basis of New York life would be destroyed."
14. Paul looked happier at this first sign of my being impressed. "Oh, but they go further than that," he said. "There are whisperings going on that New York is not a good place in which to bring up children, that there is not enough space for them to play, and that there are not enough or good enough schools for them to go to. And I've seen suggestions that New York is not a good place for young men to come to for a career either. One evening newspaper well known for its powerful crusades is about to revive Horace Greeley's advice to young men to go West. It's going to give prizes to young men who *do* go West."
15. "What's the idea of all this sniping?" I asked. "Do these people attack New York because they think really that life is better elsewhere?"

16. "Don't they, though!" he said. "Just look around you. What play has been most popular in New York these last years? A play about life in Oklahoma. And then there is 'Brigadoon' which idealizes life in Scotland, and when a play has anything agreeable to say about New York it's about New York of two generations ago, like 'Life with Father.' Everything is said to be better than New York. In music, for example, it's far harder to get tickets for the Boston than for any local orchestra, and unfailingly we are told by interested parties (the *Times* critic comes from Boston) that the Boston really *is* a better orchestra. And now the radio programs are coming from Hollywood. And where are week-ends being spent? In New York with its wonderful museums and restaurants and concerts and theatres? No. In Connecticut and Pennsylvania. Mark my words, this vogue of the week-end is the opening wedge. Once you wean people away from New York for the week-end it won't be hard to get them to stay away altogether."

17. "Has there," I asked, "been support for the Un-New York movement in intellectual circles?"

18. "Certainly," said Paul. "You'll find it invading the works of the most serious thinkers and teachers. Our young men and women are being taught right here in colleges, some of them colleges supported by our own city funds, that life as lived in New York is perhaps *not* the acme of existence, that there are other and simpler ways of existence more rewarding. Scientists pretend on the basis of scientific researches to subscribe to the notion that there are baneful effects from noise in New York. Even the climate is assaulted. It is further suggested that for three or four months New York is unbearably hot and four or five months wretchedly damp and cold. Even spring in New York, these propagandists say, is a short rainy spell between arctic cold and tropic heat. As I said, it's high time for our inquiry or, as President Hoover used to say, there'll be grass growing in the streets soon. Everyone will have fled to out-of-town, or worse still New York will be like out-of-town."

19. "Whom will you get to testify at your inquiry?" I asked.

20. "Seven and a half million New Yorkers," said Paul.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

Irwin Edman—professor of philosophy at Columbia University and also well known as a writer of books and articles—in this short

bit of satire is bent on persuading his readers not to abandon common sense when fighting subversive and "un-American" activities. His method, another variant on the *reductio ad absurdum* (see the comments on "The Case for the Comics," p. 392) is to imagine what a slightly hysterical and humorless New Yorker might consider "un-New Yorkish" if he were following the same reasoning as the people whom Edman feels are wrongly defining "un-American." The humor and the force in such an argument will depend, of course, on the degree to which the author is able to invent ludicrous un-New Yorkishness which will parallel the particular definition of un-Americanism he is attacking.

1. Why does Edman mention the term "un-American" in par. 2 but not elsewhere?

2. What role is played by the supposed narrator of this sketch down as far as par. 11? In the rest of the sketch? What relevance does this have to Edman's argument?

3. A good deal of Paul's part of the dialogue is taken up with his report of criticisms of New York which, he says, are un-New Yorkish. What is Edman trying to suggest to the reader about criticism of America? Why does Edman have his characters pick cocktail and dinner parties as the "very basis of New York life" (pars. 12-13)?

4. Wherein lies the irony of par. 5? Of pars. 19-20?

Suggestions for Writing

1. What constitutes constructive criticism?

2. Write a satire on the program of a political party or of a campus organization, using Edman's method of constructing an absurd parallel.

*Who Will Do the Dirty Work?**

by DAVID L. COHN

I

Large numbers of us in the United States are corroded by resentments, conscious or subconscious. The worm of discontent, for all our riches, gnaws at our secret hearts. We are restless, dissatisfied, vaguely troubled; haunted by we know not what. Our cup runneth over with gadgets but we are not serene.

2. The source of our resentments, in my opinion, is that many of us are not what we should like to be, or what we think we ought to be. We do not occupy the place in business or society to which our merits "entitle" us. Saddest of all, having been "educated" for a higher (economic) place in life, through no fault of our own we are condemned to what we regard as a lower place.

3. An outward evidence of our inward resentment is our growing aversion to physical labor. "The modern man and the modern woman," wrote D. H. Lawrence, "hate physical work. Ask your husband to peel the potatoes and earn his deep resentment. Ask your wife to wash your socks, and earn the same. There is still a certain thrill about 'mental' and purely mechanical work like attending a machine. But actual labor has become to us, with our education, abhorrent."

4. Lawrence was writing of Britons in the period between the two world wars. But what he said of them is applicable to us and is intensified by factors purely American: our widespread education; our riches so dazzling that it would seem ignominious to offer a gold mine as a gift if the recipient should have to bend over to pick up the nuggets; the illusion that all of us can, and should, be freed from physical labor; the notion that, as Huey Long promised with great political effectiveness, "every man can be a king"; and the further notion that ours is a classless society when actually it is riddled with class and caste concepts.

* From *The Atlantic Monthly*, May, 1949. By permission of the publishers and the author. Copyright 1949 by The Atlantic Monthly Company. The quotation in par. 3 is from *Assorted Articles* by D. H. Lawrence, published by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.

5. The causes and possible cures of our resentments have been little explored; indeed the subject is seldom mentioned, as though it were taboo in polite society. Why? Because to probe here is to take in the surgeon's hand the palpitant heart of the American dream with the fear that it may stop beating before it can be returned to its place within the chest wall. But since the spread of disease is neither stopped by fears nor cured by looking the other way, it may be well to peer into the heart whatever the risks.

6. Our dilemma is difficult. It is fraught perhaps with a certain inevitability, given the nation's needs, the manner of its growth, the quality of our industrial genius, the nature of men. For more than a century we have been a people furiously on the run, engaged in the business of settling this continent and bending the resources of nature to the uses of men. And if, as the British say, their empire was put together in abstraction, so the element of abstraction seems to have entered into the conquering of this continent, despite our alleged purposefulness.

7. Thus, for example, when Lewis and Clark returned from their expedition to the Northwest to find out what was in the grab bag of the Louisiana Purchase, a large body of public and legislative opinion held that much of its contents was worthless. The Great Plains, for example, must forever remain a desert. A quarter century later, Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri told his colleagues that it would be centuries before the Pacific Coast was settled. Hurrying Americans did not even take time out to laugh at these words. They pushed westward in search of riches to be had there, it was believed, for the taking. By 1869 a transcontinental railroad was operating, the Indian and the buffalo were receding into the shadows of oblivion, the Great Plains were soon thereafter thickly tenanted with cattle driven northward from Texas, and clouds of homesteaders, with seed and plow, pressed closely on cattlemen's heels to make an agricultural empire where none had existed before. Then, as the United States threw wide its doors to immigration from 1870 to 1914, it imported not only millions of people to build this country but also a mass market in the consuming and purchasing power of these same people.

8. A nation on the run does not stop to take stock. But the United States has long been engaged in transforming itself from one kind of economy into another, and how far we have gone in this transformation was made plain by the Bureau of the Census in 1920. Then it was found, for the first time in the nation's history, that more men were

living in cities than in small towns and on the farms. A rural-agricultural society from our earliest beginnings, we had become an urban-industrial society, the process receiving its greatest impetus in our furious expansion after the Civil War.

9 In this society, business has constantly grown bigger; so have the farms. The hundreds of telephone companies that were operating at the turn of the century have become one giant company. Where once there were many automobile companies, now there are a handful, and one of these accounts for roughly half the output. Retail distribution was formerly the Elysian fields of the little man, because only small organizational ability and capital were required to run the small-town grocery, drugstore, and similar businesses. But retail distribution today is more and more pre-empted by huge chain-store organizations, the sales of one in 1948 amounting to nearly 2.5 billion dollars, and the sales of another to almost 1.5 billion.

10 Here the testimony of the eye is eloquent. Compare Main Street's tenants of twenty-five years ago with those of today. People still buy groceries and drugs, but what has become of Tom Hunt, Your Grocer for Forty Years, and Doc Stillwell, proprietor of the Busy Bee Drugstore, who sold Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup to your grandmother? More pertinently perhaps, what has become of Tom Hunt, Jr., and Doc Stillwell's boy, Sidney?

11 The disappearance of independent proprietors is a matter of deep concern to the Federal government. It troubled Franklin and Jefferson, who feared that industrialization of this country might lead to a propertyless proletariat. The theme has been recurring ever since: you find it in the third annual report to President Truman of the Council of Economic Advisers.

12. "Year by year," says the report, "control of the market is passing more largely into the hands of the large corporations, not only by internal growth but by the absorption of smaller firms. The process of expansion of large corporations by swallowing smaller firms continues, and the concentration of economic power becomes more intense."

13 But I am not concerned here with the question of whether big business or small business is better for the nation in terms of efficiency in general and the lowering of costs and prices in particular. My concern is with a stubborn and somber fact; namely, that as economic power becomes concentrated, the great majority of employable Americans, whatever their talents or aspirations, cannot rationally look forward to becoming independent proprietors or executives of big

business, but must content themselves with becoming, at best, skilled workers.

14. According to Seymour E. Harris, Professor of Economics at Harvard, "The need for executives does not increase in proportion to the growth of population. From 1910 to 1940, while the population was increasing 36 per cent, the number of openings for executives was increased only 8 per cent. And from 1929 to 1946 the number of active proprietors of unincorporated enterprises (roughly, the field of small business) actually declined 2.6 per cent" (*New York Times Magazine,* January 2, 1949).

15 This is also true, if to a lesser degree, of the land. The American farm has long been growing larger, and the larger farms, which are in reality farm-factories owned by corporations, account for a disproportionately large fraction of total farm output and income. Roughly speaking, 10 per cent of our farms produce 50 per cent of our food. This means the constant thinning of the ranks of the subsistence farmer—the "noble independent farmer" as he was called in the 1830's —while machinery has converted the once large farm family from an economic asset into a liability. Fewer people being needed on the land, they must turn to the cities and factories for a livelihood.

16. The remorseless process of the big becoming bigger is accompanied by a collateral process through which many corporations have expanded into fields foreign to those for which they were chartered. A paint company processes foods; an oil company manufactures cosmetics; recently a railroad-car manufacturer wanted to buy two rayon mills.

17. Yet, as the big grow bigger, we have continued to preach a doctrine valid perhaps during much of the American past for large numbers of men, but of increasingly dubious application since the turn of the century. It is: *Rise above your station.* At the same time, parents have been saying that their children must have advantages they did not have; the opportunity to get an education, to "amount to something," to do clean, white-collar work, instead of dirty handwork.

II

18. What does it mean to rise above your station in an industrial society dominated by giant corporations? What can it mean except the opportunity to acquire a managerial job with one of them? (This aside from the self-employed in a variety of occupations some of which are already overcrowded, such as the law or civil engineering.)

Yet how is one to win the grand prize of manager? The number of such positions is tiny compared with the number of aspirants, and the competition for the limited quantity of managerships is so fierce that usually they go only to the superlatively equipped. What of the rest of us? How are we to "amount to something" even when we have gone to college?

19. Our dilemma—the dilemma of those of us who would rise above our station—is the more cruel since it stems from the noblest instinct of our democratic society: the right of every man to have the opportunity to realize to the utmost his potentialities. This is the cornerstone of the nation. It is a concept so deeply ingrained within us as to become embodied in the folk saying that every American boy may expect to become President. Nor is this all. The right to rise above one's station has acquired a touching poignancy because millions of our citizens derive from communities overseas where a man was expected to stay in the place denominated for him by king, bishop, landlord, or even God. "Once a cobbler, always a cobbler" was a maxim almost as effective as law over wide reaches of the world.

20. Furthermore, we are faced with a melancholy paradox. It would almost seem that as the dimensions of the nation have widened in riches and power, the dimensions of opportunity for the individual have decreased; that, while we may be leader of the democratic world, we afford less and less room for business leaders here at home. The nobility of the instinct of which we have been speaking remains unsullied, the attractiveness of the aspiration undimmed. But the hard fact remains—let's face it unblinkingly—that most of us cannot now reasonably expect to rise above our station as the term and the opportunity were once understood in the United States, even though we may be the world's richest nation with much of our potential richness as yet unrealized. If this is true of the so-called average man, what of the better-equipped men and women, the college graduates? What are their prospects in the immediate future?

21. The President's Commission on Higher Education has proposed for 1960—only eleven years hence—an enrollment of 4.6 million college students. This is almost double the present enrollment which, in turn, is ten times larger than the student body of 1900. We all agree that the wider the diffusion of education among us, the better for the nation. But we, more perhaps than most peoples, have a pathetic faith in the *cash* value of an education. Here, generally speaking, education is not a preparation for the good life—born of love and knowledge, as

Bertrand Russell defines it, with the great virtue that both are indefinitely extensible—but an allegedly almost infallible method of rising socially and financially. And in so doing, we tread increasingly unstable ground, for we are turning out more college graduates than the economy is prepared to receive.

22. While the President's Commission on Higher Education was proposing that we have more college students, the Veterans Administration addressed itself to a cold fact. There will soon be more college graduates than there are jobs for them in their chosen fields.

23. By 1950, for example, close to 50,000 engineers will be graduated, as against an annual replacement need of 7000. Lawyers will become a surplus commodity with few takers, yet they continue to flock to college although many members of the class of 1948 are jobless. There is still room for chemists and psychologists but only if they have a graduate degree. There are already too many personnel men. The fields of physical education, social science, and English are crowded. Recruits are badly needed in the ranks of medicine, dentistry, nursing, and grade-school teaching, but even here we could quickly reach the saturation point under a vigorously expanded program.

24. If large numbers of college graduates could not find employment in their specialties; if we should bring about an overproduction of intellectuals, what would be the effects? Would these ambitious men who had undergone rigorous disciplines of study in order to get a degree just sit and take it when they found themselves jobless? Or, embittered and frustrated, would they become enemies of society as it is at present; fanatical advocates of some form of authoritarianism, more dangerous since they are ambitious, trained, and resentful?

25. What to do? The Veterans Bureau suggests that more students ought to prepare themselves for the trades, or begin their careers as clerks and office workers. This suggestion flows inevitably from the facts, but will it commend itself to the aspirant? How stem the force of drives among a highly aggressive people? Will a man who thinks of himself as a potential engineer be content to run a lathe?

III

26. If it is difficult for the best equipped to rise and next to impossible for the mediocre, how are we affected when constantly told that we can and should rise? Suppose you say to a worker in a fertilizer plant, a garbage collector, a car washer, that he ought to rise above his station, and he cannot do it. Or you tell a coal miner that he ought to get

out of his black pit and become a white-collar gentleman, and he is unable to escape. (When we were hotly discussing the coal strikes some time ago, I never heard one man say that *he* would like to be a miner.) Is it not likely that he will resent being a miner, and begin to wish that his son should not follow in his footsteps? And if this is true of the miner, is it not equally true of all who perform the unpleasant but indispensable tasks of society?

[27] Let's look at what is happening in other occupations. Custom tailors (along with cabinetmakers and other handiwork craftsmen) are a dying race. They were largely first-generation immigrants, proud of their craft and ranking among our higher wage earners. But their sons do not want to become tailors. They are sensitive to the status they must occupy in our society as workers, and they yearn for the white collar. How archaic seems that day when it was noted in the Talmud: "Rabbi Judah would enter the House of Study carrying a jug (which he himself had made), and Rabbi Simeon carrying a basket (which he himself had woven). They said, 'Great is handicraft for it honors those who engage in it,' " and it was laid down as law that "artisans are not required to stand up from their labor when a sage passes by."

[28] We resent physical labor for many reasons: the exaggerated claims of manufacturers and "science" that machines can give us all a push-button existence; the feeling that if we work with our hands we are less likely to "better ourselves"; and the effects of middle-class snobbishness which dictates that physical labor is not respectable. But many of us resent it because clearly or dimly we believe that we have little chance of rising above our station as, actually or legendarily, we once had in this country. And if our resentments have been temporarily stayed, it is because of our war-born prosperity, high employment during recent years, and phenomenal wages paid even to the most unskilled. Yet this is the shakiest of foundations upon which to rely. For one of the most striking phenomena of the past five years is that businessmen, farmers, and large numbers of workers have had little faith in their prosperity, and if they have accepted it gladly, there has been more than a touch of wariness and skepticism in their acceptance.

[29] Consider three other phenomena of our times. One is that many otherwise honorable men and women—without losing caste among their fellows—have often preferred to loaf on an unemployment dole rather than to take a job which in pay prestige seems an affront to

their *amour-propre.* Another is the lack of men's pride in their work: the waiter who throws food at you, the sloppy hotel maid, the slipshod carpenter, the hit-and-miss house painter, the careless garage mechanic. To what extent is this aberrant conduct a reflection of men's resentments in our society?

30. The third is our search for economic security. We who once disdained security, now want it double-barreled. We desire to be protected not only through devices of the Federal government, but also through industrial pensions for which labor unions are pressing. Where once we believed the sky was the limit, now we see it starred with pie. This is the measure of our changing dream.

31 What remedies are in sight?

32 If men's work attitudes are affected by snobbishness, we must make labor truly dignified, not in the sense of the bogus exaltation of the worker by Communism, but in the sense of evaluating a man for what he is and his usefulness to society rather than by his clothes or his occupation. This, however, is difficult to achieve. We do not truly believe in the dignity of labor—a concept mouthed by politicians and sung by poets who never sweated for a day in a Kansas wheat field. Nor will it be simple to knock the snobbishness out of the heads of many American mothers who would rather see Sister marry a white-collar moron than become the wife of a skillful, highly paid pattern-maker.

33. Yet this change of point of view is the condition precedent to the next step. Since it is arithmetically demonstrable that many professional fields will soon be overcrowded, it is reckless for men to enter them unless they are extraordinarily gifted. Their only recourse under the circumstances is to fit themselves, as the Bureau of Labor suggests, for the trades however short this is of their aspirations.

34 The third step involves a realization by big business that the trend toward the obliteration of small operators and independent owners, the whittling down of the middle class, and the stultification of men's aspirations to rise economically may ultimately wreck the structure of present society. Here, fortunately, many enlightened businessmen are aware of what is happening; they are worried lest the American dream become a nightmare; and they know that men are more than statistical digits called consumers. It is for these reasons that some of the oil companies, for example, distribute their products through independent owners of filling stations.

35. But many sections of business are less enlightened, and numerous

maladjustments in our society flow, not from the greed of businessmen, but from their social illiteracy, their lack of imagination and sensitivity, their unwareness of the hour, and a dangerous time-lag in their thinking. Yet unless large numbers of representatives of these groups take such steps as may be necessary to preserve the American dream, unless they understand that men are prideful as well as aggressive and acquisitive, then the industrializing of the United States will come to the bleak end anticipated by Jefferson and Franklin. "When two men ride a horse, one must go in the front," said Thomas Hobbes. The time has come when Americans must consider whether their countrymen will be long content to ride on the mare's rump.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

To persuade the public that it must face a problem it does not like to think exists, and to suggest a remedy which it considers unpalatable, is a task requiring both tact and argumentative skill. In this essay David L. Cohn provides both.

1. Par. 1 states the problem; par. 2 states the author's opinion of the cause of the problem; par. 25 and pars. 31-34 suggest remedies. What is Cohn doing in the rest of the essay? If an author's audience is unwilling to face a problem and its cause, what must he devote a good deal of his time to? What is the function of par. 5?

2. Pars. 6-16 are in the main a survey of certain historical changes in American life. What reasons are implied by pars. 6 and 17 for making this survey? Why is the motto "Rise above your station" quoted in par. 17 instead of earlier? This motto is echoed in pars. 18, 19, 20, 26, and 28. What is the effect of the repetition?

3. Cohn uses pars. 18-26 to enforce on the reader an understanding of how serious and how difficult of solution is the problem he has presented. What effect does he gain by discussing the "superlatively equipped" citizen, the average man with college training, and the workers in non-white-collar occupations, in that order?

4. What connection have pars. 27-30 with par. 25? With pars. 3 and 4? Why are pars. 27-30 not placed earlier in the essay? What connection have they with Cohn's suggested solution in pars. 31-35?

5. A man who wishes to persuade his audience to believe a distasteful truth and to accept a course of action hitherto scorned will be wise not to antagonize that audience. Why does Cohn begin his essay: "Large numbers of *us* . . ."? How does par. 6 allow the reader

to feel that he is not personally being blamed for the unhappy state of American society that Cohn describes? What further opportunity does Cohn give him in par. 19 to feel that his and the nation's motives have, in any case, been unimpeachable? Why is Cohn able to speak a little more sharply by the time he gets to par. 32? In pars. 32-35, Cohn, without pulling his punches, makes the reader feel that no punch is aimed directly at him but rather at the fellow next door; so that the reader cheers the punching but nervously thinks himself a little lucky to escape and vows to conduct himself better in the future. How does Cohn manage this? How many people admit to being poets, politicians, or unenlightened businessmen?

6. The author alternates the two general statements of his opening paragraph with pungent figures of speech, and ends his last paragraph with another. Why? What do you think of the metaphor developed in par. 5? What makes par. 10 effective? Can you improve on the title for the essay?

Suggestions for Writing

1. Class concepts in America.
2. Why white-collar men pursue handicraft hobbies.
3. Should college enrollments be limited?
4. The non-financial values of a college education.
5. Write an essay in which you attempt to persuade your readers of the virtues of smallness or bigness, for example, in business or in education.

Is Reading Here to Stay?[*]

by JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH

Publishers, I am told, are worried about their business, and I, as a writer, am therefore worried too. But I am not sure that the actual state of their affairs disturbs me quite so much as some of the analyses of it and some of the proposals for remedying what is admittedly an unsatisfactory situation.

[*] From *The Nation*, February 26, 1949. By permission of the publishers. Copyright 1949 by The Nation Associates, Inc.

2. One analysis, for example, viewed the threat of television with great alarm. Books are not selling, it explained, because readers are laying down the book they bought in order to watch a wrestling match, and they forget to buy another. But surely the book for which television is a more than satisfactory substitute was not one which a wise publisher would consider a foundation stone of his business. And yet the remedy proposed was that publishers should meet the new competition with books which the "video-viewer" would like. In the long run, surely, the only hope must lie, not in publishing books which can compete with television, but in publishing books which television cannot compete with. There is only one thing which no other medium can present so well as the printed page can, and that thing is literature.

3. It requires, nevertheless, but a glance at any list of recent books to demonstrate that publishers are depending less and less upon literature for their appeal; that an astonishingly large proportion of their offerings are not even books in the more limited sense of the word, but rather what in the amusement world are called "gimmicks." At one extreme are the perfectly legitimate and valuable volumes of diaries, letters, and reminiscences produced by the men of action. At the other extreme are the collections of puzzles, jokes, or cafe chitchat, which are admittedly trivial and admittedly transitory. Even the most promoted novels are, more often than not, those of which the primary appeal is either topical or scandalous. Works by professional writers concerned chiefly with the creation of literature are all but lost in the hurly-burly. And if the publisher replies that it is the quasi-books which sell, that may be less because of the competition offered by television than because of the competition which he himself is offering. Bad books drive out good. The publisher seems bent on destroying his own audience by encouraging it to get out of the habit of reading. Lewis Gannett calls his daily column "Books and Things," and though I fancy he did not mean to suggest what that title suggests to me, the fact remains that any general reviewer finds a very large proportion of the volumes sent him "things" rather than books.

4 Perhaps the best long-range strategy for the publishing business as a whole would be based upon the assumption that its potential audience is composed of people who can and do read; that its only ultimate hope is the hope that such people will not cease to exist. If, however, it should adopt such a strategy, it had best realize to begin with what forces it has to fight, for its enemies will include the educator and the psychologist, both of whom are increasingly op-

posed to the printed word. A recent investigation, solemnly conducted and solemnly reported, into something called "personality" presented as one of its few clear-cut conclusions the discovery that children much given to reading were likely to grow up into men and women who lacked "personality." This really means, of course, likely to be unpleasing to the semi-illiterates who set up the standards for personality. But that fact will not be perceived by the educators already strongly prejudiced against books. They are nowadays all committed to "audio-visual aids," and they seem blandly to forget that the printed word is still the most generally efficient and effective method of conveying thought or information ever invented by man, and that over the largest of all fields a hundred words is often worth a thousand pictures. The ability to take in the printed word is one which has to be cultivated, and it is, as a matter of fact, being systematically discouraged. Perhaps the devolution of the written language has already begun. Perhaps in another hundred years only ideographs in the form of conventionalized graphs and charts will be intelligible, and perhaps a century after that the man on vacation who wants to tell his friends at home that he is having a wonderful time will have to draw a picture of a conventionalized ocean wave accompanied by a picture of a conventionalized blonde in a bathing suit. Where will the publishing business be then? The chorus girl who married in haste, came in on the first Sunday after the wedding to find her husband looking at the funny papers, and exclaimed in consternation, "My God, I've married a bookworm!" was only a little ahead of her time. Already even graphs are assumed to be insufficiently "vivid" unless you get, instead of lines or figures, a series of little pictures of men and beasts with the explanation that each black hen represents one million chickens now feeding on Ukrainian farms.

5. A few years ago I attended a meeting of teachers in secondary schools who were devoting a session to the question, "How can literature be brought to children?" That meant, of course, "How can literature be made childish?" What they should have been discussing was not how literature could be brought to the children but how children could be brought to literature. What they were proposing was not education but a refusal to educate. Unfortunately, however, publishers seem to be making the same mistake. If they want the television audience they would be much better advised to go into the television business themselves, for they certainly cannot beat it on its own ground, and they certainly will not ultimately succeed by encour-

aging the neglect of the only art in the presentation of which they cannot be competed with.

6. Perhaps in the end we writers will have to do what we did before printing was invented—namely, depend upon the circulation of manuscripts which interested eccentrics take the trouble to copy. Our only hope of escaping that fate seems to lie in the boy or girl who perversely plays hooky from the classroom, and—risking the appalled rebuke of the psychologist—reads a book when he should be looking at a film strip or discussing current events with other children under the guidance of an instructor equipped with a full complement of audio-visual aids. Such children do exist, and some publishers do still cater to them by publishing what the *Herald Tribune* calls in its "best-seller" list, "reading books."

* * *

Commentary and Questions

One type of persuasion depends not so much on elaborate factual evidence and intricate logical analysis as on reminding its audience of truths forgotten or overlooked. It is designed more to bring back waverers to the author's party than to convert those who are already in outright opposition. Such an argument is this article by a noted scholar and literary critic, Joseph Wood Krutch. It was originally given as a speech before a group of publishers.

1. What assumption does the author make about the value of reading and the purpose of books? Does he present evidence to support this assumption? Were any members of his actual audience likely to question it? Would he have titled his essay "Is Reading Here to Stay?" if he had thought any sizable number of his audience wanted to answer "No"? What does Krutch think of "educators" and "psychologists"? Do you think he has any hope of converting them? Whom does he hope to convert?

2. Par. 1 is plainly introductory. Show how pars. 2-5 are woven into a connected unit in which one part leads into the next and brings the reader at the end back to the same topic with which he started. What references to ideas mentioned previously make par. 6 seem closely connected to the rest of the article?

3. What is the effect of the conscious exaggerations about the man on a vacation, the chorus girl (par. 4), and the possible necessity of circulating manuscripts (par. 6)? Are there any resemblances between this device and the techniques used by Al Capp, David L.

Cohn, Morris Bishop, and Irwin Edman (pp. 389-392, 393-397, 399-402, and 403-406)?

4. Krutch makes his argument more forceful by a plentiful use of epigrammatic balance and parallelism in his sentences: for example, "What they should have been discussing was not how literature could be brought to the children but how children could be brought to literature." Find other examples.

Suggestions for Writing

1. Is walking here to stay?
2. Should publishers print more "reading books" and fewer "gimmicks"?
3. How to get through college without reading.

*How Dense Is the Mass?**

by GILBERT SELDES

I

Both the movies and radio are losing their audiences. The process has been going on for a long time in the movies; it has just begun in radio. The immediate causes are different, but the fundamental reason is the same; and the same simple, drastic step will save both these useful servants of the public. I am not predicting immediate bankruptcy for either, but if it comes, I would trace it to a kind of intellectual bankruptcy in the past.

2. For ten years, at least, nearly everyone in the field of popular entertainment has been hypnotized by two words: "mass media." The producers have said in effect, "We are mass media, we must produce for the mass"; and the critics, conceding the point, have complained, "What you produce isn't much good, and haven't minorities some rights, too?" The sponsor cynically giving the people what they

* From *The Atlantic Monthly*, November, 1948. By permission of the publishers and the author. Copyright 1948 by The Atlantic Monthly Company.

like and the intellectual, unable to break the sponsor's argument, have both been under the spell of an abstraction: for the mass doesn't exist. And now, when the entertainments concocted for the mass have demonstrated their weaknesses, we can examine the concept of the mass medium and provide, I think, a new approach, with a sounder commercial basis, to the problem of the audience.

3. "Mass medium" is, of course, used as a shorthand symbol for "any form of communication and entertainment intended for a very large number of people." It parallels mass production and consumption and has some of the same characteristics: repetitive gestures on the producing end and passive enjoyment for the consumer. A network executive once described the mass, negatively but graphically, when he said, "There's a lunatic fringe that doesn't listen to radio." We see the great central mass, a sort of heartland of solid citizens bounded by a glacial fringe, a polar icecap, of non-listening high-brows.

4. In the mind of the sponsor, the audience is a large pie and all the programs on the air at a given moment are trying to get bigger and bigger slices—because there is only one pie, and success depends on "the share of the total audience." If the slice is too small, the sponsor has to drop out of the contest; consequently, the only kind of program worth putting on is the kind that gets the big slice. On this commercial basis an entire philosophy has been erected, of which the first principle is: Radio ought *never* to serve any interest except that of the mass; every hour taken from this purpose deprives the majority of something to which they are entitled, in favor of an intellectual minority.

5. When women's clubs, educators, or New Deal bureaucrats criticize radio programs, the answer of the industry is usually a table of the many kinds of entertainment provided, the many hours of cultural broadcasts, the varied and different interests served: quizzes and grand operas, news and drama; hot music and classics—sometimes they omit daytime serials and horror stories for children. Radio's sweep of interest is, in fact, impressive when compared with the short tether of Hollywood, but the plea of "variety of interests" is unacceptable because, with a few exceptions, all these varied programs and interests are substantially of the same kind, appealing to the same people. Intellectually and emotionally, they lie within the same parallels of latitude, and the wide world of human interests outside this narrow zone is left untended. The major sponsored programs, the ones that give radio its essential character, all flourish in one climate.

6. The exceptions are illuminating. Under a variety of pressures, the broadcasters have been compelled to create and "sustain" programs they believed to be lacking in popular appeal. The wide open spaces between sponsored hours dismayed them; and since "no one was listening anyhow," this was a golden opportunity to show enthusiasm for "the public interest." All sorts of worthy cultural programs came to the air and many of them became good commercial properties, permanent elements in radio programming: extensive news coverage, such forums as "America's Town Meeting of the Air," and symphony orchestras.

7. In all of these, radio departed from the lump-mass concept of the audience. The somber analytical commentaries of Raymond Swing required attention differing in kind from passive listening to familiar songs; hearing the Jupiter Symphony produced an effect unlike that of a melodrama. The listeners to Swing and Mozart probably followed other programs, too, perhaps comedy or sport; they brought different responses to different programs and got different satisfactions from them. They proved, in fact, that our society is not a monolithic mass; it is, and has been from the start, pluralistic.

8 And just when the true concept of the pluralistic audience began to pay off in sponsorship, the networks abandoned it. They have themselves gone into the business of putting programs on the air for the declared purpose of sale to a sponsor. CBS, for instance, which gained prestige by sustaining the Philharmonic for ten years, now prides itself on the number of programs it creates and sells each year for commercial sponsorship. There is, of course, nothing reprehensible in this; the programs range from harmless to excellent; but they lie within the established zone of interest, as do the programs prepared by other networks for the same purpose.

9. The broadcasters' present nod toward the public interest is usually in the form of sporadic documentaries on thorny subjects like venereal disease and Communism. Produced in an awe-struck and portentous style, they make no bid for popularity, as if to say, "This is too good for the average man." Partly this defeatism goes back to the days when Norman Corwin led radio up a rhapsodic byway which did honor to both, but left the documentary so romantic that no sponsor wants to make an honest woman of her. Until the documentary is produced at regular hours it will not gather many listeners; the other non-sponsored programs, except for educational and religious periods, are specifically intended for the mass audience.

10. At this moment "the mass" is beginning to drift away. Surveys made for the radio industry show that the top-ranking programs drop half of their pulling power if there is a television set in the home; a reasonably good dramatic transmission can take away the greater part of a top comedian's audience; and nine out of ten set owners habitually choose whatever television brings them even if it is in conflict with their favorite radio program.

11. This is not radio losing its audience to itself; many television stations are not radio-owned and those run by newspapers will probably develop a kind of television which will have little to do with radio except for taking away sponsors. The television programs that attract audiences are hardly entertainment in radio's sense; if the present ratio of listening is kept up, television may take up the major part of the radio audience without developing any first-class entertainment of its own. It is hard to think of radio withering on the vine—but that is precisely what broadcasters, especially those without television stations, must think about. For the television programs that today take listeners away from the most expensive radio entertainment are third-rate local wrestling matches, variety shows of small charm and less talent, old Western movies, news events, a play, and then sports and more sports far into the night.

12. This is happening while television has little money to spend for talent and radio has much. When sponsors have to divide their appropriations between television and radio, when the quality of radio goes down and that of television goes up, the flight from sound-without-sight will be headlong. Then radio may ruefully remember that it might have created audiences which wouldn't have deserted so promptly to such an ignoble rival.

II

13. Before we consider what radio can do, let us see what has happened to the movies. In Hollywood the mass concept is enshrined in the words "Everybody goes to the movies" and on this premise Hollywood continued to build long after its own researchers had fished up the contrary truth: "Nearly everybody stops going to the movies." Even the great bankers who finance the movies were apparently as bemused by the concept of the mass audience as the producers were.

14. Every year more people went to the movies—or at least more money was taken in at the box office. No one bothered to ask whether

the increased receipts represented higher prices or more tickets sold or in what proportion; no one asked whether any increase in attendance corresponded to the over-all increase in population or had any relation to the fatter take-home pay of the American worker. The age-level was rising: were the movies holding their share of the mature or were they living on the increment of about a million boys and girls of movie age per year? Eventually some of these questions were asked—and the answers were ignored because the answers totally annihilated the fixed illusion of the mass audience. The inescapable fact about the motion picture audience is that 65 per cent of it is under the age of 30. The merciless tale of the statistics continues: beginning at the age of 19, people begin to fall out of the habit of going to the movies; they still go, but less often; they pick and choose more carefully, acting in fact as adults, and this process of going less and less to the movies is never reversed. Audience Research, Inc., has estimated that if all the people between the ages of 31 and 60 should go to the movies only once a week, the box office receipts after taxes would rise by 800 million dollars a year, and this does not count those between 19 and 30 who might be persuaded to go as frequently as they used to when they were younger. It has cost Hollywood a lot of money to kill off its own audience.

15. For when all allowances are made for new interests and altered economic status, the fact still remains that the movies have not provided the kind of entertainment that the average adult feels he must have. The people who stay away from the movies are not a lunatic fringe of intellectuals; they are the people who used to go regularly, they are average grownups no longer satisfied by the infantile myths of the movies. In their astounding miscalculation of the audience, studio executives not only recognized no difference between children and adults: they thought of maturity as a purely intellectual quality. Neither the movie-makers nor their bankers are peculiarly sensitive to the varieties of human experience; they keep thinking of the mass man and seem not to know that regardless of intellectual level the texture of a man's life is more intricately woven in the years when he is finding his place in the world, starting a family, going to war, buying a house. The same is true of a woman's life in that period.

16. Someone, an intellectual perhaps, accused the movies of being an escape mechanism. The movies were enchanted, they had a mission in life. It was decided that there is only one universal desire, to escape, and that escape is always in one direction. Like radio, but

with far less justification, the movies spoke glowingly of their "variety": the Westerns, the comedies, the musicals, the mysteries; but the moment they touched new material they turned it into old, keeping it always in the mass zone of interest. So their dabblings in psychology came out as mystery-melodrama, all the biographical films were the story of Jack the Giant Killer, and their historical films could only be distinguished from the Westerns by the fact that "the hero signs his name with a feather."

17 The movie equivalent of radio's sustaining time is the B picture, but movie practice was different. No new ground was broken in the B's—no experiments to engage the interests of groups outside the regular movie audience or to give that audience greater variety. Variation came when a studio rewarded a big money-maker by letting him make a picture without too much interference from the front office. Pictures like *The Informer, The Lost Weekend, Treasure of Sierra Madre,* and in recent years half a dozen exceptional British films proved that pictures satisfying to the adult mind are not necessarily the highroad to bankruptcy.

18 But audiences are not created by exceptions; they are created by people getting, with some regularity, what they want. The studio managers, aware that something was going wrong, took a characteristic step: they pre-tested their pictures, asking sample audiences to decide, in advance of production, between a happy and a tragic ending. The vote was in favor of the happy ending and the producers sat back and said, "See!" because high-brow critics had always implied that the tragic ending, as a sign of maturity, would not be offensive to a large section of the audience. The happy endings were continued and the audiences continued to dwindle, steadily, by age brackets. When the 75-million-dollar income from Britain was suddenly cut off, the industry went into an unmanly fit of protestation and scolding and threats. No one mentioned the fact that by concentrating on their imaginary mass audience, the movies had lost a net income four times as great in the United States alone.

III

19. What we imagine, we create. Our great entertainment industries are creating before our eyes a cultural *proletariat:* the intellectually disinherited, the emotionally homeless, whose function is only to answer the telephone and say what program they are listening to. Mass media are not the only forces working toward that end, but

they are the most powerful. Every imitative sterile picture or program, however "harmless," enlarges the passive audience, brushes more and more stragglers into the central robot mass, and so "justifies" the next series. Movies and radio entrench themselves by creating the kind of audience they want, the audience which does not grow, makes no demands, is dumbly grateful—the ideal audience in a totalitarian nightmare.

[20] If this process is to be stopped in time, our entertainments will have to accept the natural alternative to their concept of the mass audience. I have already suggested what this alternative is: we are a pluralistic society. Our entire history has made us so. We are not only a nation of many nations: we have as many climates as all of continental Europe, we are an economic and intellectual composite; our laws refuse the minority no right except the right to rule the majority; our minorities are many and so vigorous that it takes a world war to give us even the appearance of unity; we pioneer and go off center as often as we dig in; we are unruly and act badly when we are regimented.

[21] Opposed to the mass picture of an enormous central group with minority fringes of people who are totally unlike the mass, the pluralistic picture is this: many large groups, many small ones, and individuals belonging to several major and several minor groups at the same time, so that the people in any minority group are in many vital ways the same as the people in the majority groups. We all live simultaneously in a dozen worlds and the happy ones are those whose worlds are integrated and harmonious. The economist, the psychologist, the vocational guide, the intelligence-tester, and a dozen other people can find categories into which we fit, but we move in and out of large and small groups freely so long as we do not become part of a mass, so long as we live in a free society which recognizes our attributes as human beings.

[22] The mass-and-minority concept whittles the individual down to size, so that he can be fitted into one of half a dozen compartments. In practice this leads to the principle of "the ruling passion" and ends, in radio, with the abstraction of the Laughing Man. Networks cancel news broadcasts and juggle their programs around to get "three solid hours of laughs," convinced that the Laughing Man will instantly turn to another station if you try to touch any other of his interests or concerns. It is known that he will laugh at the same thing at the same hour every week, that he will laugh at anything if he is told to laugh, and

there is some proof, not yet conclusive, that he will laugh just as loudly at nothing at all. Corresponding to him is the Weeping Woman of the daytime serials. In between the day and night hours, a little time is found for the Shrieking Child. Television is developing its own abstraction ("Hiya, Sportlover!") and in the movies, of course, everything is lumped into the one universal abstraction of People Escaping.

23. A special appreciative word should be said for the program type which in 1948 demonstrated the workings of the mass concept so perfectly that even the National Association of Broadcasters, usually so indulgent to success on the air, got frightened—the big "giveaway," the program that asks nothing of you except that you answer the phone for a chance at a fortune. For the long pull it didn't seem good to the NAB that Fred Allen should lose his audience to *Stop the Music!* As entertainment this program was a void; its music was mangled, there was no comedy, the handling of the contestants was awkward. People listened for a chance at the money and to enjoy the pains and pleasures of other people's chances. The audience was not only paid for listening, it was paid to surrender all its individual qualities, all its interests, even its radio-induced habit of laughter; it was paid to stop asking for entertainment on the air. The giveaway has shown us how far in the creation of mass man radio can go.

24. The purpose of entertainment is to make people listen to the commercial; when entertainment has reduced the listener to a passive, noncritical state, the announcer moves in with his clubs or machine guns or soothing syrup and finishes the job. No matter what is said about program content, the commercial is sacred—it's the sponsor's private property. (I recall a network executive on the verge of hysterics because there was no way to stop the maddening reiteration of "Lucky Strike Green has gone to war.")

25. So it is peculiarly appropriate that a commercial announcement should demonstrate, beyond all question, the fallacy of the mass concept. Man-in-the-mass must be hammered and howled at; the name of the product must be repeated ten times, and spelled out, and surrounded by adjectives in triplicate; there is no room for candor or simple communication when you come to sell the product to mass man.

26. For the past two years a program has been on the air which carries the following identification: "The Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company presents . . ." The people who hear this program remember it,

they connect the program with the product, they say they are influenced *by the program* to buy the product, not by the commercial, because there is none; and the audience response is from 20 to 50 per cent better than it is for programs using the technique of repetition. The program is *The Greatest Story Ever Told,* a scrupulous presentation of Christ's teachings; it impresses people by its content and method and its difference from other programs. It sells tires without ever praising a tire or asking the listener to buy one.

27. Reason totters at the suspicion that the sponsor may be wrong about the audience. That is sheer heresy.

IV

28. Within the range of their dominant ideas, both the movies and radio have made money and produced admirable entertainments. Obviously I am not preparing a balance sheet of the good and the bad and I am omitting the profoundly important question of the communications function of these media. I am concerned here only with one major explanation of the weakness and inadequacy which critical people too hastily ascribe to "commercialism." To make my own position perfectly clear, I would add that I think the standard product of radio and the movies is generally underrated by intellectual critics; and, on the other hand, no roster of exceptions can excuse what is socially deplorable in the average product. I believe that the error of thinking which produces an enormous quantity of insipid works can be corrected within the framework of ordinary profit-making, and that when this correction has been made, audiences can be created to take the place of those that are deserting; I believe that with a proper concept of the audience new areas will be open to inventiveness and enterprise; and finally that we dare not wait too long for the machinery which is creating mass men to reverse itself.

29. The hope of profit is most important because the sponsors can take prompt and effective steps to vary the program structure of radio and no one but the managers can do anything about the movies. There isn't actually time for experiments from the outside; and outsiders might try to turn radio and the movies into high-brow art which they should never be. What needs to be done in the movies is relatively simple: make pictures for grownups. This does not mean, as Hollywood pretends, grim, slow-paced European films. The mature mind takes satisfaction in comedy, too, and in farce. The one thing adults require is as easy to recognize and as hard to define as the smile of a

friend. It is the sense that something real is happening—as real as *Alice in Wonderland* or *Show Boat* or *Hamlet;* it is also the sense that something real is being said about human beings—as the Marx brothers say it in *A Night at the Opera* or Robinson Jeffers in *Medea.*

30. In radio, the brief experience with television while alarming is not decisive; its lesson is, however, reinforced by radio's earlier figures: there has always been a large non-listening group. About half of the women who listen to radio do not care for daytime serials; there are vast numbers of both men and women who listen for brief periods, selectively, without the radio habit; there are even off nights, when the total listening audience is known to be small. Everything indicates the existence of potential audiences, not yet touched; and the early experience of radio, with its sustaining programs, suggests that these non-listeners are waiting only to be interested. They are, moreover, not the people who will be seduced away from radio by the meager fare television is now providing.

31 For nearly a generation sponsors have been in competition for the mass audience, badgering the same people with the same kind of commercials, selling the same goods. Now they see that audience drifting away and can stop to think that 20 per cent of an audience that doesn't listen habitually might be far more profitable than a dwindling 10 per cent of the audience that does.

32 As for material, every program director in the business has a dozen projects he cannot get on the air so long as he has to aim for a section of the mass audience. Many of these are variations in the documentary style and some are imitations of the Third Program of the BBC, which is intentionally high-brow. There is little place in American commercial radio for programs which deliberately invite the audience not to listen, nor would they be particularly useful in solving the present problem, which is to create multiple, overlapping audiences of considerable dimensions. For this sponsors and broadcasters must coöperate.

33. We can ask the sponsors to end the constant iteration of one joke per comedian per year; to vary the range and improve the technique of dramatic programs; to restore the candor and simplicity of audience participation; to revamp the entire racket of guest appearance; to begin the slow process of salvaging what's good in the daytime serial; and, most important, to bring the accent of truth into the speech of radio. The networks which have recently threatened to throw out certain sponsored programs if their ratings failed to improve should

surely demand a little improvement in quality also. There is no proof that this would reduce the appeal of a program.

34. For the networks, the problem is complex. If they want to improve the structure of the audience, they can do it by creating programs for sponsors which will attract new audiences, and programs for new audiences which, after a longer interval, will attract sponsors. There is little point in the networks looking for new ways to attract the audience the sponsor already has. That audience should have a chance to hear programs intellectually and emotionally more varied than those now offered; and such programs cannot be tried out if the objective is immediate sale to a sponsor. Nor can they make their way if they are presented only on special occasions, for prestige; they have to be offered regularly, at attractive hours, over a fairly long period of time, to find their audience.

35 It is inevitable that the documentary will be incorporated into the commercial program structure, and here the duty of the network is plain: to develop and set standards for this form, broadening the audience that cares for it, so that it will not be debauched when a sponsor takes it over. Another job for pioneers is to develop new ways of handling fiction, since radio drama has sunk into formulas and sound-effects. Still another is to bring confidently to the listener the materials now hidden in educational programs.

36 In these and dozens of other ways portions of the mass will be attracted to new things; the mass will break up and reassemble into many shifting groups; it will no longer be a mass. And this is of course the most important result of all. The fragmentation of the mass can only be accomplished by radio and the movies; if they do it, they will not only save themselves but all of us as well. For where there is no mass, there is no danger of a master.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

In the previous selection, Joseph Wood Krutch argued that the way for publishers to keep up their book sales is to make the books better. In this essay Gilbert Seldes, who has often written about and had long experience with the "mass media," argues that radio and the movies will have to make themselves a great deal better in order to avoid losing their public much faster than the publishers. Krutch could base his persuasion on assumptions that his audience was likely to agree with. Seldes cannot; he is bound to meet some measure of

disbelief and must therefore support every step of his argument by exact and unambiguous evidence. His article is thus a good example of the well reasoned, carefully constructed controversial essay. It has the further advantage of a colorful but thoroughly literate style.

1. After stating the problem in par. 1, Seldes suggests in par. 2 an unexpected basis for a solution by telling us that "the mass doesn't exist." This statement is enlarged and explained a little at the end of par. 7, and the reader reminded of it again by such phrases as "the fixed illusion of the mass audience" (par. 14) and "their imaginary mass audience" (par. 18); but a full development of the idea does not come till section III. Why? What is the function of each of the four sections in the essay? Why are pars. 23-26 at the end of section III instead of section I?

2. Although Seldes devotes most of his essay to showing how the radio and the movies can get their audience back, he suggests in the last paragraph that there is a much more fundamental reason for escaping the concept of "the mass." Were you surprised at this application of his argument? If you were, look back at par. 19; look also at the last sentence of par. 21, the first of par. 22, the last two of par. 23, and the last of par. 28. Why didn't Seldes stress this application earlier and why does he say relatively little of it even in the whole essay? What groups of people must he convince before a change is made and what argument is most likely to move them?

3. Can you make any generalizations about Seldes' method of persuasion? For example, how does he go about disproving the following assertions:

That radio does offer variety.

That the only programs listened to are those designed for the mass audience.

That documentaries cannot have popular appeal.

That "everybody goes to the movies."

That movies are giving the public what it wants.

That tragic endings have no sizable appeal.

That we are a monolithic society.

That radio cannot sell its advertisers' products without repetitive commercials.

Note that any controversialist who is suggesting a change of some sort must demonstrate that present procedures are unsatisfactory, that arguments in their favor are unsound, and that the proposed changes

will be an improvement on present practice. How well does Seldes do this? Is there anything in par. 28 which suggests why Seldes might meet less opposition than some other adverse critics of movies and radio?

4. What does Seldes mean by the last sentence in par. 16? Could he have said what he meant as concisely and as vividly in any other way?

Suggestions for Writing

1. Television and the mass audience.
2. Popular magazines and the mass audience.
3. Education and the mass audience.
4. Write a carefully reasoned argument, well buttressed with evidence, advocating some sort of change or showing what must be done about a problem.

Dunkirk[*]

by WINSTON CHURCHILL

From the moment that the French defenses at Sedan and on the Meuse were broken at the end of the second week of May, only a rapid retreat to Amiens and the south could have saved the British and French Armies who had entered Belgium at the appeal of the Belgian King; but this strategic fact was not immediately realized. The French High Command hoped they would be able to close the gap, and the Armies of the north were under their orders. Moreover, a retirement of this kind would have involved almost certainly the destruction of the fine Belgian Army of over 20 divisions and the abandonment of the whole of Belgium. Therefore, when the force and scope of the German penetration were realized and when a new French Generalissimo, General Weygand,

[*] From *Blood, Sweat, and Tears* by Winston S. Churchill, courtesy of G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, and of McClelland and Stewart, Limited, Publishers, Toronto. Copyright 1941 by Winston S. Churchill.

assumed command in place of General Gamelin, an effort was made by the French and British Armies in Belgium to keep on holding the right hand of the Belgians and to give their own right hand to a newly created French Army which was to have advanced across the Somme in great strength to grasp it.

2. However, the German eruption swept like a sharp scythe around the right and rear of the Armies of the north. Eight or nine armored divisions, each of about four hundred armored vehicles of different kinds, but carefully assorted to be complementary and divisible into small self-contained units, cut off all communications between us and the main French Armies. It severed our own communications for food and ammunition, which ran first to Amiens and afterwards through Abbeville, and it shore its way up the coast to Boulogne and Calais, and almost to Dunkirk. Behind this armored and mechanized onslaught came a number of German divisions in lorries, and behind them again there plodded comparatively slowly the dull brute mass of the ordinary German Army and German people, always so ready to be led to the trampling down in other lands of liberties and comforts which they have never known in their own.

3. I have said this armored scythe-stroke almost reached Dunkirk—almost but not quite. Boulogne and Calais were the scenes of desperate fighting. The Guards defended Boulogne for a while and were then withdrawn by orders from this country. The Rifle Brigade, the 60th Rifles, and the Queen Victoria's Rifles, with a battalion of British tanks and 1,000 Frenchmen, in all about four thousand strong, defended Calais to the last. The British Brigadier was given an hour to surrender. He spurned the offer, and four days of intense street fighting passed before silence reigned over Calais, which marked the end of a memorable resistance. Only 30 unwounded survivors were brought off by the Navy, and we do not know the fate of their comrades. Their sacrifice, however, was not in vain. At least two armored divisions, which otherwise would have been turned against the British Expeditionary Force, had to be sent to overcome them. They have added another page to the glories of the light divisions, and the time gained enabled the Graveline water lines to be flooded and to be held by the French troops.

4. Thus it was that the port of Dunkirk was kept open. When it was found impossible for the Armies of the north to reopen their communications to Amiens with the main French Armies, only one choice remained. It seemed, indeed, forlorn. The Belgian, British and French

Armies were almost surrounded. Their sole line of retreat was to a single port and to its neighboring beaches. They were pressed on every side by heavy attacks and far outnumbered in the air.

5. When, a week ago today, I asked the House to fix this afternoon as the occasion for a statement, I feared it would be my hard lot to announce the greatest military disaster in our long history. I thought—and some good judges agreed with me—that perhaps 20,000 or 30,000 men might be re-embarked. But it certainly seemed that the whole of the French First Army and the whole of the British Expeditionary Force north of the Amiens-Abbeville gap would be broken up in the open field or else would have to capitulate for lack of food and ammunition. These were the hard and heavy tidings for which I called upon the House and the nation to prepare themselves a week ago. The whole root and core and brain of the British Army, on which and around which we were to build, and are to build, the great British Armies in the later years of the war, seemed about to perish upon the field or to be led into an ignominious and starving captivity.

6 That was the prospect a week ago. But another blow which might well have proved final was yet to fall upon us. The King of the Belgians had called upon us to come to his aid. Had not this Ruler and his Government severed themselves from the Allies, who rescued their country from extinction in the late war, and had they not sought refuge in what has proved to be a fatal neutrality, the French and British Armies might well at the outset have saved not only Belgium but perhaps even Poland. Yet at the last moment, when Belgium was already invaded, King Leopold called upon us to come to his aid, and even at the last moment we came. He and his brave, efficient Army, nearly half a million strong, guarded our left flank and thus kept open our only line of retreat to the sea. Suddenly, without prior consultation, with the least possible notice, without the advice of his Ministers and upon his own personal act, he sent a plenipotentiary to the German Command, surrendered his Army, and exposed our whole flank and means of retreat.

7. I asked the House a week ago to suspend its judgment because the facts were not clear, but I do not feel that any reason now exists why we should not form our own opinions upon this pitiful episode. The surrender of the Belgian Army compelled the British at the shortest notice to cover a flank to the sea more than 30 miles in length. Otherwise all would have been cut off, and all would have shared the fate to which King Leopold had condemned the finest Army his country

had ever formed. So in doing this and in exposing this flank, as anyone who followed the operations on the map will see, contact was lost between the British and two out of the three corps forming the First French Army, who were still farther from the coast than we were, and it seemed impossible that any large number of Allied troops could reach the coast.

8. The enemy attacked on all sides with great strength and fierceness, and their main power, the power of their far more numerous Air Force, was thrown into the battle or else concentrated upon Dunkirk and the beaches. Pressing in upon the narrow exit, both from the east and from the west, the enemy began to fire with cannon upon the beaches by which alone the shipping could approach or depart. They sowed magnetic mines in the channels and seas; they sent repeated waves of hostile aircraft, sometimes more than a hundred strong in one formation, to cast their bombs upon the single pier that remained, and upon the sand dunes upon which the troops had their eyes for shelter. Their U-boats, one of which was sunk, and their motor launches took their toll of the vast traffic which now began. For four or five days an intense struggle reigned. All their armored divisions—or what was left of them—together with great masses of infantry and artillery, hurled themselves in vain upon the ever-narrowing, ever-contracting appendix within which the British and French Armies fought.

9. Meanwhile, the Royal Navy, with the willing help of countless merchant seamen, strained every nerve to embark the British and Allied troops; 220 light warships and 650 other vessels were engaged. They had to operate upon the difficult coast, often in adverse weather, under an almost ceaseless hail of bombs and an increasing concentration of artillery fire. Nor were the seas, as I have said, themselves free from mines and torpedoes. It was in conditions such as these that our men carried on, with little or no rest, for days and nights on end, making trip after trip across the dangerous waters, bringing with them always men whom they had rescued. The numbers they have brought back are the measure of their devotion and their courage. The hospital ships, which brought off many thousands of British and French wounded, being so plainly marked were a special target for Nazi bombs; but the men and women on board them never faltered in their duty.

10. Meanwhile, the Royal Air Force, which had already been intervening in the battle, so far as its range would allow, from home bases,

now used part of its main metropolitan fighter strength, and struck at the German bombers and at the fighters which in large numbers protected them. This struggle was protracted and fierce. Suddenly the scene has cleared, the crash and thunder has for the moment—but only for the moment—died away. A miracle of deliverance, achieved by valor, by perseverance, by perfect discipline, by faultless service, by resource, by skill, by unconquerable fidelity, is manifest to us all. The enemy was hurled back by the retreating British and French troops. He was so roughly handled that he did not hurry their departure seriously. The Royal Air Force engaged the main strength of the German Air Force, and inflicted upon them losses of at least four to one; and the Navy, using nearly 1,000 ships of all kinds, carried over 335,000 men, French and British, out of the jaws of death and shame, to their native land and to the tasks which lie immediately ahead. We must be very careful not to assign to this deliverance the attributes of a victory. Wars are not won by evacuations. But there was a victory inside this deliverance, which should be noted. It was gained by the Air Force. Many of our soldiers coming back have not seen the Air Force at work; they saw only the bombers which escaped its protective attack. They underrate its achievements. I have heard much talk of this; that is why I go out of my way to say this. I will tell you about it.

11. This was a great trial of strength between the British and German Air Forces. Can you conceive a greater objective for the Germans in the air than to make evacuation from these beaches impossible, and to sink all these ships which were displayed, almost to the extent of thousands? Could there have been an objective of greater military importance and significance for the whole purpose of the war than this? They tried hard, and they were beaten back; they were frustrated in their task. We got the Army away; and they have paid fourfold for any losses which they have inflicted. Very large formations of German aeroplanes—and we know that they are a very brave race—have turned on several occasions from the attack of one-quarter of their number of the Royal Air Force, and have dispersed in different directions. Twelve aeroplanes have been hunted by two. One aeroplane was driven into the water and cast away by the mere charge of a British aeroplane, which had no more ammunition. All of our types—the Hurricane, the Spitfire and the new Defiant—and all our pilots have been vindicated as superior to what they have at present to face.

12. When we consider how much greater would be our advantage in

defending the air above this Island against an overseas attack, I must say that I find in these facts a sure basis upon which practical and reassuring thoughts may rest. I will pay my tribute to these young airmen. The great French Army was very largely, for the time being, cast back and disturbed by the onrush of a few thousands of armored vehicles. May it not also be that the cause of civilization itself will be defended by the skill and devotion of a few thousand airmen? There never has been, I suppose, in all the world, in all the history of war, such an opportunity for youth. The Knights of the Round Table, the Crusaders, all fall back into the past—not only distant but prosaic; these young men, going forth every morn to guard their native land and all that we stand for, holding in their hands these instruments of colossal and shattering power, of whom it may be said that

> "Every morn brought forth a noble chance
> And every chance brought forth a noble knight," *

deserve our gratitude, as do all of the brave men who, in so many ways and on so many occasions, are ready, and continue ready, to give life and all for their native land.

13. I return to the Army. In the long series of very fierce battles, now on this front, now on that, fighting on three fronts at once, battles fought by two or three divisions against an equal or somewhat larger number of the enemy, and fought fiercely on some of the old grounds that so many of us knew so well—in these battles our losses in men have exceeded 30,000 killed, wounded and missing. I take occasion to express the sympathy of the House to all who have suffered bereavement or who are still anxious. The President of the Board of Trade [1] is not here today. His son has been killed, and many in the House have felt the pangs of affliction in the sharpest form. But I will say this about the missing: We have had a large number of wounded come home safely to this country, but I would say about the missing that there may be very many reported missing who will come back home, some day, in one way or another. In the confusion of this fight it is inevitable that many have been left in positions where honor required no further resistance from them.

14. Against this loss of over 30,000 men, we can set a far heavier loss certainly inflicted upon the enemy. But our losses in material are

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* See Tennyson's *Morte d'Arthur,* ll. 230-231.

[1] Sir Andrew Duncan, now [1941] Minister of Supply.

enormous. We have perhaps lost one-third of the men we lost in the opening days of the battle of 21st March, 1918, but we have lost nearly as many guns—nearly one thousand—and all our transport, all the armored vehicles that were with the Army in the north. This loss will impose a further delay on the expansion of our military strength. That expansion had not been proceeding as fast as we had hoped. The best of all we had to give had gone to the British Expeditionary Force, and although they had not the numbers of tanks and some articles of equipment which were desirable, they were a very well and finely equipped Army. They had the first-fruits of all that our industry had to give, and that is gone. And now here is this further delay. How long it will be, how long it will last, depends upon the exertions which we make in this Island. An effort the like of which has never been seen in our records is now being made. Work is proceeding everywhere, night and day, Sundays and week days. Capital and Labor have cast aside their interests, rights, and customs and put them into the common stock. Already the flow of munitions has leaped forward. There is no reason why we should not in a few months overtake the sudden and serious loss that has come upon us, without retarding the development of our general program.

15 Nevertheless, our thankfulness at the escape of our Army and so many men, whose loved ones have passed through an agonizing week, must not blind us to the fact that what has happened in France and Belgium is a colossal military disaster. The French Army has been weakened, the Belgian Army has been lost, a large part of those fortified lines upon which so much faith had been reposed is gone, many valuable mining districts and factories have passed into the enemy's possession, the whole of the Channel ports are in his hands, with all the tragic consequences that follow from that, and we must expect another blow to be struck almost immediately at us or at France. We are told that Herr Hitler has a plan for invading the British Isles. This has often been thought of before. When Napoleon lay at Boulogne for a year with his flat-bottomed boats and his Grand Army, he was told by someone, "There are bitter weeds in England." There are certainly a great many more of them since the British Expeditionary Force returned.

16 The whole question of home defense against invasion is, of course, powerfully affected by the fact that we have for the time being in this Island incomparably more powerful military forces than we have ever had at any moment in this war or the last. But this will not continue.

We shall not be content with a defensive war. We have our duty to our Ally. We have to reconstitute and build up the British Expeditionary Force once again, under its gallant Commander-in-Chief, Lord Gort. All this is in train; but in the interval we must put our defenses in this Island into such a high state of organization that the fewest possible numbers will be required to give effective security and that the largest possible potential of offensive effort may be realized. On this we are now engaged. It will be very convenient, if it be the desire of the House, to enter upon this subject in a secret Session. Not that the Government would necessarily be able to reveal in very great detail military secrets, but we like to have our discussions free, without the restraint imposed by the fact that they will be read the next day by the enemy; and the Government would benefit by views freely expressed in all parts of the House by Members with their knowledge of so many different parts of the country. I understand that some request is to be made upon this subject, which will be readily acceded to by His Majesty's Government.

17. We have found it necessary to take measures of increasing stringency, not only against enemy aliens and suspicious characters of other nationalities, but also against British subjects who may become a danger or a nuisance should the war be transported to the United Kingdom. I know there are a great many people affected by the orders which we have made who are the passionate enemies of Nazi Germany. I am very sorry for them, but we cannot, at the present time and under the present stress, draw all the distinctions which we should like to do. If parachute landings were attempted and fierce fighting attendant upon them followed, these unfortunate people would be far better out of the way, for their own sakes as well as for ours. There is, however, another class, for which I feel not the slightest sympathy. Parliament has given us the powers to put down Fifth Column activities with a strong hand, and we shall use those powers, subject to the supervision and correction of the House, without the slightest hesitation until we are satisfied, and more than satisfied, that this malignancy in our midst has been effectively stamped out.

18. Turning once again, and this time more generally, to the question of invasion, I would observe that there has never been a period in all these long centuries of which we boast when an absolute guarantee against invasion, still less against serious raids, could have been given to our people. In the days of Napoleon the same wind which would have carried his transports across the Channel might have driven

away the blockading fleet. There was always the chance, and it is that chance which has excited and befooled the imaginations of many Continental tyrants. Many are the tales that are told. We are assured that novel methods will be adopted, and when we see the originality of malice, the ingenuity of aggression, which our enemy displays, we may certainly prepare ourselves for every kind of novel stratagem and every kind of brutal and treacherous maneuver. I think that no idea is so outlandish that it should not be considered and viewed with a searching, but at the same time, I hope, with a steady eye. We must never forget the solid assurances of sea power and those which belong to air power if it can be locally exercised.

19. I have, myself, full confidence that if all do their duty, if nothing is neglected, and if the best arrangements are made, as they are being made, we shall prove ourselves once again able to defend our Island home, to ride out the storm of war, and to outlive the menace of tyranny, if necessary for years, if necessary alone. At any rate, that is what we are going to try to do. That is the resolve of His Majesty's Government—every man of them. That is the will of Parliament and the nation. The British Empire and the French Republic, linked together in their cause and in their need, will defend to the death their native soil, aiding each other like good comrades to the utmost of their strength. Even though large tracts of Europe and many old and famous States have fallen or may fall into the grip of the Gestapo and all the odious apparatus of Nazi rule, we shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender, and even if, which I do not for a moment believe, this Island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle, until, in God's good time, the New World, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the old.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

On June 4, 1940, the Right Honorable Winston S. Churchill, prime minister of Great Britain, gave to the House of Commons his report

on the evacuation of French and British troops from the coast of France. For days, as the German forces attacked on all sides with all weapons, hundreds of boats, from small private motor cruisers and fishing smacks to warships of the British Navy, had dodged back and forth across the English Channel, plucking the remnants of the Allied armies off the Dunkirk beaches. They had finished their work early on the day when Churchill made his speech to Commons. Although the prime minister warned his hearers that "wars are not won by evacuations," the rescue from Dunkirk has become a memorable symbol of defeat turning into a kind of victory.

Most of Churchill's speech is expository narrative, couched in his usual vigorous and eloquent prose. His purpose, however, was not merely to report what had happened, but to draw for his countrymen fresh inspiration from the terrible task just accomplished, to stir up in them courage for the bitter and lonely days to come. As Dunkirk itself grew to be a symbol of desperate courage, so Churchill's final paragraph came to be a symbol for a tenacity that would not admit defeat. Of all Churchill's rhetoric, few sentences have been more quoted than his famous and defiant promise: "We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, and we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender."

1. Churchill is one of the few modern masters of the grand oratorical style. It is not a good style for the college student to imitate directly, but from it he can learn a great deal about the resources of the English language. The sentence which concludes par. 12 shows the Churchillian rhetoric at its most magniloquent—too flowery, perhaps, for ordinary use, but entirely appropriate to the extraordinary occasion which it marked. A quieter strength, used for dramatic emphasis, appears in the final sentence of par. 6. The whole of pars. 2 and 8 are marked by a particularly efficient and sustained narrative force. Look carefully at this style to see whether you can discover what qualities of diction, cadence, and sentence structure produce its effect.

2. After you have read Churchill's speech, turn back to p. 375 to read what the author of the "Letter to a Seventeen-Year-Old Son" had to say about the importance of Churchill's mastery of language in making him a great leader of a nation at war. Do you agree?

It's the English in Us°

by GERALD W. JOHNSON

I

The American people, as the twentieth century approaches its halfway mark, are certainly not English. This seems to be a matter of perpetual astonishment to Englishmen who live at home and they are still incredulous despite a multitude of witnesses. The Frenchman, Crèvecoeur, told them so a hundred and seventy-five years ago; but if they reject him as full of Gallic prejudice, they have the evidence of an impressive list of British observers, beginning with Lord Bryce, including Arnold Bennett and H. G. Wells, and coming down to John Buchan, D. W. Brogan and Harold Laski. All agree that the American is something quite different from the Englishman.

2. But what is he? The question puzzled Crèvecoeur in 1782, and it puzzled Laski no less in 1948. His name may be Roosevelt, contracted from Martenzen van Rosenvelt, which is emphatically non-English, he may have French, Italian, Flemish, Swedish and Scottish blood, and yet be so nearly the model of an English gentleman that his enemies will accuse him of being practically a subject of the King; or he may be named Best, a native of a State with almost no intermixture of foreign blood, and yet be imprisoned for adhering to the common enemy of the United States and England. Obviously, the racial origin of an American doesn't tell much about him.

3. From this uncertainty has sprung in recent years a theory that since the country is no longer predominantly English, therefore it isn't English at all, or not to any important extent. It is a theory held tenaciously and hopefully by all who for highly emotional or severely rational reasons consider English influence derogatory to the country.

° From *Our English Heritage*. Copyright 1949 by Gerald W. Johnson, published by J. B. Lippincott Company. This portion of the book was originally published in slightly condensed form under the title "It's the English in Us" in *The Saturday Review of Literature*, June 4, 1949.

4. Statistically and theoretically there is a good deal to support it. For two generations before the quota system shut it off the great flood of immigration had come from non-English-speaking countries. Add twelve million Negroes and statisticians arrive at a figure of about fifty-one per cent for the non-British part of the population, and the British figure includes the Scotch, Welsh and North Irish elements.

5. But there is an imponderable factor that doesn't appear in statistical tables. It is the English power of transmutation, which is very considerable indeed, the indefinable process whereby a Swedish-French-Italian-Scottish-Flemish-Dutch combination touched by English influence may become so remarkably like an Englishman as to command the enthusiastic loyalty of the English. During his wartime visit to London, Wendell Willkie was equally popular in West End clubs and in Limehouse. German-American he may have been by blood, but he was a good enough Englishman to be acceptable in London, whether among the aristocracy or among the proletariat.

6. It does not follow that when an American, affected by this power of transmutation, takes on some English coloration he is necessarily improved. We assimilate their bad qualities as well as the better ones; in particular there is only too much reason to believe that we are pretty well saturated with the worst of all English traits, one which is as conspicuous in them as it is in the Germans and the Jews and which has made all three groups bitterly hated.

7. This is the deadly heresy of the *Herrenvolk*, the Chosen People, the race whose merits are so conspicuous that even God is forced to recognize them and to take the race under His special protection. It may be argued with some plausibility that the English are worse infected with this disease than either the Germans or the Jews, simply because they proclaim it less vociferously. Their relative silence on the subject is attributable, not to any doubt of their own superiority, but to a confidence in it so sublime that they tacitly assume that all the world shares it. This assumption was never made by any other group that cherishes the same delusion of its own superiority. Therefore the others insist on proclamations that lay them open to ridicule, while the Englishman is so blandly certain of his membership in the Master Race that he considers it not worth while to make any effort to impress "lesser breeds, without the law."

8. A hundred years ago Americans developed a virulent case of this malady and it is interesting to note that one of the correctives applied consisted of the comment of English writers, notably Charles Dick-

ens, Harriet Martineau and the female Trollope. The satire in *Martin Chuzzlewit,* like many strong poisons, had a powerful germicidal effect when applied to a nationalism already inflamed and threatening to turn gangrenous.

9. The infection subsided for a while, but it has never been wholly eliminated and two conditions of modern American life are favorable to another flare-up. These are the simultaneous possession of great wealth and great military power. It would be fatuous to deny that it is easily possible for the American people, in the years immediately ahead, to generate an arrogance which would make that of the British seem almost a virtue by comparison.

10. But we are to some extent aware of the danger, and there is in existence some disposition to resist it. If the pattern of our national life is set by influences we know we should resist, then we are a failure as a nation. What is better worth considering here is the influence of those factors that are accepted and approved, sometimes unwittingly, but never consciously resisted.

11. In Scripture it is written that "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." As a rule, a man thinketh in his heart in the terms that he acquired when he first began to think at all, that is, in his youth when he was under formal instruction by professional educators. If he is an American, that formal instruction was given in the English language, and English literature was the medium used to give shape and expression to his notions of the sublime and the beautiful. Poetry he first learned as English poetry and even non-English thought, the philosophy of Plato, for example, came to him in the words of Benjamin Jowett.

12. His forefathers may have lived in Hungary, or Japan, or Mexico, or anywhere elsè, yet "if there be any virtue and there be any praise" in the thoughts of his heart and if these things come to him expressed in the English language, he is somewhat English regardless of race, or nationality, or residence in the midst of the Mississippi Valley. We are not English and our minds are not English minds, but as long as we can pick up a book of verse from London and be stirred instantly "there is some corner of a foreign field that is forever England."

13. The fact is immutable. It may be regretted, but it cannot be changed and it is folly to ignore it. That is the philosophy that really counts. The writings of the learned doctors may agitate the schools and fill the columns of the reviews and the more stately newspapers, but what moves the people is the intangible influence of a thousand

years of English thought and English struggle. To attempt to measure it with any degree of precision is hopeless, for the people are not aware of it and cannot report it to others. As far as their conscious thought is concerned they may be anti-English and consider themselves anti-English to the bone; but it is not true.

14. Walking up Charles Street in Baltimore in the spring of 1939 I encountered a crowd of rather dilapidated youth streaming out of a church and into busses decorated with large cloth banners denouncing war and British imperialism. The young people were singing a dismal chant and bored-looking policemen stood around keeping the sidewalks clear.

15. "What goes on?" I asked the biggest and most bored.

16. "Some sort of pacifist outfit," he answered, twirling what elsewhere is called a nightstick, but in Baltimore an espantoon.

17 "That's all very well," he added suddenly, "until old England gets in trouble again, but then—" he spat and twirled his espantoon and looked silently down the street, closing the interview.

18 Not six months later the war was on and his words were justified; but to assume that the policeman was bribed by British gold, or deceived by British propaganda, would be nonsensical. He simply recognized the power of British tradition, which is for the most part English tradition, and knew what it could do.

19. There is no reasonable doubt that Woodrow Wilson in 1914 sincerely believed that neutrality, not only in deed, but in word and thought, was the right course for the United States to pursue. There is abundant evidence that he made desperate efforts to pursue it. He was not English; he was of a Scottish family that had lived for generations in Ireland. He was not an enthusiast, but a historian, trained in critical examination of evidence. He was not a traditionalist; on the contrary, ever since he attacked the eating clubs at Princeton, before he entered politics, he had been known as a great iconoclast. So when the first World War broke, for a time he could hold aloof, but that was the utmost of which he was capable. It was as impossible for him to accept the German concept of the all-inclusive state as it was for him to change the color of his eyes. All the weight of English tradition was against it, and in the end it thrust him, as well as the great mass of his fellow-citizens, into the English side of the fight.

20. President of the United States or patrolman pounding a beat, all Americans are under the pressure of that tradition and are shaped and moulded by it. Americans of the first generation are probably more

acutely conscious of it than those of the tenth; but they are all moved by it. Some rejoice in it and some, as far as their rational processes go, resist it; but it exists and there is no understanding America without taking it into account. Nor should anyone think he has taken account of it when he attributes it to some slight and transitory cause—bribery, or threats, or snobbery, or deceit.

21. It is a curious fact that some of the people who have most completely misunderstood the nature of this influence have been visiting Englishmen. They make the mistake of assuming that the force whose existence they recognize has its source in the organized state named England, which is the capital and nerve-center of the British Empire; and when they discover that American enthusiasm for that state is, in fact, quite languid, they are puzzled and sometimes exasperated. In the other direction, German observers, including diplomatic agents, observing this lack of enthusiasm for the government of the Crown, have twice mistaken it for a deep anti-English feeling, and twice the mistake has led to the ruin of Germany.

22. Americans threw off allegiance to the Crown in 1776. The act was final, definite, irrevocable. Since 1814, when a group of misguided Federalists in New England seem to have imagined that they could take their States back into the empire, no American leader above the tenth rate has seriously suggested a return to monarchy. The chance that such an effort will ever be made has been diminishing steadily since the Declaration of Independence and is smaller today than ever before. Even those enthusiasts who are hottest for world federation, or a federation of western democracies, do not propose that the institution of monarchy should be revived.

23 Primogeniture, the basis of a permanent, hereditary aristocracy, is even more definitely out. The American trend, far from favoring inheritance by the oldest son, is distinctly in the direction of the abolition of all inheritance. Inherited money commands servility and sycophancy in America as money commands them everywhere in the world, but genuine respect for inherited wealth is probably at a lower ebb at this moment than it ever was before. This is evidenced not merely by the fact that inheritance taxes tend to increase rather than diminish, but also by the attitude of politicians and publicists, notably newspaper writers. Fifty years ago the doings of what was known as "Society," composed largely of people with inherited money, were given an immense amount of space in the newspapers. Today "Society" is relegated to relative obscurity and the large space is given to

"Café Society," which is a different thing and in nothing more conspicuously different than in its independence of inherited wealth. Notoriety is a better passport to Café Society than any kind of wealth.

24. Imperialism is another matter. Imperialism is an insidious idea, capable of assuming countless forms, including the form of anti-imperialism. William McKinley took over the Philippine Islands in the name of anti-imperialism, and the assumption that he was hypocritical about it is not backed by substantial evidence. Mommsen declares that the Roman people, even after they had brought all Italy under their control, were strongly isolationist and the conquest of Sicily had to be effected under all sorts of subterfuges to avoid a popular uprising against it.

25. No prudent commentator, therefore, will assert flatly that the American people have definitely and permanently rejected imperialism. But it is safe to say that if and when it comes it will not be recognizably British imperialism. For one thing, the nation has not been fecund of great proconsuls. There have been many honest and earnest American governors of subject peoples, and a few reasonably efficient ones, but no American has arisen remotely comparable to Cecil Rhodes, or even to Warren Hastings.

26. Our experience has been in the diametrically opposite direction. Our worse failures have not been by way of sending out men like Gaius Verres, terrible scourges of mankind, but nincompoops. There is a faint but perceptible air of the comic about the history of American colonial administration and comedy was ever the ruin of glamor.

27. In addition to our unhappy experience in governing other peoples, efforts to create an untouchable Ark of the Covenant called the national honor have not been notably successful for a long time. Their last memorable achievement was precipitation of the Spanish-American war in 1898. Since then the trend has been in the other direction until at present the danger is less our truculence than our disposition to assume that every national collision must be a War of Jenkins' Ear, a case of unblushing aggression.

28. So the most that can be said is that we are not admirers of British imperialism, but that can be said definitely. The thing may creep upon us—there is no lack of pessimists who aver that it has already crept upon us—but if and when it comes it will not be in the form that has been familiar to the world since Elizabeth's sea-dogs made the Spanish treasure fleet a bad insurance risk, and the expansive Samuel Argall, agent of Virginia, thought it moral and praiseworthy

to blast the Jesuits out of what is now Bar Harbor, Maine, and compel the Dutch at the mouth of the Hudson to swear allegiance to England.
29. Monarchy, aristocracy and British imperialism, three pillars of the English state, are out as far as America is concerned, and no one who ignores the fact can understand the country.

II

30. But monarchy, aristocracy and imperialism are not England.
31. To an American it seems strange that a fact so obvious should be worth mentioning, but the writings of some English commentators on America are evidence that they have not realized it or at least that they assume that these things are inseparable from England and that wherever English influence is felt they must be operative.
32. The England that still holds a powerful grip upon the thoughts and acts of the American people, including those of non-English origin, is not the realm of the English king, nor the institutions created by the English people. It is nothing so tangible, nothing definable in materialistic terms. It is a story, partly history, partly legend, largely poetry and drama. It is the struggle of a thousand years through which the common Englishman was transformed from the crook-backed serf who was sold with the land into the labor leader who stands before the King as his Prime Minister and whose will the King cannot gainsay.
33. The struggle is not unique. It has been carried on in every country in the world and in some it has been carried on successfully. But the version that we know best, the only one that we know at all well, is the English version; hence it is the one dominant in our lives.
34. The never-ending struggle has always and everywhere the same objective. It is simply to place the common man in a position where he may call his soul his own. But while the struggle is the same, it has been carried on against opponents of various types at various times and in various places. Autocrats, theocrats, aristocrats, plutocrats have fought it and demagogues have betrayed it, so the story is never exactly the same in any two nations.
35. One of the conspicuous characteristics of the English version is gradualism. In England there have been no such sudden surges forward as were represented by the French and Russian revolutions, not any such backward thrust as the Thirty Years' War in Germany, or the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in France. The English story is bloody enough, but the blood has usually been shed drop by drop,

rather than in torrents. Bloody Mary was an English Queen, but she is unique; and even her butcheries were rather slight as compared with those of, say, the Duke of Alva in the Netherlands. As a rule English martyrs to liberty met death singly. As a rule, liberty advanced in England step by step and not in leaps and bounds.

36. This gradualism is so conspicuously a part of the American story that, although we have been under democratic rule continuously for a longer period than any other great nation, we are at this moment politically the most conservative of the great nations. We have outdone the English themselves in the matter of proceeding with caution.

37. This is a severe trial to the spirit of impatient idealists, who deprecate this English influence as hobbling social amelioration in America without any compensating advantages. But they are wrong, not about the hobbling, which is obvious, but in denying the advantages. It is precisely because we have been going slowly that no important reform in the United States of America has ever been undone. The Alien and Sedition laws, an effort to undo the First Amendment to the Constitution, lasted two years. Lincoln suspended the writ of *habeas corpus*, but only momentarily in time of war, and even that remains the principal blot on his memory. Wilson's attorney-general harried radicals, but eventually the courts put a stop to it under the existing law.

38. Once, indeed, we plunged ahead rapidly on what we thought was the road to reform, and had to fall back in confusion. That was in the adoption of the Eighteenth Amendment, prohibiting the sale of beverage alcohol. It failed because it wasn't in fact a reform, but an invasion of liberty.

39. After every great war it seems that we develop a panic fear of liberty and indulge in an orgy of crimes against it. But Reconstruction in the South after 1865 and the witch-hunting after 1918, were perpetrated not by repealing the guarantees of liberty but by monstrous violations of them. The slow judicial process at length will almost certainly reveal that much of the reactionary hysteria following 1945 was equally lawless. Americans are no more exempt from criminal tendencies than are other nations and when they are sufficiently terrified they give way to the same mob instincts. But the fact remains that American law as it is written after due deliberation—undue deliberation sometimes, without a doubt—has moved steadily toward enlarging, rather than restricting the liberty of the common man.

40. If not one of his important rights has been snatched away by law in the course of nearly two hundred years, it is in part because he has not won his rights too soon. No great popular leader—not Jefferson in 1800, not Jackson in 1828, or Lincoln in 1860, or Wilson in 1912, or Roosevelt in 1932—has come to power without evoking anguished screams from those who were convinced that these men were bent upon giving the people liberties they were incompetent to hold.[1] Yet when the dust had settled every important reform effected by these leaders was embraced by the opposition party and remained a permanent part of the American system.

41 Perhaps because the enlargement of English liberty proceeded for a thousand years so slowly that the effect of one step could be measured before the next was taken, it has developed in the nation a strong belief in fair play. In politics fair play is justifiable only on the theory that the opposition may be partly right. That idea is utterly rejected by partisan campaigners, as the assailants of every strong President abundantly prove, but it has never been abandoned by the mass of the voters, who have always taken fervid partisans somewhat humorously.

42 It must never be forgotten that what is now the United States remained part of the realm of the English King through the hundred and seventy critical years that saw the transition of the monarchy from Tudor to Hanover. These years included the English Civil War with all the tremendous emphasis it laid upon the dignity of the individual. They included a vast amount of experimentation and cogitation in government; and they included also the discovery, in the course of this experimentation, that no political reform is ever exactly right. Reformers, being human, invariably either overshoot or undershoot

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[1] "The ties of marriage . . . are severed and destroyed; our wives and daughters are thrown into stews; our children are cast into the world from the breast and forgotten; filial piety is extinguished, and our surnames . . . are abolished." This is a description of the state of the nation made by Theodore Dwight in an oration at New Haven July 7, 1801. This interesting situation, it seems, was attributable to the election of Thomas Jefferson as President the previous November.

"The bill . . . applies force to the judiciary and . . . would undermine independence of the courts. It violates all precedents in the history of our government. . . . The theory of the bill is in direct violation of the spirit of the American Constitution and its employment would permit alteration of the Constitution without the people's consent or approval; it undermines the protection our constitutional system gives to minorities and is subversive of the rights of individuals." This is the opinion, expressed 130 years after Dwight by a Senate committee, of President Roosevelt's proposal to take measures to guard against the Supreme Court's ever being composed of judges the majority of whom are senile.

the mark, which means that the initial success must always be followed by precise adjustments to correct errors.

43. This knowledge was not passed on to the Americans. It was acquired by them along with the English when they were still a part of the English political system. But it is part of the influence that the English have exerted upon American life. Upon it is based the American principle that the ballot as a political instrument is always preferable to the bullet, because your opponent of today may be a useful supporter tomorrow, if he is alive, but can be of no possible further use once he is dead.

44. In one instance only have we departed from the tacit understanding that whatever happens, nobody will shoot. That occasion was after the election of 1860, when the defeated minority did appeal to arms. The result was a war that cost more American lives than both World Wars, and left wounds that have not yet healed. It was a powerful reinforcement of our old belief that the English system of gradualism and no shooting is the best method of effecting lasting improvements in our political, social and economic institutions.

45. The American valuation of the capable man also has in it more of English tradition than we sometimes think. We like to believe, and Frederick Jackson Turner and his followers have strengthened the belief, that the frontier, not the English, taught us that skill and energy yield precedence only to honesty among the human qualities that command respect; and we have not always given first place even to honesty.

46. But the idea had begun to permeate English society as far back as the reign of Elizabeth. The seaman, Francis Drake, was knighted by a queen who coolly ignored the scions of many noble houses. He had skill and energy, so he became Sir Francis while barons' sons went untitled. Long before that, indeed, the English had begun to restrict inheritance to a single line. If a nobleman's younger sons wished recognition, they had to earn it. Earned honors, furthermore, were regarded as no whit less honorable than those inherited. Two centuries later Wellington, who started as an untitled younger son, became not merely a perfectly genuine duke, but the Iron Duke, compared to whom dukes by inheritance were but poor stuff.

47. With such ideas in their heads the English settlers could find a certain reasonableness in the granite law of the frontier that crushed all but the able in body and mind; and finding it not without reason could adapt themselves to it with better grace than men trained in

the belief that there was a certain divinity in blue blood for which ability was no equivalent. From this it was a short step to the theory that a combination of brains and character constitutes the only genuine superiority, which theory is the foundation of democracy.

48. Finally, "a nation of shopkeepers" unquestionably had something to do with implanting in us the belief that the producer and trader is the true conquistador. This inheritance has its sordid side, as no candid man can deny. We have never been able to make a clear distinction between the commercial instinct and the acquisitive instinct, so we have failed many times to differentiate the man who makes money from the man who grabs money. The result is that over and over again we have followed the leadership of Gadarene swine who repeatedly—as in 1873 and in 1893 and in 1929—"ran violently down a steep place into the sea . . . and were choked."

49. But civilization has made a step forward in any community when it makes up its collective mind that the way to deal with an intruding stranger is to cheat him and not to shoot him. Civilization has made, not a step but a long stride forward when it is decided to make a fair deal with the stranger. A fair deal presupposes a profit at both ends; and while it is true of late years that there are extremists who equate "profit motive" with all evil, it is nevertheless much preferable to the homicidal motive. The English taught us to exalt the trader, and while it is a teaching not without flaws it has unquestionably tended to soften manners and restrain manslaughter. Incidentally, it has built up an economic power that is now the most formidable in existence.

50. Locke's empiricism, Hobbes' materialism and Spencer's eclecticism are elements of English philosophy that have agitated American schools and still furnish matter for gentle and joyous debate among the learned doctors. But most of the people never heard of any of them, and if they heard would promptly forget. The English philosophy that still sways the thoughts and acts of the millions who never saw the inside of a college is none of these. It is English faith in gradualism linked with compromise, English faith in ability as at least equal to heredity, and English faith in commerce as a better instrument of conquest than war.

51. The pattern that the English set is not perfect. In many ways it has proved to be so imperfect that it had to be abandoned and a new pattern devised. Many English ideas have given way to ideas brought from some other country because the non-English idea was superior.

Many English methods have been less efficient than other methods and have been abandoned.

52. Nevertheless, so much of the pattern has survived that a relation unique among nations exists between the United States and Great Britain. Nearly three hundred and fifty years after the first settlement and nearly a hundred and seventy-five years after the political separation the English pattern is still followed. England probably never sent more than four or five millions of her people to this country; other countries have sent more than thirty millions; yet the English pattern survives.

53 It is true that the English, coming first, multiplied so prodigiously that the millions pouring in later could not overwhelm them. Nevertheless, the impact of thirty million aliens is a terrific test of any culture. The English pattern had to be good, very good, to survive that test. It is hard to think of any other except the Chinese that has stood up under an equivalent strain, and the eventual triumph of Chinese culture was very much slower. The English pattern in America has not been subverted even temporarily. Many times its end has been announced, but the announcement has always been premature. After a short season it has become plain that the new idea had not really taken hold.

54. It is possible that it is nearing its end now. It is being assailed with tremendous vigor by what is probably the oldest concept of government in existence. This is what we are in the habit of calling the Fascist-Communist concept, or totalitarianism. But only the name is new; totalitarianism is simply despotism "writ large." The despot may claim his authority by the grace of God, or by the grace of "the leadership principle," or by the grace of the proletariat, but he is a despot still. He has had more names than Proteus had shapes, but only one nature. As Nero he was not essentially different from Genghis, as Caligula he was basically Hitler, and as Attila, as Abdul, as Bonaparte, as Franco and as Stalin he is recognizably the same.

55 As John he ruled England for a while, but eventually his claws were clipped. As George, a singularly feeble avatar, he provoked an explosion of the English spirit that snapped our political bonds with England. As someone so far without a name, but probably much resembling Huey Long, he may yet dominate this country, and then, indeed, the English pattern will be rubbed out, its promise belied and its significance gone.

56. For in spite of its multitude of intricate, interwoven figures and

its bewildering variety of colors, the pattern that the English set is in its main outlines a simple one. It seems complicated only because there is movement in it. Time being one of its dimensions, it alters from day to day, and thereby confuses observers whose perception is slow.

57. It is the figure of the stooping serf, himself a part of the real estate, straightening, slowly standing up, raising his eyes from the clod to the plant, to the flower, to the furrow and then the field beyond, at last to the face of the King. In the panel being woven now he stands erect and eyes the King with level gaze, and the King cannot gainsay him.

58. What is the next panel to be? It is a question not to be addressed to the English, for although they gave us the outline they are no longer weaving the web. Their responsibility ended with their dominance, many generations ago, and the pattern henceforth must be American. Others have contributed to it colors and figures unknown to the English, and the artistry, or lack of it, of Americans as a nation will be proved by their capacity to make these new contributions enrich the original design without obliterating its masterly strokes.

59 We have no lack of pessimists who are certain that the work is beyond us. The development, they say, has come to its logical conclusion, the wheel has made its full turn, and retrogression is all that may be expected. The next panel that comes from the loom of Time, they prophesy, will show the level-eyed citizen beginning to quail before the glare of a dictator, beginning to stoop again, and to sink his gaze toward the earth.

60 Others say no, that the pattern set by the English, far from having run out, is only now ready for its development with richer fabrics, more gorgeous hues and more daring designs than its originators ever possessed. Weavers as industrious and skillful as their fathers, and far more splendidly endowed, will carry the moving figure on, and the man who is the center of the picture little by little will raise his eyes from the face of the Ruler and turn them toward the stars.

61 But that is for the future to reveal. That, as the yarn-spinners like to say when they don't know what comes next, is another story.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

The history of peoples and of nations is always open to a number of different interpretations, often sharply opposed to one another. Many interpreters of America have stressed the nation's uniqueness,

its mixture of many racial stocks, and its sturdy independence from Old World ties, particularly from the England which sent so many of its first settlers. Gerald W. Johnson concedes the uniqueness and the mixture of nationalities, but argues that some of the most characteristic patterns of American society are still governed by ideas inherited from English culture. To prove this, he selects the characteristics of English political life and history that seem to him most central, and shows how they have passed over into American life and history to become a part of the nation's cultural heritage.

The strength of this type of argument lies in the amount of skill shown by the author in convincing the reader that the ideas he has chosen for analysis are really central to the issue, and that the ones he has left out are not. The reader must also be convinced that the illustrative examples demonstrate what the author says they do and that he has not ignored others which would disprove his generalizations. The interpretation of history rests on the knowledge and use of so many facts and ideas that to do it successfully and convincingly requires skill of a very high order.

1. Why does Johnson begin by stating that racially America is no longer English? What does this lead to in par. 3? What is the author doing in pars. 4 and 5? Why does he discuss in pars. 6-9 the outstandingly bad quality America has assimilated from the English before discussing the good?

2. How does Johnson in pars. 11-20 go about demonstrating that Americans are unconsciously influenced by English thought? Why does he emphasize in pars. 13 and 32 its unconsciousness and intangibility? Are pars. 21-31 necessary? In them is Johnson merely proving that many English observers are wrong or is he forestalling certain American objections to his main line of argument?

3. What is the central idea of pars. 32-34? Show that, directly or indirectly, pars. 35-41 are developments of that central idea. What is the function of par. 50? Pars. 51-53 are a restatement and re-emphasis of ideas previously discussed; in what new direction does Johnson go in pars. 54-61? Show that this last section is connected both by its idea and by verbal echoes to pars. 32-34. Is it a logical way to end the discussion?

4. Why, in view of Johnson's main idea, is his simile in par. 19 peculiarly appropriate when he says of Woodrow Wilson that it "was as impossible for him to accept the German concept of the all-inclusive state as it was for him to change the color of his eyes"? What do

you think of the metaphor at the end of par. 8? Note that it is carried on in the next paragraph and serves to link the two. Trace one basic metaphor that is carried on almost continuously through pars. 56-60. What is the value of such a sustained metaphor?

Suggestions for Writing

1. The characteristics of a Middle Westerner.
2. What makes an American?

*The Indispensable Opposition**

by WALTER LIPPMANN

I

Were they pressed hard enough, most men would probably confess that political freedom—that is to say, the right to speak freely and to act in opposition—is a noble ideal rather than a practical necessity. As the case for freedom is generally put to-day, the argument lends itself to this feeling. It is made to appear that, whereas each man claims his freedom as a matter of right, the freedom he accords to other men is a matter of toleration. Thus, the defense of freedom of opinion tends to rest not on its substantial, beneficial, and indispensable consequences, but on a somewhat eccentric, a rather vaguely benevolent, attachment to an abstraction.

2. It is all very well to say with Voltaire, 'I wholly disapprove of what you say, but will defend to the death your right to say it,' but as a matter of fact most men will not defend to the death the rights of other men: if they disapprove sufficiently what other men say, they will somehow suppress those men if they can.

3. So, if this is the best that can be said for liberty of opinion, that a man must tolerate his opponents because everyone has a 'right' to

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say what he pleases, then we shall find that liberty of opinion is a luxury, safe only in pleasant times when men can be tolerant because they are not deeply and vitally concerned.

4. Yet actually, as a matter of historic fact, there is a much stronger foundation for the great constitutional right of freedom of speech, and as a matter of practical human experience there is a much more compelling reason for cultivating the habits of free men. We take, it seems to me, a naïvely self-righteous view when we argue as if the right of our opponents to speak were something that we protect because we are magnanimous, noble, and unselfish. The compelling reason why, if liberty of opinion did not exist, we should have to invent it, why it will eventually have to be restored in all civilized countries where it is now suppressed, is that we must protect the right of our opponents to speak because we must hear what they have to say.

5. We miss the whole point when we imagine that we tolerate the freedom of our political opponents as we tolerate a howling baby next door, as we put up with the blasts from our neighbor's radio because we are too peaceable to heave a brick through the window. If this were all there is to freedom of opinion, that we are too good-natured or too timid to do anything about our opponents and our critics except to let them talk, it would be difficult to say whether we are tolerant because we are magnanimous or because we are lazy, because we have strong principles or because we lack serious convictions, whether we have the hospitality of an inquiring mind or the indifference of an empty mind. And so, if we truly wish to understand why freedom is necessary in a civilized society, we must begin by realizing that, because freedom of discussion improves our own opinions, the liberties of other men are our own vital necessity.

6 We are much closer to the essence of the matter, not when we quote Voltaire, but when we go to the doctor and pay him to ask us the most embarrassing questions and to prescribe the most disagreeable diet. When we pay the doctor to exercise complete freedom of speech about the cause and cure of our stomachache, we do not look upon ourselves as tolerant and magnanimous, and worthy to be admired by ourselves. We have enough common sense to know that if we threaten to put the doctor in jail because we do not like the diagnosis and the prescription it will be unpleasant for the doctor, to be sure, but equally unpleasant for our own stomachache. That is why

even the most ferocious dictator would rather be treated by a doctor who was free to think and speak the truth than by his own Minister of Propaganda. For there is a point, the point at which things really matter, where the freedom of others is no longer a question of their right but of our own need.

7. The point at which we recognize this need is much higher in some men than in others. The totalitarian rulers think they do not need the freedom of an opposition: they exile, imprison, or shoot their opponents. We have concluded on the basis of practical experience, which goes back to Magna Carta and beyond, that we need the opposition. We pay the opposition salaries out of the public treasury.

8. In so far as the usual apology for freedom of speech ignores this experience, it becomes abstract and eccentric rather than concrete and human. The emphasis is generally put on the right to speak, as if all that mattered were that the doctor should be free to go out into the park and explain to the vacant air why I have a stomachache. Surely that is a miserable caricature of the great civic right which men have bled and died for. What really matters is that the doctor should tell *me* what ails me, that I should listen to him; that if I do not like what he says I should be free to call in another doctor; and that then the first doctor should have to listen to the second doctor; and that out of all the speaking and listening, the give-and-take of opinions, the truth should be arrived at.

9. This is the creative principle of freedom of speech, not that it is a system for the tolerating of error, but that it is a system for finding the truth. It may not produce the truth, or the whole truth all the time, or often, or in some cases ever. But if the truth can be found, there is no other system which will normally and habitually find so much truth. Until we have thoroughly understood this principle, we shall not know why we must value our liberty, or how we can protect and develop it.

II

10 Let us apply this principle to the system of public speech in a totalitarian state. We may, without any serious falsification, picture a condition of affairs in which the mass of the people are being addressed through one broadcasting system by one man and his chosen subordinates. The orators speak. The audience listens but cannot and dare not speak back. It is a system of one-way communication; the opinions of the rulers are broadcast outwardly to the mass of the people. But nothing comes back to the rulers from the people

except the cheers; nothing returns in the way of knowledge of forgotten facts, hidden feelings, neglected truths, and practical suggestions.

11. But even a dictator cannot govern by his own one-way inspiration alone. In practice, therefore, the totalitarian rulers get back the reports of the secret police and of their party henchmen down among the crowd. If these reports are competent, the rulers may manage to remain in touch with public sentiment. Yet that is not enough to know what the audience feels. The rulers have also to make great decisions that have enormous consequences, and here their system provides virtually no help from the give-and-take of opinion in the nation. So they must either rely on their own intuition, which cannot be permanently and continually inspired, or, if they are intelligent despots, encourage their trusted advisers and their technicians to speak and debate freely in their presence.

12 On the walls of the houses of Italian peasants one may see inscribed in large letters the legend, 'Mussolini is always right.' But if that legend is taken seriously by Italian ambassadors, by the Italian General Staff, and by the Ministry of Finance, then all one can say is heaven help Mussolini, heaven help Italy, and the new Emperor of Ethiopia.

13. For at some point, even in a totalitarian state, it is indispensable that there should exist the freedom of opinion which causes opposing opinions to be debated. As time goes on, that is less and less easy under a despotism; critical discussion disappears as the internal opposition is liquidated in favor of men who think and feel alike. That is why the early successes of despots, of Napoleon I and of Napoleon III, have usually been followed by an irreparable mistake. For in listening only to his yes men—the others being in exile or in concentration camps, or terrified—the despot shuts himself off from the truth that no man can dispense with.

14. We know all this well enough when we contemplate the dictatorships. But when we try to picture our own system, by way of contrast, what picture do we have in our minds? It is, is it not, that anyone may stand up on his own soapbox and say anything he pleases, like the individuals in Kipling's poem who sit each in his separate star and draw the Thing as they see it for the God of Things as they are. Kipling, perhaps, could do this, since he was a poet. But the ordinary mortal isolated on his separate star will have an hallucination, and a citizenry declaiming from separate soapboxes will poison the air with hot and nonsensical confusion.

15. If the democratic alternative to the totalitarian one-way broadcasts is a row of separate soapboxes, then I submit that the alternative is unworkable, is unreasonable, and is humanly unattractive. It is above all a false alternative. It is not true that liberty has developed among civilized men when anyone is free to set up a soapbox, is free to hire a hall where he may expound his opinions to those who are willing to listen. On the contrary, freedom of speech is established to achieve its essential purpose only when different opinions are expounded in the same hall to the same audience.

16. For, while the right to talk may be the beginning of freedom, the necessity of listening is what makes the right important. Even in Russia and Germany a man may still stand in an open field and speak his mind. What matters is not the utterance of opinions. What matters is the confrontation of opinions in debate. No man can care profoundly that every fool should say what he likes. Nothing has been accomplished if the wisest man proclaims his wisdom in the middle of the Sahara Desert. This is the shadow. We have the substance of liberty when the fool is compelled to listen to the wise man and learn; when the wise man is compelled to take account of the fool, and to instruct him; when the wise man can increase his wisdom by hearing the judgment of his peers.

17. That is why civilized men must cherish liberty—as a means of promoting the discovery of truth. So we must not fix our whole attention on the right of anyone to hire his own hall, to rent his own broadcasting station, to distribute his own pamphlets. These rights are incidental; and though they must be preserved, they can be preserved only by regarding them as incidental, as auxiliary to the substance of liberty that must be cherished and cultivated.

18. Freedom of speech is best conceived, therefore, by having in mind the picture of a place like the American Congress, an assembly where opposing views are represented, where ideas are not merely uttered but debated, or the British Parliament, where men who are free to speak are also compelled to answer. We may picture the true condition of freedom as existing in a place like a court of law, where witnesses testify and are cross-examined, where the lawyer argues against the opposing lawyer before the same judge and in the presence of one jury. We may picture freedom as existing in a forum where the speaker must respond to questions; in a gathering of scientists where the data, the hypothesis, and the conclusion are submitted to men competent to judge them; in a reputable newspaper which not only

will publish the opinions of those who disagree but will reëxamine its own opinion in the light of what they say.

19. Thus the essence of freedom of opinion is not in mere toleration as such, but in the debate which toleration provides: it is not in the venting of opinion, but in the confrontation of opinion. That this is the practical substance can readily be understood when we remember how differently we feel and act about the censorship and regulation of opinion purveyed by different media of communication. We find then that, in so far as the medium makes difficult the confrontation of opinion in debate, we are driven towards censorship and regulation.

20 There is, for example, the whispering campaign, the circulation of anonymous rumors by men who cannot be compelled to prove what they say. They put the utmost strain on our tolerance, and there are few who do not rejoice when the anonymous slanderer is caught, exposed, and punished. At a higher level there is the moving picture, a most powerful medium for conveying ideas, but a medium which does not permit debate. A moving picture cannot be answered effectively by another moving picture; in all free countries there is some censorship of the movies, and there would be more if the producers did not recognize their limitations by avoiding political controversy. There is then the radio. Here debate is difficult: it is not easy to make sure that the speaker is being answered in the presence of the same audience. Inevitably, there is some regulation of the radio.

21. When we reach the newspaper press, the opportunity for debate is so considerable that discontent cannot grow to the point where under normal conditions there is any disposition to regulate the press. But when newspapers abuse their power by injuring people who have no means of replying, a disposition to regulate the press appears. When we arrive at Congress we find that, because the membership of the House is so large, full debate is impracticable. So there are restrictive rules. On the other hand, in the Senate, where the conditions of full debate exist, there is almost absolute freedom of speech.

22 This shows us that the preservation and development of freedom of opinion are not only a matter of adhering to abstract legal rights, but also, and very urgently, a matter of organizing and arranging sufficient debate. Once we have a firm hold on the central principle, there are many practical conclusions to be drawn. We then realize that the defense of freedom of opinion consists primarily in perfecting the opportunity for an adequate give-and-take of opinion; it consists also in regulating the freedom of those revolutionists who cannot or

will not permit or maintain debate when it does not suit their purposes.

23. We must insist that free oratory is only the beginning of free speech; it is not the end, but a means to an end. The end is to find the truth. The practical justification of civil liberty is not that self-expression is one of the rights of man. It is that the examination of opinion is one of the necessities of man. For experience tells us that it is only when freedom of opinion becomes the compulsion to debate that the seed which our fathers planted has produced its fruit. When that is understood, freedom will be cherished not because it is a vent for our opinions but because it is the surest method of correcting them.

24. The unexamined life, said Socrates, is unfit to be lived by man. This is the virtue of liberty, and the ground on which we may best justify our belief in it, that it tolerates error in order to serve the truth. When men are brought face to face with their opponents, forced to listen and learn and mend their ideas, they cease to be children and savages and begin to live like civilized men. Then only is freedom a reality, when men may voice their opinions because they must examine their opinions.

III

25. The only reason for dwelling on all this is that if we are to preserve democracy we must understand its principles. And the principle which distinguishes it from all other forms of government is that in a democracy the opposition not only is tolerated as constitutional but must be maintained because it is in fact indispensable.

26 The democratic system cannot be operated without effective opposition. For, in making the great experiment of governing people by consent rather than by coercion, it is not sufficient that the party in power should have a majority. It is just as necessary that the party in power should never outrage the minority. That means that it must listen to the minority and be moved by the criticisms of the minority. That means that its measures must take account of the minority's objections, and that in administering measures it must remember that the minority may become the majority.

27. The opposition is indispensable. A good statesman, like any other sensible human being, always learns more from his opponents than from his fervent supporters. For his supporters will push him to disaster unless his opponents show him where the dangers are. So if he is wise he will often pray to be delivered from his friends, because

they will ruin him. But, though it hurts, he ought also to pray never to be left without opponents; for they keep him on the path of reason and good sense.

28. The national unity of a free people depends upon a sufficiently even balance of political power to make it impracticable for the administration to be arbitrary and for the opposition to be revolutionary and irreconcilable. Where that balance no longer exists, democracy perishes. For unless all the citizens of a state are forced by circumstances to compromise, unless they feel that they can affect policy but that no one can wholly dominate it, unless by habit and necessity they have to give and take, freedom cannot be maintained.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

In 1859, in his great essay *On Liberty,* John Stuart Mill pointed out that "all silencing of discussion is an assumption of infallibility." "Not the violent conflict between parts of the truth," he continued, "but the quiet suppression of half of it is the formidable evil; there is always hope when people are forced to listen to both sides; it is when they attend only to one that errors harden into prejudices, and truth itself ceases to have the effect of truth, by being exaggerated in falsehood."

Much of the world since then has forgotten or ignored Mill's warning. Even in the United States the freedom of discussion has sometimes been thought an expensive luxury. But in 1939, when dictators strutted on almost every horizon, Walter Lippmann reminded us that freedom of speech is no luxury but an absolute necessity.

1. Why does Lippmann begin by discussing the interpretation of political freedom with which he disagrees? Where does he first state his own interpretation? In par. 5 he takes pains to demolish the assumption of noble-mindedness in the usual view of freedom; what sentence in par. 4 does this passage pick up and develop? Why is he so anxious to demonstrate that the argument for freedom must not rest on a sort of tired magnanimity?

2. Having cleared the ground of illusions, Lippmann proceeds to set forth his own view. What is the advantage of doing this by means of the analogy of doctor and stomachache in par. 6? Notice how in par. 8 the analogy is continued to discredit further the attitude Lippmann is attacking. What is the purpose of par. 9?

3. Pars. 10-13 make the first specific application of the general

principles already expounded. Why does Lippmann choose first an application that shows what happens when his interpretation of freedom is *not* followed?

4. The key sentence in the next group of paragraphs is the last of par. 15. Show how the criterion of freedom set forth in this sentence is applied in a slightly different way in each one of pars. 18-24. Notice the progression of application in pars. 20 and 21. Is there any reason other than convenience of length for printing these as two separate paragraphs instead of one?

5. What is the function of pars. 25-28? There is a great deal of repetition of idea in these paragraphs as well as in the whole essay. When a writer has to present an idea which rests on fairly simple reasoning but is still hard to grasp or likely to encounter much disbelief, what is the advantage of repeating it with different illustrations and applications? What are the possible dangers?

6. What does Lippmann gain by using commonplace and earthy expressions such as these: *a howling baby next door, heave a brick through the window* (par. 5), *stomachache* (par. 6)? Wherein lies the force of the last sentence in par. 16?

Suggestions for Writing

1. Lippmann says that "the defense of freedom of opinion consists primarily in perfecting the opportunity for an adequate give-and-take of opinion; it consists also in regulating the freedom of those revolutionists who cannot or will not permit or maintain debate when it does not suit their purposes" (par. 22). Discuss the practical application of this principle to suppressing so-called subversive groups. What kind of "regulation" is in order?

2. Lippmann suggests in par. 19 and following paragraphs that in the modern world of organized and monopolistic communication, it is difficult to arrange "sufficient debate." Discuss ways of overcoming this difficulty.

Outline for a Defense of Poetry[*]

by EARL DANIELS

Something is wrong, somewhere! That is the obvious thing to say about poetry in America today. Poetry is still being written, perhaps by more people, in larger quantities than ever. Mushroom magazines, countless numbers of them, spring up, to die for the independence of verse. Few read them except the contributors, more often than not unpaid for their contributions save in the doubtful satisfaction of seeing their names in print. In the general magazines, space for verse has been consistently shrinking; many either carry none at all, or carry it only as a space filler, where important fiction or an article happens to end in the middle of a page. Something as attention-compelling as a Pulitzer prize is almost necessary if a poet is to become a best seller and earn a decent living from his work. And publishers' feelings about sales possibilities are summarized in that terse phrase at the end of a statement of manuscript needs—"No poetry."

2. A member of a faculty in a liberal arts college recently put the common reader's attitude in a question to a friend who was teaching, or trying to teach, poetry in the college. "Do you mean to tell me," he asked, "that you would turn to poetry for fun, as you would turn to novels and short stories; that if it weren't part of your job you would read it, of your own accord, for pleasure?" For anyone who knows poetry, the answer to this incredulity is a *yes,* loud and emphatic enough to call for italics and boldface type. We do read poetry for pleasure. We do go to it from the same motive we go to fiction. Poetry does not fail us, or turn bitter on the tongue oftener than novels, short stories, or any other kind of reading. If we had to make comparisons, most of us would probably say that more of the time poetry is more fun than all other kinds of literature put together. But not until a man has discovered that there is pleasure in it—this before

[*] Earl Daniels, *The Art of Reading Poetry* (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1941), Chapter I. Copyright 1941 by Earl Daniels.

anything else—has he any valid reason for bothering his head about poetry. A young friend, who has found that pleasure, writes me this in a long letter: "The other morning, before going to work, I went to the bookcase to spend my usual five minutes pondering what I should take with me to read. Looking at *Selections* from Wordsworth, the small *Oxford Classics* edition, I almost felt remorse, and putting the book in my pocket hurried out of the house before I could change my mind. That began it. And last night, when the rest of the family went to the Fair, I stayed home, with the baby and Wordsworth. I began to read at nine-fifteen and went to bed at twelve, only because my eyes dropped shut while I was reading." The rest of the letter is about the discovery of Wordsworth, which came in those quiet evening hours. Like Keats upon his first exposure to *The Faerie Queene,* my friend went through Wordsworth like "a horse through a spring meadow—*ramping*"; like Keats on another occasion, he must have felt

> . . . like some watcher of the skies
> When a new planet swims into his ken,

as he went on to quote passage after passage which had stirred his heart.

3. Great passages are in all poets, to stir the hearts of all readers. No discoverer can forget a first encounter with them, or fail to taste the joys of subsequent, repetitive returns. For example, there is Chaucer's line about the Canon, in the prologue to "The Canon's Yeoman's Tale." On a warm April morning, in fourteenth-century England, he has ridden hard to overtake the pilgrim party, traveling to the shrine of Thomas à Becket at Canterbury. Chaucer says it looked as if he had spurred his horse for three miles, and notes that he had covered his head, as farmers still do, with a large dock leaf, as shade against the sun. Fat and out of breath, he stands there, hot and uncomfortable, puffing from his exertions. As he looks at him, all Chaucer's love for even the meanest commonplace of human nature, and, incidentally, all the abiding humanity of the Canon, is condensed into a single, unforgettable line:

> But it was joye for to seen hym swete! *sweat*

4. Or, once he has read, who can fail to remember always, Christopher Marlowe's evocation of Helen of Troy, the symbol of woman's glory and beauty? Summoned from the shades by the magic of Mephistophilis, she appears before Faustus in the loveliness of youth

which cannot die. He gazes in awed wonder on the vision, remembering what Helen has been in legend, what she has meant to the dreams of men. He can only murmur, under his breath, words which are an epitome of Helen and her power; epitome, too, of that heroic struggle when, for ten years, Greece laid siege against the walls of Troy.

> Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships
> And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?

The Greek fleet sails through those lines. Greek and Trojan heroes are there—Hector, Patroclus, Achilles, and all the rest. There is a defeated city, wrapped in smoke and flame, resonant with the din of hand-to-hand combat in the narrow streets, dusty with confusion. These things and more were there for Faustus. And these things and more, the words still mean for imaginations capable of being quickened by their implications.

5. To think of Helen of Troy is also to remember Cleopatra of Egypt, whose face was likewise the doom of a world. Once more a poet has said it best; this time, Shakespeare, in the words of Enobarbus, who has seen and is reporting Cleopatra's journey down the Nile to meet Antony.

> The barge she sat in, like a burnish'd throne,
> Burn'd on the water. The poop was beaten gold;
> Purple the sails, and so perfumèd that
> The winds were lovesick with them. The oars were silver,
> Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made
> The water which they beat to follow faster,
> As amorous of their strokes. For her own person,
> It beggar'd all description: she did lie
> In her pavilion—cloth-of-gold of tissue—
> O'er-picturing that Venus where we see
> The fancy outwork nature. On each side her
> Stood pretty dimpled boys, like smiling Cupids,
> With divers-colour'd fans, whose wind did seem
> To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool,
> And what they undid did . . .
>
> Her gentlewomen, like the Nereides,
> So many mermaids, tended her i' the eyes,
> And made their bends adornings. At the helm
> A seeming mermaid steers; the silken tackle

Swell with the touches of those flower-soft hands,
That yarely frame the office. From the barge
A strange invisible perfume hits the sense
Of the adjacent wharfs. The city cast
Her people out upon her; and Antony,
Enthron'd i' the marketplace, did sit alone,
Whistling to the air, which, but for vacancy,
Had gone to gaze on Cleopatra too
And made a gap in nature.

6. If you have not done it already, go back now, after your first reading, and read this aloud, just for the sound. *Listen!*

7. But these are only fragments; their pleasure is the pleasure only of the part. And the same kind of pleasure is discoverable in prose, if one tears passages from context, to hold them up for admiration in isolation.[1] More important, much more important, is that greater pleasure of the whole, to which parts and fragments are at best subsidiary. For the good poem is unified and organic; we have not read it until we have seen and felt it *as a whole*, even though its power may be manifest in the very way fragments will go singing through the mind long after we are through with the poem. The pounding rhythms of Vachel Lindsay's "The Congo" keep up their music for hours; the "fat black bucks in a wine-barrel room" continue to sag, and reel, and "beat an empty barrel with the handle of a broom" because the totality of the poem moved us, though we remember just a bit here and there, once the mind has relaxed into inattentiveness. Because Chaucer spoke eloquently to him, a publisher's representative, traveling among the colleges, has learned the "Prologue" to *The Canterbury Tales*—all 858 lines of it—simply for the pleasure in reciting it to himself. I remember another striking instance of Chaucer's appeal, this time to a college student. He had been enthusiastic about Chaucer during the final semester of his senior year. Immediately after commencement, he had married, acquiring a dog and a cat as part of the beginnings of housekeeping. That summer he wrote me. Because of dominant traits, revealed in relations with neighborhood cats, he had called the cat Alisoun, after Chaucer's irrepressible Wife

[1] Although it cannot be demonstrated at this elementary stage of the discussion, it must be insisted that in the passage cited, the pleasure is a pleasure of poetry, not a pleasure of prose; that their satisfaction is inherent in the poetry, foreign to prose except as it approaches or becomes, essentially, poetry.

of Bath, and he wanted a name for the dog, a name also out of Chaucer. I forget what I suggested. The actual naming makes little difference. What counts is that Geoffrey Chaucer could speak out of medieval England so tellingly and persuasively to a twentieth-century American college student that he wanted his first family possessions named in his honor. Chaucer is always doing that sort of thing to people who will take the time to learn to read him.

8. Not long ago I was walking home behind a crowd of children, just out of school. They might have been sixth-graders; they couldn't have been older than that. They were shouting, in chorus, at the top of their lungs, not the words of the latest popular song, but the echoing rhythms of *The Ancient Mariner:*

> Water, water, everywhere,
> And all the boards did shrink;
> Water, water, everywhere,
> Nor any drop to drink.

It would be silly to suggest that their chanting showed any understanding of the poetry in the words, or of Coleridge's poem as a whole. Probably, most of it went over their heads. They simply reacted to the magic of sound, as many of us react to "The Congo." On a very elementary level, they were demonstrating the validity of poetry, that it does things to people when it is given a chance; and they prove that something is wrong today. For if, as sixth-graders, poetry could bring them a joy insistent on expression, could enliven their way home, exactly like any game they might play along the street, why, as adults, will most of them stop reading poetry "for fun"? Why aren't there more traveling men who learn the "Prologue" to *The Canterbury Tales,* more college graduates who name their dogs and cats in Chaucer's honor? Why is poetry not only not a best seller, but usually not any kind of seller at all? Why do men and women not continue to read it, treasuring it as an enhancement and enrichment of living, a possession time cannot wither, nor depressions take away?

9. Whatever may be wrong, it is not the poetry. Not the poetry, but we, potential readers, are wrong, for we have somehow failed to realize our potentialities. And the depth of our wrongness is implicit in that faculty member's wondering that anyone could read poetry for the fun of it. It is wrong that an educated man—unfortunately, too many are like him—could be so wrong about poetry, so wrongly edu-

cated that he could ask so appalling a question. The same kind of wrong is in another remark, more frequently made, and running something like this: "It's all right, I suppose, for those who like it, but why can't a man say what he wants to say, and get it over with? Why can't he say it right out, say it just as well in prose?" An old story tells of two college roommates, one a major in English literature, the other, in science and mathematics. The science man had a curiosity about poetry, and his friend volunteered to show him. For a beginning he would take something easy: a narrative with strong, masculine rhythm. So he selected "The Charge of the Light Brigade," and, wise enough to know poetry should be heard to be enjoyed, he began to read aloud, asking of his friend only that he listen.

Half a league, half a league,
Half a league onward,

he read, and he was interrupted. "There!" said the other. "You see! That's what I mean. That's the trouble. If the fool means a league and a half, why doesn't he say so?" Probably the first lesson ended in confusion there. But it is to be hoped the English major persisted in his efforts, until he had shown his roommate something of what poetry may do for a man's mind and spirit.

10 For poetry—this is an elemental fact about it—cannot be said just as well, cannot be said at all in prose! In prose it would not be the poem; it cannot be translated into any other form without becoming something different. What the poetry of a poem is, what gives a poem its peculiar quality, responsible for the peculiar pleasure of poetry—that is what, primarily, learning to read poetry ought to teach us. Moreover—and this is another elemental fact—poetry does not ask for a particular type of mind, as so many seem to think, if it is to be enjoyed. Like music, like all the arts, it is for all who can and will find time to take it seriously, and a "special soul" may turn out to be more of a hindrance than a help.

11. This cult of "the special soul" has a good deal to do with the situation. For though poetry is not meant for special souls, being a normal, healthy activity of healthy and normal men and women, too many have, for too long, been busy trying to inculcate the idea of its specialness. Most of us, most of the time, are suspicious of special souls. We shy away from them and are uncomfortably embarrassed in their presence. And the poets themselves are less helpful than they should be, for they have contributed to the mystery in which poetry is mis-

takenly shrouded, insisting too often on the difference between the poet and other men, on his *apartness,* which calls for similar apartness in a reader. Plato, a poet though he did not use verse, who said much that was bad for poets and poetry, though he may have intended it for praise, wrote this:

> A poet is indeed a thing ethereally light, winged, and sacred, nor can he compose anything worth calling poetry until he becomes inspired, and, as it were, mad, or whilst any reason remains in him. . . . Poets are the interpreters of the divinities.[2]

[12] Such ideas are not isolated in the history of literature. They range from Plato all the way to Ezra Pound and the Dadaists of contemporary France. Springing from a sinister belief that poetry, somehow, needs defense, they have turned out to be an insidious kind of attack, and poets, who would be defenders, are much to blame for the defeat of what they thought they were fighting for. Poets and other self-appointed advocates are one reason why poetry is not read today nearly as much as it should be, for they have fostered the belief that poetry is like the Eleusinian mysteries of ancient Greece, open only to a select, a very select, body of initiates, not to be profaned by the touch of a common hand. They have forgotten the wiser, truer word of John Keats, one of the wisest, most human, most sensible of poets: "That if Poetry comes not as naturally as the Leaves to a tree it had better not come at all." [3] They have insisted on the divinity of the poet at the expense of his humanity, have insisted that he writes for a special audience, different from the ordinary run of men and women, whose distinction is their broad and understanding humanity. They have tried to build a cultist's temple, and have wondered why the rest of us have shown them little sympathy. Tennyson tells us that

> The poet in a golden clime was born,
> With golden stars above.

Shelley says: "A poet participates in the eternal, the infinite, and the one; as far as relates to his conceptions, time and place and number are not. . . . A poet is a nightingale, who sits in the darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds." And after that, he seems to expect us to take him seriously when he asserts, "Poets are

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[2] *Ion* 534.

[3] Letter to John Taylor, 27 February 1818.

the unacknowledged legislators of the world." [4] After all, legislation, even unacknowledged, has a practicality, a reality about it not consonant with the very special soul who has just been pictured.

[13] Despite many vagaries, Wordsworth was closer to truth in his belief that a poet was just "a man speaking to men"; a man whose difference from other men was only in degree, not in kind. Unless we are convinced of the "man-ness" of the poet, we are not likely to be much concerned about poetry. Poets who have written about themselves and their work have not been very much help to the cause in which they believe themselves to be earnestly enlisted.

[14] Posing as priests, they have been discouragers of our hesitancy, turning uncertainty as to whether poetry was worth bothering about into assurance that it wasn't. Better to do without poetry than be obliged to breathe the incense-heavy air in which poetry's articulate advocates seem to prefer to live. And all this when emphasis ought to be put on the simple truth that poetry, most of the time, is a natural activity of the human spirit, a necessity, not a luxury; rightly understood, its appeal is to healthy and red-blooded men and women as a part of the necessary pleasures of a normal life.

[15] If the poet as priest or prophet is bad for poetry, the poet as puzzle-maker has been no less efficient in turning readers away. Often with the best intentions, the puzzle-makers would transform poetry into a riddle, a highly refined acrostic, or a crossword puzzle. An average reader hasn't time for that sort of high jinks. When he wants puzzles, he wants them under their own name; he wants to know what he is getting. . . .

[16] Closely allied to puzzle-makers are poets who may be described as militant independents. Absorbed in the private and, usually, highly complex matters of their own secret thoughts, they have signed, with a John Hancock flourish, a declaration of independence from any responsibility to a prospective reader. They wrap the mantle of indifference about them with an attention-compelling gesture which is an invitation to suspicion. Now a reader has, as reader, a fundamental right to expect results from poetry as from any form of writing, from any art; a right to expect intelligibility to follow earnest effort to understand. The poet who says, "I have spoken, it is enough for me; I have no responsibility to be clear that you may know what I am talk-

[4] The Shelley quotations are from *A Defence of Poetry.*

ing about"—that poet rejects the requirement of all important art. Unless there be communication, there cannot be aesthetic pleasure. Art, not expression *for someone,* poetry, not communication *with someone,* not written for an audience, is less than art, less than poetry. Art has seldom flourished on the desert island of a solitary castaway!

17. Of course, poets who talk to themselves sometimes transform their solitude into beautiful and significant poetry. Examples of illustrious remoteness from the world readily occur to anyone. Emily Dickinson is one of our choicest spirits in American poetry. Yet all her life, it would seem she wrote only to herself, and for herself, setting down her fragile lyrics on the odds and ends of scraps of paper, guarding them from the eyes of all except the intimates of her family circle. She would not publish them during her lifetime; she wanted them destroyed after her death. Because they were written in that spirit, Emily Dickinson's poems are marked by a sincerity and intimacy often embarrassing to a sensitive reader, who feels that he is listening in on a privacy never intended for his ears.

18. For no other reason than because I am so fond of it, because I find new pleasure whenever I read it, I shall put here not a poem of Miss Dickinson's but a song from an anonymous English poet, perhaps of the sixteenth century. I know nothing about the poet, nothing about the circumstances under which the poem was written. I only know that I like it, even though it gives me that same eavesdropping feeling which marks a good deal of Emily Dickinson's verse. It is a private conversation of a man with himself, direct, unpretentious, real.

O western wind, when wilt thou blow
    That the small rain down can rain?
Christ, that my love were in my arms
    And I in my bed again.

19. Yes, poets can talk to themselves. But not when they are self-conscious, boastful about their own self-sufficiency, attitudinizing to alienate a reader. When good poets write to themselves, they do it without a declaration of independence. They write as though with an obligation upon themselves, as poets, to be clear in communicating with their other selves, as readers. And because they are careful about being clear to themselves as readers—selves very much like you and me—they write, without pose, poetry which speaks meaningfully to other people.

20. Cultists, puzzle-makers, militant independents: these do not include all categories of poets who have talked badly about poetry, but they will serve as examples to show how the poets have themselves contributed to misunderstandings making for its contemporary ill-repute. Those who try to teach what poets have written—and this must be taken to include a wider range than teachers in the technical sense of the word, for the voice of the lecturer is abroad in the land—must also be held responsible for some of the trouble and confusion. It would be foolish to deny that there is good teaching of poetry, as there is good teaching of everything else, and that good teaching is powerfully effective in right directions. But still too many sixth-graders do stop singing *The Ancient Mariner,* and too few adults learn the "Prologue" to *The Canterbury Tales.* Year after year, students crowd into college with ideas about poetry so distorted and wrong that they must be forcibly eradicated if there is to be progress toward enjoyment, so that the reading of poetry shall not cease abruptly, as soon as the compulsion of academic prescription is removed. If any generalization about poetry is valid, it is that at best college students read poetry badly. Most of them cannot read it at all. Unless they learn to perform major surgical operations on their own habits of mind, they will never read effectively, with enjoyment to themselves. For this situation, bad teaching must be in some measure to blame, teaching so bad, so pervasive, as to strike at the roots of a valid, continuing interest and pleasure with poetry.

21 I should accuse teachers of poetry of at least three great heresies: the heresy of facile talk about appreciation; the heresy of too great concern with peripheral things; the heresy of preoccupation with morals and the meaning of life.

1. The Heresy of Facile Talk about Appreciation

22. Facile talk about appreciation fosters the rapt expression, the starry eye, and the throbbing heart. Manifest in *oohs* and *ahs,* it is the inarticulate expression of what is thought to be pleasure when it is only lack of understanding. This gush school of poetry readers will always take the easy road of indolence, impatient of the hard work and concentration essential to comprehension. Probably the trouble is in a common misinterpretation of the word *appreciation,* which has nothing facile or effortless about it. Etymologically, it comes from two Latin words: *ad,* meaning *to* or *at,* and *pretium,* meaning *price* or

value. Thus, at its simplest, *to appreciate* is to put an accurate value on something. *Appreciation* is a synonym for *criticism,* an ugly word for most of the appreciation school, and both words call for the strenuous intellectual activity of analysis in order that a sound estimate of value may be reached. Without analysis, without work, there can be no pleasure in reading, no appreciation. Moreover, appreciation has little about it that is secret or mysterious. It does not come as a gift of God, by grace of any English department. Only those who seek early, persistently, with assiduity, ever find it; and only those who find enter into the joy of reading poetry. Appreciation does not come in the watches of the night as one sleeps; it is a daytime activity of the alert mind and the taut muscle. What Mr. Adler says in *How to Read a Book* applies to poetry as much as to the most difficult, abstract philosophic prose:

> a) The most direct sign that you have done the work of reading is *fatigue.* Reading that is reading involves the most intense mental activity. . . . To read books passively does not feed a mind. It makes blotting-paper out of it.
>
> b) . . . nothing helps those who will not keep awake while reading.[5]

The kind of reading Mr. Adler is talking about is an elementary spading-process, a necessary and sweat-provocative preparation of the ground, a *sine qua non* of appreciation.

2. *The Heresy of Too Great Concern with Peripheral Things*

[23] Peripheral things are "off at the side," away from the center; they are extracurricular. Interesting and important when kept in their proper, subordinate position, they are a hindrance to understanding if they are over-emphasized. For them we miss what is central, sacrifice first things for what are at best secondary. Among these second-rate matters in which discussion of poetry often wanders and loses itself, the Bog of Technique is perhaps most dangerous. John Bunyan's Slough of Despond was not blacker or more engulfing, and it takes a stout heart to win through this morass. Technique may be, it *is,* im-

[5] Mortimer J. Adler, *How to Read a Book,* Simon and Schuster (New York: 1940) pp. 110, 218.

portant; but not at the beginning of the game. Yet for a majority of students it seems to be all the game. They have been taught to put on labels, like "blank verse," or "heroic couplet," with deadly accuracy, but they cannot read fifty lines of Shakespeare with enjoying understanding, or feel the dancing glamour of *The Rape of the Lock.* They know the names for verse meters, and can mechanically chop lines into so-called feet, but beyond an awareness that Milton's "On the Late Massacre in Piedmont" and Mrs. Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese* are in the Italian and the English sonnet form, respectively, they have no feeling for differences in the poems, far more important than these superficialities. They can divide Keats' "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer," one of the finest poems in the language, into octave and sestet, and proudly catalogue the rime scheme; but they have never felt the glow which ought to result from intelligent reading, their hearts have never been warmed at the fire of Keats' record of intellectual adventure. And without a new and a different point of departure, their hearts never will be warmed at poetry's flame; they will grow up to wonder how anyone, in his right mind, can bother about poetry. Better they should never in their lives hear of one of the labels they now learn early to recite so glibly.

[24] Technique at best—and this best is at long remove from the academic and mechanic concern for labels—technique at best ought not to come for a long time. It is like dessert, proper, in any well-regulated meal, after the solidities of meat and potatoes, vegetables, and bread and butter. To use the food figure another way, technique is for the adulthood of appreciation, not for its infancy and adolescence. No one ought to think of feeding a six-month-old baby with corned beef and cabbage; no one who cares for poetry ought to confuse beginners with what are the arcana, the mysteries of the craft, proper only to one who has learned already to read, and read well. The general reader doesn't need to know the name of a single verse foot, need never scan, in the word's accepted sense, a line of verse, in order to enjoy poetry as it was meant to be enjoyed.

3. *The Heresy of Preoccupation with Morals and the Meaning of Life*

[25] The heresy of preoccupation with morals and the meaning of life is really another aspect of the heresy about peripheral things, but it is so pervasive, so deeply rooted with those who have listened to misin-

formed talk about poetry, that it deserves the dignity of a place apart to itself. Youth are probably the most moral people in the world. At no other time does the meaning of life burden our shoulders as it does in adolescence. And at that time, of all times, to encourage the pursuit of morals and philosophy, of the personal application in what is read, is likely to turn out to be only too successful. Someone has said that to look for pictures in music we are listening to is to be on the road to perdition as far as the appreciation of music is concerned. To look for morals and philosophy in poetry is to set one's feet in the same broad path. Poetry is devoid neither of morals nor of philosophy; Dante and Milton would rise to confound anyone stupid enough to say that. But he who would enjoy poetry must not look, *primarily,* for morals and a way of life.

26. That is precisely what too many students do. From "Rabbi Ben Ezra" they copy into their notebooks glib memory gems, like "Grow old along with me, the best is yet to be," and the memory gem, usually a facile platitude, is all they know of what is at best often only a second-rate poem. They come to associate poetry with the inculcation of a lesson for themselves, than which few things could be harder on the vitality of poetry. Concern for ethics is likely to mean that bad poems —"Rabbi Ben Ezra" or "Abou ben Adhem"—are read to the exclusion of better poems. "The Bishop Orders His Tomb at St. Praxed's Church" is a better poem than "Rabbi Ben Ezra," though the Bishop is not a very moral man. What is more vital, he is human; placed in a human and a dramatic situation, he should be allowed to speak, and he will if he is given an opportunity—like that other scoundrel of the "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister," or the lady-villain of "The Laboratory" —speak effectively to the heart of any normal person, anywhere, at any time.

27. It would be difficult to find memory gem or message in Waller's "Go, Lovely Rose." Yet it is one of the purest lyrics in English, and a justification of Emerson's phrase, "Beauty is its own excuse for being." It ought to be part of the poetry equipment, the mental furniture of everyone, to be learned by heart for the joy which comes from saying, over and over, the beautiful words. Read them slowly, aloud; surrender to the pictures and to the sound. What a pity it would be to look for a lesson, to try to derive personal application to one's own way of living!

SONG

Go, lovely rose!
Tell her that wastes her time and me
That now she knows,
When I resemble her to thee,
How sweet and fair she seems to be.

Tell her that's young
And shuns to have her graces spied,
That hadst thou sprung
In deserts where no men abide,
Thou must have uncommended died.

Small is the worth
Of beauty from the light retired;
Bid her come forth,
Suffer herself to be desired,
And not blush so to be admired.

Then die, that she
The common fate of all things rare
May read in thee;
How small a part of time they share
That are so wondrous sweet and fair!

—EDMUND WALLER

[28] There are many such poems in English literature, and they are one reason why everybody should learn to read poetry. It does make a difference what a mind has in the way of furniture. Wordsworth wrote of his ideal for his sister, Dorothy, to be attained as a result of her closeness to the landscape of the English Lake Country:

Therefore let the Moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;
And let the misty mountain-winds be free
To blow against thee: and, in after years,
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies: . . .

Surely something may be said, simply in terms of potential pleasure to one's self, for the difference in the mind furnished with, as a random example, "Shoot the sherbet to me, Herbert," and one equipped with the haunting loveliness of "Go, Lovely Rose."

29 If you are one of those taught to approach the presence of the poem in quest of vital lesson, of profound comment on man and the universe, the answer is, *Don't*. Here should be no halfway measures, no reducing the urge to philosophy by half, no gradual tapering-off. You may, after all, rest comfortable in the assurance that if philosophy and morals are present in any vital way, they will make themselves felt without your conscious searching for them, insistent on their share in your awareness of the complete poem.

30 The way of a group of college freshmen with a poem of Robert Frost illustrates how deadly this concern about morals may be. Here is the poem.

STOPPING BY WOODS ON A SNOWY EVENING *

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep.
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

—ROBERT FROST

* From *Complete Poems of Robert Frost, 1949*, by Robert Frost. Copyright 1923, 1949 by Henry Holt and Company, Inc.

31. Here are some interpretations by freshmen who were supposed to be better-than-average students.

a) In this poem the underlying thought seems to be that of suicide. . . . The last four lines of the poem indicate that the person decides he has more work to do on earth before he dies in order to fulfill a promise of some kind.

b) A man who has promised to leave town after committing some crime, and has been told "to get going and don't stop." The line, "The darkest evening of the year," might mean the disgrace he has brought on himself; and, "I have promises to keep," may mean he has promised to get out of the country.

c) If he didn't mention that the owner of the woods lived in the village, I would say he was talking about the life he has yet to live before he meets his Maker.

d) It deals with the thought of eternal rest. . . . But then the subject is brought back to reality with the thought of the things he has yet to do, and the rest of his life he has yet to spend.

e) It may represent one who is tired of life's hardships, and is tempted to drop by the wayside in some secluded retreat, but who must press on since he has many years of work ahead and many obligations to fulfill before such rest may be his.

f) Almost every day we find ourselves faced with the lures of temptation. We realize that we ought to keep on our way, yet the temptation to stay where all is peaceful and quiet is often too great for us to resist. While we are here in college we are often tempted to do the easiest thing. That is, to neglect our studies and to run around and have a good time. However we know that there are promises to be kept and obligations to be filled. We have been sent here by our parents for the purpose of receiving an education, and there is no doubt that our duty is to do all in our power to take advantage of this opportunity.

g) I am a college man. I am taking a pre-med course. I am away from home. I am open to temptations that college may offer me. Am I to take advantage of their owner's absence to sit and gaze in his woods—to take advantage of being away from my parents to stop by the wayside and admire the beautiful sirens? Or, am I to be a second Ulysses and have sufficient will power to overcome these temptations? Am I to stop where there is "easy wind and downy flake"—to sit back in my chair, just to dream and forget all hardships? Or am I to heed

the impatience of the horse and the warning of the harness bell—to awaken to my will calling for me to go on? True, it is dark now, and I cannot see well, but do I not remember the vows that I have made —to go through at all costs? Yes, I must go through those long miles of roads rougher than *I* can imagine, before *I* call for time out.

32. Comments *f* and *g* are especially nauseous misunderstandings, and they represent the cardinal sin of personal application. To make a poem mean privately, to ourselves alone, to look first for directions about *our* life and *our* problems—no going wrong can be more abysmally bad. Like the old hocus-pocus magic-formula way in which the Bible used to be consulted, you put your question, open the book at random, drop an equally random finger on the page, and there you are—provided you are ingenious enough in twisting words to meet special situations and personal needs. The method is equally unintelligent with the Bible and with poetry, and to resort to it is to proclaim oneself part of an intellectual underworld of superstition and ignorance. The poet's message, so far as he has a message for the individual, is a message to the individual not in his private and peculiar selfhood, but in his representative capacity as a normal human being, as a man; it is part of the universality of the poet's speaking.

33. If facile talk about appreciation, concern with peripheral things, and preoccupation with morals and the meaning of life are heresies, what is sound doctrine in the reading of poetry? What is orthodox? What is a right approach to Frost's poem, or to any poem? The simple, natural approach, the easiest way. What is obvious in "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" is that the poet has had a perfectly everyday experience. On a snow-filled winter's afternoon, he has come to a patch of woodland; for no reason, save that he simply and unashamedly likes to, he has stopped, just to watch the woods fill up with snow. That is the experience, the start of the poem, which, from such an unassuming start, got itself written because *the poet enjoyed the experience,* remembered it, and something made him want to try to put it in words, *just for fun: the poem is a record of experience to be shared with a reader,* who must take it at this simple face value if he is to read the poem as it should be read. Most poems probably begin much like this. And if someone says, "It may never have happened to Frost; he may have imagined it all," the answer is that in literature and the arts there is no essential difference between experience in actuality and experience in imagination; both are the stuff of

poems, in the broadest sense of the term, *experience.* It is really very little a reader's business whether a writer is using memory or imagination, so long as the reality of the result is not affected. Frost may, indeed, have imagined it all, so far as we have a right to know, or care.

34. But why should a poet want to share experience, if he has nothing "important" to say, no "lesson" to teach, if he is not intent on "improving society," and "bettering the conditions of the human race"? Like so many facts, this is a mystery, hid in elemental human nature. Men do act this way: human nature prompts them to want to tell others what has happened to them. All conversation is built on that ancient formula, "Have you heard this one?" The questioner hopes "this one" has not been heard, so that he can go on and tell his story, enjoy sharing his experience.

35. The woman in the parable is a case in point. She had lost her money. It is not significant that she went on an orgy of spring cleaning, turning the house upside down, or that she found her money. But when she found it, and this is the important thing, her next move was to give a party, inviting friends and neighbors for miles around, just that they might rejoice with her because she had found what had been lost: in other words, that they might share her experience. So the poet, though tangibilities like money may not be involved. Something emotionally stirring has happened, and he makes a poem, which is his invitation to his friends and neighbors to rejoice with him. How ungracious of the friends and neighbors of the woman, if they had hunted for lessons in the experience, emphasized, perhaps, the moral that in the future she must be more careful about her money, suggested it was all an illustration of the guidance of a good providence, enabling her to recover her fortune—or any other testimony a dyed-in-the-wool moralist might strain to discover. They had been invited to a party; the woman didn't want lessons; she wanted them to have a good time with her. No less ungracious is the reader who would deduce moral teaching from "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," and from many other poems, when what the poet wants is that we should have a good time at his party, along with him, because he, in the first place, had a good time with his experience. Such sharing is the request every good poet makes of his readers, and it leads straight to an idea at the heart of all poetry, the irrefragable cornerstone on which poetry rests. That idea, the center of this book, is that *poetry, reduced to its simplest, is only experience.* Experience moved the poet; he enjoyed it, and wanted to put it down on paper, as experience

and nothing else, partly because writing is a self-contained action which is fun for the writer, partly because he wanted the reader to enjoy the experience with him. If we are to learn to read, we must begin with elemental, irreducible facts like this.

36. Of course poetry can be, often is, profound and philosophical, probing below surfaces, reaching far down to the depths of the spirit, anxious about Life, and Death, what is before Life, and after Death. In his *De Rerum Natura* (Of the Nature of Things), Lucretius wrote thousands of lines devoted to the origin of the universe, to man's nature and his place within his world. He wrote a poem, which has lived for more than nineteen hundred years, admittedly one of the great things of all literatures. Milton set himself, in *Paradise Lost,* to

> assert eternal Providence,
> And justify the ways of God to men.

And whatever we may think of the success with which he resolved his problem, his poem is one of the few supremely great poems so far given to the world.

37 Lucretius and Milton are difficult poets. And there are many difficult, extraordinarily difficult poems; poems difficult enough to task the best efforts of best minds for their understanding and enjoyment. They are full of message, philosophy, and morals. But they are not for the neophyte, and we shall never learn to like or understand them if we begin with their complexities. A start must be made where the going is easier and simpler. Failure to start there, traceable in large part to the poets themselves, and to those who have tried, with honest but mistaken zeal, to teach poetry when they did not understand it themselves, is a principal reason why there are not more, and more intelligent, readers of poetry today, why people in increasing numbers do not turn to it in leisure hours, just for fun, without conscious concern for culture, or the higher things of life, or philosophy, or morals, or any of the other wrong motives assigned for the study of literature. It is right to like right things. But to like right things for wrong reasons is hardly a mark of an educated man or woman.

38. *Levels* are important. When we are children, we should think and speak as children, and there is a childhood of the mind and spirit as truly as there is a physical, a chronological childhood. If, in poetry, we are to advance beyond seeing through a glass darkly, our sight muddy and confused, we must leave poets like Lucretius and Milton and Dante, content for a while with the simplest simplicities. Nor can we

all, variously endowed as we are, expect ever to attain to the heights of Milton and Dante. For some of us, those mountain peaks are too high and difficult of ascent. But we can find ample space for breathing on a lower level; for ourselves, supreme pleasure on the highest level of our own capabilities. Only, we must go as high as possible, stretch to the full measure of our stature and strength. Then, we shall be content to let those things go which for us are unattainable, since, on our own level, *for us,* there is bound to be God's plenty for enjoyment as long as we shall live. The man who has advanced from Edgar Guest and Robert W. Service to Longfellow has made progress; better yet if he can go to Masefield or Kipling. And beyond are so many more: Tennyson and Browning, Wordsworth, Shelley—it would be futile to try to catalogue them, or to arrange them at exact levels. Somewhere, at the end of arduous journeyings among the regions of poetry, are the lofty tablelands and mountain summits, where the masters dwell—Homer, Virgil, Dante, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, and the rest, who are God's noblest voices. Are they reserved for specialists and experts—poets' poets? I should hardly want to say that, though it is certain that the air of their world is too rarefied for many of us, much of the time. And then, too, we are unwilling to discipline ourselves by the hard labor necessary for understanding their voices. If we do not, for one reason or another, attain to fellowship with these saints and giants, it is hardly cause for weeping, since so much remains besides, so many, to speak persuasively to us, in our own tongue. Only—and this is important—we must be sure that we proceed to the highest point we are capable of standing on with comfort and pleasure to ourselves.

[39] To enable a reader to find this "highest point," at which he can read poetry with honest enjoyment to himself—that ought to be the goal of any course in poetry, of any talking about it. Winning to the goal can come only by beginning with simple things, by ridding our minds of corrupting confusions, of mistaken notions, which are barriers to understanding what poetry is all about. This chapter has considered some of those confusions and notions, to clear the ground, as a preliminary to progress in the way of poetry. It has tried to show that for the present despised state of poetry poets and teachers must bear a good deal of the burden of responsibility. For poets have made a cult of poetry, and most of us are suspicious of cults: they have emphasized mystery, they have offered puzzles, where a reader

looked for poems; they have frightened us away by their assertive declarations of their independence of any responsibility to us, by their insistence on talking to themselves only, for themselves, in their own way. And teaching has set us wrong by fostering three great heresies: facile talk about appreciation; excessive concern with peripheral things; and too much preoccupation with morals and philosophy. Our consideration of these heresies has led us to two orthodox articles of a right belief about poetry:

1. Poetry exists principally that the reader may find pleasure where the poet had found pleasure before him.

2. Poetry is, fundamentally, a record of pleasurable experience which the poet set down for the fun of it, that the reader might have fun in turn.

40. At this point, the reader would do well to examine his own experience of poetry. If nowhere in his memory he finds poems which have been fun, if none of the poems quoted in this chapter have made him feel a little pleasanter inside, then, probably, poetry is not for him. He is one of those rarest men for whom it has no word, and he should abandon poetry and this book, for they will prove little more than wasted time and effort. But if he does remember poems pleasantly, no matter how few; even if there be only one, among those quoted here, which he has in the slightest degree liked, he is invited to continue in our common adventure after the peculiar pleasure of poetry, assured, in advance, of fun, and, I hope, of discovering in his experience

life and food
For future years.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

In this opening chapter of a book designed to teach students how to read poetry, Earl Daniels is attempting to persuade his readers of two things: first, that poetry is worth reading; second, that the indifference or active aversion of so many people to poetry is not due to flaws in poetry itself, but to certain mistaken attitudes on the part of some poets and certain mistaken attitudes on the part of some teachers of poetry. Professor Daniels is a little like the new proprietor of a store whose previous owners have for some time been steadily going bankrupt. His problem is simply, How to bring the customers back into the store? First he gets them interested enough in the mer-

chandise to persuade them it is still worth the price. Just as he has a few of them half convinced, they suddenly remember sad experiences under the old management and shy away again. But to these he points out that the goods themselves have always been sound enough; it was just that the manufacturers put the public in a bad mood by silly advertising and the store owners did the rest of the damage by stupid sales methods.

This sort of problem in persuasion is not unique either to store owners or to professors of poetry. It is faced by anyone trying to convince a skeptical public to readopt a plan or principle or course of action that has fallen into disrepute. The problem is to show that the plan or principle is good in itself and that previous failures are no argument against future success.

1. Why is par. 1 so effective as an opening statement? Comment on the opening and the close. Show how the first two sentences of par. 2 carry the impact of par. 1 still further and at the same time lead into the author's statement of his own position. What is the advantage of using a specific example to illustrate the author's position and why is this one appropriate?

2. Par. 3 begins a series of examples of the kinds of pleasure to be found in poetry. Do you notice any progression in the kinds of examples and the kinds of pleasures? Pars. 7 and 8 contain a different set of examples, this time illustrating the effect of poetry. Is there a different kind of progression here? Show how the end of par. 8 summarizes what has gone before in such a way as to re-emphasize the problem and lead into the statements of par. 9; how the anecdote of par. 9 is used to lead into the statement of par. 10; and how the statement of par. 10 is used to lead into par. 11.

3. Pars. 11-19 contain the second portion of the chapter: the author's defense of poetry against the unwise claims and practices of some of the poets. How does he keep this discussion from being abstract? (Two concrete examples of puzzle-making poems, by the way, have been omitted here after par. 15 to save space.) How does he censure some poets without casting a shadow on all of them? How does par. 20 manage to be both a summary of what has been said already and an introduction to what follows?

4. Which of the three "heresies" attacked in pars. 22-32 is discussed at most length? Which of the three do you think the author feels most strongly about? Does this have anything to do with the order in which he takes them up?

5. What parts of the summary in par. 39 do you believe the author thought most important? What makes you think so? Why isn't this summary the final paragraph of the chapter?

Suggestions for Writing

1. Poetry I have liked and disliked.
2. In defense of reading aloud.
3. How I would teach Shakespeare.
4. Pick out one of your favorite activities—such as listening to popular music—and defend it.

*Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown**

by VIRGINIA WOOLF

It seems to me possible, perhaps desirable, that I may be the only person in this room who has committed the folly of writing, trying to write, or failing to write, a novel. And when I asked myself, as your invitation to speak to you about modern fiction made me ask myself, what demon whispered in my ear and urged me to my doom, a little figure rose before me—the figure of a man, or of a woman, who said, "My name is Brown. Catch me if you can."

2. Most novelists have the same experience. Some Brown, Smith, or Jones comes before them and says in the most seductive and charming way in the world, "Come and catch me if you can." And so, led on by this will-o'-the-wisp, they flounder through volume after volume, spending the best years of their lives in the pursuit, and receiving for the most part very little cash in exchange. Few catch the phantom; most have to be content with a scrap of her dress or a wisp of her hair.

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* From *The Hogarth Essays.* Copyright 1928 by Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc. Originally published separately (London: L. and Virginia Woolf, 1924). Reprinted by permission of Leonard Woolf. This essay was originally prepared as a paper to be read before a society called The Heretics at Cambridge, England, May 18, 1924.

3. My belief that men and women write novels because they are lured on to create some character which has thus imposed itself upon them has the sanction of Mr. Arnold Bennett. In an article from which I will quote he says: "The foundation of good fiction is character-creating and nothing else. . . . Style counts; plot counts; originality of outlook counts. But none of these counts anything like so much as the convincingness of the characters. If the characters are real the novel will have a chance; if they are not, oblivion will be its portion. . . ." And he goes on to draw the conclusion that we have no young novelists of first-rate importance at the present moment, because they are unable to create characters that are real, true, and convincing.

4 These are the questions that I want with greater boldness than discretion to discuss to-night. I want to make out what we mean when we talk about "character" in fiction; to say something about the question of reality which Mr. Bennett raises; and to suggest some reasons why the younger novelists fail to create characters, if, as Mr. Bennett asserts, it is true that fail they do. This will lead me, I am well aware, to make some very sweeping and some very vague assertions. For the question is an extremely difficult one. Think how little we know about character—think how little we know about art. But, to make a clearance before I begin, I will suggest that we range Edwardians and Georgians into two camps; Mr. Wells, Mr. Bennett, and Mr. Galsworthy I will call the Edwardians; Mr. Forster, Mr. Lawrence, Mr. Strachey, Mr. Joyce, and Mr. Eliot I will call the Georgians. And if I speak in the first person, with intolerable egotism, I will ask you to excuse me. I do not want to attribute to the world at large the opinions of one solitary, ill-informed, and misguided individual.

5. My first assertion is one that I think you will grant—that every one in this room is a judge of character. Indeed it would be impossible to live for a year without disaster unless one practised character-reading and had some skill in the art. Our marriages, our friendships depend on it; our business largely depends on it; every day questions arise which can only be solved by its help. And now I will hazard a second assertion, which is more disputable perhaps, to the effect that on or about December, 1910, human character changed.

6. I am not saying that one went out, as one might into a garden, and there saw that a rose had flowered, or that a hen had laid an egg. The change was not sudden and definite like that. But a change there was, nevertheless; and, since one must be arbitrary, let us date it about the

year 1910. The first signs of it are recorded in the books of Samuel Butler, in *The Way of All Flesh* in particular; the plays of Bernard Shaw continued to record it. In life one can see the change, if I may use a homely illustration, in the character of one's cook. The Victorian cook lived like a leviathan in the lower depths, formidable, silent, obscure, inscrutable; the Georgian cook is a creature of sunshine and fresh air; in and out of the drawing-room, now to borrow *The Daily Herald,* now to ask advice about a hat. Do you ask for more solemn instances of the power of the human race to change? Read the *Agamemnon,* and see whether, in process of time, your sympathies are not almost entirely with Clytemnestra. Or consider the married life of the Carlyles, and bewail the waste, the futility, for him and for her, of the horrible domestic tradition which made it seemly for a woman of genius to spend her time chasing beetles, scouring saucepans, instead of writing books. All human relations have shifted—those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children. And when human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics, and literature. Let us agree to place one of these changes about the year 1910.

7. I have said that people have to acquire a good deal of skill in character-reading if they are to live a single year of life without disaster. But it is the art of the young. In middle age and in old age the art is practised mostly for its uses, and friendships and other adventures and experiments in the art of reading character are seldom made. But novelists differ from the rest of the world because they do not cease to be interested in character when they have learnt enough about it for practical purposes. They go a step further; they feel that there is something permanently interesting in character in itself. When all the practical business of life has been discharged, there is something about people which continues to seem to them of overwhelming importance, in spite of the fact that it has no bearing whatever upon their happiness, comfort, or income. The study of character becomes to them an absorbing pursuit; to impart character an obsession. And this I find it very difficult to explain: what novelists mean when they talk about character, what the impulse is that urges them so powerfully every now and then to embody their view in writing.

8. So, if you will allow me, instead of analyzing and abstracting, I will tell you a simple story which, however pointless, has the merit of being true, of a journey from Richmond to Waterloo, in the hope that I may show you what I mean by character in itself; that you may

realize the different aspects it can wear; and the hideous perils that beset you directly you try to describe it in words.

9. One night some weeks ago, then, I was late for the train and jumped into the first carriage I came to. As I sat down I had the strange and uncomfortable feeling that I was interrupting a conversation between two people who were already sitting there. Not that they were young or happy. Far from it. They were both elderly, the woman over sixty, the man well over forty. They were sitting opposite each other, and the man, who had been leaning over and talking emphatically to judge by his attitude and the flush on his face, sat back and became silent. I had disturbed him, and he was annoyed. The elderly lady, however, whom I will call Mrs. Brown, seemed rather relieved. She was one of those clean, threadbare old ladies whose extreme tidiness—everything buttoned, fastened, tied together, mended and brushed up—suggests more extreme poverty than rags and dirt. There was something pinched about her—a look of suffering, of apprehension, and, in addition, she was extremely small. Her feet, in their clean little boots, scarcely touched the floor. I felt that she had nobody to support her; that she had to make up her mind for herself; that, having been deserted, or left a widow, years ago, she had led an anxious, harried life, bringing up an only son, perhaps, who, as likely as not, was by this time beginning to go to the bad. All this shot through my mind as I sat down, being uncomfortable, like most people, at travelling with fellow passengers unless I have somehow or other accounted for them. Then I looked at the man. He was no relation of Mrs. Brown's I felt sure; he was of a bigger, burlier, less refined type. He was a man of business I imagined, very likely a respectable corn-chandler from the North, dressed in good blue serge with a pocket-knife and a silk handkerchief, and a stout leather bag. Obviously, however, he had an unpleasant business to settle with Mrs. Brown; a secret, perhaps sinister business, which they did not intend to discuss in my presence.

10. "Yes, the Crofts have had very bad luck with their servants," Mr. Smith (as I will call him) said in a considering way, going back to some earlier topic, with a view to keeping up appearances.

11. "Ah, poor people," said Mrs. Brown, a trifle condescendingly. "My grandmother had a maid who came when she was fifteen and stayed till she was eighty" (this was said with a kind of hurt and aggressive pride to impress us both perhaps).

12. "One doesn't often come across that sort of thing nowadays," said Mr. Smith in conciliatory tones.
13. Then they were silent.
14. "It's odd they don't start a golf club there—I should have thought one of the young fellows would," said Mr. Smith, for the silence obviously made him uneasy.
15. Mrs. Brown hardly took the trouble to answer.
16. "What changes they're making in this part of the world," said Mr. Smith looking out of the window, and looking furtively at me as he did so.
17. It was plain, from Mrs. Brown's silence, from the uneasy affability with which Mr. Smith spoke, that he had some power over her which he was exerting disagreeably. It might have been her son's downfall, or some painful episode in her past life, or her daughter's. Perhaps she was going to London to sign some document to make over some property. Obviously against her will she was in Mr. Smith's hands. I was beginning to feel a great deal of pity for her, when she said, suddenly and inconsequently,
18. "Can you tell me if an oak-tree dies when the leaves have been eaten for two years in succession by caterpillars?"
19 She spoke quite brightly, and rather precisely, in a cultivated, inquisitive voice.
20 Mr. Smith was startled, but relieved to have a safe topic of conversation given him. He told her a great deal very quickly about plagues of insects. He told her that he had a brother who kept a fruit farm in Kent. He told her what fruit farmers do every year in Kent, and so on, and so on. While he talked a very odd thing happened. Mrs. Brown took out her little white handkerchief and began to dab her eyes. She was crying. But she went on listening quite composedly to what he was saying, and he went on talking, a little louder, a little angrily, as if he had seen her cry often before; as if it were a painful habit. At last it got on his nerves. He stopped abruptly, looked out of the window, then leant towards her as he had been doing when I got in, and said in a bullying, menacing way, as if he would not stand any more nonsense,
21 "So about that matter we were discussing. It'll be all right? George will be there on Tuesday?"
22. "We sha'n't be late," said Mrs. Brown, gathering herself together with superb dignity.
23. Mr. Smith said nothing. He got up, buttoned his coat, reached his

bag down, and jumped out of the train before it had stopped at Clapham Junction. He had got what he wanted, but he was ashamed of himself; he was glad to get out of the old lady's sight.

[24] Mrs. Brown and I were left alone together. She sat in her corner opposite, very clean, very small, rather queer, and suffering intensely. The impression she made was overwhelming. It came pouring out like a draught, like a smell of burning. What was it composed of—that overwhelming and peculiar impression? Myriads of irrelevant and incongruous ideas crowd into one's head on such occasions; one sees the person, one sees Mrs. Brown, in the centre of all sorts of different scenes. I thought of her in a seaside house, among queer ornaments: sea-urchins, models of ships in glass cases. Her husband's medals were on the mantelpiece. She popped in and out of the room, perching on the edges of chairs, picking meals out of saucers, indulging in long, silent stares. The caterpillars and the oak-trees seemed to imply all that. And then, into this fantastic and secluded life, broke Mr. Smith. I saw him blowing in, so to speak, on a windy day. He banged, he slammed. His dripping umbrella made a pool in the hall. They sat closeted together.

[25] And then Mrs. Brown faced the dreadful revelation. She took her heroic decision. Early, before dawn, she packed her bag and carried it herself to the station. She would not let Smith touch it. She was wounded in her pride, unmoored from her anchorage; she came of gentlefolks who kept servants—but details could wait. The important thing was to realize her character, to steep oneself in her atmosphere. I had no time to explain why I felt it somewhat tragic, heroic, yet with a dash of the flighty, and fantastic, before the train stopped, and I watched her disappear, carrying her bag, into the vast blazing station. She looked very small, very tenacious; at once very frail and very heroic. And I have never seen her again, and I shall never know what became of her.

[26] The story ends without any point to it. But I have not told you this anecdote to illustrate either my own ingenuity or the pleasure of travelling from Richmond to Waterloo. What I want you to see in it is this. Here is a character imposing itself upon another person. Here is Mrs. Brown making someone begin almost automatically to write a novel about her. I believe that all novels begin with an old lady in the corner opposite. I believe that all novels, that is to say, deal with character, and that it is to express character—not to preach doctrines, sing songs, or celebrate the glories of the British Empire, that the form of

the novel, so clumsy, verbose, and undramatic, so rich, elastic and alive, has been evolved. To express character, I have said; but you will at once reflect that the very widest interpretation can be put upon those words. For example, old Mrs. Brown's character will strike you very differently according to the age and country in which you happen to be born. It would be easy enough to write three different versions of that incident in the train, an English, a French, and a Russian. The English writer would make the old lady into a "character"; he would bring out her oddities and mannerisms; her buttons and wrinkles; her ribbons and warts. Her personality would dominate the book. A French writer would rub out all that; he would sacrifice the individual Mrs. Brown to give a more general view of human nature; to make a more abstract, proportioned, and harmonious whole. The Russian would pierce through the flesh; would reveal the soul—the soul alone, wandering out into the Waterloo Road, asking of life some tremendous question which would sound on and on in our ears after the book was finished. And then besides age and country there is the writer's temperament to be considered. You see one thing in character, and I another. You say it means this, and I that. And when it comes to writing each makes a further selection on principles of his own. Thus Mrs. Brown can be treated in an infinite variety of ways, according to the age, country, and temperament of the writer.

[27] But now I must recall what Mr. Arnold Bennett says. He says that it is only if the characters are real that the novel has any chance of surviving. Otherwise, die it must. But, I ask myself, what is reality? And who are the judges of reality? A character may be real to Mr. Bennett and quite unreal to me. For instance, in this article he says that Dr. Watson in *Sherlock Holmes* is real to him: to me Dr. Watson is a sack stuffed with straw, a dummy, a figure of fun. And so it is with character after character—in book after book. There is nothing that people differ about more than the reality of characters, especially in contemporary books. But if you take a larger view I think that Mr. Bennett is perfectly right. If, that is, you think of the novels which seem to you great novels—*War and Peace, Vanity Fair, Tristram Shandy, Madame Bovary, Pride and Prejudice, The Mayor of Casterbridge, Villette*—if you think of these books, you do at once think of some character who has seemed to you so real (I do not by that mean so lifelike) that it has the power to make you think not merely of it itself, but of all sorts of things through its eyes—of religion, of love, of war, of peace, of family life, of balls in county towns, of sunsets,

moonrises, the immortality of the soul. There is hardly any subject of human experience that is left out of *War and Peace* it seems to me. And in all these novels all these great novelists have brought us to see whatever they wish us to see through some character. Otherwise, they would not be novelists; but poets, historians, or pamphleteers.

28. But now let us examine what Mr. Bennett went on to say—he said that there was no great novelist among the Georgian writers because they cannot create characters who are real, true, and convincing. And there I cannot agree. There are reasons, excuses, possibilities which I think put a different colour upon the case. It seems so to me at least, but I am well aware that this is a matter about which I am likely to be prejudiced, sanguine, and near-sighted. I will put my view before you in the hope that you will make it impartial, judicial, and broad-minded. Why, then, is it so hard for novelists at present to create characters which seem real, not only to Mr. Bennett, but to the world at large? Why, when October comes round, do the publishers always fail to supply us with a masterpiece?

29. Surely one reason is that the men and women who began writing novels in 1910 or thereabouts had this great difficulty to face—that there was no English novelist living from whom they could learn their business. Mr. Conrad is a Pole; which sets him apart, and makes him, however admirable, not very helpful. Mr. Hardy has written no novel since 1895. The most prominent and successful novelists in the year 1910 were, I suppose, Mr. Wells, Mr. Bennett, and Mr. Galsworthy. Now it seems to me that to go to these men and ask them to teach you how to write a novel—how to create characters that are real—is precisely like going to a bootmaker and asking him to teach you how to make a watch. Do not let me give you the impression that I do not admire and enjoy their books. They seem to me of great value, and indeed of great necessity. There are seasons when it is more important to have boots than to have watches. To drop metaphor, I think that after the creative activity of the Victorian age it was quite necessary, not only for literature but for life, that someone should write the books that Mr. Wells, Mr. Bennett, and Mr. Galsworthy have written. Yet what odd books they are! Sometimes I wonder if we are right to call them books at all. For they leave one with so strange a feeling of incompleteness and dissatisfaction. In order to complete them it seems necessary to do something—to join a society, or, more desperately, to write a cheque. That done, the restlessness is laid, the book finished; it can be put upon the shelf, and need never be read again. But with

the work of other novelists it is different. *Tristram Shandy* or *Pride and Prejudice* is complete in itself; it is self-contained; it leaves one with no desire to do anything, except indeed to read the book again, and to understand it better. The difference perhaps is that both Sterne and Jane Austen were interested in things in themselves; in character in itself; in the book in itself. Therefore everything was inside the book, nothing outside. But the Edwardians were never interested in character in itself; or in the book in itself. They were interested in something outside. Their books, then, were incomplete as books, and required that the reader should finish them, actively and practically, for himself.

30. Perhaps we can make this clearer if we take the liberty of imagining a little party in the railway carriage—Mr. Wells, Mr. Galsworthy, Mr. Bennett are travelling to Waterloo with Mrs. Brown. Mrs. Brown, I have said, was poorly dressed and very small. She had an anxious, harassed look. I doubt whether she was what you call an educated woman. Seizing upon all these symptoms of the unsatisfactory condition of our primary schools with a rapidity to which I can do no justice, Mr. Wells would instantly project upon the windowpane a vision of a better, breezier, jollier, happier, more adventurous and gallant world, where these musty railway carriages and fusty old women do not exist; where miraculous barges bring tropical fruit to Camberwell by eight o'clock in the morning; where there are public nurseries, fountains, and libraries, dining-rooms, drawing-rooms, and marriages; where every citizen is generous and candid, manly and magnificent, and rather like Mr. Wells himself. But nobody is in the least like Mrs. Brown. There are no Mrs. Browns in Utopia. Indeed I do not think that Mr. Wells, in his passion to make her what she ought to be, would waste a thought upon her as she is. And what would Mr. Galsworthy see? Can we doubt that the walls of Doulton's factory would take his fancy? There are women in that factory who make twenty-five dozen earthenware pots every day. There are mothers in the Mile End Road who depend upon the farthings which those women earn. But there are employers in Surrey who are even now smoking rich cigars while the nightingale sings. Burning with indignation, stuffed with information, arraigning civilization, Mr. Galsworthy would only see in Mrs. Brown a pot broken on the wheel and thrown into the corner. Mr. Bennett, alone of the Edwardians, would keep his eyes in the carriage. He, indeed, would observe every detail with immense care. He would notice the advertisements; the pictures of Swanage

and Portsmouth; the way in which the cushion bulged between the buttons; how Mrs. Brown wore a brooch which had cost three-and-ten-three at Whitworth's bazaar; and had mended both gloves—indeed the thumb of the left-hand glove had been replaced. And he would observe, at length, how this was the non-stop train from Windsor which calls at Richmond for the convenience of middle-class residents, who can afford to go to the theatre but have not reached the social rank which can afford motor-cars, though it is true, there are occasions (he would tell us what), when they hire them from a company (he would tell us which). And so he would gradually sidle sedately towards Mrs. Brown, and would remark how she had been left a little copyhold, not freehold, property at Datchet, which, however, was mortgaged to Mr. Bungay the solicitor—but why should I presume to invent Mr. Bennett? Does not Mr. Bennett write novels himself? I will open the first book that chance puts in my way—*Hilda Lessways*. Let us see how he makes us feel that Hilda is real, true, and convincing, as a novelist should. She shut the door in a soft, controlled way, which showed the constraint of her relations with her mother. She was fond of reading *Maud;* she was endowed with the power to feel intensely. So far, so good; in his leisurely, sure-footed way Mr. Bennett is trying in these first pages, where every touch is important, to show us the kind of girl she was.

31 But then he begins to describe, not Hilda Lessways, but the view from her bedroom window, the excuse being that Mr. Skellorn, the man who collects rents, is coming along that way. Mr. Bennett proceeds:

32 "The bailiwick of Turnhill lay behind her; and all the murky district of the Five Towns, of which Turnhill is the northern outpost, lay to the south. At the foot of Chatterley Wood the canal wound in large curves on its way towards the undefiled plains of Cheshire and the sea. On the canal-side, exactly opposite to Hilda's window, was a flour-mill, that sometimes made nearly as much smoke as the kilns and the chimneys closing the prospect on either hand. From the flour-mill a bricked path, which separated a considerable row of new cottages from their appurtenant gardens, led straight into Lessways Street, in front of Mrs. Lessways' house. By this path Mr. Skellorn should have arrived, for he inhabited the farthest of the cottages."

33. One line of insight would have done more than all those lines of description; but let them pass as the necessary drudgery of the novelist. And now—where is Hilda? Alas. Hilda is still looking out of the

window. Passionate and dissatisfied as she was, she was a girl with an eye for houses. She often compared this old Mr. Skellorn with the villas she saw from her bedroom window. Therefore the villas must be described. Mr. Bennett proceeds:

34. "The row was called Freehold Villas: a consciously proud name in a district where much of the land was copyhold and could only change owners subject to the payment of 'fines,' and to the feudal consent of a 'court' presided over by the agent of a lord of the manor. Most of the dwellings were owned by their occupiers, who, each an absolute monarch of the soil, niggled in his sooty garden of an evening amid the flutter of drying shirts and towels. Freehold Villas symbolized the final triumph of Victorian economics, the apotheosis of the prudent and industrious artisan. It corresponded with a Building Society Secretary's dream of paradise. And indeed it was a very real achievement. Nevertheless, Hilda's irrational contempt would not admit this."

35. Heaven be praised, we cry! At last we are coming to Hilda herself. But not so fast. Hilda may have been this, that, and the other; but Hilda not only looked at houses, and thought of houses; Hilda lived in a house. And what sort of a house did Hilda live in? Mr. Bennett proceeds:

36. "It was one of the two middle houses of a detached terrace of four houses built by her grandfather Lessways, the tea-pot manufacturer; it was the chief of the four, obviously the habitation of the proprietor of the terrace. One of the corner houses comprised a grocer's shop, and this house had been robbed of its just proportion of garden so that the seigneurial garden-plot might be triflingly larger than the other. The terrace was not a terrace of cottages, but of houses rated at from twenty-six to thirty-six pounds a year; beyond the means of artisans and petty insurance agents and rent-collectors. And further, it was well built, generously built; and its architecture, though debased, showed some faint traces of Georgian amenity. It was admittedly the best row of houses in that newly settled quarter of the town. In coming to it out of Freehold Villas Mr. Skellorn obviously came to something superior, wider, more liberal. Suddenly Hilda heard her mother's voice. . . ."

37. But we cannot hear her mother's voice, or Hilda's voice; we can only hear Mr. Bennett's voice telling us facts about rents and freeholds and copyholds and fines. What can Mr. Bennett be about? I have formed my own opinion of what Mr. Bennett is about—he is trying to make us imagine for him; he is trying to hypnotize us into the be-

lief that, because he has made a house, there must be a person living there. With all his powers of observation, which are marvellous, with all his sympathy and humanity, which are great, Mr. Bennett has never once looked at Mrs. Brown in her corner. There she sits in the corner of the carriage—that carriage which is travelling, not from Richmond to Waterloo, but from one age of English literature to the next, for Mrs. Brown is eternal, Mrs. Brown is human nature, Mrs. Brown changes only on the surface, it is the novelists who get in and out—there she sits and not one of the Edwardian writers had so much as looked at her. They have looked very powerfully, searchingly, and sympathetically out of the window; at factories, at Utopias, even at the decoration and upholstery of the carriage; but never at her, never at life, never at human nature. And so they have developed a technique of novel-writing which suits their purpose; they have made tools and established conventions which do their business. But those tools are not our tools, and that business is not our business. For us those conventions are ruin, those tools are death.

[38] You may well complain of the vagueness of my language. What is a convention, a tool, you may ask, and what do you mean by saying that Mr. Bennett's and Mr. Wells's and Mr. Galsworthy's conventions are the wrong conventions for the Georgians? The question is difficult: I will attempt a short cut. A convention in writing is not much different from a convention in manners. Both in life and in literature it is necessary to have some means of bridging the gulf between the hostess and her unknown guest on the one hand, the writer and his unknown reader on the other. The hostess bethinks her of the weather, for generations of hostesses have established the fact that this is a subject of universal interest in which we all believe. She begins by saying that we are having a wretched May, and, having thus got into touch with her unknown guest, proceeds to matters of greater interest. So it is in literature. The writer must get into touch with his reader by putting before him something which he recognizes, which therefore stimulates his imagination, and makes him willing to coöperate in the far more difficult business of intimacy. And it is of the highest importance that this common meeting-place should be reached easily, almost instinctively, in the dark, with one's eyes shut. Here is Mr. Bennett making use of this common ground in the passage which I have quoted. The problem before him was to make us believe in the reality of Hilda Lessways. So he began, being an Edwardian, by describing accurately and minutely the sort of house Hilda lived in, and the sort

of house she saw from the window. House property was the common ground from which the Edwardians found it easy to proceed to intimacy. Indirect as it seems to us, the convention worked admirably, and thousands of Hilda Lessways were launched upon the world by this means. For that age and generation, the convention was a good one.

39. But now, if you will allow me to pull my own anecdote to pieces, you will see how keenly I felt the lack of a convention, and how serious a matter it is when the tools of one generation are useless for the next. The incident had made a great impression on me. But how was I to transmit it to you? All I could do was to report as accurately as I could what was said, to describe in detail what was worn, to say, despairingly, that all sorts of scenes rushed into my mind, to proceed to tumble them out pell-mell, and to describe this vivid, this overmastering impression by likening it to a draught or a smell of burning. To tell you the truth, I was also strongly tempted to manufacture a three-volume novel about the old lady's son, and his adventures crossing the Atlantic, and her daughter, and how she kept a milliner's shop in Westminster, the past life of Smith himself, and his house at Sheffield, though such stories seem to me the most dreary, irrelevant, and humbugging affairs in the world.

40 But if I had done that I should have escaped the appalling effort of saying what I meant. And to have got at what I meant I should have had to go back and back and back; to experiment with one thing and another; to try this sentence and that, referring each word to my vision, matching it as exactly as possible, and knowing that somehow I had to find a common ground between us, a convention which would not seem to you too odd, unreal, and far-fetched to believe in. I admit that I shirked that arduous undertaking. I let my Mrs. Brown slip through my fingers. I have told you nothing whatever about her. But that is partly the great Edwardians' fault. I asked them—they are my elders and betters—How shall I begin to describe this woman's character? And they said, "Begin by saying that her father kept a shop in Harrogate. Ascertain the rent. Ascertain the wages of shop assistants in the year 1878. Discover what her mother died of. Describe cancer. Describe calico. Describe—" But I cried, "Stop! Stop!" And I regret to say that I threw that ugly, that clumsy, that incongruous tool out of the window, for I knew that if I began describing the cancer and the calico, my Mrs. Brown, that vision to which I cling though I know no

way of imparting it to you, would have been dulled and tarnished and vanished for ever.

41. That is what I meant by saying that the Edwardian tools are the wrong ones for us to use. They have laid an enormous stress upon the fabric of things. They have given us a house in the hope that we may be able to deduce the human beings who live there. To give them their due, they have made that house much better worth living in. But if you hold that novels are in the first place about people, and only in the second about the houses they live in, that is the wrong way to set about it. Therefore, you see, the Georgian writer had to begin by throwing away the method that was in use at the moment. He was left alone there facing Mrs. Brown without any method of conveying her to the reader. But that is inaccurate. A writer is never alone. There is always the public with him—if not on the same seat, at least in the compartment next door. Now the public is a strange travelling companion. In England it is a very suggestive and docile creature, which, once you get it to attend, will believe implicity what it is told for a certain number of years. If you say to the public with sufficient conviction, "All women have tails, and all men humps," it will actually learn to see women with tails and men with humps, and will think it very revolutionary and probably improper if you say "Nonsense. Monkeys have tails and camels humps. But men and women have brains, and they have hearts; they think and they feel,"—that will seem to it a bad joke, and an improper one into the bargain.

42. But to return. Here is the British public sitting by the writer's side and saying in its vast and unanimous way, "Old women have houses. They have fathers. They have incomes. They have servants. They have hot water bottles. That is how we know that they are old women. Mr. Wells and Mr. Bennett and Mr. Galsworthy have always taught us that this is the way to recognize them. But now with your Mrs. Brown—how are we to believe in her? We do not even know whether her villa was called Albert or Balmoral; what she paid for her gloves; or whether her mother died of cancer or of consumption. How can she be alive? No; she is a mere figment of your imagination."

43. And old women of course ought to be made of freehold villas and copyhold estates, not of imagination.

44. The Georgian novelist, therefore, was in an awkward predicament. There was Mrs. Brown protesting that she was different, quite different, from what people made out, and luring the novelist to her rescue by the most fascinating if fleeting glimpse of her charms; there

were the Edwardians handing out tools appropriate to house building and house breaking; and there was the British public asseverating that they must see the hot water bottle first. Meanwhile the train was rushing to that station where we must all get out.

45. Such, I think, was the predicament in which the young Georgians found themselves about the year 1910. Many of them—I am thinking of Mr. Forster and Mr. Lawrence in particular—spoilt their early work because, instead of throwing away those tools, they tried to use them. They tried to compromise. They tried to combine their own direct sense of the oddity and significance of some character with Mr. Galsworthy's knowledge of the Factory Acts, and Mr. Bennett's knowledge of the Five Towns. They tried it, but they had too keen, too overpowering a sense of Mrs. Brown and her peculiarities to go on trying it much longer. Something had to be done. At whatever cost of life, limb, and damage to valuable property Mrs. Brown must be rescued, expressed, and set in her high relations to the world before the train stopped and she disappeared for ever. And so the smashing and the crashing began. Thus it is that we hear all round us, in poems and novels and biographies, even in newspaper articles and essays, the sound of breaking and falling, crashing and destruction. It is the prevailing sound of the Georgian age—rather a melancholy one if you think what melodious days there have been in the past, if you think of Shakespeare and Milton and Keats or even of Jane Austen and Thackeray and Dickens; if you think of the language, and the heights to which it can soar when free, and see the same eagle captive, bald, and croaking.

46. In view of these facts—with these sounds in my ears and these fancies in my brain—I am not going to deny that Mr. Bennett has some reason when he complains that our Georgian writers are unable to make us believe that our characters are real. I am forced to agree that they do not pour out three immortal masterpieces with Victorian regularity every autumn. But instead of being gloomy, I am sanguine. For this state of things is, I think, inevitable whenever from hoar old age or callow youth the convention ceases to be a means of communication between writer and reader, and becomes instead an obstacle and an impediment. At the present moment we are suffering, not from decay, but from having no code of manners which writers and readers accept as a prelude to the more exciting intercourse of friendship. The literary convention of the time is so artificial—you have to talk about the weather and nothing but the weather throughout the

entire visit—that, naturally, the feeble are tempted to outrage, and the strong are led to destroy the very foundations and rules of literary society. Signs of this are everywhere apparent. Grammar is violated; syntax disintegrated; as a boy staying with an aunt for the week-end rolls in the geranium bed out of sheer desperation as the solemnities of the Sabbath wear on. The more adult writers do not, of course, indulge in such wanton exhibitions of spleen. Their sincerity is desperate, and their courage tremendous; it is only that they do not know which to use, a fork or their fingers. Thus, if you read Mr. Joyce and Mr. Eliot you will be struck by the indecency of the one, and the obscurity of the other. Mr. Joyce's indecency in *Ulysses* seems to me the conscious and calculated indecency of a desperate man who feels that in order to breathe he must break the windows. At moments, when the window is broken, he is magnificent. But what a waste of energy! And, after all, how dull indecency is, when it is not the overflowing of a super-abundant energy or savagery, but the determined and public-spirited act of a man who needs fresh air! Again, with the obscurity of Mr. Eliot. I think that Mr. Eliot has written some of the loveliest single lines in modern poetry. But how intolerant he is of the old usages and politenesses of society—respect for the weak, consideration for the dull! As I sun myself upon the intense and ravishing beauty of one of his lines, and reflect that I must make a dizzy and dangerous leap to the next, and so on from line to line, like an acrobat flying precariously from bar to bar, I cry out, I confess, for the old decorums, and envy the indolence of my ancestors who, instead of spinning madly through mid-air, dreamt quietly in the shade with a book. Again, in Mr. Strachey's books, *Eminent Victorians* and *Queen Victoria*, the effort and strain of writing against the grain and current of the times is visible too. It is much less visible, of course, for not only is he dealing with facts, which are stubborn things, but he has fabricated, chiefly from eighteenth-century material, a very discreet code of manners of his own, which allows him to sit at table with the highest in the land and to say a great many things under cover of that exquisite apparel which, had they gone naked, would have been chased by the men-servants from the room. Still, if you compare *Eminent Victorians* with some of Lord Macaulay's essays, though you will feel that Lord Macaulay is always wrong, and Mr. Strachey always right, you will also feel a body, a sweep, a richness in Lord Macaulay's essays which show that his age was behind him; all his strength went straight into his work; none was used for purposes of

concealment or of conversion. But Mr. Strachey has had to open our eyes before he made us see; he has had to search out and sew together a very artful manner of speech; and the effort, beautifully though it is concealed, has robbed his work of some of the force that should have gone into it, and limited his scope.

47. For these reasons, then, we must reconcile ourselves to a season of failures and fragments. We must reflect that where so much strength is spent on finding a way of telling the truth the truth itself is bound to reach us in rather an exhausted and chaotic condition. Ulysses, Queen Victoria, Mr. Prufrock—to give Mrs. Brown some of the names she has made famous lately—is a little pale and dishevelled by the time her rescuers reach her. And it is the sound of their axes that we hear—a vigorous and stimulating sound in my ears—unless of course you wish to sleep, when, in the bounty of his concern, Providence has provided a host of writers anxious and able to satisfy your needs.

48. Thus I have tried, at tedious length, I fear, to answer some of the questions which I began by asking. I have given an account of some of the difficulties which in my view beset the Georgian writer in all his forms. I have sought to excuse him. May I end by venturing to remind you of the duties and responsibilities that are yours as partners in this business of writing books, as companions in the railway carriage, as fellow-travellers with Mrs. Brown? For she is just as visible to you who remain silent as to us who tell stories about her. In the course of your daily life this past week you have had far stranger and more interesting experiences than the one I have tried to describe. You have overheard scraps of talk that filled you with amazement. You have gone to bed at night bewildered by the complexity of your feelings. In one day thousands of ideas have coursed through your brains; thousands of emotions have met, collided, and disappeared in astonishing disorder. Nevertheless, you allow the writers to palm off upon you a version of all this, an image of Mrs. Brown, which has no likeness to that surprising apparition whatsoever. In your modesty you seem to consider that writers are of different blood and bone from yourselves; that they know more of Mrs. Brown than you do. Never was there a more fatal mistake. It is this division between reader and writer, this humility on your part, these professional airs and graces on ours, that corrupt and emasculate the books which should be the healthy offspring of a close and equal alliance between us. Hence spring those sleek, smooth novels, those portentous and ridiculous biographies, that milk-and-watery criticism, those poems melodiously

celebrating the innocence of roses and sheep which pass so plausibly for literature at the present time.

49. Your part is to insist that writers shall come down off their plinths and pedestals, and describe beautifully if possible, truthfully at any rate, our Mrs. Brown. You should insist that she is an old lady of unlimited capacity and infinite variety; capable of appearing in any place; wearing any dress; saying anything and doing heaven knows what. But the things she says and the things she does and her eyes and her nose and her speech and her silence have an overwhelming fascination, for she is, of course, the spirit we live by, life itself.

50 But do not expect just at present a complete and satisfactory presentment of her. Tolerate the spasmodic, the obscure, the fragmentary, the failure. Your help is invoked in a good cause. For I will make one final and surpassingly rash prediction—we are trembling on the verge of one of the great ages of English literature. But it can only be reached if we are determined never, never to desert Mrs. Brown.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

The members of nearly every new literary movement, or followers of a new literary fashion, must sooner or later explain why they write as they do, and defend themselves against charges that they are abandoning true standards, ignoring proper precept, producing trash instead of art. The older literary generation is often skeptical and sometimes contemptuous of the younger, while the young are apt to be defiant toward their elders.

Virginia Woolf, herself one of the most gifted writers of the 1920's and 1930's, here sets forth, urbanely, wittily, and persuasively, her own conception of the aim and function of a novelist. In so doing she is simultaneously defending the experimental and not always successful attempts of the younger "Georgians" (that is, those beginning their serious writing during the reign of King George V, who came to the throne in 1910) to carry out this and other literary concepts; and she is also clearly and sometimes a little tartly suggesting the limitations of a trio of older "Edwardians" (those first reaching fame during the reign of Edward VII, who died in 1910). As a statement and defense of a literary ideal, and a rebuttal to its detractors, what she has written here is a remarkably persuasive document.

Most of her own novels (*Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse,* for example) were a series of powerful experiments in techniques

very different from the highly detailed realism of Arnold Bennett which she here seeks to discredit. Whether or not the "crashing and destruction" of the experimental Georgians led or will lead to "one of the great ages of English literature" which Mrs. Woolf in 1924 felt trembling on the verge of, their work and her own caused a stir and excitement that has not yet died down.

By way of information, the American reader may like to know that Richmond is an outer suburb of London, that Waterloo is the name of one of the largest London railway terminals, and that British railway coaches are divided into separate compartments for six or eight. But these are perhaps facts as irrelevant as Mr. Bennett's copyhold and freehold. The important thing, as Virginia Woolf tells us, is not to lose sight of Mrs. Brown.

1. By what stylistic device does Mrs. Woolf tie her essay together and enforce her central argument? Note the mention of Brown in par. 1; the imaginative application of the railway train anecdote in par. 30; the renewed echo in par. 37; and the fact that of the last twelve paragraphs, Mrs. Brown is referred to in ten—in nine of them by name. Just what does the author symbolize by Mrs. Brown and why is the symbol so apt?

2. Mrs. Woolf's essay suggests how important is character to a novelist, points out that his problem is to convey character to his readers, explains why the Edwardians' method of doing this is no longer satisfactory, and offers a defense of the Georgians for not immediately finding a new method that is. Analyze the structure of the essay to show how its different parts carry on the course of the argument and how they are connected to each other. What is the function of the last three paragraphs and how are they related to the rest of the essay?

3. Part of the piquancy of Mrs. Woolf's style lies in her gift for little jabs of irony and satire—sometimes merely merry, sometimes distinctly edged. Look, for example, at the sentence in par. 6 about the Georgian cook; the remark in par. 30 about the imaginary citizens being "rather like Mr. Wells himself"; the statement comprising par. 43; the final sentence of par. 47. Can you find other examples? Notice that the author is, though sometimes ironic, always urbane: that is, smoothly polite, even-tempered, good-humored. What evidence does the essay contain that Mrs. Woolf has sympathy and understanding as well as wit and urbanity?

4. Another part of the piquancy of Mrs. Woolf's style, and much

of its power also, lies in her extraordinarily apt use of metaphor and illustration. What are the implications of the figure about boots and watches in par. 29? The word *tool* is a rather common and well-worn metaphor; how does Mrs. Woolf give it new life and a touch of humor in pars. 37-41 and 44? Notice how in par. 44 the phrases about tools, houses, and the hot water bottle, used symbolically in previous paragraphs, are all powerfully combined in one sentence, while in the next sentence is an effective echo of the train metaphor developed in par. 41 and used as an extension of the original anecdote of the railway carriage. Par. 46 is particularly full of striking and amusing figures; is their main function merely to surprise and amuse the reader?

5. "I let my Mrs. Brown slip through my fingers. I have told you nothing whatever about her," says the author in par. 40, speaking of her own anecdote. Is she being too modest?

Suggestions for Writing

1. The failure or success of the author of a recent piece of fiction in keeping sight of Mrs. Brown.

2. Defend or attack a literary movement or a group of authors using closely related literary techniques, on the ground that they do or do not (or, for authors in the past, did or did not) meet the needs of their own day.

3. Read one of Mrs. Woolf's own novels and discuss the means by which she conveys to her readers the character of Mrs. Brown.

Part Five

Research

Contents — *Part Five*

RALPH M. HOWER ..... *Early Macy Advertising*

M. K. BENNETT
Population and Food Supply: The Current Scare

Research

Research is the organized and systematic attempt to discover new knowledge or to uncover new meanings in old knowledge. It seeks out facts—not facts merely in isolation and by themselves, but facts as they fit into some pattern and are thus capable of yielding new theories, new generalizations, new conclusions: in short, new ways of understanding man and nature.

The raw material for research and the methods of examining it are of almost limitless variety. Laboratory research, for example, is conducted by the biologist with his microscope, the physicist with his spectrograph. Field research is what the geologist does when he explores rock strata and upthrusts, and also what the sociologist does when he asks questions and makes surveys to find out why certain neighborhoods breed crime. Library research is the ready tool of the historian, the biographer, and the literary scholar, whose raw material is in books, magazines, newspapers, manuscripts—anything printed or written. No one of these methods is used exclusively by one set of researchers: the scientist, for example, can almost never discover *all* the facts he needs in his own laboratory, but must build on a foundation of facts already discovered and interpreted by other scientists; and to learn and use these he employs the tool of library research.

To discover new knowledge by these methods is a fascinating pursuit in itself, but knowledge does not become useful to others until it is made available for them to learn, to test, and to build upon in seeking out more knowledge. The results of discovery must therefore be set forth in writing, and not until this is done can the research

process be called complete. Such writing, according to its length and form, is called a research book, a research article, or a research paper.

Research, then, is fundamentally the same, whether it is based on work in the field, the laboratory, or the library. In its complete cycle, from the initial discoveries to the completion of publication, we may distinguish three essential parts: the collection of facts; the organization and synthesis of these facts; and the publication of the results in documented form. Let us look again at each of these briefly.

Collection must be systematic, thorough, and unbiased. The researcher ought not to overlook or ignore pertinent facts, and he ought to have some idea of what he is looking for. Once he has collected his facts, if they are to be of any use, he must see what they prove or demonstrate, and draw from them inductive conclusions that will answer a question, solve a problem, or provide new understanding. Finally, when the facts and conclusions are written down systematically for publication, the researcher must include for his readers some form of documentation which will show them where he got his raw material. For laboratory or field research, he may do this through a description of experiments or surveys and his tabulations of the results. For library research, which is what we are mainly concerned with here, documentation means telling the reader what printed or written material the facts were found in. The usual way of doing this is by means of footnotes, a bibliography of sources, or both. Such documentation is important; it helps the reader to judge the completeness and reliability of the researcher's collection of facts, and it also enables the reader to go to the sources himself, either for verification or to carry out further research on his own part.

The two following selections are examples of documented research publication. The first is taken from a book, and the portion here reprinted shows how an author, digging into his raw material (in this case newspaper advertisements), can unearth facts previously unknown or overlooked that fit into a pattern and produce significant generalizations (about R. H. Macy's part in the development of modern methods of merchandising). The second selection, a complete research article from a scientific journal, has a slightly different purpose. Here the author is occupied less with uncovering new facts than with putting together facts and hypotheses already known in order to arrive at a new conclusion, or an old conclusion never before so well authenticated. Still a third modification of this research technique is illustrated by a selection in Part II of this book, the

chapter from Dixon Wecter's *The Age of the Great Depression* printed on pp. 166-185 (though not all of Wecter's footnotes and sources are included). This is the method of the historian, who takes the isolated details of history and weaves them into an understandable pattern.

Most of you, in your everyday lives, will not be doing exactly this kind of formal research; and the type of writing frequently assigned to students under the name of "research paper" is necessarily a compromise with the practical limitations of the classroom and the campus. But whether you are going to do formal research or not, you can profit by studying, and to some extent practising, the three essentials of research technique: making an orderly search for facts, combining these facts inductively to form general conclusions, and communicating the results to others with an exact and useful disclosure of sources. Even in everyday life outside the library and laboratory, this is in essence the way in which knowledge is discovered and made fruitful.

Early Macy Advertising[*]

by RALPH M. HOWER

The main point of difference, at the outset, between Macy and his competitors lay unquestionably in his use of advertising. Because of the expense involved and his own limited means, Macy could not hope to surpass the amount of advertising done by such large and well-established firms as Lord & Taylor and Arnold, Constable & Co. He could, however, strive to excel his rivals in the methods used to publicize his store. In point of fact, he employed about as much newspaper space as did any of the competing stores. This means that in proportion to the size of his business he was spending at least four or five times as much money as the others—nearly 3 per cent of sales, as we have seen, when the leading stores must have been spending less than one per cent.

2. While Macy's advertising was impressive in quantity, the feature which made it remarkable was not volume but quality. Macy advertisements had a distinctive character which made them stand out from the surrounding mass of print. It is of at least equal importance that they were usually interesting to read, which was very seldom true of the other dry goods announcements adjoining them. Giving small advertisements high visibility and avoiding dry, stereotyped messages called for perseverance, ingenuity, and skill. Considering the circumstances, the success of Macy advertising amounted to a personal triumph. For it is plain that the man who wrote the copy for the Original Haverhill Cheap Store also composed the early advertisements for the

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[*] Reprinted by permission of the publishers from Ralph M. Hower, *History of Macy's of New York: 1858-1919* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1943). Copyright 1943 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

store at Sixth Avenue and 14th Street, and that man must have been Macy himself.[38]

3. The initial Macy advertising was evidently confined to the sign over the door and some sort of display of goods in the windows, for the first newspaper advertisement which can now be found appeared on November 25, 1858, a full month after the opening. One section of it featured linen cambric handkerchiefs; another was headed, "CHEAP RIBBONS!!! You want them, of course. Go to MACY'S." The third section began, "FRENCH EMBROIDERIES from AUCTION!," while the fourth and most prominent part bore the heading, "FRENCH FLOWERS, FEATHERS, and IMPORTED HEADDRESSES, AT ONE HALF THE COST OF IMPORTATION!!!" After this first Macy advertisement came a steady stream, first in the *Daily Tribune* and subsequently spreading to other dailies.[39]

4. One gets the impression that Macy saw in newspaper advertising the solution to his initial problem. Without customers his store would soon have to close. It was off the beaten path; it was small and unimpressive in appearance; and only those who actually passed along Sixth Avenue would notice its sign or its window display. There was no way in which Macy could materially improve the location or appearance of his store; nor could he wait until the news of his bargains spread by word of mouth. By resorting to aggressive advertising he could make his store known to thousands of New Yorkers. Some of them could be persuaded to come and inspect his goods. If that did not bring success, nothing would. It would take money, but the alternative was certain loss. It would take time and effort, but until the customers came in streams Macy would have time on his hands.

5. Conditioned as we are to seeing our newspapers filled with page after page of large dry goods and department store advertisements, we find it difficult to visualize any other state of affairs. Only within the past two generations, however, has such advertising formed a prominent part of the daily paper. In the 1850's and 1860's a New York newspaper might have as much as three or four pages of advertising of all kinds combined, but they consisted entirely of classified adver-

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[38] Any other conclusion on this point involves the highly improbable assumption that Macy hired a skilled copywriter as soon as he reached Haverhill, kept him until 1855, and was able to get him back in 1858, only to lose him as the New York business obtained abundant prosperity.

[39] Advts., N. Y. *Tribune*, Nov. 25, 1858, *et seq.* Macy began in December to use the *Herald* also, and in 1859 he added the *Times*.

tising; brief, single-column announcements in small, closely packed type—the kind that we see in legal notices and want-ad columns today. Dry goods advertisements made up only a small portion of the total. At the height of the spring and fall seasons a single issue might contain as much as two or three columns of them. Occasionally a Sunday paper would devote nearly a whole page to dry goods. As a general rule, however, the announcements of Macy and all his competitors seldom totaled as much as a single column. In the summer months, indeed, they sometimes disappeared altogether. Extremely rare was any advertisement longer than one or two inches, and not one of them stretched across two columns. Typically they began "At Retail," "A Card," or "Messrs. Blank & Co. announce the opening of a fresh lot of family dry goods," or something equally formal, prosaic, and dull.

6. To some extent this drab uniformity may have been the result of long-established custom and a widespread lack of imagination with regard to the technique of advertising. More important, however, was the widely observed publisher's rule, said to have originated with James Gordon Bennett, which flatly prohibited breaking a column, using illustrations, and even having large or bold-faced type beyond a two-line initial capital letter at the beginning of the advertisement. The theory behind this leveling restriction was that no one should be allowed to gain any advantage over other advertisers beyond what he could achieve by the use of longer space, more interesting text, or more striking arrangement of agate type.[40] Thus bound in a typographical strait jacket, most advertisers responded by cramming a small space with all the words it would hold. To modern eyes the result is esthetically repelling, difficult to read, and exceedingly tiring in any quantity.

7. Despite the agate-only handicap, Macy managed to make his advertisements stand out from the gray mass of closely packed newsprint. He did so by employing unusual arrangements of type and white space to attract notice and by devising interesting copy to hold attention and make an impression. It would be an exaggeration to proclaim Macy as the father of modern advertising technique, for there was apparently little continuity between his work and that of later men, but he certainly anticipated most of the uses of the printed

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[40] Frank Presbrey, *The History and Development of Advertising* (N. Y., 1929), pp. 206-210, 236-252.

word which are cardinal practice today. And we may safely give him credit for smashing the agate shackles which held copywriters in check.[41]

8. Macy employed a variety of devices in order to attract attention to his advertising. He repeated words and phrases over and over again, thus giving them at least part of the increased visibility that larger type would have yielded. Instead of filling the allotted space entirely full of type, he arranged the text so as to leave areas of white space and make zigzag patterns or narrow columns which would catch the eye.[42] He increased the likelihood that his advertisement would be seen by having it substantially longer than the others or, alternatively, by breaking it up into a series of small, boxed advertisements, now gaining a cumulative effect by placing them in unbroken succession, now scattering them piecemeal among the other dry goods advertisements on the page, so that the reader who skipped half the column would still encounter the name Macy. He advertised oftener than most of his competitors, and he employed three, four, and even five different newspapers when competitors were usually content with fewer. Also he generally avoided dates on which the papers would be relatively crowded with dry goods advertising. Thus he rarely advertised in Sunday papers, he usually waited until the first big rush of spring and fall seasonal announcements had passed before he began his own, and he used newspapers in June and July when most competitors had dropped out of them entirely.[43]

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[41] Presbrey gives the credit to Macy and Lord & Taylor jointly (*op. cit.*, p. 248), but examination of the newspapers of 1865 proves definitely that Macy began to employ large, heavy type while Lord & Taylor still conformed to the established pattern. Indeed, the newspaper advertising which Presbrey reproduces (p. 249) clearly reveals the contrast between the two. It is fair to say, however, that Lord & Taylor took the lead in copy excellence a few years later.

[42] Macy did not invent the idea of reiteration, nor did he carry it to the extreme of filling a whole page of repetitions as did the reputed originator, Robert Bonner, of the N. Y. *Ledger* (Presbrey, *op. cit.*, pp. 236-243). One can never be sure whether the layout of an advertisement of this period was determined by the advertiser or the printer. Comparison of Macy advertisements in different papers shows variation in the use of capitals but close similarity in layout, indicating that Macy himself planned the arrangement but left choice of type to the printer.

[43] This paragraph and other generalizations in the present section are based upon a careful examination of dry goods advertising from July, 1858, to 1900 and beyond. The time, labor, and eyestrain involved made an exhaustive study of all media out of the question. As a compromise, we followed Macy advertising from day to day in the *Herald*, shifting to other papers whenever Macy ceased to use that medium. We checked, in addition, the advertising of competitors in Dec. of every year, and in every tenth year we made spot checks in various other media

9. The following excerpt is a fairly typical example of the way Macy often used reiteration: [44]

ALL ARTICLES MARKED, WAY DOWN
AT MACY'S.
WOOLLEN SACKS, marked way down.
WOOLLEN HOODS, marked way down.
WOOLLEN GLOVES, marked way down.
WOOLLEN HOSIERY, marked way down.
WOOLLEN SOCKS, marked way down.
WINTER RIBBONS, marked way down.
WINTER HEADDRESSES, marked way down, . . .

Another interesting example illustrates both the reiteration and the unusual arrangement of type which Macy employed. It might serve as a parody on Gertrude Stein—except that it makes sense: [45]

OUR
MOTTO
FOR
JULY AND AUGUST
IS
MARK WAY
IS MARK WAY
DOWN,
is mark way down, to make a full and regular closing out of our whole stock, if possible, during
July and August,
as we wish to commence the fall trade with an entire new
STOCK OF GOODS.

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to see which ones were being used. Most of the hard work of this task was performed by Alfred W. Swinyard while working on a Service Scholarship at the Harvard Business School.

[44] N. Y. *Herald,* Jan. 5, 1859.

[45] *Ibid.,* July 11, 1859.

COME, COME, TIME, TIME,
COME, COME, TIME, TIME,
THE TIME HAS COME.
WHAT IS TO BE DONE? IS THE QUESTION
WHAT IS TO BE DONE? IS THE QUESTION
WHAT SHALL BE DONE?
WHAT SHALL BE DONE?
MARK EVERY ARTICLE
MARK EVERY ARTICLE
WAY
WAY
WAY DOWN
WAY DOWN
TO SOME PRICE WHICH WILL MAKE IT
TO SOME PRICE WHICH WILL MAKE IT
SELL AND GO QUICK.
SELL AND GO QUICK.
SELL AND GO QUICK.
LADIES,

Ladies, all this has been [done] in a most thorough manner.

OUR GOODS SHALL BE SOLD CHEAP!
OUR GOODS SHALL BE SOLD CHEAP!!
IN THIS GREAT SELL OUT.
IN THIS GREAT SELL OUT.

10. Of course, it was not sufficient merely to catch the reader's eye. Macy had to arouse interest and hold it until he could present his message. So far as one can judge today, it was in this particular phase of copywriting that Macy excelled. Other stores occasionally resorted to repeated phrases and typographical devices to attract notice (though rarely with the particular skill that Macy displayed), but one may search column after column, day after day, without finding anything to compare with the lively spirit and fresh variety of Macy's early advertisements. By modern standards the ideas may sometimes seem crude, the expressions clumsy, the humor introduced with a

heavy hand, but it is historically inaccurate to use a modern yardstick. In the light of contemporary practice Macy copy stood far ahead of the rest. Rivals clung to formal announcements which did little more than give the store's name and a list of its merchandise. Macy introduced an informal, personal note, and he occasionally condescended to tell the public something about his store and its policies. It would never have occurred to him to exploit his own views and achievements as John Wanamaker was to do twenty years later, but he understood the need for making copy interesting.

11. Simply by changing advertisements regularly Macy gained an advantage over rivals who typically used the same copy over and over again, but he went far beyond constant change. He would introduce a humorous touch, or make a reference to the day's news, or resort to a pun or a colossal exaggeration of the kind that nineteenth-century Americans thought funny, and occasionally he even broke out into rhyme. Here, for example, is an early verse, with meter so bad that it is almost good: [46]

HOUSEKEEPING GOODS, EMBROIDERIES, RIBBONS and more
Than I can recount, may be bought in the store
of MACY, of whom, if you'll take my advice,
You'll patronize, seeing he has but *one price*!
In Sixth-avenue, 204 and 206 is his stand
And everything there you look for is at hand.

A longer effort at versification ran in part: [47]

"Westward the Star of Empire takes its way!"
So does the Star of Fashion and of graces,
Judging, at least, by the vast crowds each day
Rushing to MACY'S.

Broadway no longer tempts with costly glare,
With fancy shop fronts and still fancier prices,
Cheapness—if good and tasteful for the fair—
Is what entices. . . .

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[46] N. Y. *Tribune*, Dec. 22, 1858.

[47] N. Y. *Herald*, Nov. 3, 1861. It is quite possible that Macy got his idea of using the star for a trade-mark as a result of this effort. It is also possible that the verses were written by Margaret Getchell, described later in this chapter. Her diary shows that she often wrote verse, and it is highly unlikely that Macy himself could have done so without some assistance.

"Westward the Star of Fashion takes its way!"
That it should poise o'er MACY'S is not funny;
'Tis that he SELLS GOODS EQUAL TO BROADWAY
FOR MUCH LESS MONEY.

12. No one at the time had heard the term institutional advertising, but advertisements like the ones just quoted show that Macy had a feeling for the concept. Could anything be more modern and institutional than the following? [48]

THERE is an ART or SCIENCE
In spending money, and few know how to spend to the best advantage. Buy the best the market affords. Buy for cash. Buy cheap, and you are wise.
Nos. 204 and 206 6th-av.
Is the place to lay out money judiciously for HOUSE-KEEPING GOODS.
For RIBBONS, TRIMMINGS and FLOWERS,
For the nicest kind of THREAD EDGINGS.
For the nicest kind of LACE GOODS.
. . .
For the nicest kind of LADIES' STORE is at
R. H. MACY'S

A month later appeared another of the same excellence: [49]

C. O. D.
and
P. O. D.
The Principle
On Which
We Do
Business Is
P.O.D.
and
C.O.D.

Which literally means PAY ON DELIVERY and COLLECT ON DELIVERY. By this style of doing business we can sell every article in our store at its proper value, and many articles much less.

[48] N. Y. *Tribune*, Dec. 23, 1858.
[49] *Ibid.*, Jan. 22, 1859.

During the past two decades Macy's has employed copywriters of great skill and experience to drive the same point home, but all they have managed to do—indeed, all that can be done—is to write subtle and elaborate variations on the same theme. Rowland Macy could not coin such a neat slogan as "It's Smart to be Thrifty," but he could do the equivalent for his own times.

13. Another advertisement illustrates Macy's use of the pun, the exaggeration, the zigzag layout, and the constant repetition of an important phrase: [50]

SIXTY-THREE CENT SATION!
204 and 206 SIXTH AVENUE,
CORNER OF FOURTEENTH STREET.
63,000 LADIES WITHIN 6,300
MILES HAVE PURCHASED
63 CENT KID GLOVES
AT MACY'S,
WITHIN THE LAST 63 DAYS.
THE DEMAND FOR THEM
INCREASES ABOUT 63 PER CENT
EVERY 63 DAYS.
WE KEEP ONLY ONE STYLE.
WE SELL THEM FOR 63 CENTS.
THEY ARE MANUFACTURED
EXCLUSIVELY FOR US IN PARIS.
WE CONTROL THE STYLE AT 63 CENTS;
WE SELL THEM FOR 63 CENTS.
THEY ARE WORTH A DOLLAR.
WE PREFER TO SELL THEM AT 63 CENTS
THEY CANNOT BE EQUALLED IN NEW YORK
FOR 63 CENTS.
ONLY ONE STYLE
ONLY ONE PRICE

[50] N. Y. *Herald*, Apr. 1, 1859.

14. Competing dry goods firms chose to ignore current happenings, so far as their advertising copy was concerned, but not Macy. Late in 1860, for example, he began an advertisement, "ANNEXATION INSTEAD OF SECESSION. We have annexed Maiden Lane [center of the wholesale fancy goods trade] and shall open 14 wagon loads of French and German fancy goods." [51] As the breach between North and South widened, he headed the announcement of a sale: [52]

COINCIDENCES!!

MONDAY, FEB. 4th, WILL BE A DAY LONG TO BE REMEMBERED IN HISTORY!!

At 9 a.m. R. H. MACY

commences his first great sale for February, 1861.

At 10 a.m. the COTTON CONGRESS meet at MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA.

At 11 a.m. the DELEGATES meet at WASHINGTON, D.C.

The two last Conventions to discuss abstract questions.

The first deals solely in facts which we now offer for your DIGESTION!!!

We shall open at 9 a.m. on that eventful day. . . .

When the threat of war depressed the market and caught him with a large stock of toys, Macy managed to rise above his own predicament and the general pessimism with a cheerful piece of copy: [53]

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[51] *Ibid.*, Dec. 16, 1860.
[52] N. Y. *Tribune*, Feb. 4, 1861.
[53] N. Y. *Herald*, Dec. 22, 1860.

TREMENDOUS EXCITEMENT!

—

THE IRREPRESSIBLE CONFLICT!

—

R. H. MACY,

Nos. 204 and 206 6th-av.,

HAVING GONE IN, WAY UP TO HIS NECK, TO WAX DOLLS, CRYING BABIES, BABIES THAT CAN'T AND WON'T CRY, BABIES THAT CAN AND BABIES THAT CAN'T OPEN THEIR EYES OR SHUT 'EM, RUBBER DOLL HEADS (preferable to dough-heads), SWISS COTTAGES, FANCY BOXES, CHINA FIGURES and 10,000 OTHER THINGS IN THE SAME LINE, including NOAH'S ARK,

HAS NOW DETERMINED TO GET OUT!

Not by backing out himself, but by scattering these opposing forces among his customers, not by cannon or sword.

R. H. MACY relies upon ENORMOUS REDUCTION from the usual prices as the

GENTLE PERSUADER

which will not only relieve him, but carry peace and happiness to

EVERY HEARTH STONE,

and LIFT the CLOUD OF GLOOM which has hung like a pall over the EMPIRE CITY, during the last sixty days.

15. The very qualities which made Macy advertisements interesting helped to make them convincing. It is unlikely that Macy's superlatives, taken by themselves, carried much weight with readers, for such assertions as "the lowest market prices," "best quality in town," and "largest selection to be found anywhere," were as commonplace and unimpressive in the 1850's as today. What did impress readers,

apparently, was Macy's readiness to support his claims by detailed price quotations, an unusual practice which gave readers an idea of the sort of bargains they might expect to find. The steady succession of attractive offerings would inevitably arouse curiosity about Macy's store, curiosity which would be whetted into action by some particularly telling appeal. Unlike his competitors, Macy did not take everything for granted, and when he advertised corsets, for example, he probably dispelled many a doubt by adding "experienced sales women to show and fit them." [54] And few women, after perusing a mass of trite, uninteresting announcements, could fail to respond to such a frank, sprightly appeal as the following: [55]

> Ladies, Ladies,
> We Want Your Money!
> You Want Our Goods!
> We Keep the Very Best!
> We Do Our Very Prettiest
> To Buy Low and Sell Cheap. . . .

16. In the first few weeks of his advertising effort Macy must have had many qualms, and there may be a hint of desperation in such a plea as "Ladies and gentlemen, please give us a call; our goods are all new. We sell you them at low figures." [56] But, as the insistent repetition of announcements, claims, and merchandise began to have its effect, the first Christmas trade began to roll in. There is no mistaking a Nantucketer's exultation in Macy's salute to the New Year of 1859: [57]

> Trade is good at MACY'S, and they are as happy as clams at high water at MACY'S. Go, all hands; go in together, and be happy at MACY'S.

17. As the business progressed, Macy himself seems to have become preoccupied with other activities and to have left the advertising in less enterprising hands. There is less originality in the copy after 1863, less variation in the attack. The same advertisement sometimes appeared for weeks in succession without change. The war may have

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[54] *Ibid.*, Dec. 3, 1858.
[55] *Ibid.*, May 24, 1859.
[56] N. Y. *Tribune*, Dec. 9, 1858.
[57] N. Y. *Herald*, Dec. 31, 1858.

been a factor in this, for it drove dry goods prices to fantastic heights and gave storekeepers unexpected profits. After the first months of depression, moreover, the deceptive flush of war prosperity whipped New York trade into lively activity as public spending became prodigal.[58] Thus the stern necessity which first drove the old whaleman to aggressive advertising was no longer present. Macy's central problem was changing and evolving as business problems always do. His store was known, its policies were accepted, and a stream of regular patrons flocked its narrow aisles. The main question was no longer how to draw people into the store but rather how to manage efficiently the growing business. It is a proof of business genius that Macy was able to delegate advertising to other hands and tackle effectively that problem of giving his growing organization the managerial supervision it required.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

This selection is taken from the *History of Macy's of New York: 1858-1919,* which is volume VII of the *Harvard Studies in Business History.* The selection is only a small part of Mr. Hower's book (hence the footnotes begin with #38), but it serves as a good illustration of his method of organizing, documenting, and interpreting the material of his history.

1. What are the relative advantages and disadvantages of two possible methods of doing research: to start out with a preconceived theory or working hypothesis and look for evidence to support or disprove it; or to collect all possible evidence first and draw conclusions from it afterward? Which method do you think Hower followed in gathering his evidence?

2. Trace the pattern of Hower's development of his subject. (An informal outline will help you in doing this.) Has he organized his material so as to bring about a progression of thought or has he presented all of his evidence before drawing any conclusions?

3. Are there any sections which you believe should have been placed in a different part of the selection? What point is made in par. 1? Does this point serve as a satisfactory introduction? Why or why not? Does par. 17 summarize what has been presented earlier in the selection? What is your opinion of par. 17 as a concluding paragraph?

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[58] Cf. A. C. Cole, *The Irrepressible Conflict* (N. Y., 1934), pp. 344-352.

4. In a research paper of this sort one of the most difficult tasks the writer faces is the synthesizing of his material into a coherent whole. First, of course, his material must be arranged according to some over-all plan, but satisfactory arrangement alone does not always make clear to the reader the logical relationship of each part to those which precede and follow it. A transitional statement must often be used to show this relationship. Note the first sentence in par. 7, in par. 10, and in par. 15. Do these sentences point backward to what precedes or forward to what comes next?

5. How does Hower solve the problem of devising satisfactory introductions to his quoted material, for example, in pars. 11, 12, and 14? Short quotations, especially those which are closely related in thought to a particular part of a paragraph, should be woven into the paragraph itself. Note the skill with which the author does this in pars. 15 and 16.

6. In this selection footnotes are used in a variety of ways and for a variety of purposes. Footnotes 40 and 58 identify the sources of information that is summarized rather than directly quoted; footnotes 44-57 give the sources of quoted material; footnotes 38, 39, 42, and 47 offer additional information; footnote 41 expresses disagreement with a point made by an earlier researcher; footnote 43 explains the research method used by the author and acknowledges special assistance he received on this part of his work. Why was the information or interpretation included in notes 38, 42, and 47 not incorporated in the main body of the text?

Suggestions for Writing

1. Make a study of the advertising to be found in a contemporary magazine and from that study draw conclusions concerning the group of readers for whom the magazine is published.

2. Trace changing interests and tastes by considering the advertising found over a ten-year period in any one magazine. Examine at least one issue of each year.

Population and Food Supply: The Current Scare *

by M. K. BENNETT

The so-called "race between population and food supply" has again come forward as an absorbing topic of discussion, in popular and professional circles alike. Discussants mostly present a deeply pessimistic view of the future. At a press conference on May 18, 1948, Sir John Boyd Orr, retiring director of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, is reported to have "pleaded with the correspondents to help awaken the people to the fact that in the race between population and food, population was winning—'and we do not know how to stop it.'" [1] A few months earlier Sir John had said, "Taking account of the expected increase in world population, food production must be increased by 110 percent [more than doubled] in the next 25 years if sufficient food is to be provided for all mankind. Only cooperative international action can prevent the direst calamities." [2]

2. Reiterating in July 1948 Sir John's estimate of what a tremendous 25-year increase in production would be required to provide the world with "sufficient food," and defining sufficiency as a meager 2,600 calories per person per day (meager for the U. S., that is, but not for Oriental populations), President Milton S. Eisenhower, of Kansas State College, added, "And I say in all earnestness that it is an open question whether food production, for all our science, can be increased that much." [3] Reports in September 1948 from the Inter-American Conference on Renewable Natural Resources in Denver,

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* From *The Scientific Monthly*, January, 1949. By permission of the publishers and the author. Copyright 1949 by the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

[1] *N. Y. Times*, May 18, 1948, 14.

[2] FAO: The Year Past, the Year Ahead. *U. N. Bull.*, Jan. 1, 1948, 19.

[3] EISENHOWER, M. S. Man, Soil and Civilization. *Northwestern Miller*, July 6, 1948, 24.

and from meetings of both the American and the British Associations for the Advancement of Science were replete with similar pessimism. A Canadian publication stated in August,

> it would seem, then, that perhaps never again—unless an unforeseen miracle occurs—will the white people of the world be able to enjoy the extremely high level of food that was available to them in 1938 and 1939. The white races . . . will have to adapt themselves . . . to a gradual change in their diet, consuming less livestock products and more cereals.[4]

3. There is also William Vogt's recent book, *Road to Survival* (New York: Sloane Associates, 1948), described by its publishers as a "revelation of the fact that the earth, as abused by man, is unable to support the human race in terms of its most basic need—food." Fairfield Osborn's book *Our Plundered Planet* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1948, 75-76) chants much the same lament.

> The problem [he says] is how to conserve the remaining good natural soils that exist on the earth, together with the complementary resources of forests, water sources, and the myriads of beneficial forms of animal life. There is no other problem. If that is not solved the threat to human life will grow in intensity and the present conditions of starvation that are already apparent in various parts of the earth will seem as nothing in the years that lie ahead.

4. Examples need not be multiplied to indicate that we are in the midst of a resurgence of widespread discussion of the old problem of pressure of population upon the food supply. In the English-speaking world three waves of such discussion, heavily weighted with pessimism, have been recognizable since the first one was touched off by Malthus' famous *An Essay on the Principle of Population* . . . , published anonymously in 1798. The second wave came in the late 1890s in connection with the German controversy about the relative merits of agrarian and industrial national economies. Perhaps an ephemeral shortage and high price of wheat was a contributing factor. It was in 1898 that Sir William Crookes delivered his famous address, "The Wheat Problem," to the British Association for the Advancement of

4 *Grain Market Features.* Searle Grain Co., Ltd. Winnipeg. Aug. 25, 1948, 2.

Science; some people took it as a "cosmic scare." [5] But again interest in the global food-supply problem waned, only to be stimulated for the third time, for a few years after World War I. We are now in the midst of the fourth wave.

I

5. What are the sources of this resurgence of interest, and what is new in current discussion?

6. It appears that many have recently become aware of an increase in births following the cessation of hostilities—at least here in the United States, in some countries of Western Europe, and in Japan. At the same time it has become clear that war casualties—deaths—were in many countries not so large as to slow down rates of population growth. Also, there has been in the past few years tremendous inventiveness in the field of lifesaving techniques, to mention only the use of the sulfa drugs, penicillin, Atabrine, and insecticides of the DDT type—all tending to reduce mortality rates and all tending to become cheaper and more widely available. Coupling these new developments with widening knowledge of the facts about world population growth during the past half century and more, many come to the conclusion that the population outlook for the next half century is for growth, very rapid and perhaps alarming because the earth's surface is limited in extent.

7. Certainly the available evidence on world population growth during the past two centuries is impressive. There were perhaps about 875 million people in the world in 1750. Now, as we near 1950, there are perhaps 2,350 million. The words "perhaps" and "about" are used advisedly, for the world's population has never actually been counted. But the estimates, imperfect as they are, seem sound enough to warrant the statements that the world now contains nearly three people to every one person existing two centuries ago, and that the increase, at least if one takes it by centuries since 1650, has been at an accelerating rate in the world as a whole though not in each of its parts.

8. If we take the present or 1950 world population as about 2,350 million, the probability is that the increase in the past 50 years has amounted to roughly 750 million people, and this in spite of two world wars in the interval. It is an increase of over 45 percent within the adult memories of a good many living men. Much of the world's

[5] CROOKES, SIR WILLIAM. *The Wheat Problem.* (3rd ed.) London: Longmans, Green, 1917, xii.

population growth since 1900 has occurred in areas rather far out on the horizon of our vision, such as India, Burma, Japan, and the Netherlands Indies. Nevertheless, our own national population, helped by immigration, has approximately doubled since 1900, and there seems to be no large geographical area of the world where population increase has not been substantial in the past half century. The rates of natural increase, it is true, were lower in Western Europe, North America, and Australasia than in most other parts of the world. Indeed, not more than a decade ago these low rates of natural increase gave rise to concern about decline of certain national populations in the future. But recently that concern has diminished; the dates of probable maxima of populations have been postponed by the demographers.

9. One authoritative projection of population growth places the more or less probable world total in the year 2000 as about 3,300 million people.[6] An increase of some 900 million is implied for the half century which we are about to enter—in absolute numbers, a larger increase than occurred in the half century just past. Of course this is not a firm prediction, but it represents the type of projection in the minds of many who currently discuss the problem of population and food supply. They regard population trends as rather intractable and stubborn; and from all we know this seems a proper attitude to assume. Current discussion of the question seems generally to take for granted a great and perhaps unprecedented increase of world population in the next half century, barring only the advent of events highly unpalatable to mankind. Birth rates, it is supposed, cannot reasonably be expected to fall as rapidly as death rates, which are more and more reduced by modern life-preserving techniques—unless indeed the death rates should be elevated by war, famine, or pestilence, all of which men of good will seek to avoid.

10. Some discussants recognize that rates of natural increase vary from nation to nation, and that the lower rates, presaging little or no augmentation of certain national populations if we neglect immigration, tend to appear in prosperous or advanced countries. Those are countries at once highly urbanized, highly industrialized, highly literate, highly productive economically. Among them are the United States and Canada, Australia and New Zealand, the United Kingdom,

[6] NOTESTEIN, F. W. Population—The Long View. In T. W. Schultz (Ed.), *Food for the World.* Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1945, 57.

Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the Scandinavian countries, France. Germany was of this group before the war, but may not in all respects be of it now. However, the population of the high-income countries of lowest rates of natural increase of population make up much less than half the world's population; so that an expectation of heavy increase in the world total population, in the absence of unwelcome types of checks, seems well justified.

11 The war, as everyone knows, tended in many though not all parts of the world to cut down agricultural production, and to curtail the international movement of food from surplus to deficit areas. Post-hostility shortages of many sorts, currency inflations, balance-of-payment difficulties, shifts of national boundaries and population groups, occupation policies, political revolutions, civil wars, and other influences have so far combined to hamper recovery. Additionally, in the world's great food-importing area of Western Europe, the weather was very bad for crops produced in 1945 and 1947. Only as the harvest of Northern Hemisphere crops of 1948 came to an end did the Western world begin to emerge from a food shortage of great severity. Here in the United States the shortage touched us in imagination and pocket, not in the stomach. But it has certainly struck the imagination hard. From all over the world for nearly a decade stories of the most urgent food needs, or of starvation itself, have poured into our consciousness. We have been made aware, to a degree hitherto unfamiliar, of the generally restricted diets of a billion and a half or more of the world's population even in prewar years. And population growth during the past decade of war and incomplete recovery has tended to accentuate the meagerness of food supplies in all but a few exceptionally situated food-exporting nations like our own. No wonder, on this count alone, that pessimism rules.

12. With growing population coupled with lagging recovery of food output and distribution, it appears difficult for the less fortunately situated nations to recoup the level of food intake prevailing before the war, in the late 1930s. But, in the minds of many, perhaps especially the nutrition-minded, such recovery is not enough, not what the world wants or needs. Rather, the desideratum is substantial improvement in the per capita food intake of most nations, perhaps of all—one aspect of "Freedom from Want." This is an idea for several years strongly espoused by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. It has spent no little time and effort in publicizing the facts that even before the war, as measured against standards of

adequacy set up by the nutritionists, the average per capita food intake of many nations, comprising in total far more than half the world's population, was sadly deficient in quality and not infrequently in quantity; and that even in the best-fed countries at least a modest fraction of the population was either undernourished or malnourished. Although evidence for these conclusions began to appear nearly two decades ago, it has lately been the FAO more than any other organized group that has broadcast information on the quantity and composition of national food supplies. And it has espoused as its foremost objective, its major *raison d'être,* the improvement of human nutrition throughout the world—not merely the recovery of prewar nutritional status.

13. If those who limit their hopes to a fairly prompt return of the world to its prewar nutritional status are nowadays pessimistic in outlook, we need not be surprised that those whose hearts are set on general improvement of nutritional status are even more so.

14. The jeremiads of the nutritional idealists, however, are hardly as frightening as those of the conservationists, notably the soil conservationists. Extremists of this group seem to take for granted the population projections of the demographers and the nutritional goals of FAO; and then they proceed to uncover, it would seem practically everywhere, evidence of permanent soil erosion by water and wind, and of depletion of soil fertility. Both are ascribed in dominant part to blind pursuit of profits by the farmers and graziers of the world, which is alleged to lead to mistreatment of the soil.

15 There seems to be a degree of historical coincidence in the rise of the soil-conservation school to its present degree of public prominence. Great dust storms afflicted our Great Plains in the middle 1930s. A bit earlier, in 1933, this nation had embarked upon the adventure of curing economic depression in part by supporting farm prices and incomes, and the method first chosen was to make Federal payments directly to farmers in exchange for acreage reduction. When the Supreme Court in January 1936 put a stop to this "gentle rain of checks," as a shrewd observer called it, a lawful way to continue became the object of political expediency. And so the payments earlier made to purchase acreage reduction became "agricultural conservation payments"; politics opened the door of the public treasury to conservationists; the great droughts carried conviction to the public of a crying need for conservation; and increasingly since then political leaders, soil conservationists, and the public seem to have

been at one in viewing soil erosion as a dreadful threat domestically. As conservationists proliferated, the perception of threat to food supply through soil erosion spread so as to compass whole continents. The books by Vogt and Osborn provide outstanding, perhaps extreme, examples of literature originating with the ardent-conservation school. That group, of course, cries for "action now," and for funds as well. Allusion is made to civilizations which, it is claimed, disappeared because their soil was swept away. It is sought to check or control erosion, thus saving civilization.

16. The soil-conservation school adds to the old concept that the food-producing land of the world is strictly limited in extent the new concept that the land is actually being destroyed, and at a rapid rate. The argument is picked up in strange places. An advertisement of a British firm selling agricultural machinery reads in part: "To avert mass starvation and world strife, more food must be produced. Man in his ignorance, however, has raped vast areas of the good earth. Soil erosion, like a cancerous growth, has doomed miles of the land to sterility." [7]

17 The broad and general tenor of current discussion is summed up in a sentence of Sir William Crookes', spoken in 1898: "As mouths multiply, food resources dwindle." [8] A few points made in this fourth wave of pessimism, however, seem new. Concern has largely shifted, for example from "bread-eaters" of the Western world to the teeming populations of Asiatic countries. Again, interest has largely shifted from mere maintenance of accustomed diets to the improvement of diets. "Improved" diets usually involve enlargement of the proportion of calories derived from animal products; and this would involve extra drafts on productive resources because the animals burn up humanly edible grain when they convert it to meat, milk, or eggs. Sir John Orr may be thinking of such dietary improvement rather than maintenance, or even return to pre-World War II status, when he estimates that world food production must be increased by 110 percent in the next 25 years if sufficient food is to be provided for all mankind. New also in current discussion is the heavy emphasis on destruction of soil through erosion. And, finally, one sees little in earlier discussions the idea, often mentioned now, that there would

[7] *Economist* (London), Aug. 21, 1948, 307.

[8] CROOKES, SIR WILLIAM. *The Wheat Problem.* (3rd ed.) London: Longmans, Green, 1917, 3.

be little purpose in fostering the international spread of new lifesaving techniques and sanitary measures, because resulting increased pressure of population on food supply would merely plunge into misery those whose lives were saved. The emergence of some of these new notes tends to intensify current pessimism. A vicious circle as perceived nowdays seems, if not altogether different from what it seemed before, to be more vicious than we used to think.

18 The consequences envisaged in current writings are various, some perhaps rather vague. Sir John Orr speaks of "direst calamities" in the absence of concerted international action, but is not specific about the nature of those calamities or about the international action. Eisenhower speaks of "the specter of permanent, world-wide hunger" [9] as now seeming very real. Our British advertiser speaks of the necessity of greater food production if "mass starvation" and "world strife" are to be averted. Vogt, Osborn, and Eisenhower alike make much of the disappearance of earlier civilizations, as in Mesopotamia, Syria, Rome, northwestern China, and Guatemala, and they suggest that modern civilization may be headed in the same direction. Deserts are said to be on the march, because men disturb and destroy natural vegetation. Less frightening though perhaps still unpalatable is the Searle Grain Company's opinion that the people of the world may never again enjoy as good a food supply as existed just before World War II, and that the white races in particular may have to cut down on ingestion of livestock products and resort more to grain.

II

19. It seems pertinent next to review sketchily what has happened to food supplies or intake over the world in the past 50 years or so when population increased by perhaps 750 million people. The recent past has some bearing on what may conceivably happen in the next 50 years when, the demographers suggest, a further increase of some 900 million may reasonably be expected in the absence of intolerable "positive" checks to population growth.

20. The question posed with respect to the past half century has to be stated with more precision. Not much is to be learned by asking what has happened to the average per capita calorie intake of the whole world, or what has happened to the composition of the diet

[9] EISENHOWER, M. S. Man, Soil and Civilization. *Northwestern Miller*, July 6, 1948, 24.

of the world as a whole. We simply do not know, and cannot expect to find out. But there is no point in raising such a question. The world is nothing like a unit with reference to food intake,[10] any more than it is with reference to per capita real income, and a per capita world average is next door to meaningless. Much more useful to raise are the questions: Where throughout the world has food intake become more plentiful and more varied in composition in the past half century? Where less so? Where unchanged? And why?

[21] Simply because the only available information pertains to nations or colonies, the changes must be located mainly in terms of national boundaries—and even this only approximately because national boundaries themselves have changed.

[22] A degree of precision will be added if we mainly consider two aspects of average national diets: (*a*) the average per capita intake of total food calories from whatever crude foodstuff they may be derived; and (*b*) the proportion of national food intake derived from the grains and potatoes (including here such items as cassava and taro). It may be assumed that a long-persisting decline in the "cereal-potato" fraction of a national diet represents an improvement of diet unless there is evidence of accompanying exceptional decline in total calorie intake per capita. For the cereals and potatoes are almost universally the cheapest of all foods per thousand calories; and all population groups except the very wealthy clearly tend to reduce the proportion of total calories derived from cereals and potatoes whenever they can do so, expanding variously the proportions of their food-calorie intake derived from other principal and more expensive groups of foods: namely, sugars, vegetable oils, legumes or pulses, low-calorie fruits and vegetables, and animal products, including meat, dairy products, eggs and poultry, fish, and their accompanying fats. A decline in the proportion of calories derived from cereals and potatoes in a national diet does not constitute altogether conclusive evidence of nutritional improvement of diet; it may not, especially if only sugar or vegetable oil replaces the cereals and potatoes. But in general a decline of the cereal-potato fraction of a diet means increase of palatability and diversity and represents economic improvement of diet. On all the evidence we have, the mass behavior of people is to reduce the cereal-potato component of diets when that component

[10] BENNETT, M. K. International Contrasts in Food Consumption. *Geog. Rev.*, 1941, *31*, 365-76.

is high, if they can afford it. Such evidence comes forward in all surveys of food consumption by differing income groups, in whatever places and at whatever dates the surveys are made. But the tendency does not run to complete displacement; perhaps 10-20 percent of cereal-potato foods would be retained by a mass of millionaires.

23. At the present time it happens to be impossible to ascertain, systematically, nation by nation for the whole world, exactly what changes have occurred in per capita calorie intake or in the proportion of calories derived respectively from cereals and potatoes and from other foods. If estimates of population growth over the past half century are commonly lacking or uncertain, the position is far worse with respect to food supply. We know most about the nations where the record keeping is best; where domestic crops have long been painstakingly estimated, and imports and exports systematically recorded. The measurement of a national food supply is fearfully complex to accomplish, not only because there are so many components in a food supply, but also because so many important foodstuffs are usable and are used both for food and for feed.

24. More is perhaps known about the United States than any other country. Elaborate official statistics and estimates cover, year by year, the period since 1909. They show, in the 30 years between 1909 and 1939, a small decline in total calories per capita "available . . . at the retail level" from about 3,500 to about 3,300. They show also a much more striking decline in the proportion of total calories derived from grains and potatoes—from 44 to 29 percent. On the other hand, there were measurable increases in the proportions derived from sugar (from 12 to 16 percent), from fruits and the vegetables other than potatoes (from 7 to 10 percent), and from meat, fish, poultry, eggs, dairy products, and fats and oils (from 37 to 45 percent). Thus the proportion of national calories derived from grains and potatoes fell, and the proportion derived from other foodstuffs, more expensive per thousand calories as a group and with respect to nearly all individual items, reciprocally rose—at least from 1909 to 1939.[11]

25. If one now seeks to push backward in time through the 20 years preceding 1909, the official statisticians give less help. But Holbrook Working[12] was able to establish convincing evidence of decline in

[11] CLARK, F., FRIEND, B., and BURK, M. C. *Nutritive Value of the Per Capita Food Supply, 1909-45.* USDA Misc. Pub. 616, Jan. 1947, 1, 18, 32.

[12] WORKING, H. The Decline in Per Capita Consumption of Flour in the United States. *Wheat Studies of the Food Research Institute,* 1926, 2, 283.

the per capita consumption of the chief grain products, wheat flour and corn meal, and also an increase in per capita consumption of sugar, during those two decades. Flour and meal consumption fell from about 560,000 calories per person per year in 1889 to about 450,000 in 1909, a decline of nearly 20 percent. The rise in sugar consumption did not offset this. Working's incomplete findings are consistent with the interpretation that general trends known to exist from 1909 to 1939 existed also from 1889 to 1909—a decline in total food calories per capita, a decline in the proportion derived from grains and potatoes, and an increase in the proportion derived from other foodstuffs than grains and potatoes, demonstrably from sugar.
[26] These, then, were the tendencies in the United States for half a century preceding World War II. They represented a general sufficiency of total calories even with decline; that decline is reasonably attributable mainly to lowered requirement due to reduction of physical activity—machines increasingly working for men. They also represented wider freedom of choice in foods, greater variety and palatability—in short, an improvement of diet in the economic sense, whether or not in the nutritional sense. This could not have happened without increase in per capita real income, of which there is plenty of evidence that need not be brought forward.

[27] But the United States is only a part of the world. What happened elsewhere? Of this we know less. It is a proper subject for prolonged and intricate research. Yet a good many pieces of evidence can be tied together to indicate that decline in the cereal-potato fraction of national diets was rather widespread in the half century before World War II. Quite commonly we perceive in statistics declines in per capita human consumption of what are generally regarded as inferior cereals—rye, corn, barley, oats, and the millets and sorghums. In itself this indicates the existence of economic circumstances permitting wider choice of more expensive and desirable foodstuffs, among which the preferred cereals, wheat and rice, commonly appear. Quite commonly we perceive increases in per capita consumption of sugar. Not uncommonly we perceive declines in per capita consumption of a preferred cereal, wheat; but this reflects a reciprocal rise in consumption of more expensive foods. Trends toward economic improvement of national diets can be demonstrated satisfactorily at least for Canada, Australasia, the British Isles, Scandinavia, Germany, the Low Countries, Switzerland, France, *and Japan*—in kind resembling the trends in the United States, in degree and in details quite

likely different. One need not much hesitate to add to this list such nations as Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Cuba, the former Baltic States, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Greece, Italy, Spain, and Turkey. In each of these, there appears to be no suggestion of a long-term trend toward insufficiency of total calories per capita, even if there was slight decline as in the United States and for similar reasons; and there is some evidence of increasing diversity of diet.

28. Again looking at the half century preceding World War II, we see, though most dimly, developments which have the appearance of being somewhat different in several Oriental countries—India, Burma, Korea, Formosa, Java, the Philippines. The meager statistics for recent decades—one cannot press far back—suggest a gradual small reduction of per capita calorie supply, coupled with tendencies for inferior cereals and for sweet potatoes to increase while the favored grain, rice, declines in consumption.[13] In spite of some small increase of wheat consumption, occasionally of sugar, and in spite of lessened incidence of local famines, one finds little direct statistical evidence of increasing per capita consumption of fats, meat, dairy products, and fish. The dependence on cereal-potato foodstuffs remains very high; if it declined, the decline was small. There is a suggestion here, though only a suggestion, of general tightening of the food situation—fewer calories where more were needed—rather than enlarged scope to diversify diet.

29. The largest population groups not yet mentioned are China, the African continent, and the USSR. On food developments in China and Africa, little useful statistical evidence is to be found. That northern China suffered sporadic localized famines in the course of the half century is certain. Whether there was improvement or deterioration generally in calorie supply or in composition of the national average diet is unknown. There is perhaps evidence of improvement in African food supplies, but no conclusions need be drawn here.

30. In the USSR, from 1898 to World War I, there seems to have been general sufficiency of calories aside from local shortages, also a shift from rye to wheat, and possibly a degree of increased diversification of dietary composition. The first world war and the Revolution led to famine in 1921-23. Subsequent recovery was interrupted by the drive for collectivization and ensuing slaughter of livestock, and an-

[13] WICKIZER, V. D., and BENNETT, M. K. *The Rice Economy of Monsoon Asia.* Food Res. Inst. Grain Economics Ser. 3, Stanford Univ., 1941, Chaps. IX, X.

other famine occurred in 1932-33. Again came recovery, but Soviet statistics are not such as to tell us truly about calorie supplies and composition of diet just before World War II.[14] There is ample reason, however, to believe that the rural fraction of the population was then less well fed than it had been before World War I; and the rural fraction remained, in spite of growing industrialization, much the larger fraction of the total. Also, the urban population itself seems unlikely to have been as well fed before World War II as it was before World War I.

31. So much for the history of the relationship between population and food supply during the half century preceding World War II. The world population growth was enormous. But meanwhile food intake improved in a good many national populations. This, it should be emphasized, is the fact so far as concerns the regions about which we know most and can have most confidence in the statistical evidence. As for the populations where deterioration of the food position is suggested, either the credible direct evidence on food supplies is decidedly meager, or we can be fairly certain that the deterioration sprang in large part from governmental interventions, as in Korea, Formosa, and the USSR.

32. Even with respect to India, one cannot feel confident that the food position really deteriorated progressively, although the statistics —such as they are—point in this direction. For we know that at the same time India unquestionably became increasingly urbanized and industrialized. Except as this comes about through a socialized control—investment squeezed from consumption—such as prevailed after 1917 in the USSR but never in India, urbanization and industrialization spell enlargement of national real income per capita; and that tends strongly to carry with it improvement of diet in the economic sense. It is difficult to believe, of India or any other nonsocialized country, that city populations grew as they did in relation to rural populations for any other important reason than that the farm people saw a chance to improve their income status in the cities, and that the process of industrialization opened avenues for them. The people who migrated from farm to city were not jumping from frying pan to fire. On this line of reasoning, one cannot feel fully confident that India, and perhaps, though less probably, even China, were not enjoying

[14] JASNY, N. *The Socialized Agriculture of the USSR: Plans and Performance.* Food Res. Inst. Grain Economics Ser. 4, Stanford Univ., in press.

a somewhat more diversified average national diet, albeit a poor one by our standards, in 1939 than 50 years before. The facts are not clear, whereas the facts *are* clear concerning the great majority of nations belonging to the commercial Western world.

33. The half century preceding World War II may then reasonably be regarded as one more accurately characterized as giving evidence of improvement in per capita food supplies than the opposite. Widespread indeed were demonstrable improvements, whereas positive deterioration suggested in some places is subject to doubts not readily dispelled, or can be explained in terms of political interference with economic development. That this is the picture that emerges is the more remarkable because a destructive world war occurred in the interval, to say nothing of minor yet devastating localized wars; and because a rather general economic paralysis beset the world toward the end of the 50-year period. The forces that make for higher levels of living, with accompanying dietary improvement, must have been tremendously powerful.

III

34. It would be possible to review in a general way what happened in the 50 years preceding 1939 to improve national food situations in so many parts of the world. One would mention, as did Joseph S. Davis in his explanation of history's answer to Sir William Crookes,[15] not only expansion of acreage but increase of yield per acre, through improved breeds and varieties, better rotations, the spread and cheapening of transportation, the invention of laborsaving machinery, and so on. It may be added as factual material that between 1888 and 1938, even in long-settled areas of the world excluding China and Russia, it proved possible for the yield per acre of wheat to increase fully 25 percent while acreage increased some 10 percent; and in the new areas of the world, although expansion of acreage supposedly to poorer and drier land was no less than sixfold—more than 100 million acres—the yield per acre nevertheless did not decline if one makes allowance for the unusual character of the droughts of the middle 1930s in the Great Plains.[16]

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[15] DAVIS, J. S. The Specter of Dearth of Food: History's Answer to Sir William Crookes. In *On Agricultural Policy*, 1926-1938. Food Res. Inst. Misc. Pub. 9, Stanford Univ., 1939, 19-22.

[16] BENNETT, M. K. Trends of Yield in Major Wheat Regions since 1885. Part II. Irregular, Stable, and Declining Trends. *Wheat Studies*, 1938, *14*, 259.

35. But this approach is perhaps no more illuminating than to ask the question, What is it that was impeding before 1939, is now impeding, and may well continue to impede the growth of economic productivity in general and of agricultural production specifically? What, in particular, tends to prevent more food and more varied food from being produced and put into the hands of the multitudes who need or desire it?

36. Those impediments are overwhelmingly numerous if looked at one by one. Economists long since invented, however, a set of rubrics convenient for the discussion but including only four terms. They would say that agricultural productivity, with reference to an unchanging supply of land, must depend upon the application of the three other factors of production—labor, capital, and management. The rubrics—land, labor, capital, and management—are convenient, if only because bearing them all in mind precludes our focusing attention upon only one or the other of them, as I suspect some soil conservationists do.

37 About any acre of agricultural land now in use in the world, theory and history tell us (1) that it has a *maximum* theoretical (economic) productivity, given the state of technology of the moment; (2) that its maximum theoretical productivity may or may not actually be achieved at the moment, depending upon whether the optimum combination of labor, capital, and management is being applied; and (3) that in all probability, as judged by history, the point of maximum productivity will be shifted upward as time passes because technological advances will be made, even if we cannot predict either the degree or the pace of advance. But nothing in history or theory tells us what the output may be, in volume or value, at the point of maximum productivity.

38 The most impressive probability about the acres of the world now devoted to agricultural use is that a truly enormous gap exists between actual productivity and maximum productivity under optimum application of labor, capital, and management.[17] This refers to maximum economic productivity, not maximum physical productivity, which no doubt is the greater. In all probability a very large fraction of the managers of the world's agricultural land are inhibited from applying optimum doses of labor, capital, and management. Either

[17] JOHNSON, S. E. *Changes in Farming in War and Peace.* USDA Bur. Agr. Econ. FM 58, June 1946; BLACK, A. G. Iranian Agriculture—Present and Prospective. *J. Farm Econ.*, 1948, *30*, 422-42.

they are not aware of the best in current technology, or they are helpless to make use of it, or they are unwilling even if able. The mere existence of cover crops and green manures, commercial fertilizers, effective sprays against weeds whether new or old, hybrid corn, rust-resistant wheats, inoculation against hog cholera, tests for animal tuberculosis, is literally unknown to thousands of land managers in the very areas of the world where population is alleged to be most obviously outrunning food supply. In those same areas and others are land managers who know of an improvement, but have no incentive to put it to use. Somewhere a large landholder, wealthy enough and socially important enough to satisfy all his ambitions, may remain content with farming methods reminiscent of the Middle Ages. Perhaps one could find instances in Spain or Chile. Elsewhere a lack of security of life and property—in essence, a lack of orderly government—may inhibit the application of improvements widely known. Bad though orderly government, exercising unwisely its power of taxation, may inhibit improvements in farming, simply because the fruit of effort is not permitted to accrue to the men who make it. The Soviet Union is a case in point. Above all, perhaps, a great many land managers of the world cannot apply what they both know and are willing to try for the reason that they lack capital to cover the initial cost. The purchase of a pound of improved seed, to say nothing of a good spade or plow, may unfortunately be quite beyond the capacity of a great many who cultivate the world's soil.

39. For these and other reasons, the gap between agricultural potential and agricultural practice is unquestionably very wide, and has been very wide at any given point of time for far more than half a century. One of the other reasons, a most compelling one, is lack of demand or of the development of demand. There has to be an exchange of products between those who manage the land and those with whom they exchange produce; and the last must have something to exchange. Agricultural productivity not only responds to advances in economic productivity on other fronts, but stimulates it as well. The process is complex in the extreme, involving of necessity appropriate fluctuations in the relative prices of the factors of production; but its existence ought not to be overlooked merely because it is difficult to describe and trace. The invention and use of a pound of higher-yielding seed, of a longer-lived and sharper hoe, or of a way to twist rope at lesser cost, work reciprocally to enhance both agricultural and industrial productivity. Multiplied in thousands of instances, such

innovations exemplify economic development. More elaborate division of labor, a most excellent way of increasing economic productivity, is an accompanying phenomenon. The race is less accurately between population and food supply, than between population and economic development in every sphere. And even here the analogy is imperfect, for the racers are hobbled together: economic development at some stage becomes associated with a slowing down of the rate of population growth.

40. Much that can be said about the gap between agricultural practice and agricultural potential may equally be said about a gap between food harvested and food eaten. Losses in storage and transportation are truly impressive, and are unquestionably subject to reduction as the effectiveness of inhibiting influences is removed or lessened.

41. So far the emphasis has been given to factors that impede the increase of food yield per acre on land under cultivation now. It remains briefly to speak about land itself, the lack and the destruction of which are currently so heavily emphasized as impediments to improvement of per capita food supplies. Almost axiomatic is the fact that there is now less naturally good land for men to bring into use than ever there was before in historical time. Far from true would be a statement that there remains no unused land whatever subject to development for food crops. There are still areas of the world where lack of transportation hampers settlement, and where the presence of the tsetse fly or the malarial mosquito acts similarly. No one could reasonably suppose that the tropics are now fully developed, with reference especially to oil-bearing palms. Also the limit of land cultivation—at best a vague concept—is elastic, not fixed. It changes, for example, whenever a shorter-maturing variety of grain is invented, moving the limit both in latitude and in altitude—and even, perhaps, permitting double cropping of land once single-cropped. If the behavior of demand is such as to call all these reservoirs of food production into activity, their product will be huge indeed. Economic planners in Brazil estimate that Brazil has 150 million acres fit for growing wheat. Those acres may never or may not soon be settled, but the estimate itself is indicative of ideas held by some people that by no means all the productive land of the world is as yet under the plow. And land is not all. One cannot dismiss as inconceivable the profitable use of the plankton of the oceans as food or feed; and ways and means of utilizing solar radiation to provide the energy for artifi-

cial synthesis of the food elements remain to be speculated about.[18]

42. Some writers, such as Osborn and Vogt, who have espoused the cause of soil conservation, paint a picture of rapid contemporary destruction of soil resources through erosion by water and wind. The question here is not whether there is any erosion at all, for there is, but how important it may be; and this is a difficult question. If a man alleges, as Vogt does, that in this country we have lost a third of our topsoil in 150 years and that the future of our country is still within our control but will not be after only a few more decades of such abuse as we have subjected it to, no easy counterassertion comes to mind. It is comforting then to read the words of an experienced soil scientist, Charles E. Kellogg, chief of the Division of Soil survey in this country (*Sci. Mon.*, 1948, *66*, 478, 479): ". . . a large part of the arable soils of the world are made better by good farming than they were naturally." And to have him say, "For a time, it almost seemed that each popular writer was trying to outdo the others in dramatic statement. Some even went so far as to assert that erosion had swallowed whole civilizations. . . . It is sincerely to be hoped that the period of extreme statement on soil erosion is nearly over. . . ."

43. One can hardly fail to be impressed not only by the tendency of the extremists to engage in what may be called spurious quantitative thinking, but also by their failure to make clear precisely where all the damage they see has been done, or to differentiate between geological and man-made erosion, or to stress what has happened on the great agricultural flatlands of the earth equally with what they say has occurred on the much less important sloping uplands, which are singled out as manifesting the soil-destroying evils of so-called "fire-farming" or "shifting cultivation." On reading the extremists, one would never guess that the Missouri River was carrying silt—was called the "Big Muddy"—when men who knew the plow or herded domestic animals first saw it; or that beavers had ever made dams which silted up and formed mountain meadows long before the mountains above were grazed; or that dust storms had occurred in the Great Plains in the 1890s, before they felt the plow.

44. One who has no claim to expertness in this field may nevertheless find it impossible either to deny the existence of man-made soil erosion and the desirability of a degree of social action against it, or to

[18] ALSBERG, C. L. Progress in Chemistry and the Theory of Population. *Ind. & Eng. Chem.*, 1924, *16*, 524-26.

become greatly exercised about it when he thinks of the impressive array of quite different factors which inhibit agricultural productivity.

IV

45 What need be said in conclusion? Certainly it seems futile to engage in unqualified prediction in so inexact a field of inquiry, and it would be tiresome to state all the qualifications necessary in prediction. We must concede, perhaps, that the "direst calamities" lie in the realm of possibilities, though in appraising even possibilities it would be helpful to know more precisely what those calamities are thought to be. If one of the "direst calamities" is eventual reduction of the per capita ingestion of animal products among the white races, we must concede its possibility; and so with "mass starvation" if by that is meant what has long occurred locally and among relatively few people at any point in time. To concede possibility in these matters, however, is not to argue probability.

46 We need not concede the possibility within the foreseeable future of the emergence of "permanent world-wide hunger," if that phrase means everybody hungry at once. That cannot happen unless a world society develops and finds a way to achieve absolute equality of personal income, a possibility surely so remote as hardly to be called a possibility at all. In such a society the tremendous contents of the feedbin of the world could be utilized to assuage human hunger; humanly edible grain now lost to man in the conversion processes of animals could then be captured for human consumption.

47. We need not concede that possible localized national deterioration of diets of historical type leads at all certainly to world strife. Hungry nations are commonly economically weak and weak in military potential as nowadays measured in other terms than clubs or knives, and hence may be chary of assuming the risk of aggression; and in any event wars have other causes than scarcity of food.

48. We might not be wise to concede, on the other hand, the possibility of an increase of 110 percent in world food supplies within 25 years. That is a decidedly short time for so tremendous an increase.

49. And, yet, at the same time that we concede the possibilities both of deterioration of food supply and of the unlikelihood of hoped-for extreme improvement, we need not exclude the possibility of a geographically spreading gradual improvement of national diets, doubtless unequal in pace among the several nations, resulting in generally firmer assurance of food supplies increasingly consistent with human

aspirations. It is well to remember that the recent years of food shortage may, if a long stretch of peace lies before us, seem in retrospect merely transitory.

50. Pessimism about maintenance or improvement of per capita food supply, even where population is densest, is not intellectually necessary, not compelled on the basis of historical fact or logic. We know approximately what the trends have been. More important, enough is understood about the powerful forces lying behind economic productivity and dietary improvement to warrant the statement that the ultimate productivity of the earth's surface had best be regarded as incommensurable and elastic, not fixed. It can be measured, and thereafter set in relation to a future growth of population itself not firmly predictable, only in terms of surface—square miles or square feet. The customary but spurious quantitative exercise—only 4 billion cultivable acres now, less than 2 acres per person, with 2.5 acres estimated to be required per person to provide a minimum adequate diet, and with population growing while soil is washed away—ought not to mislead. The possible product of the earth defies measurement even on the assumption of stagnant technology, and the assumption itself gains no support from history.

51. Time may prove today's pessimists to have been right in their attitude; the actual outcome remains to be seen. But if they prove right, the historical reasons are quite unlikely to be limited to an overrapid increase of population set against an overrapid destruction of soil resources. The future historian will need to inquire whether some other contributory causes were important—whether men and governments acted wisely in such directions as engaging in wars, keeping civil order, spending appropriately on education and research, taxing with propriety, intervening intelligently in economic life, nursing economic isolation, or freeing the channels of trade. To follow the wrong paths is to hamper invention, stiffle capital accumulation, hinder investment domestically and internationally, and hence to retard the general economic development, one aspect of which is improvement of national diets. If the right paths are followed in these directions, and not only in human reproduction and in land use, time may prove today's pessimists to have been wrong, as with the pessimists of yesterday.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

The author of "Population and Food Supply: The Current Scare" is executive director of the Food Research Institute at Stanford University. Many of his statements here are those of a specialist who can speak authoritatively in his own field. Where, however, he is utilizing the results of elaborate statistical analyses or citing the opinions of others, either in agreement with or in contradiction to his own, he is careful to identify the printed sources of these facts and opinions.

"Early Macy Advertising" (pp. 514-526) is based chiefly on new information, information that has not been previously used. "Population and Food Supply," on the other hand, brings together material much of which is already familiar to authorities in the field, but which Bennett believes should be re-examined. He reviews the opinions of certain other writers, points to some of the evidence which he believes they have not sufficiently taken into account, and shows how their conclusions must in his opinion be considerably modified. His article is thus an excellent example of a research paper whose significance lies not in uncovering new facts but in making more reliable the generalizations to be drawn from facts already known.

1. Bennett gives direct statements of his own point of view in pars. 33, 39, and 44 and in section IV. What would have been gained or lost by including such direct statements in the introductory section (pars. 1-4)? What is he doing in the introductory section?

2. In pars. 4-18 the author places his subject in its historical setting and reviews the circumstances which led to its being considered particularly vital and urgent at the time of his writing. Do pars. 4-18 support the conclusion which he reaches in section IV? What does his essay gain by the inclusion of pars. 4-18? When is it desirable to include some history of the subject being discussed?

3. What is the author's central concern in sections II, III, and IV? Can you justify any changes in the order of the four main sections of the essay? What purpose is served by pars. 33 and 44? How does par. 48 take the reader directly back to the two concluding sentences of par. 1? Does par. 51 summarize the essay as a whole? If not, what does it summarize?

4. Footnotes 3 and 9 are identical. Could footnote 9 have been written in any other form? Footnotes 10 (par. 20) and 16 (par. 34) list works by the author himself. Why are these footnotes of value to the reader?

Suggestions for Writing

1. Choose a topic that is the subject of widespread discussion and about which there is available a considerable body of factual information. Summarize the information that is generally brought out in discussions of this topic and the opinions that are most frequently expressed. Then bring in significant evidence which has not been given adequate consideration, and which, in your judgment, leads to a modification of the generally held opinions you have cited. The problem of housing and slum clearance is an example of a suitable topic.

2. Select an important historical event, a significant literary work, or a famous person and develop a new interpretation or a new evaluation based on recently discovered information or on a new point of view.

Part Six

The Craft of Writing

Contents — *Part Six*

JAMES THURBER
Ladies' and Gentlemen's Guide to Modern English Usage

SAMUEL T. WILLIAMSON
How to Write Like a Social Scientist

JOHN MASON BROWN ..... *Pleasant Agony*

H. L. MENCKEN ..... *Scented Words*

MORTIMER ADLER ..... *How to Read a Dictionary*

CARL L. BECKER ..... *Words and Things*

ROBERT GORHAM DAVIS ..... *Logic and Logical Fallacies*

The Craft of Writing

We have included the following essays not only for the way they are written but also for what they say about writing and thinking. Like any other craft, writing makes severe demands on the individual who respects his work. Words are the writer's tools. He must use them exactly and economically if his work is to have precision. He must use them boldly if his work is to have strength. He must use them knowingly and honestly if his work is to have character. By being clear and interesting, he will win his reader's attention; by being sincere, reasonable, and logical, he will deserve his reader's approval.

If you are avoiding the pitfalls of grammar and style uncovered by James Thurber and Samuel T. Williamson in their essays, you will appreciate John Mason Brown's description of writing as a "pleasant agony." If you are a bold user of words, you will enjoy H. L. Mencken as he unmasks trades and professions which would hide the elemental nature of their work. If you are a knowing and honest user of words, you will hail Mortimer Adler for his instructions on "how to read a dictionary." If you recognize the power of writing, you will understand and approve Carl Becker's insistence on proper balancing of words and things and Robert Gorham Davis' plea for rigorous and positive thinking.

Ladies' and Gentlemen's Guide to Modern English Usage[*]

by JAMES THURBER

I—Which

The relative pronoun "which" can cause more trouble than any other word, if recklessly used. Foolhardy persons sometimes get lost in which-clauses and are never heard of again. My distinguished contemporary, Fowler, cites several tragic cases, of which the following is one: "It was rumoured that Beaconsfield intended opening the Conference with a speech in French, his pronunciation of which language leaving everything to be desired . . ." That's as much as Mr. Fowler quotes because, at his age, he was afraid to go any farther. The young man who originally got into that sentence was never found. His fate, however, was not as terrible as that of another adventurer who became involved in a remarkable which-mire. Fowler has followed his devious course as far as he safely could on foot: "Surely what applies to games should also apply to racing, the leaders of which being the very people from whom an example might well be looked for . . ." Not even Henry James could have successfully emerged from a sentence with "which," "whom," and "being" in it. The safest way to avoid such things is to follow in the path of the American author, Ernest Hemingway. In his youth he was trapped in a which-clause one time and barely escaped with his mind. He was going along on solid ground until he got into this: "It was the one thing of which, being very much afraid—for whom has not been warned to fear such things—he . . ." Being a young and powerfully built man, Hemingway was able to fight his way back to where he had started, and begin again. This time he skirted the treacherous morass in this way: "He was afraid of one thing. This was the one thing. He had been warned to fear such

[*] Reprinted by permission of the author. Originally published in *The New Yorker*, May 4, June 22, and August 17, 1929. Copyright 1929 by James Thurber.

things. Everybody has been warned to fear such things." Today Hemingway is alive and well, and many happy writers are following along the trail he blazed.

2. What most people don't realize is that one "which" leads to another. Trying to cross a paragraph by leaping from "which" to "which" is like Eliza crossing the ice. The danger is in missing a "which" and falling in. A case in point is this: "He went up to a pew which was in the gallery, which brought him under a colored window which he loved and always quieted his spirit." The writer, worn out, missed the last "which"—the one that should come just before "always" in that sentence. But supposing he had got it in! We would have: "He went up to a pew which was in the gallery, which brought him under a colored window which he loved and which always quieted his spirit." Your inveterate whicher in this way gives the effect of tweeting like a bird or walking with a crutch, and is not welcome in the best company.

3. It is well to remember that one "which" leads to two and that two "whiches" multiply like rabbits. You should never start out with the idea that you can get by with one "which." Suddenly they are all around you. Take a sentence like this: "It imposes a problem which we either solve, or perish." On a hot night, or after a hard day's work, a man often lets himself get by with a monstrosity like that, but suppose he dictates that sentence bright and early in the morning. It comes to him typed out by his stenographer and he instantly senses that something is the matter with it. He tries to reconstruct the sentence, still clinging to the "which," and gets something like this: "It imposes a problem which we either solve, or which, failing to solve, we must perish on account of." He goes to the water-cooler, gets a drink, sharpens his pencil, and grimly tries again. "It imposes a problem which we either solve or which we don't solve and . . ." He begins once more: "It imposes a problem which we either solve, or which we do not solve, and from which . . ." The more times he does it the more "whiches" he gets. The way out is simple: "We must either solve this problem, or perish." Never monkey with "which." Nothing except getting tangled up in a typewriter ribbon is worse.

II—The Perfect Infinitive

4. It is easy enough to say that a person should live in such a way as to avoid the perfect infinitive after the past conditional, but it is another matter to do it. The observance of the commonest amenities of

life constantly leads us into that usage. Let us take a typical case. A gentleman and his wife, calling on friends, find them not at home. The gentleman decides to leave a note of regret couched in a few well-chosen words, and the first thing he knows he is involved in this: "We would have liked to have found you in." Reading it over, the gentleman is assailed by the suspicion that he has too many "haves," and that the whole business has somehow been put too far into the past. His first reaction is to remedy this by dating the note: "9 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 21, 1931." This at once seems too formal, and with a sigh he starts in again on the sentence itself. That is where he makes a fatal mistake. The simplest way out, as always, is to seek some other method of expressing the thought. In this case the gentleman should simply dash off, "Called. You were out. Sorry," and go home to bed. What he does, however, is to lapse into a profound study of this particular grammatical situation, than which there is no more hazardous mental occupation. His wife should, above all things, not choose this time to nag at him, or hurry him. His condition now calls for the utmost kindness and consideration.

5. First the victim will change the sentence to: "We would have liked to find you in." Now as a matter of fact, this is correct (barring the use of "would" instead of "should"), but, alas, the gentleman does not realize it. Few people ever do realize it. This is because the present infinitive, "to find," seems to imply success. They therefore fall back on the perfect infinitive, "to have found," because it implies that the thing hoped for did not come to pass. They have fallen back on it so often that, after the ordinary past tenses, its use has come to be counted as idiomatic, even though it is incorrect. After past conditionals, however—such as our gentleman caller has got into—the use of the perfect infinitive is not even idiomatic. It is just dangerous.

6. The gentleman, with two variants on his hands, takes to mumbling them to himself, first one and then the other—"We would have liked to have found you in," "We would have liked to find you in." After he does this several times, both expressions begin to sound meaningless. They don't make any sense at all, let alone make precise sense. His mental feeling is analogous to the terror that strikes into children's minds when they get to repeating some common word, like "saucer," over and over again, until it sounds idiotic and legendary. At this point it would be infinitely better not to leave any note at all, but the gentleman's education and his strength of mind have been challenged. He takes an envelope out of his pocket and grimly makes a list of all

the possible combinations, thus getting: "We would have liked to have found," "We would have liked to find," "We would like to have found," and "We would like to find." A dull pain takes him back of the ears. This is the danger sign, and his wife should have the presence of mind to summon assistance, for he is now out of hand and uncontrollable. What she does, however, is to say, "Here, let me write it." He instantly snarls, "I'm no child" or "Get away" or some such thing, and his difficulties are added to by the quarrel which follows. At length he has the bright inspiration of going into the hope clauses and turns out: "We had hoped to have been able to have found." If he has married the right kind of woman, she will hastily scratch a brief word on a calling card, shove it under the door, and drag her husband away. Otherwise he will sink rapidly into a serious mental state, from which it may take him weeks to emerge.

7. There is a simple rule about past conditionals which will prevent a lapse into that deep contemplation which is so often fatal. After "would have liked," "would have hoped," "would have feared," etc., use the present infinitive. The implication of non-fulfillment is inherent in the governing verb itself, that is, in the "would have liked," etc. You don't have to shade the infinitive to get a nice note of frustration. Let it alone. Dr. Fowler himself says: "Sometimes a writer, dimly aware that 'would have liked to have done' is wrong, is yet so fascinated by the perfect infinitive that he clings to that at all costs." That's what it is—a fascination—like a cobra's for a bird. Avoid the perfect infinitive after the past conditional as you would a cobra.

III—The Subjunctive Mood

8. The importance of correct grammar in the home can not be overestimated. Two young people should make sure that each is rhetorically sound before they get married, because grammatical precision, particularly in mood, is just as important as anything else. Rhetoric and sex, in fact, are so closely related that when one becomes confused they both become confused. Take the subjunctive. Fowler, in his book on modern English usage, says the subjunctive is dying, but adds that there are still a few truly living uses, which he groups under "Alives, Revivals, Survivals, and Arrivals." Curiously enough, he leaves out Departures, which it seems to me are just as important as Arrivals. Let us examine the all too common domestic situation where the husband arrives just after another gentleman has departed—or just after he thinks another gentleman has departed (Suppositional

Departures lead to just as much bitterness, and even more subjunctives, than Actual Departures).

9. The wife, in either case, is almost sure to go into the subjunctive—very likely before any accusation is made. Among the most common subjunctives which she will be inclined to use are those of indignation and hauteur, such as "Be that as it may," "Far be it from me," etc. For the moment, she is safe enough in the subjunctive, because her husband has probably gone into it, too, using "Would God I were," "If there be justice," and so on. Wives select the subjunctive usually because it is the best mood in which to spar for time, husbands because it lends itself most easily to ranting and posturing. As long as they both stay in it they are safe. Misunderstandings are almost certain to arise, however, when the husband goes into the indicative, as he is pretty sure to do. He usually does this preparatory to dismissing his suspicions, a step toward which every husband is impelled by his natural egotism. First he will begin with a plain past-tense indicative if-clause—just to show that he knows who the man is—prior to dismissing him.

10. "If George Spangrell was here," the husband will begin, lighting a cigarette, "I . . ."

11. "Well, what would you do if he *were*?" demands the wife.

12. The confusion, which begins at this point, is pretty intricate. The husband has gone into the indicative, but his wife has stayed in the subjunctive and, furthermore, she thinks that he is still there, too. Thus she thinks he intended to say: "If George Spangrell was here [that is, now] I would tell him what I think of him, the low scoundrel." There is no excuse for a wife prematurely imputing such a suspicion or such a rhetorical monstrosity to her husband. What he probably intended to say was merely something like this: "If George Spangrell was here, I wouldn't like it, but of course I know he wasn't, dear." However, misunderstandings now begin to pile up. The husband is instantly made suspicious by her "What would you do if he *were*?" He considers her "were" tantamount to "is." (This quick-tempered construction, of course, makes the "would" in his wife's sentence ridiculous, for, had she meant "is" instead of "were," she would have substituted "will" for "would.") The situation is much too involved now, however, for the husband to make an effort to parse anything. He instantly abandons all grammatical analysis, and begins to look about, peering into the wardrobe, swishing under beds with a cane or umbrella.

13. His wife now has the advantage of him, not only in mood, but in posture. A woman must naturally view with disdain and contempt any man who is down on all fours unless he has taken that position for the purpose of playing horse with some children—an extenuation which we need not discuss here. To meet her on even terms, the husband should walk, not crawl, from wardrobe to chaise-longue, using the mandatory subjunctive in a firm voice, as follows: "If anyone be in (or under) there, let him come out!" ["Come out" is better here than "emerge" because stronger, but a husband should not fall into the colloquial "Come on out of that!" He may, however, if he so wishes, address the gentleman, whether he be present or not, as "Spangrell" but never "Mr. Spangrell" (Hypocritical Dignification) and certainly never as "George"—the use of the given name being in extreme bad taste where no endearment is intended.]

14 The wife of course will resent all these goings-on, and the quarrel that results will probably last late into the night.

15 There are several ways to prevent a situation like this. In the first place, when a husband says "was" a wife should instantly respond with "wasn't." Most husbands will take a "wasn't" at its face value, because it preserves their egotism and self-respect. On the other hand, "if . . . were" is always dangerous. Husbands have come to know that a wife's "if . . . were" usually means that what she is presenting as purely hypothetical is, in reality, a matter of fact. Thus, if a wife begins, one evening after an excellent dinner, "Dear, what would you do, if I were the sort of woman who had, etc.," her husband knows full well that it is going to turn out that she is the sort of woman who has. Husbands are suspicious of all subjunctives. Wives should avoid them. Once a woman has "if . . . were'd" a Mr. Spangrell, her husband is, nine times out of ten, going to swish under the chaise-longue. Even if he finds no one, the situation becomes extremely awkward, and there is of course always the plaguey hundredth chance that he may discover a strange cane or pair of gloves.

16 The best of all ways out is for the husband to go instantly into the future indicative and say, with great dignity, "I shall go down to the drugstore." Ordinarily, his wife would reply, "Oh, no you won't," but with all the doubt and suspicion in the air, she will be inclined to humor him and let him have his way. She is certain to, if Spangrell is in the clothes hamper.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

These three sections are taken from a group of essays published under the general title we have used here: *Ladies' and Gentlemen's Guide to Modern English Usage.* The man and book frequently referred to by Thurber are H. W. Fowler and his *Dictionary of Modern English Usage.*

1. In the first two sections Thurber does not merely have his tongue in his cheek when he offers a way out for the tired "whicher" and for the man having trouble with the perfect infinitive. In section I the solution comes near the end (par. 3). Is the solution in section II given at an equally effective spot?

2. In a sentence enclosed in parentheses near the end of par. 12, Thurber explains why the husband's misunderstanding of his wife's subjunctive cannot be defended. But Thurber leaves it for the reader to judge the wife's misunderstanding (earlier in the paragraph) when she fails to realize that her husband has shifted from the subjunctive to the indicative. Is she merely being tactful?

Suggestions for Writing

1. Ladies' and gentlemen's guide to campus usage.

2. Are you a "whicher"? Analyze one of your recent pieces of writing: can you defend each *which*?

How to Write Like a Social Scientist[*]

by SAMUEL T. WILLIAMSON

During my years as an editor, I have seen probably hundreds of job applicants who were either just out of college or in their senior years. All wanted "to write." Many brought letters from their teachers. But I do not recall one letter announcing that its bearer could write what he wished to say with

[*] From *The Saturday Review of Literature,* October 4, 1947. By permission of the publishers and the author. Copyright 1947 by Saturday Review Associates, Inc.

clarity and directness, with economy of words, and with pleasing variety of sentence structure.

2. Most of these young men and women could not write plain English. Apparently their noses had not been rubbed in the drudgery of putting one simple, well-chosen word behind the other. If this was true of teachers' pets, what about the rest? What about those going into business and industry? Or those going into professions? What about those who remain at college—first for a Master of Arts degree, then an instructorship combined with work for a Ph.D., then perhaps an assistant professorship, next a full professorship and finally, as an academic crown of laurel, appointment as head of a department or as dean of a faculty?

3. Certainly, faculty members of a front-rank university should be better able to express themselves than those they teach. Assume that those in the English department have this ability: Can the same be said of the social scientists—economists, sociologists, and authorities on government? We need today as we never needed so urgently before all the understanding they can give us of problems of earning a living, caring for our fellows, and governing ourselves. Too many of them, I find, can't write as well as their students.

4. I am still convalescing from overexposure some time ago to products of the academic mind. One of the foundations engaged me to edit the manuscripts of a socio-economic research report designed for the thoughtful citizen as well as for the specialist. My expectations were not high—no deathless prose, merely a sturdy, no-nonsense report of explorers into the wilderness of statistics and half-known fact. I knew from experience that economic necessity compels many a professional writer to be a cream-skimmer and a gatherer of easily obtainable material; for unless his publisher will stand the extra cost, he cannot afford the exhaustive investigation which endowed research makes possible. Although I did not expect fine writing from a trained, professional researcher, I did assume that a careful fact-finder would write carefully.

5. And so, anticipating no literary treat, I plunged into the forest of words of my first manuscript. My weapons were a sturdy eraser and several batteries of sharpened pencils. My armor was a thesaurus. And if I should become lost, a near-by public library was a landmark, and the Encyclopedia of Social Sciences on its reference shelves was an ever-ready guide.

6. Instead of big trees, I found underbrush. Cutting through in-

volved, lumbering sentences was bad enough, but the real chore was removal of the burdocks of excess verbiage which clung to the manuscript. Nothing was big or large; in my author's lexicon, it was "substantial." When he meant "much," he wrote "to a substantially high degree." If some event took place in the early 1920's, he put it "in the early part of the decade of the twenties." And instead of "that depends," my author wrote, "any answer to this question must bear in mind certain peculiar characteristics of the industry."

7. So it went for 30,000 words. The pile of verbal burdocks grew—sometimes twelve words from a twenty-word sentence. The shortened version of 20,000 words was perhaps no more thrilling than the original report; but it was terser and crisper. It took less time to read and it could be understood quicker. That was all I could do. As S. S. McClure once said to me, "An editor can improve a manuscript, but he cannot put in what isn't there."

8. I did not know the author I was editing; after what I did to his copy, it may be just as well that we have not met. Aside from his cat-chasing-its-own-tail verbosity, he was a competent enough workman. Apparently he is well thought of. He has his doctorate, he is a trained researcher and a pupil of an eminent professor. He has held a number of fellowships and he has performed competently several jobs of economic research. But, after this long academic preparation for what was to be a life work, it is a mystery why so little attention was given to acquiring use of simple English.

9. Later, when I encountered other manuscripts, I found I had been too hard on this promising Ph.D. Tone-deaf as he was to words, his report was a lighthouse of clarity among the chapters turned in by his so-called academic betters. These brethren—and sister'n—who contributed the remainder of the foundation's study were professors and assistant professors in our foremost colleges and universities. The names of one or two are occasionally in newspaper headlines. All of them had, as the professorial term has it, "published."

10. Anyone who edits copy, regardless of whether it is good or bad, discovers in a manuscript certain pet phrases, little quirks of style and other individual traits of its author. But in the series I edited, all twenty reports read alike. Their words would be found in any English dictionary, grammar was beyond criticism, but long passages in these reports demanded not editing but actual translation. For hours at a time, I floundered in brier patches like this: "In eliminating wage changes due to purely transitory conditions, collective bargaining has

eliminated one of the important causes of industrial conflict, for changes under such conditions are almost always followed by a reaction when normal conditions appear."

11. I am not picking on my little group of social scientists. They are merely members of a caste; they are so used to taking in each other's literary washing that it has become a habit for them to clothe their thoughts in the same smothering verbal garments. Nor are they any worse than most of their colleagues, for example:

> In the long run, developments in transportation, housing, optimum size of plant, etc., might tend to induce an industrial and demographic pattern similar to the one that consciousness of vulnerability would dictate. Such a tendency might be advanced by public persuasion and governmental inducement, and advanced more effectively if the causes of urbanization had been cărefully studied.

12. Such pedantic Choctaw may be all right as a sort of code language or shorthand of social science to circulate among initiates, but its perpetrators have no right to impose it on others. The tragedy is that its users appear to be under the impression that it is good English usage.

13. Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do! There once was a time when everyday folk spoke one language, and learned men wrote another. It was called the Dark Ages. The world is in such a state that we may return to the Dark Ages if we do not acquire wisdom. If social scientists have answers to our problems yet feel under no obligation to make themselves understood, then we laymen must learn their language. This may take some practice, but practice should become perfect by following six simple rules of the guild of social science writers. Examples which I give are sound and well tested; they come from manuscripts I edited.

14. RULE 1. *Never use a short word when you can think of a long one.* Never say "now" but "currently." It is not "soon" but "presently." You did not have "enough" but a "sufficiency." Never do you come to the "end" but to the "termination." This rule is basic.

15. RULE 2. *Never use one word when you can use two or more.* Eschew "probably." Write, "it is probable," and raise this to "it is not improbable." Then you'll be able to parlay "probably" into "available evidence would tend to indicate that it is not unreasonable to suppose."

16. RULE 3. *Put one-syllable thought into polysyllabic terms.* Instead of observing that a work force might be bigger and better, write, "In addition to quantitative enlargement, it is not improbable that there is need also for qualitative improvement in the personnel of the service." If you have discovered that musicians out of practice can't hold jobs, report that "the fact of rapid deterioration of musical skill when not in use soon converts the employed into the unemployable." Resist the impulse to say that much men's clothing is machine made. Put it thus: "Nearly all operations in the industry lend themselves to performance by machine, and all grades of men's clothing sold in significant quantity involve a very substantial amount of machine work."

17. RULE 4. *Put the obvious in terms of the unintelligible.* When you write that "the product of the activity of janitors is expended in the identical locality in which that activity takes place," your lay reader is in for a time of it. After an hour's puzzlement, he may conclude that janitors' sweepings are thrown on the town dump. See what you can do with this: "Each article sent to the cleaner is handled separately." You become a member of the guild in good standing if you put it like this: "Within the cleaning plant proper the business of the industry involves several well-defined processes, which, from the economic point of view, may be characterized simply by saying that most of them require separate handling of each individual garment or piece of material to be cleaned."

18. RULE 5. *Announce what you are going to say before you say it.* This pitcher's wind-up technique before hurling towards—not at—home plate has two varieties. First is the quick wind-up: "In the following sections the policies of the administration will be considered." Then you become strong enough for the contortionist wind-up: "Perhaps more important, therefore, than the question of what standards are in a particular case, there are the questions of the extent of observance of these standards and the methods of their enforcement." Also, you can play with reversing Rule 5 and *say what you have said after you have said it.*

19. RULE 6. *Defend your style as "scientific."* Look down on—not up to—clear, simple English. Sneer at it as "popular." Scorn it as "journalistic." Explain your failure to put more mental sweat into your writing on the ground that "the social scientists who want to be scientific believe that we can have scientific description of human behavior and trustworthy predictions in the scientific sense only as we build

adequate taxonomic systems for observable phenomena and symbolic systems for the manipulation of ideal and abstract entities."

20. For this explanation I am indebted to Lyman Bryson in an *SRL* article (Oct. 13, 1945) "Writers: Enemies of Social Science." Standing on ground considerably of his own choosing, Mr. Bryson argued against judging social science writing by literary standards.

21. Social scientists are not criticized because they are not literary artists. The trouble with social science does not lie in its special vocabulary. Those words are doubtless chosen with great care. The trouble is that too few social scientists take enough care with words outside their special vocabularies.

22. It is not too much to expect that teachers should be more competent in the art of explanation than those they teach. Teachers of social sciences diligently try to acquire knowledge; too few of them exert themselves enough to impart it intelligently.

23. Too long has this been excused as "the academic mind." It should be called by what it is: intellectual laziness and grubby-mindedness.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

1. Do you think Williamson substantiates his attack? Is this an example of *argumentum ad hominem*?

2. What is the relationship of these three groups of paragraphs: 1-3, 4-9, 10-12? What is the function of par. 13? Does par. 20 include information that might have been put in a footnote?

3. Do the concluding paragraphs (21-23) involve too great a shift from ironic to direct attack? Does the conclusion harmonize with the tone in the introduction (for example, in pars. 1-3)?

4. In addition to avoiding in his own essay the faults of writing he singles out for censure, does Williamson possess any positive virtues of style?

5. Would the statement of his six rules have been as effective if it had not been made ironically?

Suggestions for Writing

1. Jargons I have known.

2. How to write like a sports writer.

3. A defense of specialized language.

4. Can you suggest any situations in which more words rather than fewer words might be excusable? Consider, for example, the

conversation of someone who is trying to be tactful in an embarrassing moment.

Pleasant Agony *

by JOHN MASON BROWN

At a season's end, when the country is calling, it may be permissible to talk shop before shutting it up, however temporarily. For four and a half years now, mine has been the privilege, hence the pleasant agony, of filling these pages each week, or almost every week. I say pleasant agony because I know of no other words with which to describe what writing is to me.

2. I claim no singularity in this. There may be, there must be, writers to whom writing comes as effortlessly as breathing. There may even be (though I doubt it) writers whose happiness is complete while they are actually writing. But most of us who live by putting words together are not so fortunate. We are tortured while we write and would be tortured were we not allowed to do so. Although when we are done we feel "delivered," as Sainte-Beuve put it, this delirium of delivery is not accomplished without labor pains for which medicine has, as yet, provided no soothing drugs. If all attempts to coerce words into doing what we would have them do are at best painful pleasures, the pains and pleasures of summoning the right words to meet a weekly deadline are of a special kind.

3. A cook faced with getting dinner when lunch is over knows something of the routine, if not all the anguishes, of a columnist. No mortals, however, have appetites as insatiable as a column's. A column is an omnivorous beast. Its hunger is never appeased. Feed it, and almost at once it demands to be fed again.

4. Though he used a different image to express this same idea, even Shaw, seemingly the most easeful of writers, knew this. When he

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abandoned the job of drama critic on London's *Saturday Review*, he protested against the weekly deadlines which had confronted him for nearly four years. He likened himself to a man fighting a windmill. "I have hardly time," wrote he, "to stagger to my feet from the knock-down blow of one sail, when the next strikes me down."

5. His successor in the same job on that same fortunate magazine shared an identical dislike of deadlines. For twelve years, Max Beerbohm admitted in his valedictory article, Thursdays had been for him the least pleasant day of the week. Why Thursday? Because that was the day, the latest possible one, he set aside each week to get his writing done. On every Wednesday, therefore, he would be engulfed by "a certain sense of oppression, of misgiving, even of dread." It was only on Friday, when once the danger was passed, that the sun would shine again. Then he would move on dancing feet.

6. I quote my betters to console myself by the reminder that they, too, knew the pangs of weekly columnizing. Yet the consolation I seek is denied me when I discover, for example, that it took Beerbohm one, and only one, short day of pain to turn out the delectable copy which he could write. Shaw, I am certain, was also a one-day man. I wish I were. I wish even more ardently that I could claim any of the merits which glorify their reviews for what it takes me two, three, or sometimes five days of ceaseless sweating to produce as fodder for these columns.

7. Beerbohm ascribed his disrelish for the act of writing to "the acute literary conscience" with which he had been cursed. It was this conscience, he maintained, which kept his pen from ever running away with him. I know what he means. Unblessed with any of his gifts, I am none the less cursed with something of his conscience. Beerbohm insisted that "to seem to write with ease and delight is one of the duties which a writer owes to his readers." If he worked hard at his sentences, it was because Beerbohm hoped they would read easily. In other words, he was in complete agreement with Sheridan's "easy writing's vile hard reading." One statement of Beerbohm's I could truthfully apply to my own efforts for the *SRL*. It runs, "I may often have failed in my articles here, to disguise labor. But the effort to disguise it has always been loyally made."

8. There is a passage in "The Goncourt Journals" which has haunted me since I read it. Envy has kept it green for me, and wonder (or is it disbelief?) has kept it alive. I have in mind Gautier's boast that he never thought about what he was going to write. "I take up my pen,"

he explained, "and write. I am a man of letters and am presumed to know my job. . . . I throw my sentences into the air and I can be sure that they will come down on their feet, like cats. . . . Look here: here's my script: not a word blotted."

9. When I think of the one-legged kittens that land on my pages; when I remember the false starts, illegible scribblings, unfinished sentences, discarded drafts, changed constructions, and altered words which mark my beginnings, my continuings, and my endings, I blush with shame and, like the voyagers in Dante's realm, abandon all hope.

10. In these journalistic days the first word that pops into an author's mind is held to be the acceptable, if not the best, word. We are supposed to smile because Wordsworth, at a day's end, was wearied from his quest for the exact word. But where Wordsworth the man may win a smile, Wordsworth the writer, fatiguing himself by doing what is a writer's duty, is far from laughable. The *mot juste* is not just any word. Even if it eludes its pursuer, the search for it seems to me to remain among the obligations of authorship. Indeed, the true hope of anyone who loves the language and respects it is to stumble upon, not the correct word or phrase, but the word or phrase which is so right that it seems inevitable.

11. The word and the phrase are not the only hurdles—and joys—of authorship. The sentence and the paragraph, by means of which points are made, thoughts communicated, emotions transferred, pictures painted, personalities caught, rhythms established, and cadences varied, offer other challenges and should supply their own sources of delight and pride. When so much hurried writing is done for hurried reading, I find it comforting to have Shaw, a veritable geyser with words and ideas, admit in his "Sixteen Self Sketches" how depleting he found his labors as a weekly feuilletonist for ten years. Why? Because, says he, of "taking all the pains I was capable of to get to the bottom of every sentence I wrote."

12. One of the modern world's luckier occurrences was what happened at Harrow when a boy named Winston Churchill was being "menaced with Education." Three times, he tells us in "A Roving Commission," his backwardness as a classical scholar forced him to remain in the same form and hence repeat the same elementary course in English. "Thus," writes he (and who can question him?), "I got into my bones the essential structure of the ordinary British sentence —which is a noble thing. . . . Naturally I am biased in favor of boys learning English. I would make them all learn English: and then I

would let the clever ones learn Latin as an honor, and Greek as a treat. But the only thing I would whip them for would be for not knowing English. I would whip them hard for that." One trembles to think how many of us whose profession is writing would be flogged today if lapses in English, or American, were whippable offenses.

13. Later on in that same grand book, Churchill has his more precise say on the subtleties, intricacies, and possibilities of the writer's craft. It is his opinion, and one worth heeding, that, "just as the sentence contains one idea in all its fulness, so the paragraph should embrace a distinct episode; and as sentences should follow one another in harmonious sequence, so the paragraphs must fit on to one another like the automatic couplings of railway carriages."

14. I quote Churchill and these others belonging to the peerage of prose-writers because, for any author with a memory, one of the disheartening and humbling aspects of writing is the recollection, as his own pen moves, of how those whom he admires have faced and solved identical problems. This recollection of what has been done, this sensing of what could and should be done, this awareness of what one hopes to do regardless of whether one can or cannot do it—these are parts of that literary conscience, mentioned by Beerbohm, which keeps a writer's pen from running away with him. I know they are factors in retarding my own pen (meaning my typewriter, pencil, or dictation) even on those happy days when a subject seems to write itself, when sentences come easily, and one paragraph gives way to another.

15. Style is a strange and mysterious thing. Some contemporary writers appear to get along without it and to want to do so, and most of us rightly disparage it when it shows the effort that has gone into it. Few of us, for example, can read Pater today without being irritated and put off by the deliberate intricacies and involutions of his sentences. His style, once held to be a model, remains a model, although as we see it it is one to be avoided rather than followed. Pater could not bring himself to say a simple thing simply. His orchestration is so elaborate that the melody of his thought is lost.

16. Hazlitt comes closer to present-day tastes. More than being the enemy of the gaudy and "Occult" schools of writing, Hazlitt was not only a champion but at his best a matchless practitioner of "The Familiar Style." Although he had the art to make a long sentence seem short, he knew the value of short sentences. "I hate anything," wrote

he, "that occupies more space than it is worth. I hate to see a load of band-boxes go along the street, and I hate to see a parcel of big words without any meaning in them."

17. The perpetual challenge of writing, the challenge presented by each new sentence is to say exactly what one wants to say exactly as one wants to say it. This is where the anguish of composition mixes with the delights. This is where, too, style, as I see it, comes into the picture. Style is merely the means, chosen or instinctive (doubtless both), by which a writer has his precise say.

18. Certainly, style is not affectation. Conscious though it may be, when self-conscious it is an obstruction. Its purpose, to my way of thinking, is to give the reader pleasure by sparing him the work which the writer is duty-bound to have done for him. Writers, notwithstanding their hopes or ambitions, may or may not be artists. But there is no excuse for their not being artisans. The style is the man, we are told. True in the final and spiritual sense as this is, style is more than that. It is the writing man *in print*. It is, so to speak. his written voice and, if it is truly his voice, even in print it should be his and his alone. The closer it comes to the illusion of speech, perhaps the better. Yet the closeness of the written word to the spoken can, and in fact should, never be more than an illusion. For the point of the written word is planning, as surely as the charm of the spoken one is its lack of it.

19. Without shame I confess that, regardless of how unsatisfactory the results may be, I labor when writing these weekly pieces to lighten the labor of those who may read them. That I fail again and again I know to my own chagrin, but I can honestly say I try. I not only rewrite; I often rewrite and rewrite again. I do this though I am well aware that the result is sentences and paragraphs which do not bear rereading. I rewrite partly in longhand, partly by dictation, occasionally sitting down, sometimes walking, but most often snaking my way across the floor on my stomach. My desk, a migratory one, is the small piece of beaverboard I push before me. On it are sheets of typewriter paper darkened with hieroglyphics which must be deciphered immediately to be read at all.

20. Endeavoring to square my writing with my writing conscience, and having to live with the difference between what I would like to have done and am able to do, is one of the reasons why writing is to me an agony, however pleasant. There are other contributors to the pleasures and the agonies of trying to keep these columns fed. Upon

these I shall touch next time. Since there is no earthly reason why anyone should be interested, this can be taken as a threat, not a promise. I can delve into these personal problems of authorship only at a season's end. What is more, I find I want to do so. Surely this is as good a reason for writing as any, and a better one than so regular an offender as the conductor of a weekly column can always claim.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

As John Mason Brown explains in the first paragraph of this selection, he writes an article almost every week for *The Saturday Review of Literature.* This one appeared in a June issue, as the author was about to leave on a summer vacation, and is the first of a pair of articles on the subject of writing. In the second he speaks, as he indicates in par. 20 here, of other "pleasures and agonies" of writing, especially those of a drama critic.

1. Part of the last paragraph furnishes a transition to "Pleasant Agony-II." How much of the paragraph could be omitted? Would the new conclusion be effective?

2. In par. 3 the routine of the columnist is compared to that of a cook. Find other direct or implied comparisons that make the writing concrete (don't omit quoted passages).

3. What is the subject of pars. 15-18? What is the justification for including these paragraphs in this essay?

Suggestion for Writing

The pleasant agony of my hobby.

Scented Words

by H. L. MENCKEN

Oft in the stilly night, ere slumber's chain has bound me, I find myself sweating over a problem both philological and psychological; to wit, why in hell have the used-car dealers of this great republic never devised a better term to designate their profession? What could be more soaring than their idealism—I always think of them, in fact, as one of the great glories of the Rotarian metaphysic—and yet what could be more prosaic and forbidding than the name by which they call themselves? The realtors, if they were of like backwardness, would still be *real-estate agents* and brothers to the ox, and the morticians would still be *undertakers* and brothers to the buzzard. Are the used-car boys, then, too dumb to invent a match for *realtor* and *mortician*? Hardly, for haven't they already got rid of the vulgar and sordid *second-hand* by substituting the tasty *used,* and do not some of them proceed from *used* to *nearly new* and *experienced*? No, it can't be that. They are smart enough to excogitate something as far beyond *realtor* and *mortician* as either is beyond *mixologist,* for bartender, or *commissionnaire,* for door opener. They have simply fumbled their chance and neglected their duty. They suffer from a form of aphasia, and every lover of beauteous words must hope that it will be as evanescent as it is deplorable.

2. If my talent for constructive onomatology were as lively as it used to be, I'd throw myself into the breach without further ado and offer them something nifty. There was a time when this gift of mine was so powerful that I tossed off *ecdysiast* for the strip-tease gals and *bootician* for the more recherché bootleggers without blowing a vein, but that, alas, was some years ago, before morticians began to send me Christmas cards. As things stand, the best I can do is lament that all terms based upon the obvious word *service* are barred out, for the keepers of gas stations and roadside feed troughs have already hogged

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them, including even the verb *to service,* which Robert Louis Stevenson invented in 1893 and then abandoned. It would be hard to imagine any group of Americans more devoted to the dream of Service than the used-car dealers, for even the most earthy of them, when he ropes a prospect, serves him by saving him from the others, but words of the *service* class, as I say, are out, since such forms as *service station, tire service, curb service,* and so on, not only are already hogged but have become banal. For a couple of weeks, I toyed with terms, chiefly from foreign languages, that plausibly adumbrated the used-car dealers' stern and, indeed, almost suicidal ideal of rectitude, but I had to give it up when I found no better sources than the French *probité* and *confidence,* one of which suggests prying grand juries and the other of which has been preempted by the confidence men. That the problem will be solved soon or late, and in a poetic and dashing manner, I am sure; at the time, unhappily, I am unequal to it.

3. Pondering it, I have been led to cast my eye over some of the more recent bedfellows of *realtor* and *mortician,* and find that several very nobby ones have been invented within the past few years. Perhaps the nobbiest of all is *zymurgeon,* to designate one who serves humanity by working in a brewery. This was thrown to the winds in 1947 by the St. Louis *Star-Times,* which maybe got the idea from a book by the English wordmonger Ivor Brown, who discovered several years ago that the tony word for brewing is *zymurgy. Zymurgy,* at that time, was certainly not new. It had been listed in all the dictionaries, in fact, for nearly a century, but inasmuch as it always appeared near the bottom of the last page, it was overlooked by all previous connoisseurs of verbal delicatessen. It had an analogue, the adjective *zymotic,* which was quite as old, and probably even older. *Zymotic,* however, has nothing to do with the confection of malt liquor. It was used by medical men, in the days before the germ theory of disease, to designate such contagious maladies as smallpox, measles, and typhoid fever, for they were then thought to be produced by a process resembling fermentation. That process, in truth, *did* resemble fermentation more or less, but when Pasteur, Koch, and company began proving that not ferments but bacilli were to blame, *zymotic* disappeared from the medical books, and any doctor who used it today would be dismissed as paleolithic. Both *zymurgy* and *zymotic,* the former suggested by *metallurgy,* were derived originally from a Greek word, *zyme,* meaning a ferment or leaven. The *Star-Times,* starting with *zymurgy,* arrived at *zymurgeon* by thinking of

surgeon, just as the undertakers arrived at *mortician* by thinking of *physician,* their immemorial pal, and the real-estate boys at *realtor* by thinking of such elegant words as *senator* and *ambassador.* I should add that the *Star-Times* is not indissolubly wedded to *zymurgeon;* it is also flirting with *zymeotechnician,* and may hatch even gaudier ones later on. So far, the brew-workers of St. Louis have not indicated their preference, if, indeed, they have ever heard of the matter at all. My own choice is *zymurgeon,* though I am still willing to hear argument in favor of *zymeotechnician,* and even *zymor, zymologist, zymiast, zymician,* and *zymurgic engineer.* When a brewmaster, fearing the return of prohibition, takes a header into one of his vats and is not found until the next morning, he is obviously a *zymocide.* So is a boozer who makes a bet that he can drink thirty kegs of beer in thirty days.

4. The year 1947 also saw the birth of *sanitor* for janitor, a crown and climax to the process that, some time previously, had worked through *superintendent, custodian, custodian-engineer, custodial engineer,* and, finally, *building engineer.* The new term was born in Louisville and has since made its way to most other cultural centers, though the janitors in the New York public schools are still *custodian-engineers* and those in the warrens of job-holders at Washington are officially *custodian-personnel.* There seems to be a powerful pull, probably inspired by the roaring success of *realtor,* toward the suffix *-or,* and it is thus not surprising that the janitors have come back to it. Many neighborhood butchers and greengrocers are now calling themselves *purveyors,* and virtually all house painters of any tone have become *decorators.* (Meanwhile, not a few interior decorators, disgusted by this invasion from below, have taken to calling themselves *interiorists.*) In many ambitious crafts *-or* is reached by simply turning a traditional *e* into *o.* In 1941, for example, a faction of welders, having seceded in a huff from the American Federation of Labor, changed their name to the more genteel *weldor,* and have since operated a Brotherhood of *Weldors,* Cutters and Helpers of America. The possibilities along this line are manifest. The bartenders, who have scored a failure with *mixologist,* might very well turn to *bartendor,* and the plumbers, who have done almost as badly with *sanitarian* and *sanitary engineer,* might try *plumbor.* Also, there are *truckor, roofor, jewelor, waitor, gardenor,* and *bouncor.* Each of these would borrow some of the fragrance of *realtor.*

5. The pull of *-or* is so strong that the pedagogues, who began to call themselves *educationists* a decade or so ago, have now gone back to *educator*, which appeared as a rival for the homely *teacher* in Shakespeare's time. I myself once proposed *autor* for dealers in new cars (not used, nearly new, or experienced), but it did not take, maybe because it was too close to *author*, which designates a generally insolvent and contemptible class of men. Nearly all bookkeepers are now *auditors*, and those that are not are *accountants*. *Operator* is used often, as in *rodent operator* or *pest-control operator* (abbreviated to *P.C.O.*), for rat-catcher. The keeper of a necktie shoppe in New York calls himself a *cravateur*, which has a family resemblance to the French *cravatier* and may be only a way stop on the road to *cravator*. In other directions, there is the same steady progress toward euphemism. Some of the sweller jewellers, having muffed *jewellor*, have resorted to *jewellist*, and every rubber in a Turkish bath is now a *physiotherapist*. The regular doctors who specialize in muscle bending formerly used that term, but in 1946 they began to look for something more polished, and now they vacillate between *physiatrist*, *physiatrician*, and *physicologist*, with the medical journals reporting that *physiatrist* is winning out, though it is hard on the tongue. I add a few more: *home aide*, for servant girl (apparently invented in Canada); *dietician* or *nutritionist*, for cook; *insurance consultant*, for insurance agent (vice *insuror*, which was a flop); and *wedding manager* or *director*, for *shadchen*. The goons who chase small boys playing hooky are no longer *truant officers*, as aforetime, but *attendance officers*. The maids who mop up in hospitals have ceased to be maids and become *nurses' orderlies*. Garbage men are now *sanitary officers*, or, in some towns, *sanitation expediters*. The boys who wrap up packages in stores are *packageers*, builders are *constructioneers*, soda jerks are *fountaineers*, cleaners of cesspools are *septicians*, chimney sweeps (who survive in England) are *fluonomists*, disc jockeys are *transcription directors*, junkmen are *salvagers* or *waste-material dealers*, window dressers are *directors of visual presentation*, washwomen are *clothing refreshers*, and the girls in the ten-cent stores, in certain ultra-progressive communities, have become *counter clerks*, *sales assistants*, or *service women*.

6. The hairdressers, as everyone knows, long ago abandoned their ancient designation, traced to 1771, for *beautician*, *cosmetician*, *cosmetologist*, *hair stylist*, and *beauty engineer*. The name *cosmetologist* has been recognized in many states, and also in the District of Colum-

bia, where, in 1938, Congress set up a board to examine practitioners and defined their art as that of doing "arranging, dressing, styling, curling, waving, cleansing, cutting, removing, singeing, bleaching, coloring, or similar work upon the hair of any person by any means, and with hands or mechanical or electrical apparatus or appliances, or by the use of cosmetic preparations, antiseptics, tonics, lotions, or creams, massaging, cleansing, stimulating, exercising, beautifying, or similar work, the scalp, face, neck, arms, bust, or upper part of the body, or manicuring the nails of any person." In their first days of glory, the gals called their dens *parlors, shops, shoppes* (including *beauté shoppés*), and *salons,* but of late they have taken to *center, bar, clinic, laboratory, studio,* and even *villa* and *château.* Like the *chirotonsors,* or barbers, they have pushed their prices so high that they now suffer from a buyers' strike, and have laid in large lines of unguents to be used at home, in the hope of squeezing a few more dollars out of their patrons, who are not customers but *clients* or *patients.*

7. The morticians also are now using *patient* to designate a customer, though some prefer *case* and a few of the less progressive, at least in their clinical conferences, cling to *body, remains,* and even *stiff* and *meat.* But *corpse,* according to a manual issued by the National Selected Morticians in 1941, "is an offensive word." Just why it is offensive is not explained. It dates from the early fourteenth century, was used with no thought of gaucherie by Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Bacon, and Ruskin, and occurs four times in the King James Bible. Some of the ultra- or super-morticians of Hollywood are now toying with *loved one* for the deceased, as readers of Evelyn Waugh's novel of that name well know. The same dreamers call the place where he is on show the *slumber room,* though I gather that the Selected Morticians prefer *reposing room.* So far as I can make out, no one, even in Hollywood, has ever invented a euphemism for *embalmer,* but the atelier in which he works is no longer his *morgue* but his *preparation room, operating room,* or *laboratory.* In circles of any refinement, the term *coffin* has given way to *casket,* though the latter was derided by Nathaniel Hawthorne in 1863 as "a vile modern phrase" (*sic*) that takes all the poetry out of death. *Coffin* came into English from the French centuries ago, but has been under fire since the rise of elegance in Early Victorian days. During the Civil War era, it had a formidable rival in *case,* but *casket* knocked out both soon afterward, Hawthorne to the contrary notwithstanding. The Selected

Morticians say that *coffin* now means only "a special wedge-shaped receptacle," like those still in use both in the British Isles and on the Continent of Europe. But the War Department, perhaps remembering that George Washington is buried in one at Mt. Vernon, sticks to the term.

8. I know an undertaker in Baltimore, of the highest chop, who continues to call his establishment a *funeral parlor,* but most of the others have now substituted *chapel, drawing room,* or *funeral home.* Back in the nineties of the last century, as I am informed by a stenographic report of the Carlyle W. Harris murder trial, there was at least one undertaker in New York who called his place a *store.* The Selected Morticians warn their members that the can or jar in which clean dirt is carried to the loved one's last resting place ("ashes to ashes, dust to dust") is under no circumstances to be called the *sandbox,* even *sotto voce.* In Hollywood, incidentally, burial is going out, at least among Class A movie folk. They are now disposed of by *inhumement, entombment, inurnment, immurement,* or *insarcophagusment.* A spot close enough to Valentino to be in his glare of immortality costs something on the order of twenty-five thousand dollars.

9. Who invented *mortician* is not known, but the records show that it was first used in the *Embalmer's Monthly* early in 1895. It was not, however, until September 17, 1917, that the Selected Morticians launched their very exclusive organization, which is confined to one practitioner in a town and is almost as snobbish as the Porcellian Club, at Harvard. I am told, indeed, by one of its stars that even a former fellow of the Porcellian Club is occasionally blackballed, not to mention a member of Phi Beta Kappa or the Union League of Philadelphia. Dr. Louise Pound reported in *Dialect Notes* in 1918 that there were already country undertakers in both central Iowa and western Washington who had grabbed *mortician,* and even debased it to *morticianer,* and since then it has come into such widespread use in all parts of the country that even the *Journal of the American Medical Association,* the bible of the doctors, has formally recognized it. On July 19, 1897, the *Journal* printed a learned article in which morticians and pathologists were jointly given some good advice about the use of rubber gloves in their procedures.

10. In 1940, the cobblers of the United States suddenly decided to call themselves *shoetricians,* apparently in imitation of *mortician* and *physician,* and on February 25th of that year those of Texas and the adjacent states formed the Texas-Southwestern Association of *Shoe-*

tricians, at Forth Worth. But the New York *Times* poked such vicious sport at the new name on March 13th, and so many other newspapers joined in reviling it, that it quickly died the death. The cobblers then went back to *shoe rebuilder,* which had been invented in 1935, and it still survives. Their trade journal is the *Master Shoe Rebuilder,* of Boston, which has a large circulation and has absorbed the archaic *Shoe Repairer.* So far, not many of them have followed the beauticians and morticians in inventing fancy names for their studios, though I have heard of a *shuchâteau* in Denver. The morticians themselves have set up a monthly *Mid-Continent Mortician,* in Minneapolis, but their principal organ is the poetically named *Casket and Sunny Side,* which was founded in 1871 and is still flourishing lushly. Its runner-up, only ten years younger, bears the old-fashioned title of the *American Funeral Director.*

[11] The morticians made one capital mistake at the start of their distinguished career: they neglected to register their new name as a trademark. As a result, it is in the public domain, and anyone who chooses to do so may use it. The realtors were a good deal smarter. *Realtor* is their private property, and whenever any unauthorized person cabbages it, their lawyers clamp down on him hard. Indeed, they even pursue and afflict newspapers and magazines that apply it inadvertently to a heathen and a stranger. This, I suppose, accounts for the fact that Negro real-estate agents have had to invent a name of their own; to wit, *realtist.* But Negro undertakers are free to use *mortician* in a wide and lavish way, and they do so everywhere in the United States.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

H. L. Mencken became famous in the 1920's for his debunking of the shams and hypocrisy of American life as he saw it. He is also well known for *The American Language*—published in 1919, later revised and supplemented by separate publications—in which he stresses the individuality of our language as distinct from that spoken in England. "Scented Words" is one of a series of supplementary articles having the general heading "Postscripts to the American Language."

1. On what principle did Mencken choose the first eleven words in this article? Does this principle have any relation to the rest of the article?

2. Do you think this selection would be more effective if an explicit definition of the phrase *scented words* were given at the beginning?

3. If you have read "Pleasant Agony" (pp. 566-571), do you think John Mason Brown would agree with Mencken's attitude toward scented words?

4. Can you add to Mencken's list?

5. How has Mencken managed to write an article containing dozens of separate examples of words and phrases without letting the article become a mere series of monotonous lists?

How to Read a Dictionary[*]

by MORTIMER ADLER

The dictionary invites a playful reading. It challenges anyone to sit down with it in an idle moment only to find an hour gone by without being bored. Recently I noticed an advertisement for a dictionary as a wonder book. "Astonished Actually Means Thunderstruck" was the headline, written obviously in the hope that the prospective buyer would be thunderstruck, or wonderstruck, enough to look further. And the rest of the ad listed such tidbits as a "*disaster* literally means 'the stars are against you!' " or "to tantalize is to torment with the punishment of Tantalus as told in Greek mythology."

2. While I do not think astonishment is the dictionary's main mission in life, I cannot resist reporting some of the things I learned accidentally while thumbing its pages, in the course of writing this article. I discovered that the word "solecism" derives from Soli, the name of a Greek colony in Cilicia, whose inhabitants were thought by the Athenians to speak bad Greek; hence, "solecism" was probably the equivalent in Greek slang for a Bostonian's contemptuous refer-

[*] From *The Saturday Review of Literature*, December 13, 1941. By permission of the publishers and the author. Copyright 1941 by Saturday Review Co., Inc.

ence to "New Yorkese." I learned that "coal" originally meant charred wood. It was then applied to mineral coal when this was first introduced, under such names as "sea-coal" and "pit-coal." Now that mineral coal is the more common variety, we redundantly refer to charred wood as "charcoal." I was edified by the fact that the drink "Tom and Jerry" derives its name from the two chief characters in Egan's "Life of London" (1821), that in England a low beer joint is called a "Tom and Jerry Shop," and that indulgence in riotous behavior is called "to tom and jerry." I had always thought that a forlorn hope was really a hope on the verge of turning into despair, but it seems that it isn't a hope at all. "Hope" here is a misspelling of the Dutch word "hoop" meaning heap. A forlorn hope is a storming party, a band of heroes who are willing to end up in a heap for their country's cause. And most shocking of all was the discovery that one theory about the origin of the magician's "hocus pocus" accounts for it as a corruption of *"hoc est corpus"*—the sacred words accompanying the sacrament of the Eucharist. This, together with the reversal in meaning of "dunce"—from the proper name of Duns Scotus, the subtlest doctor of the Church, to naming a numbskull—provides a two word commentary on the transition from the Middle Ages to modern times.

3. The staid modern dictionary is full of such wit even when it doesn't try to be funny, as Dr. Johnson did when he defined "oats" as "a grain which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people." Look up "Welsh rabbit," for example, or "scotch capon" or "swiss steak," and you will discover gentle jokes about national shortcomings in diet.

4. I find that what interests me most of all are the shifts in meaning of common words in daily use. From meaning an attendant on horses, "marshall" has come to mean a leader of men; though also originating in the stable, "constable" has gone in the reverse direction from signifying an officer of highest rank to denoting a policeman; "boon" has done an about-face by becoming the gift which answers a petition, having been the prayer which asked for it; "magistrate" and "minister" have changed places with each other in the ups and downs of words, for in current political usage, "magistrate" usually names a minor official, whereas "minister" refers to a *major* diplomatic or cabinet post. It is often hard to remember that a minister is a *servant* of the people, and harder still to recall the precise point of religious controversy which caused the substitution of "minister" for "priest"

as the name for one who served in the performance of sacerdotal functions. And readers of our Constitution should have their attention called to a shift in the word "citizen" from meaning any one who, by birth or choice, owes allegiance to the state, to the narrower designation of those who are granted the right to vote. Similarly, "commerce" has narrowed in meaning; like "trade," it once meant every dealing in merchandise, but now is distinguished from industry according to the difference between distributing commodities and producing them.

5. The word "commerce" reminds me of one other sort of incidental inquiry the dictionary lures you into. You discover that "commerce" and "mercenary" have the same root in *"mercis,"* wares, and that leads you to the closely related root *"merces,"* pay or reward, which is embodied in the word "mercy." If you start this game of research, you will find such roots as *"spec"* from *"spectare"* meaning to look at or see, which generates a family of 246 English words (species, speculate, specimen, specify, spectacle, inspect, respect, aspect, etc.); or *"press"* from *"primo"* meaning to squeeze, which has an equally large family (impress, repress, pressing, compress, surpress, oppress, depress, express, etc.).

6. It is almost as hard to stop writing about the dictionary in this way as to stop reading one when you are in hot pursuit of the mysteries of human speech. But, over and above such fascinations, the dictionary has its sober uses. To make the most of these one has to know how to read the special sort of book a dictionary is. But, before I state the rules, let me see if I can explain why most people today don't use dictionaries in a manner befitting the purpose for which they were originally created.

7. In its various sizes and editions, the dictionary is an unlisted best-seller on every season's list. To be able to get along without one would be a sign of supreme literacy—of complete competence as a reader and writer. The dictionary exists, of course, because there is no one in that condition. But, if the dictionary is the necessity we all acknowledge, why is it so infrequently used by the man who owns one? And, even when we do consult it, why do most of us misuse the dictionary or use it poorly?

8. The answer to both questions may be that few of us make efforts at reading or writing anything above the present level of our literary competence. The books—or maybe it is just the newspapers and magazines—we read, and the things we write, don't send us to the dic-

tionary for help. Our vocabularies are quite adequate, because the first rule in most contemporary writing is the taboo against strange words, or familiar words in strange senses.

9. Of course, there are always people (not excluding college graduates) who have difficulty with spelling or pronouncing even the common words in daily discourse. That, by the way, is the source of the most frequent impulse to go to the dictionary. There is nothing wrong about this. The dictionary is there to render this simple service—in fact, Noah Webster began his career as the compiler of a spelling book which sold in the millions. But my point remains—the dictionary has other and more important uses, and the reason we do not generally avail ourselves of these services is not our superiority, but rather our lack of need as the life of letters is currently lived.

10. The history of dictionaries, I think, will bear me out on this point. The Greeks did not have a dictionary, even though "lexicon" is the Greek word for it. They had no need for foreign language dictionaries because there was no literature in a foreign language they cared to read. They had no need for a Greek word-book because the small educated class already knew what such a book would contain. This small group of literate men would have been, like the modern French Academy, the makers of the dictionary, the arbiters of good usage. But at a time when so sharp a line separated the learned from the lewd (which, in an obsolete usage, means *unlettered*), there was no occasion for the few men who could make a dictionary to prepare one for the others.

11. George Santayana's remark about the Greeks—that they were the only uneducated people in European history—has a double significance. The masses were, of course, uneducated, but even the learned few were not educated in the sense that they had to sit at the feet of foreign masters. Education, in that sense, begins with the Romans, who went to school to Greek pedagogues, and became cultivated through contact with Greek culture. It is not surprising, therefore, that the first dictionaries were glossaries of Homeric words. The earliest lexicon which is still extant is such a glossary, prepared by a Greek, Apollonius, in the fifth century of our era, obviously intended to help Romans read the "Iliad" and "Odyssey" of Homer, as well as other Greek literature which employed the Homeric vocabulary. Most of us today need similar glossaries to read Shakespeare well.

12. There were dictionaries in the Middle Ages—a famous Latin one by the Spaniard, Isidore of Seville, which was really a philosophical

work, a sort of encyclopedia of worldly knowledge accomplished by discussions of the most important technical terms occurring in learned discourse. There were foreign-language dictionaries in the Renaissance (both Latin and Greek) made necessary by the fact that the *humane letters* which dominated the education of the period were from the ancient languages. Even when the vulgar tongues—English, French, or Italian—gradually displaced Latin as the language of learning, the pursuit of learning was still the privilege of the few. Under such circumstances, dictionaries were intended for a limited audience, mainly as an aid to reading the most worthy literature. In attempting to compile a standard dictionary, Dr. Johnson derived his norms from the usage of the best writers, on the theory that this would furnish a guide to others who tried to read them, or who tried to write as well.

13 We see, then, that from the beginning the educational motive dominated the making of dictionaries, though, as in the case of Dr. Johnson, and the work of the French and Italian Academies, there was also an interest in preserving the purity and order of the language. As against the latter interest, the Oxford English Dictionary, begun in 1857, was a new departure, in that it did not try to dictate the best usage, but rather to present an accurate historical record of every type of usage—the worst as well as the best, taken from popular as well as stylish writing. But this conflict between the mission of the lexicographer as self-appointed arbiter and his function as historian can be regarded as a side-issue, for the dictionary, however constructed, is primarily an educational instrument. And the problem is whether that instrument is currently well used.

14. Our own Noah Webster is in a sense the hero of the story. Alarmed by the state into which learning had fallen after the Revolutionary War, Webster sought to make a one volume dictionary which would serve in the self-education of the semi-literate masses. He was concerned with the masses, not the elite, and with self-education, at a time when this country had not yet become democratic enough to regard the public education of all its children as a primary obligation of the state. The Webster dictionary was probably one of the first self-help books to become a popular best-seller. And the paradox is that now, with public education widely established in this country, with "literacy" as universal as suffrage, the self-help potentialities of a dictionary are seldom realized by the millions who own one. I am not thinking merely of children from progressive schools who cannot use a dictionary because they do not know the alphabet. I am thinking

of all the products of contemporary education who, not being taught or inspired to read the great and difficult books, have little use for the dictionary. *How much better educated was the self-read man whom Webster helped!*

15. This brief history of dictionaries is revelant to the rules for reading and using them well. One of the first rules as to how to read a book is to know what sort of book it is. That means knowing what the author's intention was and what sort of thing you can expect to find in his work. If you look upon a dictionary merely as a spelling book or a guide to pronunciation, you will use it accordingly. If you realize that it contains a wealth of historical information, crystallized in the growth of language, you will pay attention, not merely to the variety of meanings which are listed under each word, but to their order.

16. And above all if you are interested in advancing your own education, you will use a dictionary according to its primary intention—as a help in reading books that might otherwise be too difficult because their vocabulary includes technical words, archaic words, literary allusions, or even familiar words used in now obsolete senses. The number of words in a man's vocabulary is as definite as the number of dollars he has in the bank; equally definite is the number of senses in which a man is able to use any given word. But there is this difference: a man cannot draw upon the public treasury when his bank-balance is overdrawn, but we can all draw upon the dictionary to get the coin we need to carry on the transaction of reading anything we want to read.

17. Let me be sure that I am not misunderstood. I am not saying that a dictionary is all you need in order to move anywhere in the realms of literature. There are many problems to be solved, in reading a book well, other than those arising from the author's vocabulary. And even with respect to vocabulary, the dictionary's primary service is on those occasions when you are confronted with a technical word or with a word that is wholly new to you—such as "costard" (an apple), or "hoatzin" (a South American bird), or "rabato" (a kind of flaring collar). More frequently the problem of interpretation arises because a relatively familiar word seems to be used in a strange sense. Here the dictionary will help, but it will not solve the problem. The dictionary may suggest the variety of senses in which the troublesome word can be used, but it can never determine how the author you are reading used it. That you must decide by wrestling with the context.

More often than not, especially with distinguished writers, the word may be given a special, an almost unique, shade of meaning. The growth of your own vocabulary, in the important dimension of multiple meanings as well as in mere quantity of words, will depend, first of all, upon the character of the books you read, and secondly, upon the use you make of the dictionary as a guide. You will misuse it—you will stultify rather than enlighten yourself—if you substitute the dictionary for the exercise of your own interpretative judgment in reading.

18. This suggests several other rules as to how *not* to read a dictionary. There is no more irritating fellow than the man who tries to settle an argument about communism, or justice, or liberty, by quoting from Webster. Webster and all his fellow lexicographers may be respected as authorities on word-usage, but they are not the ultimate founts of wisdom. They are no Supreme Court to which we can appeal for a decision of those fundamental controversies which, despite the warnings of semanticists, get us involved with abstract words. It is well to remember that the dictionary's authority can, for obvious reasons, be surer in the field of concrete words, and even in the field of the abstract technical words of science, than it ever can be with respect to philosophical words. Yet these words are indispensable if we are going to talk, read, or write about the things that matter most.

19. Another negative rule is: Don't swallow the dictionary. Don't try to get word-rich quick, by memorizing a lot of fancy words whose meanings are unconnected with any actual experience. Merely verbal knowledge is almost worse than no knowledge at all. If learning consisted in nothing but knowing the meanings of words, we could abolish all our courses of study, and substitute the dictionary for every other sort of book. But no one except a pedant or a fool would regard it as profitable or wise to read the dictionary from cover to cover.

20. In short, don't forget that the dictionary is a book about words, not about things. It can tell you how men have used words, but it does not define the nature of the things the words name. A Scandinavian university undertook a "linguistic experiment" to prove that human arguments always reduce to verbal differences. Seven lawyers were given seven dictionary definitions of truth and asked to defend them. They soon forgot to stick to the "verbal meanings" they had been assigned, and became vehemently involved in defending or opposing certain fundamental views about the nature of truth. The experiment showed that discussions may start about the meanings of words, but

that, when interest in the problem is aroused, they seldom end there. Men pass from words to things, from names to natures. The dictionary can start an argument, but only thought or research can end it.

21. If we remember that a dictionary is a book about words, we can derive from that fact all the rules for reading a dictionary intelligently. Words can be looked at in four ways.

22. (1) *Words are physical things*—writable marks and speakable sounds. There must, therefore, be uniform ways of spelling and pronouncing them, though the uniformity is often spoiled by variations.

23. (2) *Words are parts of speech.* Each single word plays a grammatical role in the more complicated structure of a phrase or a sentence. According to the part it plays, we classify it as a certain part of speech—noun or verb, adjective or adverb, article or preposition. The same word can vary in different usages, shifting from one part of speech to another, as when we say "Man the boat" or "Take the jump." Another sort of grammatical variation in words arises from their inflection, but in a relatively uninflected language like English, we need pay attention only to the conjugation of the verb (infinitive, participle, past tense, etc.), the case of the noun (singular and plural), and the degree of the adjective (especially the comparative and superlative).

24. (3) *Words are signs.* They have meanings, not one but many. These meanings are related in various ways. Sometimes they shade from one into another; sometimes one word will have two or more sets of totally unrelated meanings. Through their meanings words are related to one another—as synonyms sharing in the same meaning even though they differ in its shading; or as antonyms through opposition or contrast of meanings. Furthermore, it is in their capacity as signs that we distinguish words as proper or common names (according as they name just one thing or many which are alike in some respect); and as concrete or abstract names (according as they point to some thing which we can sense, or refer to some aspect of things which we can understand by thought but not observe through our senses).

25. Finally, (4) *words are conventional.* They mean or signify natural things, but they themselves are not natural. They are man-made signs. That is why every word has a history, just as everything else man makes has a time and place of origin, and a cultural career, in

which it goes through certain transformations. The history of words is given by their etymological derivation from original word-roots, prefixes, and suffixes; it includes the account of their physical change, both in spelling and pronunciation; it tells of their shifting meanings, and which among them are archaic and obsolete, which are current and regular, which are idiomatic, colloquial, or slang.

26. A good dictionary will answer all your questions about words under these four heads. The art of reading a dictionary (as any other book) consists in knowing what questions to ask about words and how to find the answers. I have suggested the questions. The dictionary itself tells you how to find the answers. In this respect, it is a perfect self-help book, because it tells you what to pay attention to and how to interpret the various abbreviations and symbols it uses in giving you the four varieties of information about words. Anyone who fails to consult the explanatory notes and the list of abbreviations at the beginning of a dictionary can blame only himself for not being able to read the dictionary well. Unfortunately, many people fail here, as in the case of other books, because they insist upon neglecting the prefatory matter—as if the author were just amusing himself by including it.

27 I think these suggestions about how to read, and how not to misuse, a dictionary are easy to follow. But like all other rules they will be followed well only by the man who is rightly motivated in the first place. And, in the last place, they will be wisely applied only by the man who remembers that we are both *free* and *bound* in all our dealing with language, whether as writers or readers.

> "When I use a word," Humpty-Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less."
>
> "The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things."
>
> "The question is," said Humpty-Dumpty, "which is to be master—that's all."

* * *

Commentary and Questions

1. Explain what Adler means by the statement (par. 27) "that we are both *free* and *bound* in all our dealings with language, whether as writers or readers."

2. How are the sections of this essay logically connected with each other and why are they placed in this particular order? The following brief outline may help you in your analysis:

I. Playful use of a dictionary
II. Why most people don't use a dictionary properly now
  A. Proper use not made necessary by nature of contemporary reading
  B. Short history of dictionaries
III. Sober uses of a dictionary
  A. How not to use a dictionary
  B. How to use a dictionary

Suggestions for Writing

1. How to read an encyclopedia.
2. How to examine a book without leafing every page.

Words and Things[*]

by CARL L. BECKER

For good or evil, words often have great influence in their own right, apart from the things they represent. Like actors on the stage, they have their entrances and their exits, play an important role for a time, and then lose favor. They may, like men, be born free and equal, but like men they have their ups and downs. Certain words in particular suddenly acquire greater prestige than they deserve, and then after a time, from too much use or because the things they refer to have become sinister or merely ridiculous, they lose their popularity and either cease to be used at all or are used only to distort what they originally represented.

2. Such a word is "creative," which for a long time played a minor and becoming role. Then one day some critic or other used it to boost a book that he happened to like. Mr. X, he announced, was a "creative

[*] Reprinted from *How* New *Will the Better World Be?* by Carl L. Becker, by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. Copyright 1944 by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.

writer." The word caught on, and now nothing is any good unless it is "creative." Writer, artist, critic, interior decorator, cook—if he be not "creative" he may as well be damned. Too much use has beaten all sense out of the word, so that it has become merely ridiculous. Another such word is "refined." In the nineteenth century a person of cultivation, good manners, and good taste was a "person of refinement." It was a compliment—as much as to say: "he is the genuine article, a real guy." But in the course of time much of what in the nineteenth century was regarded as good manners and good taste came to seem artificial and affected—something, like the Sunday suit, put on to make one look slicker than one usually is; so that now it is practically an insult to call a person "very refined." It means a person too nice and squeamish and innocent to be let out alone nights. In respect to persons, the word now merely distorts the thing it originally represented, and can be used seriously only in regard to products like sugar or alcohol.

3. Something of the same sort has happened to such good old words as "politics," "power," "empire," and "imperial." The term "politics" has taken on a certain unsavory meaning, as when we say "playing politics," or "it's only politics." In international relations playing politics, otherwise known as "the diplomatic game," has recently become a little more unsavory, or even sinister, by being described as "power politics." In the second century the term "Roman Empire" meant much the same thing as the term "civilization"; and to speak of the "sway of Imperial Rome" was to confer the highest distinction on that city. Long after the Roman Empire disappeared the thing itself was so much prized that men longed to have it restored, and even added to its high prestige by calling it the "Holy Roman Empire." But for a long time now the terms "empire" and "imperialism" have been terms of reproach.

4. During recent years the terms "power politics" and "imperialism" have come to be more than terms of reproach; they have come to denote something wholly evil. . . . It will be worth while to trace the history of these terms, and to examine the things which they refer to, in order to see whether the things referred to are in themselves wholly evil and whether in any case they can be easily ignored or got rid of.

5. Something more than two thousand years ago the famous Greek philosopher Aristotle wrote a book, or left notes which were made

into a book, entitled *Politics*. For Aristotle, and for the Greeks and Romans and the people of the Middle Ages, the term "politics" referred to the institutions, laws, customs, and moral and religious ideas by which men managed to live together in a community. Its meaning was not limited to the form of government and the making of laws, but included the economic activities and moral ideas of the community as well. But in the sixteenth century Machiavelli discussed the art of government without reference to morality and ethics; and in the next two centuries certain writers dealt with the activities by which men make a living and acquire wealth as a separate subject, which was called "political economy" or "economics." Since that time the term "politics" has been commonly understood to refer to the form of government and laws and activities by which the people are governed.

6. In the eighteenth century, when people were mostly governed by absolute kings, there were of course no elections and no political parties; but there were influential noble families, and industrial "guilds," and financial corporations—all representing certain interests, and all seeking to get the favor of the king. The head of a powerful noble family, for example, might for various reasons have great influence with the king (or with the king's minister, or the king's mistress), which of course he would use for getting what he wanted for his family or his friends. When he did this he was "playing politics," but that isn't what it was called at that time. It was said that he "had the ear of the king," or that he was "making use of his interest through the minister."

7. Then kings mostly lost their power, and in the nineteenth century in most European countries laws were made, as they are in the United States, by assemblies composed of representatives elected by the people. For getting the representatives elected and for advocating certain measures, political parties were formed; and those who made a business of managing the parties or getting elected to office were called "politicians." The term "politics" came then to have a double meaning. In general it referred to the form of government and the making of laws; but it also referred to the activities of politicians in winning elections and getting laws passed that would be agreeable to the people who supported their candidates. In an ideal democracy people are supposed to forget about their personal and private interests and to support measures that will serve the common interests of the nation. Many people do this all of the time, and most people do it

some of the time. But it is not always, or often, easy to know what the common interest is, whereas it is always easy to know what is for the immediate interest of the individual or the group to which he belongs. In the United States there are many such groups—farmers, laborers, big business, commerce, the South, the industrial Northeast, the Middle West, and so on. It is no longer great families but these groups and sections that have a powerful "interest." They have not "the ear of the king," but they have the ear of their representatives in the House and Senate, and through them they have great influence in getting the laws passed that will be, or that they think will be, beneficial for them. They exert great "pressure," and this competitive struggle of the groups and sections for getting what they want whether it is for the common good or not is called "pressure politics." Since the groups have political power, it would be equally correct to call it "power politics."

8. The term "pressure politics" doesn't sound quite so bad as "power politics," and that may be why the one term is used for domestic politics whereas the other is reserved for international politics. But still, to those who are thinking of some ideal democracy, even the term "pressure politics" doesn't sound any too good. However it sounds, we all know that it expresses the way in which democracy actually works, and after all it is inevitable that it should work that way. By and large, men pursue their own interests, and where the interest of a group is clearly discernible and can be promoted or injured by legislation, it is inevitable that the group should try to promote or protect it by legislation. The practical justification for doing so is that democratic government rests on the will of the people, and the will of the people can be determined only by majority vote; and in practice the majority vote is determined by the competitive pressure of the various groups. The groups that at any time get what they want, by pressure on congressmen, log-rolling bargains, or otherwise, may be said to represent for that purpose and that time the will of the nation.

9. The trouble with this is that all people have many interests, some of which can be promoted by certain laws only at the expense of the others. Farmers and laborers are both "producers" and "consumers." As producers they want higher prices for what they sell; but as consumers they want lower prices for what they buy. Their interest as producers is more apparent to them, and more easily promoted by legislation, than their interest as consumers. Besides, everybody is a

consumer and all consumers have, as consumers, the same interest; but the class of "everybody" which makes up the consumers is not organized, and therefore cannot easily exert "pressure" on legislation. We feel, therefore, that the term "pressure politics" doesn't sound quite right because pressure politics benefits only those who are organized to promote their private interests at the expense of the others. . . .

10. The technique of politics in international affairs is much the same as in national affairs, but this fact is obscured because the conditions are somewhat different and we use different terms to describe it. We speak of "international relations" instead of international "politics," of "playing the diplomatic game" instead of "playing politics," of "power politics" instead of "pressure politics." In international politics the interests involved are independent states instead of groups or sections within the state; the interests are promoted by exerting "power" rather than "pressure"; and the conflict of interests is resolved, not by a legislative body enacting laws that can be enforced by judicial process, but by treaties or agreements voluntarily subscribed to by the states involved. If the interests are regarded as vital and cannot be reconciled by agreement, the only way out in international politics is war. In national politics the conflict of interests between groups or sections may also become irreconcilable by peaceful means, although in strongly united nation-states this is less likely to happen; but when it does happen, the way out is the same as in international politics—civil war, which is sometimes called revolution.

11. There is, however, one very important difference between national and international politics. The conditions which separate nations are ordinarily more deep-seated and permanent than those which separate groups within the nation. An English-speaking farmer in Iowa is, after all, not a "foreigner" to an English-speaking (or even a German-speaking) laborer in Detroit in the same sense, or to the same degree, that an Italian in Rome is a foreigner to an Englishman in London. For this reason the common interests of the various groups in the United States are more apparent, even if in the long run they are not more real, than the common interests of the various nations of Europe or of the world. And therefore the conflicts of interest more easily appear to be, even if they are not in fact, irreconcilable by peaceful means. And since there is no international government by which agreements can be enforced, any state which has sufficient

power is in a position to use its power without any restraint except that which is self-imposed—the restraint which is imposed by its own sense of decency and justice. . . . But to suppose that power politics is always wholly evil because Hitler and his humorless, bleak-faced Nazi supporters . . . made a wholly evil use of it is only to obscure and distort the political realities of the world in which we live. . . .

12. . . . If we regard things instead of words, it is clear that the term "power politics" is what the grammarians call a "redundancy." The simple fact is that politics is inseparable from power. States and governments exist to exert power, for the maintenance of order, the administration of justice, the defense of the community against aggression—in theory always and solely for these good ends. But the power, much or little, is always there, and will be used for some end, good, bad, or indifferent. In any country the government may be strong or weak. In the world at large there are great powers and minor powers. In each country and in the world at large there is either a stable balance of power, an unstable balance of power, or no balance of power at all. But there is always power. "Power," as Lionel Gelber says in his book *Peace by Power*, "never vanishes. If you do not wish to retain or wield it, somebody else will. You may feel the effects of power as a passive recipient; you may deal with it as an active agent. There is no escape, no immunity." Political power exists in the world and will be used by those who have it—for good ends we hope, but at all events for some ends.

13. In this very real sense all politics is power politics. . . .

* * *

Commentary and Questions

This selection is a series of excerpts from chapter 4 of *How* New *Will the Better World Be?*—first published in 1944. The original title of the chapter, "Can We Abolish Power Politics and End Imperialism?" we have changed to "Words and Things" in order to stress the distinction Becker makes in this part of the chapter. Later in this chapter he traces the background of the term *imperialism* by a method similar to the one he uses here in discussing the term *power politics*. Besides omitting the latter part of the chapter we have cut out, because of the now dated references to events of the war years, certain passages from the first part (indicated by ellipsis marks), and in one place (par. 4) we have formed one paragraph out of material originally in two paragraphs.

1. Explain how par. 2 and par. 3 are related to the last sentence of par. 1.

2. Why does Becker pair the following terms: *politics* and *international politics; playing politics* and *playing the diplomatic game; pressure politics* and *power politics*?

3. In par. 20 of his essay (p. 585) Mortimer Adler sums up his advice on how not to use a dictionary by saying, "In short, don't forget that the dictionary is a book about words, not about things." Does Becker's discussion here harmonize with that statement?

Suggestion for Writing

Write an analysis of a recent political statement or speech to determine the relationship between its "words and things."

Logic and Logical Fallacies[*]

by ROBERT GORHAM DAVIS

Expression does not exist apart from thought, and cannot be analyzed or profitably discussed apart from thought. Just as clear and effective organization is essential to good writing, so consistent thinking and coherence of mind underlie consistent writing and coherence of style. The faults and errors which we have discussed under the headings of style and structure are closely bound up with orderly thought, as the student can hardly fail to notice. But some direct suggestions on the modes of consistent thinking and of analyzing and criticizing arguments and assertions ought also to prove useful. The following pages accordingly present some notes on logic and common logical fallacies.

Undefined Terms

2. The first requirement for logical discourse is knowing what the words you use actually mean. Words are not like paper money or

[*] From the Harvard *Handbook for English A* (fourth edition, 1947). By permission of the author, of Theodore Morrison, and of Harvard University. Copyright 1940, 1941, 1944, 1947 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

counters in a game. Except for technical terms in some of the sciences, they do not have a fixed face value. Their meanings are fluid and changing, influenced by many considerations of context and reference, circumstance and association. This is just as true of common words such as *fast* as it is of literary terms such as *romantic.* Moreover, if there is to be communication, words must have approximately the same meaning for the reader that they have for the writer. A speech in an unknown language means nothing to the hearer. When an adult speaks to a small child or an expert to a layman, communication may be seriously limited by lack of a mature vocabulary or ignorance of technical terms. Many arguments are meaningless because the speakers are using important words in quite different senses.

3. Because we learn most words—or guess at them—from the contexts in which we first encounter them, our sense of them is often incomplete or wrong. Readers sometimes visualize the Assyrian who comes down like the wolf on the fold as an enormous man dressed in cohorts (some kind of fancy armor, possibly) gleaming in purple and gold. "A rift in the lute" suggests vaguely a cracked mandolin. Failure to ascertain the literal meaning of figurative language is a frequent reason for mixed metaphors. We are surprised to find that the "devil" in "the devil to pay" and "the devil and the deep blue sea" is not Old Nick, but part of a ship. Unless terms mean the same thing to both writer and reader, proper understanding is impossible.

Abstractions

4. The most serious logical difficulties occur with abstract terms. An abstraction is a word which stands for a quality found in a number of different objects or events from which it has been "abstracted" or taken away. We may, for instance, talk of the "whiteness" of paper or cotton or snow without considering qualities of cold or inflammability or usefulness which these materials happen also to possess. Usually, however, our minds carry over other qualities by association. See, for instance, the chapter called "The Whiteness of the Whale" in *Moby Dick.*

5. In much theoretic discussion the process of abstraction is carried so far that although vague associations and connotations persist, the original objects or events from which the qualities have been abstracted are lost sight of completely. Instead of thinking of words like *sincerity* and *Americanism* as symbols standing for qualities that have to be abstracted with great care from examples and test cases, we

come to think of them as real things in themselves. We assume that Americanism is Americanism just as a bicycle is a bicycle, and that everyone knows what it means. We forget that before the question, "Is Father Coughlin sincere?" can mean anything, we have to agree on the criteria of sincerity.

6. When we try to define such words and find examples, we discover that almost no one agrees on their meaning. The word *church* may refer to anything from a building on the corner of Spring Street to the whole tradition of institutionalized Christianity. *Germany* may mean a geographical section of Europe, a people, a governing group, a cultural tradition, or a military power. Abstractions such as *freedom, courage, race, beauty, truth, justice, nature, honor, humanism, democracy,* should never be used in a theme unless their meaning is defined or indicated clearly by the context. Freedom for whom? To do what? Under what circumstances? Abstract terms have merely emotional value unless they are strictly defined by asking questions of this kind. The study of a word such as *nature* in a good unabridged dictionary will show that even the dictionary, indispensable though it is, cannot determine for us the sense in which a word is being used in any given instance. Once the student understands the importance of definition, he will no longer be betrayed into fruitless arguments over such questions as whether free verse is "poetry" or whether you can change "human nature."

Name-calling

7. It is a common unfairness in controversy to place what the writer dislikes or opposes in a generally odious category. The humanist dismisses what he dislikes by calling it *romantic;* the liberal, by calling it *fascist;* the conservative, by calling it *communistic.* These terms tell the reader nothing. What is *piety* to some will be *bigotry* to others. *Non-Catholics* would rather be called *Protestants* than *heretics.* What is *right-thinking* except a designation for those who agree with the writer? Labor leaders become *outside agitators;* industrial organizations, *forces of reaction;* the Child Labor Amendment, the *youth control bill;* prison reform, *coddling;* progressive education, *fads and frills.* Such terms are intended to block thought by an appeal to prejudice and associative habits. Three steps are necessary before such epithets have real meaning. First, they must be defined; second, it must be shown that the object to which they are applied actually possesses these qualities; third, it must be shown that the possession of

such qualities in this particular situation is necessarily undesirable. Unless a person is alert and critical both in choosing and in interpreting words, he may be alienated from ideas with which he would be in sympathy if he had not been frightened by a mere name.

Generalization

8. Similar to the abuse of abstract terms and epithets is the habit of presenting personal opinions in the guise of universal laws. The student often seems to feel that the broader the terms in which he states an opinion, the more effective he will be. Ordinarily the reverse is true. An enthusiasm for Thomas Wolfe should lead to a specific critical analysis of Wolfe's novels that will enable the writer to explain his enthusiasm to others; it should not be turned into the argument that Wolfe is "the greatest American novelist," particularly if the writer's knowledge of American novelists is somewhat limited. The same questions of *who* and *when* and *why* and under what *circumstances* which are used to check abstract terms should be applied to generalizations. Consider how contradictory proverbial wisdom is when detached from particular circumstances. "Look before you leap," but "he who hesitates is lost."

9. Superlatives and the words *right* and *wrong, true* and *untrue, never* and *always* must be used with caution in matters of opinion. When a student says flatly that X is true, he often is really saying that he or his family or the author of a book he has just been reading, persons of certain tastes and background and experience, *think* that X is true. Unless these people are identified and their reasons for thinking so explained, the assertion is worthless. Because many freshmen are taking survey courses in which they read a single work by an author or see an historical event through the eyes of a single historian whose bias they may not be able to measure, they must guard against this error.

Sampling

10. Assertions of a general nature are frequently open to question because they are based on insufficient evidence. Some persons are quite ready, after meeting one Armenian or reading one medieval romance, to generalize about Armenians and medieval romances. One ought, of course, to examine objectively as many examples as possible before making a generalization, but the number is less important than the representativeness of the examples chosen. The Literary Digest Presidential Poll, sent to hundreds of thousands of people

selected from telephone directories, was far less accurate than the Gallup Poll which questioned far fewer voters, but selected them carefully and proportionately from all different social groups. The "typical" college student, as portrayed by moving pictures and cartoons, is very different from the "representative" college student as determined statistically. We cannot let uncontrolled experience do our sampling for us; instances and examples which impress themselves upon our minds do so usually because they are exceptional. In propaganda and arguments extreme cases are customarily treated as if they were characteristic.

11. If one is permitted arbitrarily to select some examples and ignore others, it is possible to find convincing evidence for almost any theory, no matter how fantastic. The fact that the mind tends naturally to remember those instances which confirm its opinions imposes a duty upon the writer, unless he wishes to encourage prejudice and superstition, to look carefully for exceptions to all generalizations which he is tempted to make. We forget the premonitions which are not followed by disaster and the times when our hunches failed to select the winner in a race. Patent medicine advertisements print the letters of those who survived their cure, and not of those who died during it. All Americans did not gamble on the stock exchange in the twenties, and all Vermonters are not thin-lipped and shrewd. Of course the search for negative examples can be carried too far. Outside of mathematics or the laboratory, few generalizations can be made airtight, and most are not intended to be. But quibbling is so easy that resort to it is very common, and the knowledge that people can and will quibble over generalizations is another reason for making assertions as limited and explicitly conditional as possible.

False Analogy

12. Illustration, comparison, analogy are most valuable in making an essay clear and interesting. It must not be supposed, however, that they prove anything or have much argumentative weight. The rule that what is true of one thing in one set of circumstances is not necessarily true of another thing in another set of circumstances seems almost too obvious to need stating. Yet constantly nations and businesses are discussed as if they were human beings with human habits and feelings; human bodies are discussed as if they were machines; the universe, as if it were a clock. It is assumed that what held true for seventeenth century New England or the thirteen Atlantic colonies

also holds true for an industrial nation of 130,000,000 people. Carlyle dismissed the arguments for representative democracy by saying that if a captain had to take a vote among his crew every time he wanted to do something, he would never get around Cape Horn. This analogy calmly ignores the distinction between the lawmaking and the executive branches of constitutional democracies. Moreover, voters may be considered much more like the stockholders of a merchant line than its hired sailors. Such arguments introduce assumptions in a metaphorical guise in which they are not readily detected or easily criticized. In place of analysis they attempt to identify their position with some familiar symbol which will evoke a predictable, emotional response in the reader. The revival during the 1932 presidential campaign of Lincoln's remark, "Don't swap horses in the middle of the stream," was not merely a picturesque way of saying keep Hoover in the White House. It made a number of assumptions about the nature of depressions and the function of government. This propagandist technique can be seen most clearly in political cartoons.

Degree

13. Often differences in degree are more important than differences in kind. By legal and social standards there is more difference between an habitual drunkard and a man who drinks temperately, than between a temperate drinker and a total abstainer. In fact differences of degree produce what are regarded as differences of kind. At known temperatures ice turns to water and water boils. At an indeterminate point affection becomes love and a man who needs a shave becomes a man with a beard. The fact that no men or systems are perfect makes rejoinders and counter-accusations very easy if differences in degree are ignored. Newspapers in totalitarian states, answering American accusations of brutality and suppression, refer to lynchings and gangsterism here. Before a disinterested judge could evaluate these mutual accusations, he would have to settle the question of the degree to which violent suppression and lynching are respectively prevalent in the countries under consideration. On the other hand, differences in degree may be merely apparent. Lincoln Steffens pointed out that newspapers can create a "crime wave" any time they wish, simply by emphasizing all the minor assaults and thefts commonly ignored or given an inch or two on a back page. The great reported increases in insanity may be due to the fact that in a more urban and institutionalized society cases of insanity more fre-

quently come to the attention of authorities and hence are recorded in statistics.

Causation

14. The most common way of deciding that one thing causes another thing is the simple principle: *post hoc, ergo propter hoc,* "After this, therefore because of this." Rome fell after the introduction of Christianity; therefore Christianity was responsible for the fall of Rome. Such reasoning illustrates another kind of faulty generalization. But even if one could find ten cases in which a nation "fell" after the introduction of Christianity, it still would not be at all certain that Christianity caused the fall. Day, it has frequently been pointed out, follows night in every observable instance, and yet night cannot be called the cause of day. Usually a combination of causes produces a result. Sitting in a draught may cause a cold, but only given a certain physical condition in the person sitting there. In such instances one may distinguish between necessary and sufficient conditions. Air is a necessary condition for the maintenance of plant life, but air alone is not sufficient to produce plant life. And often different causes at different times may produce the same result. This relation is known as plurality of causes. If, after sitting in a stuffy theatre on Monday, and then again after eating in a stuffy restaurant on Thursday, a man suffered from headaches, he might say, generalizing, that bad air gave him headaches. But actually the headache on Monday may have been caused by eye-strain and on Thursday by indigestion. To isolate the causative factor it is necessary that all other conditions be precisely the same. Such isolation is possible, except in very simple instances, only in the laboratory or with scientific methods. If a picture falls from the wall every time a truck passes, we can quite certainly say that the truck's passing is the cause. But with anything as complex and conditional as a nation's economy or human character, the determination of cause is not easy or certain. A psychiatrist often sees a patient for an hour daily for a year or more before he feels that he understands his psychosis.

15. Ordinarily when we speak of cause we mean the proximate or immediate cause. The plants were killed by frost; we had indigestion from eating lobster salad. But any single cause is one in an unbroken series. When a man is murdered, is his death caused by the loss of blood from the wound, or by the firing of the pistol, or by the malice aforethought of the murderer? Was the World War "caused" by the

assassination at Sarajevo? Were the Navigation Acts or the ideas of John Locke more important in "causing" the American Revolution? A complete statement of cause would comprise the sum total of the conditions which preceded an event, conditions stretching back indefinitely into the past. Historical events are so interrelated that the isolation of a causative sequence is dependent chiefly on the particular preoccupations of the historian. An economic determinist can "explain" history entirely in terms of economic developments; an idealist, entirely in terms of the development of ideas.

Syllogistic Reasoning

16. The formal syllogism of the type,

All men are mortal
John is a man
Therefore John is mortal,

is not so highly regarded today as in some earlier periods. It merely fixes an individual as a member of a class, and then assumes that the individual has the given characteristics of the class. Once we have decided who John is, and what "man" and "mortal" mean, and have canvassed all men, including John, to make sure that they are mortal, the conclusion naturally follows. It can be seen that the chief difficulties arise in trying to establish acceptable premises. Faults in the premises are known as "material" fallacies, and are usually more serious than the "formal" fallacies, which are logical defects in drawing a conclusion from the premises. But although directly syllogistic reasoning is not much practiced, buried syllogisms can be found in all argument, and it is often a useful clarification to outline your own or another writer's essay in syllogistic form. The two most frequent defects in the syllogism itself are the undistributed and the ambiguous middle. The middle term is the one that appears in each of the premises and not in the conclusion. In the syllogism,

All good citizens vote
John votes
Therefore John is a good citizen,

the middle term is not "good citizens," but "votes." Even though it were true that all good citizens vote, nothing prevents bad citizens from voting also, and John may be one of the bad citizens. To dis-

tribute the middle term "votes" one might say (but only if that is what one meant),

All voters are good citizens
John is a voter
Therefore John is a good citizen.

17. The ambiguous middle term is even more common. It represents a problem in definition, while the undistributed middle is a problem in generalization. All acts which benefit others are virtuous, losing money at poker benefits others, therefore losing at poker is a virtuous act. Here the middle term "act which benefits others" is obviously used very loosely and ambiguously.

Non-sequitur

18. This phrase, meaning "it does not follow," is used to characterize the kind of humor found in pictures in which the Marx Brothers perform. It is an amusing illogicality because it usually expresses, beneath its apparent incongruity, an imaginative, associative, or personal truth. "My ancestors came over on the Mayflower; therefore I am naturally opposed to labor unions." It is not logically necessary that those whose ancestors came over on the Mayflower should be opposed to unions; but it may happen to be true as a personal fact in a given case. Contemporary psychologists have effectively shown us that there is often such a wide difference between the true and the purported reasons for an attitude that, in rationalizing our behavior, we are often quite unconscious of the motives that actually influence us. A fanatical antivivisectionist, for instance, may have temperamental impulses toward cruelty which he is suppressing and compensating for by a reasoned opposition to any kind of permitted suffering. We may expect, then, to come upon many conclusions which are psychologically interesting in themselves, but have nothing to do with the given premises.

Ignoratio elenchi

19. This means, in idiomatic English, "arguing off the point," or ignoring the question at issue. A man trying to show that monarchy is the best form of government for the British Empire may devote most of his attention to the character of George V and the affection his people felt for him. In ordinary conversational argument it is almost impossible for disputants to keep to the point. Constantly turning up are

tempting side-issues through which one can discomfit an opponent or force him to irrelevant admissions that seem to weaken his case.

Begging the Question; Arguing in a Circle

20. The first of these terms means to assume in the premises what you are pretending to prove in the course of your argument. The function of logic is to demonstrate that because one thing or group of things is true, another must be true as a consequence. But in begging the question you simply say in varying language that what is assumed to be true is assumed to be true. An argument which asserts that we shall enjoy immortality because we have souls which are immaterial and indestructible establishes nothing, because the idea of immortality is already contained in the assumption about the soul. It is the premise which needs to be demonstrated, not the conclusion. Arguing in a circle is another form of this fallacy. It proves the premise by the conclusion and the conclusion by the premise. The conscience forbids an act because it is wrong; the act is wrong because the conscious forbids it.

Arguments ad hominem and ad populum

21. It is very difficult for men to be persuaded by reason when their interest or prestige is at stake. If one wishes to preach the significance of physiognomy, it is well to choose a hearer with a high forehead and a determined jaw. The arguments in favor of repealing the protective tariff on corn or wheat in England were more readily entertained by manufacturers than by landowners. The cotton manufacturers in New England who were doing a profitable trade with the South were the last to be moved by descriptions of the evils of slavery. Because interest and desire are so deeply seated in human nature, arguments are frequently mingled with attempts to appeal to emotion, arouse fear, play upon pride, attack the characters of proponents of an opposite view, show that their practice is inconsistent with their principles; all matters which have, strictly speaking, nothing to do with the truth or falsity, the general desirability or undesirability, of some particular measure. If men are desperate enough they will listen to arguments proper only to an insane asylum but which seem to promise them relief.

22. After reading these suggestions, which are largely negative, the student may feel that any original assertion he can make will probably contain one or several logical faults. This assumption is not true. Even

if it were, we know from reading newspapers and magazines that worldly fame is not dimmed by the constant and, one suspects, conscious practice of illogicality. But generalizations are not made only by charlatans and sophists. Intelligent and scrupulous writers also have a great many fresh and provocative observations and conclusions to express and are expressing them influentially. What is intelligence but the ability to see the connection between things, to discern causes, to relate the particular to the general, to define and discriminate and compare? Any man who thinks and feels and observes closely will not want for something to express.

23. And in his expression a proponent will find that a due regard for logic does not limit but rather increases the force of his argument. When statements are not trite, they are usually controversial. Men arrive at truth dialectically; error is weeded out in the course of discussion, argument, attack, and counterattack. Not only can a writer who understands logic show the weaknesses of arguments he disagrees with, but also, by anticipating the kind of attack likely to be made on his own ideas, he can so arrange them, properly modified with qualifications and exceptions, that the anticipated attack is made much less effective. Thus, fortunately, we do not have to depend on the spirit of fairness and love of truth to lead men to logic; it has the strong support of argumentative necessity and of the universal desire to make ideas prevail.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

This is a chapter from the Harvard University *Handbook for English A*. The first paragraph makes transitional references to earlier chapters. We have omitted here the first sentence and the first word of the second sentence.

1. A method of explaining technical terms is followed rather consistently in this selection. What, for example, is the method used in par. 4?

2. In a textbook on logic, a section on syllogistic reasoning might well be placed first. Why do you think such a discussion is not placed first here instead of being held as late as pars. 16-17?

3. In pars. 14 and 15 Davis points out some of the dangers in loose generalization about causation. How does Thomas Henry Huxley's story (pp. 206-208) about the doubting friend of the man whose spoons were stolen suggest an opposite danger in too much skepticism about generalization?

4. Do pars. 22-23 weaken what has been said earlier in the selection? How are they related to par. 1?

Suggestion for Writing

Logical fallacies I have encountered—for example, in newspapers, advertising, or speeches.

Part Seven

Narration

Contents *Part Seven*

MARK TWAIN ..... *A Daring Deed*

SAKI (H. H. MUNRO) ..... *The Open Window*

JOHN STEINBECK ..... *The Leader of the People*

JOHN P. MARQUAND ..... *Children's Page*

STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT ..... *By the Waters of Babylon*

SAKI (H. H. MUNRO) ..... *Tobermory*

MARY MCCARTHY ..... *The Unspoiled Reaction*

WARD DORRANCE ..... *The White Hound*

Narration

Almost everybody likes to read or hear a story. For that reason lecturers frequently digress from presenting facts and ideas to tell an anecdote or incident intended to illustrate a point. People saying or doing something in a "real" situation—one that can be visualized—are of more immediate interest than facts pyramiding in a notebook or ideas sailing through the thin air of the lecture room.

If there is to be a "story," we must have characters and a situation. Obviously what the characters say or do in the situation makes the story. Superficially what holds most narratives together is a time scheme. He met her on Monday and married her Saturday night, according to a once popular song. What keeps the listener's interest, however, is not the progression of time from Monday to Saturday, but what happened between Monday and Saturday. In most stories what happens between Monday and Saturday shapes itself into a plot, a cause-and-effect chain. Many stories have in addition a theme; some stories have only a theme, without any discernible plot to tie the events together. Whether a story has both theme and plot, it is nearly always based on a problem or a conflict. In simple detective fiction the problem is to determine "whodunit." In more complex fiction the only conflict may be within the mind of one or more characters, and the resolution may involve no tangible action.

Once an author has decided *what* his purpose is—what he wants to say or what effect he wants to create—he must concentrate on *how* to achieve that purpose. His initial problem is determining from what point of view the material is to be presented: shall the story "tell itself" or shall one of the characters act as a narrator? When the

point of view is determined, the central problem becomes, as in any kind of writing, the selection and arrangement of details. For the writer of the short narrative, selecting and arranging details is especially important: the shorter the narrative, the more limited must be the scope. To be effective the short narrative must have singleness of purpose. To achieve that singleness the author usually centers the action around one character or theme and restricts the action to one central event. Although he may use several characters and a series of events, he ordinarily subordinates all but one character or theme and passes rapidly over all but one event. Thus the author quickly focuses interest on his purpose, whether that be solving a simple or complex problem or suggesting a subtle, intangible conflict.

A Daring Deed[*]

by MARK TWAIN

When I returned to the pilot-house St. Louis was gone, and I was lost. Here was a piece of river which was all down in my book, but I could make neither head nor tail of it: you understand, it was turned around. I had seen it when coming up-stream, but I had never faced about to see how it looked when it was behind me. My heart broke again, for it was plain that I had got to learn this troublesome river *both ways.*

The pilot-house was full of pilots, going down to "look at the river." What is called the "upper river" (the two hundred miles between St. Louis and Cairo, where the Ohio comes in) was low; and the Mississippi changes its channel so constantly that the pilots used to always find it necessary to run down to Cairo to take a fresh look, when their boats were to lie in port a week; that is, when the water was at a low stage. A deal of this "looking at the river" was done by poor fellows who seldom had a berth, and whose only hope of getting one lay in their being always freshly posted and therefore ready to drop into the shoes of some reputable pilot, for a single trip, on account of such pilot's sudden illness, or some other necessity. And a good many of them constantly ran up and down inspecting the river, not because they ever really hoped to get a berth, but because (they being guests of the boat) it was cheaper to "look at the river" than stay ashore and pay board. In time these fellows grew dainty in their tastes, and only infested boats that had an established reputation for setting good tables. All visiting pilots were useful, for they were always ready and willing, winter or summer, night or day, to go out in the yawl and help buoy the channel or assist the boat's pilots in any way they could. They were likewise welcomed because all pilots are

[*] From *Life on the Mississippi* by Mark Twain. Reprinted by permission of Harper & Brothers, New York.

tireless talkers, when gathered together, and as they talk only about the river they are always understood and are always interesting. Your true pilot cares nothing about anything on earth but the river, and his pride in his occupation surpasses the pride of kings.

We had a fine company of these river inspectors along this trip. There were eight or ten, and there was abundance of room for them in our great pilot-house. Two or three of them wore polished silk hats, elaborate shirt-fronts, diamond breastpins, kid gloves, and patent-leather boots. They were choice in their English, and bore themselves with a dignity proper to men of solid means and prodigious reputation as pilots. The others were more or less loosely clad, and wore upon their heads tall felt cones that were suggestive of the days of the Commonwealth.

I was a cipher in this august company, and felt subdued, not to say torpid. I was not even of sufficient consequence to assist at the wheel when it was necessary to put the tiller hard down in a hurry; the guest that stood nearest did that when occasion required—and this was pretty much all the time, because of the crookedness of the channel and the scant water. I stood in a corner; and the talk I listened to took the hope all out of me. One visitor said to another:

"Jim, how did you run Plum Point, coming up?"

"It was in the night, there, and I ran it the way one of the boys on the *Diana* told me; started out about fifty yards above the wood-pile on the false point, and held on the cabin under Plum Point till I raised the reef—quarter less twain—then straightened up for the middle bar till I got well abreast the old one-limbed cottonwood in the bend, then got my stern on the cottonwood, and head on the low place above the point, and came through a-booming—nine and a half."

"Pretty square crossing, ain't it?"

"Yes, but the upper bar's working down fast."

Another pilot spoke up and said:

"I had better water than that, and ran it lower down; started out from the false point—mark twain—raised the second reef abreast the big snag in the bend, and had quarter less twain."

One of the gorgeous ones remarked:

"I don't want to find fault with your leadsmen, but that's a good deal of water for Plum Point, it seems to me."

There was an approving nod all around as this quiet snub dropped on the boaster and "settled" him. And so they went on talk-talk-talking. Meantime, the thing that was running in my mind was, "Now,

if my ears hear aright, I have not only to get the names of all the towns and islands and bends, and so on, by heart, but I must even get up a warm personal acquaintanceship with every old snag and one-limbed cottonwood and obscure wood-pile that ornaments the banks of this river for twelve hundred miles; and more than that, I must actually know where these things are in the dark, unless these guests are gifted with eyes that can pierce through two miles of solid blackness. I wish the piloting business was in Jericho and I had never thought of it."

At dusk Mr. Bixby tapped the big bell three times (the signal to land), and the captain emerged from his drawing-room in the forward end of the "texas," and looked up inquiringly. Mr. Bixby said:

"We will lay up here all night, captain."

"Very well, sir."

That was all. The boat came to shore and was tied up for the night. It seemed to me a fine thing that the pilot could do as he pleased, without asking so grand a captain's permission. I took my supper and went immediately to bed, discouraged by my day's observations and experiences. My late voyage's note-booking was but a confusion of meaningless names. It had tangled me all up in a knot every time I had looked at it in the daytime. I now hoped for respite in sleep; but no, it reveled all through my head till sunrise again, a frantic and tireless nightmare.

Next morning I felt pretty rusty and low-spirited. We went booming along, taking a good many chances, for we were anxious to "get out of the river" (as getting out to Cairo was called) before night should overtake us. But Mr. Bixby's partner, the other pilot, presently grounded the boat, and we lost so much time getting her off that it was plain the darkness would overtake us a good long way above the mouth. This was a great misfortune, especially to certain of our visiting pilots, whose boats would have to wait for their return, no matter how long that might be. It sobered the pilot-house talk a good deal. Coming up-stream, pilots did not mind low water or any kind of darkness; nothing stopped them but fog. But down-stream work was different; a boat was too nearly helpless, with a stiff current pushing behind her; so it was not customary to run down-stream at night in low water.

There seemed to be one small hope, however: if we could get through the intricate and dangerous Hat Island crossing before night, we could venture the rest, for we would have plainer sailing and bet-

ter water. But it would be insanity to attempt Hat Island at night. So there was a deal of looking at watches all the rest of the day, and a constant ciphering upon the speed we were making; Hat Island was the eternal subject; sometimes hope was high and sometimes we were delayed in a bad crossing, and down it went again. For hours all hands lay under the burden of this suppressed excitement; it was even communicated to me, and I got to feeling so solicitous about Hat Island, and under such an awful pressure of responsibility, that I wished I might have five minutes on shore to draw a good, full, relieving breath, and start over again. We were standing no regular watches. Each of our pilots ran such portions of the river as he had run when coming up-stream, because of his greater familiarity with it; but both remained in the pilot-house constantly.

An hour before sunset Mr. Bixby took the wheel, and Mr. W. stepped aside. For the next thirty minutes every man held his watch in his hand and was restless, silent, and uneasy. At last somebody said, with a doomful sigh:

"Well, yonder's Hat Island—and we can't make it."

All the watches closed with a snap, everybody sighed and muttered something about its being "too bad, too bad—ah, if we could *only* have got here half an hour sooner!" and the place was thick with the atmosphere of disappointment. Some started to go out, but loitered, hearing no bell-tap to land. The sun dipped behind the horizon, the boat went on. Inquiring looks passed from one guest to another; and one who had his hand on the door-knob and had turned it, waited, then presently took away his hand and let the knob turn back again. We bore steadily down the bend. More looks were exchanged, and nods of surprised admiration—but no words. Insensibly the men drew together behind Mr. Bixby, as the sky darkened and one or two dim stars came out. The dead silence and sense of waiting became oppressive. Mr. Bixby pulled the cord, and two deep, mellow notes from the big bell floated off on the night. Then a pause, and one more note was struck. The watchman's voice followed, from the hurricane-deck:

"Labboard lead, there! Stabboard lead!"

The cries of the leadsmen began to rise out of the distance, and were gruffly repeated by the word-passers on the hurricane-deck.

"M-a-r-k three! M-a-r-k three! Quarter-less-three! Half twain! Quarter twain! M-a-r-k twain! Quarter-less—"

Mr. Bixby pulled two bell-ropes, and was answered by faint jin-

glings far below in the engine-room, and our speed slackened. The steam began to whistle through the gauge-cocks. The cries of the leadsmen went on—and it is a weird sound, always, in the night. Every pilot in the lot was watching now, with fixed eyes, and talking under his breath. Nobody was calm and easy but Mr. Bixby. He would put his wheel down and stand on a spoke, and as the steamer swung into her (to me) utterly invisible marks—for we seemed to be in the midst of a wide and gloomy sea—he would meet and fasten her there. Out of the murmur of half-audible talk, one caught a coherent sentence now and then—such as:

"There; she's over the first reef all right!"

After a pause, another subdued voice:

"Her stern's coming down just *exactly* right, by *George!*"

"Now she's in the marks; over she goes!"

Somebody else muttered:

"Oh, it was done beautiful—*beautiful!*"

Now the engines were stopped altogether, and we drifted with the current. Not that I could see the boat drift, for I could not, the stars being all gone by this time. This drifting was the dismalest work; it held one's heart still. Presently I discovered a blacker gloom than that which surrounded us. It was the head of the island. We were closing right down upon it. We entered its deeper shadow, and so imminent seemed the peril that I was likely to suffocate; and I had the strongest impulse to do *something*, anything, to save the vessel. But still Mr. Bixby stood by his wheel, silent, intent as a cat, and all the pilots stood shoulder to shoulder at his back.

"She'll not make it!" somebody whispered.

The water grew shoaler and shoaler, by the leadsman's cries, till it was down to:

"Eight-and-a-half! E-i-g-h-t feet! E-i-g-h-t feet! Seven-and—"

Mr. Bixby said warningly through his speaking-tube to the engineer:

"Stand by, now!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Seven-and-a-half! Seven feet! *Six*-and—"

We touched bottom! Instantly Mr. Bixby set a lot of bells ringing, shouted through the tube, "*Now*, let her have it—every ounce you've got!" then to his partner, "Put her hard down! snatch her! snatch her!" The boat rasped and ground her way through the sand, hung upon the apex of disaster a single tremendous instant, and then over

she went! And such a shout as went up at Mr. Bixby's back never loosened the roof of a pilot-house before!

There was no more trouble after that. Mr. Bixby was a hero that night; and it was some little time, too, before his exploit ceased to be talked about by river-men.

Fully to realize the marvelous precision required in laying the great steamer in her marks in that murky waste of water, one should know that not only must she pick her intricate way through snags and blind reefs, and then shave the head of the island so closely as to brush the overhanging foliage with her stern, but at one place she must pass almost within arm's reach of a sunken and invisible wreck that would snatch the hull timbers from under her if she should strike it, and destroy a quarter of a million dollars' worth of steamboat and cargo in five minutes, and maybe a hundred and fifty human lives into the bargain.

The last remark I heard that night was a compliment to Mr. Bixby, uttered in soliloquy and with unction by one of our guests. He said:

"By the Shadow of Death, but he's a lightning pilot!"

* * *

Commentary and Questions

"A Daring Deed," a chapter from *Life on the Mississippi*, is part of Mark Twain's account of his experiences as a cub-pilot. Those experiences he ties together by contrasting his bright dream of enjoying the romantic life of a steamboat pilot with his bitter realization of how hard it is to become one. The three chapters that precede and the two that follow this one are given on pp. 18-41. This chapter contains an example of the simplest kind of narration, an incident recounted to illustrate that Mr. Bixby is "a lightning pilot."

1. The details given on pp. 611-613 emphasize the contrast between the experienced pilots' knowledge of the river and the cub-pilot's lack of knowledge. With relation to the incident itself does the presence of the "river inspectors" serve a more immediate purpose?

2. The high point or climax of the incident is given on p. 615. Are the details given on p. 616 necessary? Could any of this information have been given earlier?

Suggestion for Writing

Select an incident within your field of experience which demonstrated that some person had greater capability or skill or courage

than even his friends had realized. Tell this incident in a simple narration, paying some attention to the development of suspense, and letting the events of the story speak for themselves with a minimum of explanation.

The Open Window[*]

by SAKI (H. H. MUNRO)

"My aunt will be down presently, Mr. Nuttel," said a very self-possessed young lady of fifteen; "in the meantime you must try and put up with me."

Framton Nuttel endeavoured to say the correct something which should duly flatter the niece of the moment without unduly discounting the aunt that was to come. Privately he doubted more than ever whether these formal visits on a succession of total strangers would do much towards helping the nerve cure which he was supposed to be undergoing.

"I know how it will be," his sister had said when he was preparing to migrate to this rural retreat; "you will bury yourself down there and not speak to a living soul, and your nerves will be worse than ever from moping. I shall just give you letters of introduction to all the people I know there. Some of them, as far as I can remember, were quite nice."

Framton wondered whether Mrs. Sappleton, the lady to whom he was presenting one of the letters of introduction, came into the nice division.

"Do you know many of the people round here?" asked the niece, when she judged that they had had sufficient silent communion.

"Hardly a soul," said Framton. "My sister was staying here, at the

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[*] From *The Short Stories of Saki* by H. H. Munro. Copyright 1930 by The Viking Press, Inc. Reprinted by permission of The Viking Press, Inc., New York (publishers in the U. S.A.), and John Lane The Bodley Head Ltd., London (publishers in Great Britain).

rectory, you know, some four years ago, and she gave me letters of introduction to some of the people here."

He made the last statement in a tone of distinct regret.

"Then you know practically nothing about my aunt?" pursued the self-possessed young lady.

"Only her name and address," admitted the caller. He was wondering whether Mrs. Sappleton was in the married or widowed state. An undefinable something about the room seemed to suggest masculine habitation.

"Her great tragedy happened just three years ago," said the child; "that would be since your sister's time."

"Her tragedy?" asked Framton; somehow in this restful country spot tragedies seemed out of place.

"You may wonder why we keep that window wide open on an October afternoon," said the niece, indicating a large French window that opened on to a lawn.

"It is quite warm for the time of the year," said Framton; "but has that window got anything to do with the tragedy?"

"Out through that window, three years ago to a day, her husband and her two young brothers went off for their day's shooting. They never came back. In crossing the moor to their favourite snipe-shooting ground they were all three engulfed in a treacherous piece of bog. It had been that dreadful wet summer, you know, and places that were safe in other years gave way suddenly without warning. Their bodies were never recovered. That was the dreadful part of it." Here the child's voice lost its self-possessed note and became falteringly human. "Poor aunt always thinks that they will come back some day, they and the little brown spaniel that was lost with them, and walk in at that window just as they used to do. That is why the window is kept open every evening till it is quite dusk. Poor dear aunt, she has often told me how they went out, her husband with his white waterproof coat over his arm, and Ronnie, her youngest brother, singing, 'Bertie, why do you bound?' as he always did to tease her, because she said it got on her nerves. Do you know, sometimes on still, quiet evenings like this, I almost get a creepy feeling that they will all walk in through that window—"

She broke off with a little shudder. It was a relief to Framton when the aunt bustled into the room with a whirl of apologies for being late in making her appearance.

"I hope Vera has been amusing you?" she said.

"She has been very interesting," said Framton.

"I hope you don't mind the open window," said Mrs. Sappleton briskly; "my husband and brothers will be home directly from shooting, and they always come in this way. They've been out for snipe in the marshes today, so they'll make a fine mess over my poor carpets. So like you men-folk, isn't it?"

She rattled on cheerfully about the shooting and the scarcity of birds, and the prospects for duck in the winter. To Framton it was all purely horrible. He made a desperate but only partially successful effort to turn the talk on to a less ghastly topic; he was conscious that his hostess was giving him only a fragment of her attention, and her eyes were constantly straying past him to the open window and the lawn beyond. It was certainly an unfortunate coincidence that he should have paid his visit on this tragic anniversary.

"The doctors agree in ordering me complete rest, an absence of mental excitement, and avoidance of anything in the nature of violent physical exercise," announced Framton, who laboured under the tolerably wide-spread delusion that total strangers and chance acquaintances are hungry for the least detail of one's ailments and infirmities, their cause and cure. "On the matter of diet they are not so much in agreement," he continued.

"No?" said Mrs. Sappleton, in a voice which only replaced a yawn at the last moment. Then she suddenly brightened into alert attention—but not to what Framton was saying.

"Here they are at last!" she cried. "Just in time for tea, and don't they look as if they were muddy up to the eyes!"

Framton shivered slightly and turned towards the niece with a look intended to convey sympathetic comprehension. The child was staring out through the open window with dazed horror in her eyes. In a chill shock of nameless fear Framton swung round in his seat and looked in the same direction.

In the deepening twilight three figures were walking across the lawn towards the window; they all carried guns under their arms, and one of them was additionally burdened with a white coat hung over his shoulders. A tired brown spaniel kept close at their heels. Noiselessly they neared the house, and then a hoarse young voice chanted out of the dusk: "I said, Bertie, why do you bound?"

Framton grabbed wildly at his stick and hat; the hall-door, the gravel-drive, and the front gate were dimly noted stages in his head-

long retreat. A cyclist coming along the road had to run into the hedge to avoid imminent collision.

"Here we are, my dear," said the bearer of the white mackintosh, coming in through the window; "fairly muddy, but most of it's dry. Who was that who bolted out as we came up?"

"A most extraordinary man, a Mr. Nuttel," said Mrs. Sappleton; "could only talk about his illnesses, and dashed off without a word of good-bye or apology when you arrived. One would think he had seen a ghost."

"I expect it was the spaniel," said the niece calmly; "he told me he had a horror of dogs. He was once hunted into a cemetery somewhere on the banks of the Ganges by a pack of pariah dogs, and had to spend the night in a newly dug grave with the creatures snarling and grinning and foaming just above him. Enough to make any one lose their nerve."

Romance at short notice was her specialty.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

1. In a sense both "The Open Window" and "A Daring Deed" might be called incidents used to illustrate a point about one of the characters. If "A Daring Deed" illustrates that Mr. Bixby is "a lightning pilot," what might be said about "The Open Window"? But would such a statement give an accurate impression of what Saki has done here? As you read "The Open Window," who seems to be the central character?

2. The story may be divided into four sections: (1) the conversation between Framton Nuttel and the niece, Vera; (2) the conversation between Framton Nuttel and the aunt, Mrs. Sappleton; (3) the return of the hunting party; (4) the conversation after Framton Nuttel's departure. Does the last section seem anticlimactic? Could information given here have been introduced earlier?

3. Is it merely the return of the hunting party that causes Framton Nuttel to flee? Has Saki made you feel that you would have acted as Mr. Nuttel did had you been in his place?

4. As you were reading the story did you pay unusual attention to Vera's question, on p. 618, "Then you know practically nothing about my aunt?"

5. The conversation between Mrs. Sappleton and Framton Nuttel is an example of Saki's skillful handling of detail. Just before her

aunt's arrival Vera has been giving her version of the significance of the open window. Immediately after her arrival Mrs. Sappleton mentions the open window and, as Mr. Nuttel talks, she lets her eyes stray past him to the window. Analyze the introductory conversation between Vera and Mr. Nuttel for similar handling of detail.

Suggestion for Writing

Write a short narrative sketch centered around an embarrassing incident, real or imaginary.

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 bunkhouse 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.

[*] From *The Portable Steinbeck*. Copyright 1938, 1943 by John Steinbeck. Reprinted by permission of The Viking Press, Inc., New York.

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, downcast 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 check-rein, 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 mustaches. 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. "Hadn'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."

* * *

Commentary and Questions

1. Although "The Leader of the People" is the fourth part of a long story called *The Red Pony,* it is nevertheless self-contained. By the end of "The Leader of the People" each of the two main characters, Jody and Grandfather, has become aware of something for the first time. What does each learn?

2. How do the following comments and bits of conversation reveal Jody's attitude toward other characters or their attitude toward him?

(a) "'Big-Britches Jody told me'" (p. 623).

(b) "His mother mimicked—'And another lemon to make a lemonade for you'" (p. 635).

(c) "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" (p. 627).

(d) "'Well, I hope it don't rain until I kill those damn mice'" (p. 622).

3. What incidents reveal the attitude of Carl Tiflin and his wife toward each other?

4. When Steinbeck introduces Jody in the second paragraph of "The Leader of the People," he explicitly identifies him as a "little boy." Cite details used by Steinbeck to remind the reader, throughout the story, of Jody's youth.

Suggestion for Writing

Explain why you think "The Mouse Hunt" would or would not be a more appropriate title for this story.

*Children's Page**

by JOHN P. MARQUAND

It was not so long afterward when Edwina told about Old Trapper Joe, but even so, she said that it was hard to make it clear.

"You can't seem to remember what you thought when you were a kid," she said.

It was easy enough to understand what she meant. She was trying to look back on her actions as a child, although actually she did not look much like an adult even then. But she had red fingernails and a page-boy hair-do, and she had given up collecting photographs of movie stars, and her whole room had been done over with fluffy curtains, and she had a dressing table with little ruffles on it to match, and Nat, her Airedale terrier, was dead and she had got over crying about him. Her cowgirl costume and her tool chest and her chemistry set had been given away to the laundress' children, and she would be coming out next autumn.

"You see," she said, "it's awfully hard to remember. Kids do the craziest things, don't they? It's just as though I weren't the same person."

She must have been realizing that childhood is shut off from every other sort of past and not to be reached again successfully, that it was gone almost overnight with all that surrounded it—the schoolbooks, the diaries, the clay-modeling set, the Little Colonel books, and the

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china animals. She could look back on it already as though it had receded to an enormous distance.

"Of course," she said, "I wasn't the same sort of a person I am now, and besides, it was an awfully long time ago."

It was amusing to hear her speak of time when she had lived so little of it; but then, it was not time she was thinking of so much as space. The space was great enough, though it was only about three years before that Edwina—a name that she used to detest—had joined Old Trapper Joe and the Pioneer Trail Boys around the Old Roundup Campfire in the Outdoor Boys' page.

"It's awfully lousy of you to bring that up now," she said. "It was when I wanted to be like Bill, and I don't know why I ever wanted to be like Bill."

And when she tried to get back into that world again, she could remember details, but she was right—she was not the same person.

"It's funny," she said. "You always want something, don't you, when you're a child, worse than you ever will again, don't you think? And you can't tell anyone about it—at least I couldn't. You could only sit and think and wish and wish. And now it's awfully queer. I really don't know why I wanted it at all. It must be that a time comes, all of a sudden, when you grow up. Maybe that's what happened at father's office, and when I met Trapper Joe."

The trouble was that Edwina could not express herself when she was thirteen. It was impossible in those days to carry on an intelligent conversation with grownups, because sooner or later you ran into a wall of smiling incomprehension. It was better with her brother, but it was not highly satisfactory either. Once they had both hated to go to dancing school, but now Bill actually wanted to go and dance with girls, and his wrists were growing out of his sleeves, and he listened to love songs on the radio.

When she went into his room late on the afternoon of the day when her trouble with Trapper Joe started, Bill was standing by the bureau, gazing into his mirror. He had found a tin of talcum powder somewhere, and he was applying a little of the contents gently to his nose.

"What's the matter with your nose?" Edwina asked.

"You ought to knock when you come in here," Bill told her.

Edwina stood on one leg and rubbed the toe of her other foot up and down her calf.

"Oh, nuts!" she said.

"Don't say that," Bill told her. "It isn't ladylike."

"Lots of girls aren't ladies," Edwina said. "There was Joan of Arc."

Bill looked at his image in the mirror and did not answer.

"There was Joan of Arc," Edwina said more loudly. "And girls are soldiers in the Russian army, lots of them."

"The Russians are all lousy," Bill said.

"How do you know so much?" Edwina asked.

"Don't bother me," Bill said. "I'm busy. And if you could be a soldier, they wouldn't take you in. You're too fat."

"Anyway," Edwina said, "I'm not going to be a lady."

She heard the front hall door slam downstairs and she knew it would be her mother back from bridge. Her mother would undoubtedly ask why she was not outdoors playing in the fresh air on such a nice afternoon. Edwina would answer that there was nothing to do outdoors, and her mother would say, "Do? There is everything in the world to do."

Nevertheless, she went down to the living room, where her mother already was moving restlessly about, putting books squarely on the table, examining the cigarette boxes and straightening the ornaments on the mantelpiece. Her mother looked heavy and contented, without a problem in the world, and she said just what Edwina thought she would.

"Why, Edwina," she said, "what on earth are you doing, moping in the house on such a lovely day? Now, don't tell me you haven't anything to do. You have your scooter."

Edwina winced, because she was too old for a scooter and her mother should have known it.

"Say, mom," she said.

"Call me anything you want," her mother told her, "but don't call me 'mom.'"

Edwina stood with her hands locked behind her, her stomach protruding and her legs wide apart.

"Then why don't you call me Eddie, and not Edwina?" she asked. "I hate 'Edwina.'"

"Why, darling," her mother began, "your dress is too short, and don't stand like that—" And then the telephone began ringing out in the hall.

Edwina sat down heavily on the sofa and picked up the morning paper. "Hello," she cooed to herself, "hello," and she made a face.

She turned quickly to the comic strips and the children's page while she lay there listening. The inflection of her mother's voice indicated that she was talking to someone whom she did not know very well, but to whom she particularly wished to be agreeable.

"Oh, nuts," Edwina muttered to herself. "Nuts."

"Why, yes," she heard her mother say. . . . "Why, that sounds perfectly lovely. . . . Oh, no, she'd adore to do it. Why, she's right in the house now, lolling on the sofa, complaining she has nothing to do. Edwina would really adore to."

The determined eagerness in her mother's voice indicated that it would be something that Edwina would not adore to do at all. She was sure of it when her mother returned, because she did not take up the subject directly.

"Why, Edwina!" she said. "Take your feet off the sofa and pull your dress down. You're much too old to slump like that."

Edwina swung her feet off the sofa slowly and folded the newspaper.

"What was it I'd adore to do?" she asked.

"Oh," her mother said, "that was Mrs. Percival—Susie Percival's mother. Don't make up a face like that, dear. Mrs. Percival is getting a little group of Susie's special friends together. There is a French lady, Madame de Lille—"

"Cripes, mother!" Edwina said. "It's just French, French, French!"

"Now, darling," her mother said, "I don't believe you realize how difficult you make things for others. I wonder if you realize that you try to oppose nearly everything that we try to do for you. Your father speaks about it and Miss Yancy has, at school. Here I spend all my time, and so does your father, in trying to think of ways to make you happy, and yet, before I tell you what it is, you take the attitude that you won't like it."

"Well, then," Edwina asked, "what is it?"

"Darling," her mother said, "it's a sewing circle. Madame de Lille is going to teach you embroidery."

Edwina rocked back and forth on her heels. Inside she felt cold and determined in a solitary struggle against injustice.

"Well, I won't do it," she said. "I don't want to learn to sew—not ever."

"Edwina," her mother said, "I'll have to speak to father."

"All right," Edwina said, "but I won't do it."

"But why?" her mother said. "Look at me and try to tell me, dear.

Why can't you be happy? Why can't you be like other little girls?"

Edwina felt her voice choking in her throat. In a moment she would cry, and she did not want to cry.

"You don't care what I want to do," Edwina answered. "And I won't do that. And anyway, I don't believe that I'm your child."

"Why, Edwina," her mother said, "what on earth are you talking about? Whose child could you be?"

The idea had not been new to her. It would have explained everything if she could have proved some accident of birth.

"Anyway," Edwina answered, "I don't believe I'm yours."

"Edwina," her mother answered, "I think you'd better go upstairs to your room."

Edwina turned toward the door blindly, because her eyes were filled with tears. "I won't go into any sissy sewing class!" she shouted. "I'd rather go to hell!"

"Edwina!" she heard her mother calling after her. "Come back here, Edwina!"

Now that she had used the word, she knew that she would never be quite the same again. In a way, it was significant and appalling that a single expletive could change her so that she would never grow up to be a lady. She continued running up the stairs, because she was afraid to return and face the fact. She seemed to be running away from herself and from everything she had known, but when she was at the end of the first flight, she turned and shouted back her final thought.

"I'm not your child," she shouted, "and I'd rather go to hell than sew!"

Then she ran up the second flight into her own room and slammed the door, and listened for a moment, afraid that she might be followed, but there were no footsteps on the stairs below. She was alone in her own room, every corner of which was quiet, sorrowfully, rebukingly still. She stood there, listening in the silence, with the morning paper still clasped in her hand.

Edwina had occupied that room at the head of the stairs on the second floor ever since she had been old enough to do without a nurse, and each year it had kept growing and changing with her. The bed had changed from a white-enameled child's bed to a maple camp bed with a canopy, given her last Christmas. The painted bureau with rabbits and Mother Goose scenes was gone with the dolls and the doll's house upstairs in the attic, but the china animals which she

had been collecting since she was very young, and all the souvenirs which relatives and friends of the family had brought her from Florida and Europe, were still on top of her bookcase and on top of her new bureau. Then there were all the books which had been given her, and her stamp collection and her picture of Rosa Bonheur's Horse Fair and her fishing rod and her tennis racket and the slingshot she had made. The room had the hopeless appearance which it always had when she went up there to cry—a dumb, pathetic sort of helplessness which did not do much good. Her stamp album was on her little table by the window and her schoolbooks lay on top of it. Everything was waiting, but nothing there could help.

A year or so before, when she went up to her room to cry, she used to think of the stories she had read of other girls who cried. She used to hope in those days for an apparition of a kind fairy or a dwarf who would ask her what the matter was, but none of them had ever appeared and they would not now. She kept wondering why she did not cry and get it over with, for if she had cried, it might have been all finished; instead she only felt a deep sense of wrong and of personal insult, so deep that nothing was left but to do something desperate and terrible. At first she wanted to break something, but there was nothing that she cared to break, and then she thought of cutting off her hair, and perhaps she might have, if she had not noticed that she was still holding the newspaper.

It was the same as any paper, always dull, except for the comic page, and she was angry enough to tear it to pieces. In fact, she was about to do it when she saw a picture which made her stop—of a man in buckskin breeches with a hat like Daniel Boone's, and beneath it, in large type, she read:

> Old Trapper Joe calls red-blooded pioneer boys for the Old Roundup Campfire Contest. A big prize—your own air gun—a chance to talk over the radio. Here, boys, is all you have to do, if you have red blood and a love of the adventurous out-of-doors. Clip the coupon at the bottom of this page before you forget it and send it in to Old Trapper Joe and spin a yarn with him, just as though you were telling it around the campfire after a hard day's hike. Tell him some out-of-door adventure which you have faced, some wild animal you have seen, or just some outdoor project. The best yarn gives you an air rifle and a chance to swap another yarn with Trapper Joe himself in our own broad-

casting studio. Come ahead, boys, and don't be shy. Get out a piece of paper now and write a yarn for Trapper Joe.

As soon as Edwina read it, she must have made up her mind. At the time, the action which she contemplated seemed so natural that she did not give it a second thought. She sat down and found her English-composition pad and picked up a pencil.

"Dear Trapper Joe," she wrote, "last summer, on our canoe trip, my Indian guide and I had quite an adventure—"

She had never been on a canoe trip and she had never seen an Indian guide, but under the circumstances it did not seem to matter. Nothing, as she continued writing, seemed to matter, for she was out of her room, a thousand miles away.

"His name was Tom Big Bear," she wrote, "a very strong, reliable, good-natured Indian. Of course, I am still young, but my father has always been most anxious for me to learn to handle a canoe properly in white water, and last summer Tom Big Bear used to teach me until I got to be pretty good at it. Of course, it takes a lot of strength and I don't know that many boys here in the city have had my opportunity, so that's why I should like to spin a yarn about it. Well, one day Tom Big Bear and I started out from my father's camp in our canoe, to go and look at an old gold mine which was a hundred miles away. Before evening we shot two rapids, and it was beginning to get pretty dark and we came into a lake with tall dark spruce trees around the shore, and when we rounded a bend Tom Big Bear gave a grunt. A big bull moose was swimming toward us right across the lake. 'Tom,' I said, 'let's catch him.'" . . .

She had never realized before that writing could almost be like talking, or that all the things in the back of her mind could go so easily down on paper. When she was writing, it was all true; more definitely true than anything which had happened to her all that year. It was growing dusk and Tom Big Bear stood beside her, heavy and slightly greasy and very faithful.

"Tom," she wrote, "always smelled greasy, but he was my best friend in the woods."

Then she wrote a title on top of the paper: "My Yarn About the Big Bull Moose."

Then she paused for an instant, but not for long, and wrote, "By Bill Knowlton, 546 Willow Drive." It did not seem wrong to her at the time to use her brother's name. She folded the paper carefully

and found an envelope in her stamp album which had contained paper hinges, and addressed it to Old Trapper Joe, Box 62, and the street and number in the city. She was sealing the letter when she heard the front door slam. The noise brought her back from the woods at last, back from the white water. Trapper Joe was gone, and she knew that her father had come home.

She was able, when she opened her door a crack, to hear the rise and fall of voices in the living room. First she could hear her mother, high, half excited, half querulous, telling exactly what had happened.

"I don't know what's come over her," Edwina heard her say. "I certainly can't remember ever having behaved that way. I honestly wonder if we shouldn't take her to some psychiatrist. You needn't look like that, Charles. You know perfectly well it might very well be something—some abnormality. Now, Charles, you remember your own sister, Josie—"

"Now, Nell," she heard her father say, "it's all a phase."

"I know what you're going to say," she heard her mother answer. "I have the children all day, and then you come home and say they'll grow out of it."

"My goodness, Nell," she heard her father answer, "what difference does a sewing circle make? Don't tell me what to say to her. I've always got on all right with the kid."

Then, a minute later, she heard his step, slow and heavy, on the stairs. Her father was puffing slightly when he got up to her room. He was frowzily dressed and pale and tired, a rather short, fattish man who was growing bald, not tall and strong and greasy like Tom Big Bear, the Indian.

"Hello, kid," he said. "There seems to have been a little trouble downstairs, hasn't there? I've just been talking to your mother. If you don't want to sew, you don't have to."

He looked around the room and picked up Edwina's slingshot and tried the elastic on it awkwardly. He seemed to find it hard to say anything else. He put the slingshot down and walked over to the china animals on her bureau. He picked up one or two of them and examined them clumsily and diffidently.

"Yes," he added, "you don't have to. You'll have to do a lot of things that you don't want to later on. I remember when I was a kid."

It seemed impossible that he could remember or that he could ever have been young, and though Edwina tried, she could not believe it.

"When I was a kid I wanted to be a street cleaner with a broom and a galvanized ashcan on wheels." He smiled faintly, and then he said again, "It's all right. You don't have to sew if you don't want to, but I wouldn't say you'd rather go to hell. Now go and get washed and come downstairs to supper." Then he put his hand diffidently on her shoulder. "My," he said, "you're getting to be a big fat girl."

"Dad," she asked him, "were you ever out camping in a canoe where there were moose and Indians?"

"No," he answered. "Lord, no. The last time I was in a canoe I took your mother in one before we were married, and I darned near tipped it over. What makes you think I was ever in a canoe with Indians?"

"I don't know," Edwina said, "I was just asking."

He was trying to be friendly, in a hopeless, awkward way, as he always had tried, but Edwina could only feel that they were not related, that this half-pathetic, shabby man could not possibly be her father.

"Come on," her father said. "Come on. Supper's ready, and remember to tell mother you're sorry."

She could tell her, but she was not sorry about anything. She felt a strange elation, a sense of being different from everyone in the house —nobler, finer, braver.

She ran ahead downstairs and opened the front door.

"Here," her father called, "wait a minute. Where are you going?"

"I'll be right back," she answered. "I've just got to mail a letter."

She did not tell anyone about it, not even her best friend, Delfrieda Bush, who had buck teeth and wore glasses. In fact, the whole matter came near to skipping Edwina's mind, since she had developed a defeatest attitude about answering contests in magazines and newspapers. She had entered two puzzle contests previously, one to win a Shetland pony and the other to win a free trip to San Francisco, and in each of these her efforts had been ignored. She had also collected twenty soap wrappers and had sent them in with a jingle, the two first lines of which had been supplied to all competitors:

There was an old man who hoped,
Once he got himself thoroughly soaped—

But she had heard nothing from this either, nor had she heard anything from a five-thousand-dollar prize contest which sought the

name of a new tooth powder. Later she thought that this may have been the reason why she sent in her yarn to Trapper Joe and signed it with Bill's name. She was certain there was actually no basis of belief that anything would happen.

Yet it happened four days later, right at breakfast in the morning. Her father had just left for the office and Edwina had nearly finished her cereal, and the bus that took her to Miss Yancy's Day School would be waiting at the corner in five minutes. Bill had not come down yet, because Bill was always late.

"Bill," her mother was calling, "if you don't come down, you won't have time for any breakfast."

Edwina put some more cream on her cereal and picked up the paper that lay by her father's vacant chair.

"Edwina," she heard her mother say, "you look a little pale, dear. Has anything disagreed with you?"

Before she answered, the words on the children's page were still floating before her eyes.

> Bill Knowlton, lucky boy picked by Trapper Joe as yarn winner. Well, boys, here's the news. Bill Knowlton, of Willow Drive, gets Trapper Joe's air rifle, and that's not all. He'll be with us himself tomorrow night to tell us in his own words at the Old Roundup Campfire how he caught the old bull moose, and that's not the only honor that's coming to Bill either. The photographers will be out to his house this afternoon to take his picture, so you can see for yourselves what Bill is like. Is Bill a lucky boy, or isn't he? You ask Trapper Joe. "There's a boy who knows the open spaces," Trapper Joe tells us, "a boy who will be a he-man someday, a he-man with the grit of the old pioneers, a boy with the old frontier courage and resource, a boy who knows and loves the woods. . . ."

"Bill," she heard her mother saying, "you're awfully late."

Bill was running downstairs, putting on his coat.

"Edwina," she heard her mother say, "aren't you feeling well?"

Edwina found herself walking from the dining room as though she were walking on a cloud, dreamily and unsubstantially.

"Something didn't agree with me," she said. "I'm feeling sort of sick."

She had never experienced such a sensation, as though nothing beneath her or around her were exactly real. She had been frightened

before, but this was beyond actual fright. She had a fleeting idea that the police would certainly come and that they would take her somewhere.

"If you're not really well, dear—" her mother was saying.

"She's always like that," said Bill, "when she doesn't want to go to school."

His voice made her look at him with sudden hope. Bill was leaning over his cereal dish, eating rapidly, and the sight of Bill made everything seem tangible. If she could get out-of-doors, if she could wait and talk to Bill—

"I'm okay," she said. "So long."

She went into the hall and put on her coat and picked up her books and purse, surprised that she remembered every detail so clearly. Then she slammed the front door behind her and ran down the path toward the syringa bush near the yard gate, slipped behind the bush quickly and stood there waiting. It was a plan which she had often contemplated in her darkest moods—that of hiding while the school bus went by. She had never realized that it would be surprisingly easy. The bus simply came to the corner, paused and went away without her—without a question, as though she did not matter. Of course, there would be trouble about it later, but the trouble would not be important if only she could see Bill. In just a minute he came down the path on a run, but he stopped when she came out from behind the syringa bush. Edwina believed later that she must have realized at once that Bill would not be any sort of help. He was not the sort of big brother she had read about. He was nothing but a very messy-looking sort of boy, too large for his clothes, with egg on the corner of his mouth.

"Say," Bill said, "didn't you see your bus?"

Edwina had made up the proper sort of speech for a girl in trouble to make to her big brother.

"Bill," she said, "I'm in a great deal of trouble, and you've got to help me. You will help me, won't you, Bill?" She said it frankly, with just the right note of gentle appeal.

"Come on," said Bill. "Don't play games. Wait till mom finds out you didn't take the bus."

There were a number of things that she wished to answer, but she did not say them.

"Bill," she said, "I won the Trapper Joe contest, and I had to put

a boy's name on it and I used your name, and you've got to help me. Bill, won't you say you did it? Please?"

It had always seemed to her that Bill was stupid, and now she knew he was.

"I haven't got time to play games," he said. "I'm late. I'm in a hurry."

"It's here," she answered, and she held out the paper. "I'll give you the air rifle and they're coming to take your photograph."

She watched Bill's face as he read, because she had some idea that he might like it, but he simply stood there with the paper in his hand, staring at it.

"It will be a secret," she said. "I won't tell. Everyone will think you did it, and I'll give you something else. I'll give you—"

But Bill had found his voice before she could finish. "So that's what you've done!" he shouted at her. "You've put my name on the children's page!"

"But, Bill," she said, "I didn't know that it would happen. The photographers are coming up this afternoon. They've got to take your picture, Bill."

"Oh, no, they haven't," Bill answered. "They can't do anything like that to me! They can't put my picture on any children's page, because I'll tell them all about it. I'll tell them you've committed a forgery, and maybe they'll put you in jail."

"But, Bill—" Edwina said.

"You did it," Bill answered. "I'll tell them you forged my name."

The phrase was a new one to Edwina, but it had an ugly sound.

"Bill," she began, "I didn't mean to."

"That's all right," said Bill. "You wait till dad finds out. You wait! No one's going to do anything like that to me." Bill's voice rose in agony. "The children's page! Making me win an air rifle on the children's page!"

Bill turned and began hurrying away. She thought of calling after him, but she did not. Instead she stood still and watched him, left alone in the web of her own shame.

She had never known that anything could be so absolutely awful. It was as though she were on a beach with waves washing over her. As soon as she tried to catch her breath, as soon as she tried to think clearly, another wave would come. Yet she had to speak to someone, because it was more than she could stand alone, and the only person left was her father. It was bad enough to face the humiliation of

telling him what she had done; and she was reasonably sure, besides, that he would not think of any sensible way to help her. She remembered how he had looked at home once when a pipe had burst down cellar. He had simply stood at the head of the cellar stairs, looking down at it, and he had only said that he had not really known anything about the water system. He would certainly not know anything about Trapper Joe either. Her father had taken her to town several times to lunch and the theater, so that she knew how to reach his office from the car line, and she had twenty-five cents in her pocketbook.

He was in a law firm in one of the tallest buildings in the city, in a room with his name on the door midway down a marble corridor with other doors just alike. When Edwina got there, the lady at the desk near the elevator remembered her.

"Here's a surprise for you, Mr. Knowlton," she said.

Then she was alone with her father in his small office. Somehow he looked different from the way he did at home, leaning back in a swivel chair behind a big dark desk all covered with typewritten papers. He looked sterner and more important, but it certainly was a surprise for him to see her.

"Now, what's happened now?" was the first thing he said. "What under the sun are you doing here? Why didn't you go to school?"

Edwina started to speak and stopped, because her voice was only a squeaky whisper.

"Don't be frightened," her father said. "Tell me what's the matter," and Edwina cleared her throat and started to speak.

"It's something I did," she said. "I guess you ought to know, because you're the head of the family. It's something I wrote in the paper."

"What?" her father asked. "What paper? Don't be frightened."

"It's about Trapper Joe," she said, "in the newspaper this morning," and then, when he did not seem to understand, she spoke more loudly. "Trapper Joe—on the children's page."

"Oh," her father said. "Was that why you asked me about canoes the other night?"

"I guess I ought to tell you," Edwina said, "I did a forgery." She could not tell whether he was mad or not, as he sat there listening, because he did not say anything. He just sat looking the way he had when the water pipe had burst.

"And so you came around to me," he said. "You haven't told your

mother, have you?" Then he pressed a button on his desk, and a lady came in with a pencil and a notebook.

"Miss Jakes," he told the lady, "will you get me the morning paper, please?"

Edwina stood there resting on one foot while he read the paper very slowly. She wished he would do something, but he didn't do anything at all, not even when he finished the paper.

"Well," he said at last, "it's rather puzzling, isn't it?"

"Yes," Edwina said, "I guess so," and then her father tilted his chair forward and cleared his throat.

"You know," he said, "I've been trying to think, but I don't see that there's anything much I can do. It's one of those things that you can only do for yourself. You'll find they come up sometimes. I guess this is just between you and Trapper Joe, Edwina. I guess you've got to go and see this Trapper Joe. The newspaper building is two blocks down the street, and here's the number. You'd better see Trapper Joe and take it up with him, and then maybe you'd better come back here and see me afterward. You see, Bill was perfectly right. You shouldn't have used his name. You see it's sort of up to you, don't you?"

"Yes," Edwina said, "I guess so."

She still could not tell whether he was mad or not, but after he spoke he stood up and patted her shoulder as though he wanted to be friends.

"Now, that's the girl," he said. "Go ahead and see him."

It all seemed like a bad dream when she got there. The newspaper building was gray and smoky, with crowds on the sidewalk in front of it, reading the news on the big bulletin boards, and newsboys by the main doorway were shouting out the headlines. Their voices plunged upward, only to be lost in a roar of sound, the traffic on the street, the policemen's whistles and the rumble of printing presses somewhere underneath. The main office had a black-and-white-marble floor and a long counter. She stood by the counter for a long while without knowing what to do, until she saw a youngish bald-headed man watching her.

"Hello, sister," he said. "Are you looking for somebody?"

Edwina clenched her hands tightly and drew in her breath. "I want to speak to a man who works here," she said, "a man named Trapper Joe."

"Trapper Joe?" the bald-headed man repeated, and then he seemed to think of something, because he added, "Oh, I get it now—

the children's page. You come this way, sister. Take the elevator to the third floor and you'll see Children's Editor on the door right in front of you."

It was all like walking in a dream and it was not the way she had thought of the place at all. For one thing, no one seemed to notice or think it was strange that she should be going up in the elevator, for everyone seemed to be busy about something else. The door that had Children's Editor marked on it was wide open. It was a small stuffy room with two desks and a telephone. The two people at the desks were busy at typewriters. One was a fat, pasty-faced man in his shirt sleeves smoking a cigar, and the other was a lady in a brown tailored dress, not so well dressed as Edwina's mother. She looked thin and tired and her hair was not carefully brushed and she had a smudge on one cheek. She might have looked something like a schoolteacher if she had not been smoking a cigarette and if she had not been using lipstick. Edwina could see it was lipstick, because the cigarette butts in the ash tray beside the lady all had red smudges on them. They just sat there at their typewriters, not seeming to notice when she came in, and while she stood there the telephone on the lady's desk rang.

"Yes," the lady said, "yes." Her voice sounded short and cross, like Edwina's mother's when she was speaking to the cook. "For God's sakes, don't keep yelling for it. The page isn't closing until two o'clock."

The pale fat man looked up from his typewriter. "What's he want now?" he asked.

The lady laid down her cigarette and shrugged her shoulders. "He's just yelling for something for the machines," she answered.

Then the man saw Edwina standing in the doorway. "Are you looking for someone?" he asked.

Edwina could not believe that she was in the right place, because neither the man nor the lady looked up to their position.

"I'm looking for a man," she said. "I guess he isn't here, and I don't know what his last name is, but he's called Trapper Joe."

The pale fat man removed his cigar from the corner of his mouth and looked across the little room at the lady, and she looked at Edwina as though she did not want to be interrupted.

"Trapper Joe," the fat man said, "heh, heh! You mean the friendly old plainsman who sits with the kiddies around the campfire?"

"Yes," Edwina answered, "that's who he is, but I guess he isn't here."

"That's right," the fat man answered. "Trapper Joe isn't here. Frankly, he went out to get an ice-cream cone and to play marbles. He's funny that way. You ask Miss Lake."

"Don't be so funny yourself," Miss Lake answered, but the fat man kept on smiling.

"He's just stepped out," he said. "He's never around when you want him."

Edwina sighed. "Then I guess I'd better wait for him," she said. "There's something that I want to tell him about."

There was a moment's silence, and then the lady spoke more pleasantly. "Perhaps you can tell us and we can tell him. He's going to be gone for quite a while, but Mr. Hammel and I are working for him and we can give him any message."

Edwina did not want to explain to everyone the thing that she had to say. It would be hard enough to tell it to Trapper Joe.

"I guess I'd better wait," she said. "I guess he'll want to know. It's something pretty important."

The fat man looked across the room again at the lady. "It seems to me," the fat man said, "that Joe said he was going to be away for the rest of the day for the ball game. Isn't that so, Miss Lake?"

The lady nodded slowly. "Yes," she said, "I remember now. Trapper Joe said he was going to be out all day."

"But I've got to see him," Edwina said. "I've got to," and she tried to keep her voice from choking.

"You just tell us," the fat man said, "and we'll tell Trapper Joe."

Somehow his voice had a superior note that Edwina had noticed in other grownups' voices when they were making fun of her, but all at once the lady's voice was different.

"You leave her alone, Edgar," she said. "What's so important? I guess you'd better tell me, dear. I'm doing Trapper Joe's work today."

Edwina swallowed against a lump that was rising in her throat. She did not like the way they looked at her and she did not like the way the lady called her "dear."

"I guess I've got to tell you if he isn't here," she said. "Somebody's got to do something to stop it."

"Stop what?" the lady asked.

Edwina wished she had never come, and she wanted to go home, but once she started speaking, the words came easier.

"It's about the prize yarn," she said, "about the Indian and the canoe."

"Oh," the lady said, "about the prize story, and you came in to tell Trapper Joe how much you liked it. It was a very nice story, wasn't it?"

Edwina could feel her face growing red. Her mouth and her eyes were burning, but it was too late now not to say it.

"It was because I said I'd rather go to hell than sew," she said. "There isn't any of it true, because I wrote it."

There was a silence during which she could hear the typewriters in the hall, erasing all her words, and then she heard the fat man laugh.

And then, for some reason, Edwina began to cry, which was exactly what she had desired not to do. Nevertheless, she found herself crying so hard that she could not speak. It must have been partly that deserted sense of loneliness and partly because even to her the explanation which she was trying to make sounded absurd. The trouble was that she really knew that there was no one else in the world who could possibly understand her. There surely was no one else in the world who was deliberately trying to be someone else or who had practiced such a deceit as hers.

"Shut up, Edgar," she heard the lady say. "Shut up and close the door," and then the lady was standing beside her, opening her bag and offering her a pocket handkerchief.

"Don't cry, dear," she was saying. "It was a swell story. It was the best story anyway. And don't you mind his laughing. You mustn't cry, because you've come to just the right place. You've come to just the person who can fix everything."

Edwina took the handkerchief and blew her nose. It was the first time that she ever thought that her father might be right about anything important. In some way it did not seem so bad after what the lady had said.

"How," Edwina asked her—"how can anyone fix it?"

"Why, there are lots of ways," the lady said. "You mustn't worry. You and I will be bright enough to think of something, and I wouldn't wonder if you can have the air rifle too. You see—"

She held out the handkerchief to Edwina and told her to blow her nose again.

"You see, I do what you've done, every day, dear, and the only difference is that I get paid for it. So don't cry any more. We all have to

make believe sometimes. Trapper Joe isn't really out, and the man you hear on the radio isn't Trapper Joe. He just reads off what's given to him."

"Isn't Trapper Joe?" Edwina said.

"No," the lady answered. "Why, Trapper Joe is here right now, working on the page—what there is of him, and there isn't very much. You see, I'm Trapper Joe."

* * *

Commentary and Questions

1. Just as young Jody has become aware of something by the end of "The Leader of the People," so also thirteen-year-old Edwina becomes aware of something when she finally meets "Trapper Joe." What is it?

2. Edwina has two separate encounters with Bill, once in his room and once after breakfast on the day the winner of the prize story is announced. How do these two encounters reveal the attitude each has toward the other and the way each regards himself?

3. Edwina also has two encounters with her father, once in her own room and once in his office. In each encounter something about the father makes him lose his daughter's respect. By the end of the story does he merit her respect?

4. Do you think the father or the mother has a deeper understanding of Edwina?

5. When Edwina finally reaches the office of the Children's Editor, she cannot believe she is in the right place "because neither the man nor the lady looked up to their position." What details are given about Mr. Hammel and Miss Lake to make this statement meaningful?

6. "Children's Page" is divided into three sections: (1) the introduction of Edwina at the age of 16 (pp. 636-637); (2) an afternoon when the trouble with Trapper Joe started (pp. 637-644); (3) a morning four days later (pp. 644-653). Would the story be weakened if the first section were omitted?

7. What would be the effect if the story were told from Bill's point of view?

8. The beginning of Edwina's prize-winning story is given on p. 642. Is there anything about the style that makes it appropriate to the age of the writer? Cite examples to show that the conversation of Bill or Edwina is or is not "in character."

Suggestion for Writing

Compare the parent-child relationships in "Children's Page" and "The Leader of the People." Are you made to sympathize equally with Edwina and Jody?

By the Waters of Babylon[*]

by STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT

The north and the west and the south are good hunting ground, but it is forbidden to go east. It is forbidden to go to any of the Dead Places except to search for metal and then he who touches the metal must be a priest or the son of a priest. Afterwards, both the man and the metal must be purified. These are the rules and the laws; they are well made. It is forbidden to cross the great river and look upon the place that was the Place of the Gods—this is most strictly forbidden. We do not even say its name though we know its name. It is there that spirits live, and demons—it is there that there are the ashes of the Great Burning. These things are forbidden—they have been forbidden since the beginning of time.

My father is a priest; I am the son of a priest. I have been in the Dead Places near us, with my father—at first, I was afraid. When my father went into the house to search for the metal, I stood by the door and my heart felt small and weak. It was a dead man's house, a spirit house. It did not have the smell of man, though there were old bones in a corner. But it is not fitting that a priest's son should show fear. I looked at the bones in the shadow and kept my voice still.

Then my father came out with the metal—a good, strong piece. He looked at me with both eyes but I had not run away. He gave me the metal to hold—I took it and did not die. So he knew that I was

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[*] From *Selected Works of Stephen Vincent Benét*, published by Rinehart & Company, Inc. By permission of Brandt & Brandt. Copyright 1937 by Stephen Vincent Benét.

truly his son and would be a priest in my time. That was when I was very young—nevertheless, my brothers would not have done it, though they are good hunters. After that, they gave me the good piece of meat and the warm corner by the fire. My father watched over me—he was glad that I should be a priest. But when I boasted or wept without a reason, he punished me more strictly than my brothers. That was right.

After a time, I myself was allowed to go into the dead houses and search for metal. So I learned the ways of those houses—and if I saw bones, I was no longer afraid. The bones are light and old—sometimes they will fall into dust if you touch them. But that is a great sin.

I was taught the chants and the spells—I was taught how to stop the running of blood from a wound and many secrets. A priest must know many secrets—that was what my father said. If the hunters think we do all things by chants and spells, they may believe so—it does not hurt them. I was taught how to read in the old books and how to make the old writings—that was hard and took a long time. My knowledge made me happy—it was like a fire in my heart. Most of all, I liked to hear of the Old Days and the stories of the gods. I asked myself many questions that I could not answer, but it was good to ask them. At night, I would lie awake and listen to the wind—it seemed to me that it was the voice of the gods as they flew through the air.

We are not ignorant like the Forest People—our women spin wool on the wheel, our priests wear a white robe. We do not eat grubs from the tree, we have not forgotten the old writings, although they are hard to understand. Nevertheless, my knowledge and my lack of knowledge burned in me—I wished to know more. When I was a man at last, I came to my father and said, "It is time for me to go on my journey. Give me your leave."

He looked at me for a long time, stroking his beard, then he said at last, "Yes. It is time." That night, in the house of the priesthood, I asked for and received purification. My body hurt but my spirit was a cool stone. It was my father himself who questioned me about my dreams.

He bade me look into the smoke of the fire and see—I saw and told what I saw. It was what I have always seen—a river, and, beyond it, a great Dead Place and in it the gods walking. I have always thought about that. His eyes were stern when I told him—he was no longer my father but a priest. He said, "This is a strong dream."

"It is mine," I said, while the smoke waved and my head felt light.

They were singing the Star song in the outer chamber and it was like the buzzing of bees in my head.

He asked me how the gods were dressed and I told him how they were dressed. We know how they were dressed from the book, but I saw them as if they were before me. When I had finished, he threw the sticks three times and studied them as they fell.

"This is a very strong dream," he said. "It may eat you up."

"I am not afraid," I said and looked at him with both eyes. My voice sounded thin in my ears but that was because of the smoke.

He touched me on the breast and the forehead. He gave me the bow and the three arrows.

"Take them," he said. "It is forbidden to travel east. It is forbidden to cross the river. It is forbidden to go to the Place of the Gods. All these things are forbidden."

"All these things are forbidden," I said, but it was my voice that spoke and not my spirit. He looked at me again.

"My son," he said. "Once I had young dreams. If your dreams do not eat you up, you may be a great priest. If they eat you, you are still my son. Now go on your journey."

I went fasting, as is the law. My body hurt but not my heart. When the dawn came, I was out of sight of the village. I prayed and purified myself, waiting for a sign. The sign was an eagle. It flew east.

Sometimes signs are sent by bad spirits. I waited again on the flat rock, fasting, taking no food. I was very still—I could feel the sky above me and the earth beneath. I waited till the sun was beginning to sink. Then three deer passed in the valley, going east—they did not wind me or see me. There was a white fawn with them—a very great sign.

I followed them, at a distance, waiting for what would happen. My heart was troubled about going east, yet I knew that I must go. My head hummed with my fasting—I did not even see the panther spring upon the white fawn. But, before I knew it, the bow was in my hand. I shouted and the panther lifted his head from the fawn. It is not easy to kill a panther with one arrow but the arrow went through his eye and into his brain. He died as he tried to spring—he rolled over, tearing at the ground. Then I knew I was meant to go east—I knew that was my journey. When the night came, I made my fire and roasted meat.

It is eight suns' journey to the east and a man passes by many Dead Places. The Forest People are afraid of them but I am not.

Once I made my fire on the edge of a Dead Place at night and, next morning, in the dead house, I found a good knife, little rusted. That was small to what came afterward but it made my heart feel big. Always when I looked for game, it was in front of my arrow, and twice I passed hunting parties of the Forest People without their knowing. So I knew my magic was strong and my journey clean, in spite of the law.

Toward the setting of the eighth sun, I came to the banks of the great river. It was half-a-day's journey after I had left the god-road—we do not use the god-roads now for they are falling apart into great blocks of stone, and the forest is safer going. A long way off, I had seen the water through trees but the trees were thick. At last, I came out upon an open place at the top of a cliff. There was the great river below, like a giant in the sun. It is very long, very wide. It could eat all the streams we know and still be thirsty. Its name is Ou-dis-sun, the Sacred, the Long. No man of my tribe had seen it, not even my father, the priest. It was magic and I prayed.

Then I raised my eyes and looked south. It was there, the Place of the Gods.

How can I tell what it was like—you do not know. It was there, in the red light, and they were too big to be houses. It was there with the red light upon it, mighty and ruined. I knew that in another moment the gods would see me. I covered my eyes with my hands and crept back into the forest.

Surely, that was enough to do, and live. Surely it was enough to spend the night upon the cliff. The Forest People themselves do not come near. Yet, all through the night, I knew that I should have to cross the river and walk in the places of the gods, although the gods ate me up. My magic did not help me at all and yet there was a fire in my bowels, a fire in my mind. When the sun rose, I thought, "My journey has been clean. Now I will go home from my journey." But, even as I thought so, I knew I could not. If I went to the Place of the Gods, I would surely die, but, if I did not go, I could never be at peace with my spirit again. It is better to lose one's life than one's spirit, if one is a priest and the son of a priest.

Nevertheless, as I made the raft, the tears ran out of my eyes. The Forest People could have killed me without fight, if they had come upon me then, but they did not come. When the raft was made, I said the sayings for the dead and painted myself for death. My heart was cold as a frog and my knees like water, but the burning in my mind

would not let me have peace. As I pushed the raft from the shore, I began my death song—I had the right. It was a fine song.

"I am John, son of John," I sang. "My people are the Hill People. They are the men.
I go into the Dead Places but I am not slain.
I take the metal from the Dead Places but I am not blasted.
I travel upon the god-roads and am not afraid. E-yah! I have killed the panther, I have killed the fawn!
E-yah! I have come to the great river. No man has come there before.
It is forbidden to go east, but I have gone, forbidden to go on the great river, but I am there.
Open your hearts, you spirits, and hear my song.
Now I go to the Place of the Gods, I shall not return.
My body is painted for death and my limbs weak, but my heart is big as I go to the Place of the Gods!"

All the same, when I came to the Place of the Gods, I was afraid, afraid. The current of the great river is very strong—it gripped my raft with its hands. That was magic, for the river itself is wide and calm. I could feel evil spirits about me, in the bright morning; I could feel their breath on my neck as I was swept down the stream. Never have I been so much alone—I tried to think of my knowledge, but it was a squirrel's heap of winter nuts. There was no strength in my knowledge any more and I felt small and naked as a new-hatched bird—alone upon the great river, the servant of the gods.

Yet, after a while, my eyes were opened and I saw. I saw both banks of the river—I saw that once there had been god-roads across it, though now they were broken and fallen like broken vines. Very great they were, and wonderful and broken—broken in the time of the Great Burning when the fire fell out of the sky. And always the current took me nearer to the Place of the Gods, and the huge ruins rose before my eyes.

I do not know the customs of rivers—we are the People of the Hills. I tried to guide my raft with the pole but it spun around. I thought the river meant to take me past the Place of the Gods and out into the Bitter Water of the legends. I grew angry then—my heart felt strong. I said aloud, "I am a priest and the son of a priest!" The gods heard me—they showed me how to paddle with the pole on one side of the raft. The current changed itself—I drew near to the Place of the Gods.

When I was very near, my raft struck and turned over. I can swim in our lakes—I swam to the shore. There was a great spike of rusted metal sticking out into the river—I hauled myself up upon it and sat there, panting. I had saved my bow and two arrows and the knife I found in the Dead Place but that was all. My raft went whirling downstream toward the Bitter Water. I looked after it, and thought if it had trod me under, at least I would be safely dead. Nevertheless, when I had dried my bowstring and re-strung it, I walked forward to the Place of the Gods.

It felt like ground underfoot; it did not burn me. It is not true what some of the tales say, that the ground there burns forever, for I have been there. Here and there were the marks and stains of the Great Burning, on the ruins, that is true. But they were old marks and old stains. It is not true either, what some of our priests say, that it is an island covered with fogs and enchantments. It is not. It is a great Dead Place—greater than any Dead Place we know. Everywhere in it there are god-roads, though most are cracked and broken. Everywhere there are the ruins of the high towers of the gods.

How shall I tell what I saw? I went carefully, my strung bow in my hand, my skin ready for danger. There should have been the wailings of spirits and the shrieks of demons, but there were not. It was very silent and sunny where I had landed—the wind and the rain and the birds that drop seeds had done their work—the grass grew in the cracks of the broken stone. It is a fair island—no wonder the gods built there. If I had come there, a god, I also would have built.

How shall I tell what I saw? The towers are not all broken—here and there one still stands, like a great tree in a forest, and the birds nest high. But the towers themselves look blind, for the gods are gone. I saw a fish-hawk, catching fish in the river. I saw a little dance of white butterflies over a great heap of broken stones and columns. I went there and looked about me—there was a carved stone with cut-letters, broken in half. I can read letters but I could not understand these. They said UBTREAS. There was also the shattered image of a man or a god. It had been made of white stone and he wore his hair tied back like a woman's. His name was ASHING, as I read on the cracked half of a stone. I thought it wise to pray to ASHING, though I do not know that god.

How shall I tell what I saw? There was no smell of man left, on stone or metal. Nor were there many trees in that wilderness of stone.

There are many pigeons, nesting and dropping in the towers—the gods must have loved them, or, perhaps, they used them for sacrifices. There are wild cats that roam the god-roads, green-eyed, unafraid of man. At night they wail like demons but they are not demons. The wild dogs are more dangerous, for they hunt in a pack, but them I did not meet till later. Everywhere there are the carved stones, carved with magical numbers or words.

I went North—I did not try to hide myself. When a god or a demon saw me, then I would die, but meanwhile I was no longer afraid. My hunger for knowledge burned in me—there was so much that I could not understand. After awhile, I knew that my belly was hungry. I could have hunted for my meat, but I did not hunt. It is known that the gods did not hunt as we do—they got their food from enchanted boxes and jars. Sometimes these are still found in the Dead Places—once, when I was a child and foolish, I opened such a jar and tasted it and found the food sweet. But my father found out and punished me for it strictly, for, often, that food is death. Now, though, I had long gone past what was forbidden, and I entered the likeliest towers, looking for the food of the gods.

I found it at last in the ruins of a great temple in the mid-city. A mighty temple it must have been, for the roof was painted like the sky at night with its stars—that much I could see, though the colors were faint and dim. It went down into great caves and tunnels—perhaps they kept their slaves there. But when I started to climb down, I heard the squeaking of rats, so I did not go—rats are unclean, and there must have been many tribes of them, from the squeaking. But near there, I found food, in the heart of a ruin, behind a door that still opened. I ate only the fruits from the jars—they had a very sweet taste. There was drink, too, in bottles of glass—the drink of the gods was strong and made my head swim. After I had eaten and drunk, I slept on the top of a stone, my bow at my side.

When I woke, the sun was low. Looking down from where I lay, I saw a dog sitting on his haunches. His tongue was hanging out of his mouth; he looked as if he were laughing. He was a big dog, with a gray-brown coat, as big as a wolf. I sprang up and shouted at him but he did not move—he just sat there as if he were laughing. I did not like that. When I reached for a stone to throw, he moved swiftly out of the way of the stone. He was not afraid of me; he looked at me as if I were meat. No doubt I could have killed him with an arrow, but I did not know if there were others. Moreover, night was falling.

I looked about me—not far away there was a great, broken god-road, leading North. The towers were high enough, but not so high, and while many of the dead-houses were wrecked, there were some that stood. I went toward this god-road, keeping to the heights of the ruins, while the dog followed. When I had reached the god-road, I saw that there were others behind him. If I had slept later, they would have come upon me asleep and torn out my throat. As it was, they were sure enough of me; they did not hurry. When I went into the dead-house, they kept watch at the entrance—doubtless they thought they would have a fine hunt. But a dog cannot open a door and I knew, from the books, that the gods did not like to live on the ground but on high.

I had just found a door I could open when the dogs decided to rush. Ha! They were surprised when I shut the door in their faces—it was a good door, of strong metal. I could hear their foolish baying beyond it but I did not stop to answer them. I was in darkness—I found stairs and climbed. There were many stairs, turning around till my head was dizzy. At the top was another door—I found the knob and opened it. I was in a long small chamber—on one side of it was a bronze door that could not be opened, for it had no handle. Perhaps there was a magic word to open it but I did not have the word. I turned to the door in the opposite side of the wall. The lock of it was broken and I opened it and went in.

Within, there was a place of great riches. The god who lived there must have been a powerful god. The first room was a small anteroom—I waited there for some time, telling the spirits of the place that I came in peace and not as a robber. When it seemed to me that they had had time to hear me, I went on. Ah, what riches! Few, even, of the windows had been broken—it was all as it had been. The great windows that looked over the city had not been broken at all though they were dusty and streaked with many years. There were coverings on the floors, the colors not greatly faded, and the chairs were soft and deep. There were pictures upon the walls, very strange, very wonderful—I remember one of a bunch of flowers in a jar—if you came close to it, you could see nothing but bits of color, but if you stood away from it, the flowers might have been picked yesterday. It made my heart feel strange to look at this picture—and to look at the figure of a bird, in some hard clay, on a table and see it so like our birds. Everywhere there were books and writings, many in tongues that I could not read. The god who lived there must have been a wise god

and full of knowledge. I felt I had right there, as I sought knowledge also.

Nevertheless, it was strange. There was a washing-place but no water—perhaps the gods washed in air. There was a cooking-place but no wood, and though there was a machine to cook food, there was no place to put fire in it. Nor were there candles or lamps—there were things that looked like lamps but they had neither oil nor wick. All these things were magic, but I touched them and lived—the magic had gone out of them. Let me tell one thing to show. In the washing-place, a thing said "Hot" but it was not hot to the touch—another thing said "Cold" but it was not cold. This must have been a strong magic but the magic was gone. I do not understand—they had ways—I wish that I knew.

It was close and dry and dusty in their house of the gods. I have said the magic was gone but that is not true—it had gone from the magic things but it had not gone from the place. I felt the spirits about me, weighing upon me. Nor had I ever slept in a Dead Place before—and yet, tonight, I must sleep there. When I thought of it, my tongue felt dry in my throat, in spite of my wish for knowledge. Almost I would have gone down again and faced the dogs, but I did not.

I had not gone through all the rooms when the darkness fell. When it fell, I went back to the big room looking over the city and made fire. There was a place to make fire and a box with wood in it, though I do not think they cooked there. I wrapped myself in a floor-covering and slept in front of the fire—I was very tired.

Now I tell what is very strong magic. I woke in the midst of the night. When I woke, the fire had gone out and I was cold. It seemed to me that all around me there were whisperings and voices. I closed my eyes to shut them out. Some will say that I slept again, but I do not think that I slept. I could feel the spirits drawing my spirit out of my body as a fish is drawn on a line.

Why should I lie about it? I am a priest and the son of a priest. If there are spirits, as they say, in the small Dead Places near us, what spirits must there not be in that great Place of the Gods? And would not they wish to speak? After such long years? I know that I felt myself drawn as a fish is drawn on a line. I had stepped out of my body—I could see my body asleep in front of the cold fire, but it was not I. I was drawn to look out upon the city of the gods.

It should have been dark, for it was night, but it was not dark.

Everywhere there were lights—lines of light—circles and blurs of light—ten thousand torches would not have been the same. The sky itself was alight—you could barely see the stars for the glow in the sky. I thought to myself "This is strong magic" and trembled. There was a roaring in my ears like the rushing of rivers. Then my eyes grew used to the light and my ears to the sound. I knew that I was seeing the city as it had been when the gods were alive.

That was a sight indeed—yes, that was a sight: I could not have seen it in the body—my body would have died. Everywhere went the gods, on foot and in chariots—there were gods beyond number and counting and their chariots blocked the streets. They had turned night to day for their pleasure—they did not sleep with the sun. The noise of their coming and going was the noise of many waters. It was magic what they could do—it was magic what they did.

I looked out of another window—the great vines of their bridges were mended and the god-roads went East and West. Restless, restless, were the gods and always in motion! They burrowed tunnels under rivers—they flew in the air. With unbelievable tools they did giant works—no part of the earth was safe from them, for, if they wished for a thing, they summoned it from the other side of the world. And always, as they labored and rested, as they feasted and made love, there was a drum in their ears—the pulse of the giant city, beating and beating like a man's heart.

Were they happy? What is happiness to the gods? They were great, they were mighty, they were wonderful and terrible. As I looked upon them and their magic, I felt like a child—but a little more, it seemed to me, and they would pull down the moon from the sky. I saw them with wisdom beyond wisdom and knowledge beyond knowledge. And yet not all they did was well done—even I could see that—and yet their wisdom could not but grow until all was peace.

Then I saw their fate come upon them and that was terrible past speech. It came upon them as they walked the streets of their city. I have been in the fights with the Forest People—I have seen men die. But this was not like that. When gods war with gods, they use weapons we do not know. It was fire falling out of the sky and a mist that poisoned. It was the time of the Great Burning and the Destruction. They ran about like ants in the streets of their city—poor gods, poor gods! Then the towers began to fall. A few escaped—yes, a few. The legends tell it. But, even after the city had become a Dead Place, for many years the poison was still in the ground. I saw it happen, I

saw the last of them die. It was darkness over the broken city and I wept.

All this, I saw. I saw it as I have told it, though not in the body. When I woke in the morning, I was hungry, but I did not think first of my hunger for my heart was perplexed and confused. I knew the reason for the Dead Places but I did not see why it had happened. It seemed to me it should not have happened, with all the magic they had. I went through the house looking for an answer. There was so much in the house I could not understand—and yet I am a priest and the son of a priest. It was like being on one side of the great river, at night, with no light to show the way.

Then I saw the dead god. He was sitting in his chair, by the window, in a room I had not entered before and, for the first moment, I thought that he was alive. Then I saw the skin on the back of his hand —it was like dry leather. The room was shut, hot and dry—no doubt that had kept him as he was. At first I was afraid to approach him—then the fear left me. He was sitting looking out over the city—he was dressed in the clothes of the gods. His age was neither young nor old—I could not tell his age. But there was wisdom in his face and great sadness. You could see that he would have not run away. He had sat at his window, watching his city die—then he himself had died. But it is better to lose one's life than one's spirit—and you could see from the face that his spirit had not been lost. I knew, that, if I touched him, he would fall into dust—and yet, there was something unconquered in the face.

That is all of my story, for then I knew he was a man—I knew then that they had been men, neither gods nor demons. It is a great knowledge, hard to tell and believe. They were men—they went a dark road, but they were men. I had no fear after that—I had no fear going home, though twice I fought off the dogs and once I was hunted for two days by the Forest People. When I saw my father again, I prayed and was purified. He touched my lips and my breast, he said, "You went away a boy. You come back a man and a priest." I said, "Father, they were men! I have been in the Place of the Gods and seen it! Now slay me, if it is the law—but still I know they were men."

He looked at me out of both eyes. He said, "The law is not always the same shape—you have done what you have done. I could not have done it in my time, but you come after me. Tell!"

I told and he listened. After that, I wished to tell all the people but he showed me otherwise. He said, "Truth is a hard deer to hunt. If

you eat too much truth at once, you may die of the truth. It was not idly that our fathers forbade the Dead Places." He was right—it is better the truth should come little by little. I have learned that, being a priest. Perhaps, in the old days, they ate knowledge too fast.

Nevertheless, we make a beginning. It is not for the metal alone we go to the Dead Places now—there are the books and the writings. They are hard to learn. And the magic tools are broken—but we can look at them and wonder. At least, we make a beginning. And, when I am chief priest we shall go beyond the great river. We shall go to the Place of the Gods—the place Newyork—not one man but a company. We shall look for the images of the gods and find the god ASHING and the others—the gods LICOLN and BILTMORE and MOSES. But they were men who built the city, not gods or demons. They were men. I remember the dead man's face. They were men who were here before us. We must build again.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

1. Both Jody in "The Leader of the People" and Edwina in "Children's Page" become aware of something. But what each learns has, in a sense, a universal application: everybody in the process of growing up has had similar experiences. Do you think what John learns in "By the Waters of Babylon" is equally universal in its application?

2. Does the paragraph on p. 663 beginning "Were they happy?" fit the character and situation or does it seem to be an unwarrantable intrusion of the author's attitude? Do you think Benét has any purpose in writing "By the Waters of Babylon" other than that of holding your interest in John's daring journey? What is the significance of the title?

3. Do you think anything vital would be lost if John's father, and references to him, were omitted?

4. At what point in the story did you suddenly realize the time and setting in which it is placed? Why is the river called *Ou-dis-sun*? Why does Benét delay John's finding of the dead "god" until rather near the end of the story?

5. Here are two figures of speech used by John: "My body hurt but my spirit was a cool stone" (p. 655); "My heart was cold as a frog and my knees like water, but the burning in my mind would not let me have peace" (pp. 657-658). Find others. Are they appropriate?

6. In writing this story Benét has obviously tried to make the arrangement of words seem to be John's. What techniques has the author used to achieve this purpose? You may find it helpful to contrast this rewriting of the second paragraph of the story with the original:

> When I, the son of a priest, went first with my father to the Dead Places near us, I was afraid. When my father went into the house to search for the metal, my heart felt small and weak as I stood by the door. Although this house of a dead man, a spirit house, did not have the smell of man, there were old bones in a corner. But since it is not fitting that a priest's son should show fear, I kept my voice still when I looked at the bones in the shadow.

Suggestions for Writing

1. Aldous Huxley's novel *Ape and Essence* is also set in a future time after the virtual destruction of our civilization. Scientists from New Zealand, one of the few places not destroyed, land on the coast of California and investigate the ruins of a civilization. Suppose your town had been destroyed during, to use Benét's phrase, the Great Burning. From the ruins what conclusions do you think an exploring scientist would draw about the life of your town and the things held worthwhile by its citizens?

2. Do you agree with the statement, made in the next-to-last paragraph of "By the Waters of Babylon," that "it is better the truth should come little by little"? Is a simple Yes or No answer possible? In presenting your opinion, discuss situations in which the application of this doctrine would seem to prove or disprove the statement.

Tobermory[*]

by SAKI (H. H. MUNRO)

It was a chill, rain-washed afternoon of a late August day, that indefinite season when partridges are still in security or cold storage, and there is nothing to hunt—unless one is bounded on the north by the Bristol Channel, in which case one may lawfully gallop after fat red stags. Lady Blemley's house-party was not bounded on the north by the Bristol Channel, hence there was a full gathering of her guests round the tea-table on this particular afternoon. And, in spite of the blankness of the season and the triteness of the occasion, there was no trace in the company of that fatigued restlessness which means a dread of the pianola and a subdued hankering for auction bridge. The undisguised open-mouthed attention of the entire party was fixed on the homely negative personality of Mr. Cornelius Appin. Of all her guests, he was the one who had come to Lady Blemley with the vaguest reputation. Some one had said he was "clever," and he had got his invitation in the moderate expectation, on the part of his hostess, that some portion at least of his cleverness would be contributed to the general entertainment. Until tea-time that day she had been unable to discover in what direction, if any, his cleverness lay. He was neither a wit nor a croquet champion, a hypnotic force nor a begetter of amateur theatricals. Neither did his exterior suggest the sort of man in whom women are willing to pardon a generous measure of mental deficiency. He had subsided into mere Mr. Appin, and the Cornelius seemed a piece of transparent baptismal bluff. And now he was claiming to have launched on the world a discovery beside which the invention of gunpowder, of the printing-press, and of steam locomotion were inconsiderable trifles. Science had made bewildering strides in many

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directions during recent decades, but this thing seemed to belong to the domain of miracle rather than to scientific achievement.

"And do you really ask us to believe," Sir Wilfrid was saying, "that you have discovered a means for instructing animals in the art of human speech, and that dear old Tobermory has proved your first successful pupil?"

"It is a problem at which I have worked for the last seventeen years," said Mr. Appin, "but only during the last eight or nine months have I been rewarded with glimmerings of success. Of course I have experimented with thousands of animals, but latterly only with cats, those wonderful creatures which have assimilated themselves so marvellously with our civilization while retaining all their highly developed feral instincts. Here and there among cats one comes across an outstanding superior intellect, just as one does among the ruck of human beings, and when I made the acquaintance of Tobermory a week ago I saw at once that I was in contact with a 'Beyond-cat' of extraordinary intelligence. I had gone far along the road to success in recent experiments; with Tobermory, as you call him, I have reached the goal."

Mr. Appin concluded his remarkable statement in a voice which he strove to divest of a triumphant inflection. No one said "Rats," though Clovis's lips moved in a monosyllabic contortion which probably invoked those rodents of disbelief.

"And do you mean to say," asked Miss Resker, after a slight pause, "that you have taught Tobermory to say and understand easy sentences of one syllable?"

"My dear Miss Resker," said the wonder-worker patiently, "one teaches little children and savages and backward adults in that piecemeal fashion; when one has once solved the problem of making a beginning with an animal of highly developed intelligence one has no need for those halting methods. Tobermory can speak our language with perfect correctness."

This time Clovis very distinctly said, "Beyond-rats!" Sir Wilfrid was more polite, but equally sceptical.

"Hadn't we better have the cat in and judge for ourselves?" suggested Lady Blemley.

Sir Wilfrid went in search of the animal, and the company settled themselves down to the languid expectation of witnessing some more or less adroit drawing-room ventriloquism.

In a minute Sir Wilfrid was back in the room, his face white beneath its tan and his eyes dilated with excitement.

"By Gad, it's true!"

His agitation was unmistakably genuine, and his hearers started forward in a thrill of awakened interest.

Collapsing into an armchair he continued breathlessly: "I found him dozing in the smoking-room, and called out to him to come for his tea. He blinked at me in his usual way, and I said, 'Come on, Toby; don't keep us waiting'; and, by Gad! he drawled out in a most horribly natural voice that he'd come when he dashed well pleased! I nearly jumped out of my skin!"

Appin had preached to absolutely incredulous hearers; Sir Wilfrid's statement carried instant conviction. A Babel-like chorus of startled exclamation arose, amid which the scientist sat mutely enjoying the first fruit of his stupendous discovery.

In the midst of the clamour Tobermory entered the room and made his way with velvet tread and studied unconcern across to the group seated round the tea-table.

A sudden hush of awkwardness and constraint fell on the company. Somehow there seemed an element of embarrassment in addressing on equal terms a domestic cat of acknowledged mental ability.

"Will you have some milk, Tobermory?" asked Lady Blemley in a rather strained voice.

"I don't mind if I do," was the response, couched in a tone of even indifference. A shiver of suppressed excitement went through the listeners, and Lady Blemley might be excused for pouring out the saucerful of milk rather unsteadily.

"I'm afraid I've spilt a good deal of it," she said apologetically.

"After all, it's not my Axminster," was Tobermory's rejoinder.

Another silence fell on the group, and then Miss Resker, in her best district-visitor manner, asked if the human language had been difficult to learn. Tobermory looked squarely at her for a moment and then fixed his gaze serenely on the middle distance. It was obvious that boring questions lay outside his scheme of life.

"What do you think of human intelligence?" asked Mavis Pellington lamely.

"Of whose intelligence in particular?" asked Tobermory coldly.

"Oh, well, mine for instance," said Mavis, with a feeble laugh.

"You put me in an embarrassing position," said Tobermory, whose

tone and attitude certainly did not suggest a shred of embarrassment. "When your inclusion in this house-party was suggested Sir Wilfrid protested that you were the most brainless woman of his acquaintance, and that there was a wide distinction between hospitality and the care of the feeble-minded. Lady Blemley replied that your lack of brain-power was the precise quality which had earned you your invitation, as you were the only person she could think of who might be idiotic enough to buy their old car. You know, the one they call 'The Envy of Sisyphus,' because it goes quite nicely up-hill if you push it."

Lady Blemley's protestations would have had greater effect if she had not casually suggested to Mavis only that morning that the car in question would be just the thing for her down at her Devonshire home.

Major Barfield plunged in heavily to effect a diversion.

"How about your carryings-on with the tortoise-shell puss up at the stables, eh?"

The moment he had said it every one realized the blunder.

"One does not usually discuss these matters in public," said Tobermory frigidly. "From a slight observation of your ways since you've been in this house I should imagine you'd find it inconvenient if I were to shift the conversation on to your own little affairs."

The panic which ensued was not confined to the Major.

"Would you like to go and see if cook has got your dinner ready?" suggested Lady Blemley hurriedly, affecting to ignore the fact that it wanted at least two hours to Tobermory's dinner-time.

"Thanks," said Tobermory, "not quite so soon after my tea. I don't want to die of indigestion."

"Cats have nine lives, you know," said Sir Wilfrid heartily.

"Possibly," answered Tobermory; "but only one liver."

"Adelaide!" said Mrs. Cornett, "do you mean to encourage that cat to go out and gossip about us in the servants' hall?"

The panic had indeed become general. A narrow ornamental balustrade ran in front of most of the bedroom windows at the Towers, and it was recalled with dismay that this had formed a favourite promenade for Tobermory at all hours, whence he could watch the pigeons—and heaven knew what else besides. If he intended to become reminiscent in his present outspoken strain the effect would be something more than disconcerting. Mrs. Cornett, who spent much time at her toilet table, and whose complexion was reputed to be of a nomadic though punctual disposition, looked as ill at ease as the

Major. Miss Scrawen, who wrote fiercely sensuous poetry and led a blameless life, merely displayed irritation; if you are methodical and virtuous in private you don't necessarily want every one to know it. Bertie van Tahn, who was so depraved at seventeen that he had long ago given up trying to be any worse, turned a dull shade of gardenia white, but he did not commit the error of dashing out of the room like Odo Finsberry, a young gentleman who was understood to be reading for the Church and who was possibly disturbed at the thought of scandals he might hear concerning other people. Clovis had the presence of mind to maintain a composed exterior; privately he was calculating how long it would take to procure a box of fancy mice through the agency of the *Exchange and Mart* as a species of hush-money.

Even in a delicate situation like the present, Agnes Resker could not endure to remain too long in the background.

"Why did I ever come down here?" she asked dramatically.

Tobermory immediately accepted the opening.

"Judging by what you said to Mrs. Cornett on the croquet-lawn yesterday, you were out for food. You described the Blemleys as the dullest people to stay with that you knew, but said they were clever enough to employ a first-rate cook; otherwise they'd find it difficult to get any one to come down a second time."

"There's not a word of truth in it! I appeal to Mrs. Cornett—" exclaimed the discomfited Agnes.

"Mrs. Cornett repeated your remark afterwards to Bertie van Tahn," continued Tobermory, "and said, 'That woman is a regular Hunger Marcher; she'd go anywhere for four square meals a day,' and Bertie van Tahn said—"

At this point the chronicle mercifully ceased. Tobermory had caught a glimpse of the big yellow Tom from the Rectory working his way through the shrubbery towards the stable wing. In a flash he had vanished through the open French window.

With the disappearance of his too brilliant pupil Cornelius Appin found himself beset by a hurricane of bitter upbraiding, anxious inquiry, and frightened entreaty. The responsibility for the situation lay with him, and he must prevent matters from becoming worse. Could Tobermory impart his dangerous gift to other cats? was the first question he had to answer. It was possible, he replied, that he might have initiated his intimate friend the stable puss into his new

accomplishment, but it was unlikely that his teaching could have taken a wider range as yet.

"Then," said Mrs. Cornett, "Tobermory may be a valuable cat and a great pet; but I'm sure you'll agree, Adelaide, that both he and the stable cat must be done away with without delay."

"You don't suppose I've enjoyed the last quarter of an hour, do you?" said Lady Blemley bitterly. "My husband and I are very fond of Tobermory—at least, we were before this horrible accomplishment was infused into him; but now, of course, the only thing is to have him destroyed as soon as possible."

"We can put some strychnine in the scraps he always gets at dinner-time," said Sir Wilfrid, "and I will go and drown the stable cat myself. The coachman will be very sore at losing his pet, but I'll say a very catching form of mange has broken out in both cats and we're afraid of it spreading to the kennels."

"But my great discovery!" expostulated Mr. Appin; "after all my years of research and experiment—"

"You can go and experiment on the short-horns at the farm, who are under proper control," said Mrs. Cornett, "or the elephants at the Zoological Gardens. They're said to be highly intelligent, and they have this recommendation, that they don't come creeping about our bedrooms and under chairs, and so forth."

An archangel ecstatically proclaiming the Millennium, and then finding that it clashed unpardonably with Henley and would have to be indefinitely postponed, could hardly have felt more crestfallen than Cornelius Appin at the reception of his wonderful achievement. Public opinion, however, was against him—in fact, had the general voice been consulted on the subject it is probable that a strong minority vote would have been in favour of including him in the strychnine diet.

Defective train arrangements and a nervous desire to see matters brought to a finish prevented an immediate dispersal of the party, but dinner that evening was not a social success. Sir Wilfrid had had rather a trying time with the stable cat and subsequently with the coachman. Agnes Resker ostentatiously limited her repast to a morsel of dry toast, which she bit as though it were a personal enemy; while Mavis Pellington maintained a vindictive silence throughout the meal. Lady Blemley kept up a flow of what she hoped was conversation, but her attention was fixed on the doorway. A plateful of carefully dosed fish scraps was in readiness on the sideboard, but sweets

and savoury and dessert went their way, and no Tobermory appeared either in the dining-room or kitchen.

The sepulchral dinner was cheerful compared with the subsequent vigil in the smoking-room. Eating and drinking had at least supplied a distraction and cloak to the prevailing embarrassment. Bridge was out of the question in the general tension of nerves and tempers, and after Odo Finsberry had given a lugubrious rendering of "Mélisande in the Wood" to a frigid audience, music was tacitly avoided. At eleven the servants went to bed, announcing that the small window in the pantry had been left open as usual for Tobermory's private use. The guests read steadily through the current batch of magazines, and fell back gradually on the "Badminton Library" and bound volumes of *Punch*. Lady Blemley made periodic visits to the pantry, returning each time with an expression of listless depression which forestalled questioning.

At two o'clock Clovis broke the dominating silence.

"He won't turn up tonight. He's probably in the local newspaper office at the present moment, dictating the first instalment of his reminiscences. Lady What's-her-name's book won't be in it. It will be the event of the day."

Having made this contribution to the general cheerfulness, Clovis went to bed. At long intervals the various members of the house-party followed his example.

The servants taking round the early tea made a uniform announcement in reply to a uniform question. Tobermory had not returned.

Breakfast was, if anything, a more unpleasant function than dinner had been, but before its conclusion the situation was relieved. Tobermory's corpse was brought in from the shrubbery, where a gardener had just discovered it. From the bites on his throat and the yellow fur which coated his claws it was evident that he had fallen in unequal combat with the big Tom from the Rectory.

By midday most of the guests had quitted the Towers, and after lunch Lady Blemley had sufficiently recovered her spirits to write an extremely nasty letter to the Rectory about the loss of her valuable pet.

Tobermory had been Appin's one successful pupil, and he was destined to have no successor. A few weeks later an elephant in the Dresden Zoological Garden, which had shown no previous signs of irritability, broke loose and killed an Englishman who had apparently been teasing it. The victim's name was variously reported in the

papers as Oppin and Eppelin, but his front name was faithfully rendered Cornelius.

"If he was trying German irregular verbs on the poor beast," said Clovis, "he deserved all he got."

* * *

Commentary and Questions

1. In what way does Saki's purpose here differ from his purpose in "The Open Window" (pp. 617-620)?

2. Here Saki states the central situation in the first two paragraphs. Would it be possible for him to do so in "The Open Window"? Did you have to finish "The Open Window" before you learned the point of the story? How early do you become aware of Saki's purpose here?

3. Does this story have a central character?

4. Could the last two paragraphs be omitted without changing the emphasis of the story?

5. As Tobermory offers information in response to comments and questions, almost every character in the story becomes aware that he has something to hide. How does Saki want you to consider the faults, both revealed and hidden—as social blunders or primarily as moral aberrations? Consider the characters individually before you generalize an answer.

6. Explain the following allusions: "the Cornelius seemed a piece of transparent baptismal bluff" (p. 667); "Babel-like chorus" (p. 669); " 'The Envy of Sisyphus' " (p. 670).

7. If the statement (p. 673) that "after lunch Lady Blemley had sufficiently recovered her spirits to write an extremely nasty letter to the Rectory about the loss of her valuable pet" is an example of irony of character or situation, explain that kind of irony as distinguished from irony as a figure of speech.

Suggestions for Writing

1. In defense of Cornelius Appin, scientist.
2. Strychnine for Tobermory and his teacher.
3. If Tobermory knew my friends.

The Unspoiled Reaction[*]

by MARY McCARTHY

In the theater lobby everyone at first mistook her for another patron (a grandmother, perhaps), though the fact that she wore an unstylish closefitting hat, antique earrings, and no coat and had a generally anxious, false, and flustered air should have announced her status: she was a hostess, or, rather, one of those *entreprèneuses* masquerading as hostesses who are inevitably associated with benefits, club luncheons, lectures, alumnae teas, with all gatherings whose intention is not primarily pleasure.

Here, in the theater, on a rainy Monday morning, she was an anomaly, for in New York, in the Times Square neighborhood, relations between management and customer are, by common consent, austerely professional. Consequently her intervention at the door came as a perceptible shock to each parent and child; it demanded a slight adjustment of focus. "Haven't we seen you before?" She addressed the child, and the face that turned up to her in each case showed bewilderment and pleasure. Only a moment before, the child had been an anonymous consumer bent on mass gratification; this magic question turned him back into his human self, and the child, unless he were totally hardened, blushed.

"What is your name?" the lady continued, and now even the parent was drawn in and smiled tenderly, sharing for an instant with this unknown but plainly intuitive person the holy miracle of his child's identity. Sometimes the children answered, speaking their own names softly, with reverence; more often, shyness and delight held them tongue-tied, and the parent supplied the information. "It's for Sunny," the lady added, in a sort of whispered nudge at the parent, who came to himself with a start. The explanation, if it told him nothing else (who or what was Sunny, anyway?), told him unmistakably

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that he had been a fool just now—he ought to have suspected the utilitarian motive. Angry and disillusioned, he passed into the poorly lit auditorium, the remnants of the smile, the fond, fatuous smile, still tugging at the corners of his mouth.

But at once the sight of so many empty places (hardly twenty persons were seated in a cluster down in front) brought a sentiment of pity for the woman outside. Clearly, these puppeteers were in a bad way; not even the rain, not even Monday, not even the too high price of admission, could explain or palliate the smallness of the house. An air of failure hung over the whole undertaking, infecting the audience itself with the poison of financial sickness, so that even the most healthy, the most fortunate parents and children, sitting there in little groups in the bad light, with the dismal smell of damp wool and dead cigarettes all about them, had the look of derelicts huddled together.

So strong indeed was the sense of misery that the more sensitive parents felt an impulse to remove their children from this house of death and were only prevented by the practical difficulties (how to explain?) and by the habit of chivalry toward the poor and ill-favored. If the rat does *not* leave the sinking ship, his only recourse is to identify himself with its fortunes; so the parents, having committed themselves to this unhappy enterprise, immediately experienced the symptoms of solidarity. They began to tell themselves that the attendance could have been worse (after all, it *was* Monday and it *was* raining), to clock off each new arrival with a feeling of personal triumph, and finally to lean forward in their seats and will people into the theater as passengers in a decrepit car lean forward to will the car up a long grade.

These exercises in kinesthetic magic, in which, from their clenched fists and closed eyes, one would say nearly the whole audience was engaging, were cut short by another woman, younger and more openly managerial than the first, a progressive school teacher in genus if not in actuality, one accustomed to giving orders in the form of requests. "Will you please take an outside seat?" she said, leaning over and tapping surprised parents on the shoulder.

Some mothers and fathers did as they were bid at once, almost apologetically. Others were slow and showed even a certain disposition to stand on their rights. Still others (the most well-fed and polished) pretended not to hear. "This does not apply to me," their deaf backs declared.

When it became plain that she was not going to be obeyed without further explanation (for her little air of authority had stirred up latent antagonism in an audience which had disposed itself to pity but not to be ruled by her), she walked down an empty row and took hold of the back of a seat, in the manner of an informal lecturer. "We like to have the children together in the middle," she announced with that excess of patience that suggests that patience is really out of place. "These puppet plays are intended for *children.* We want to reach the children as a group. We want them to be free of adult influences. We want an unspoiled reaction."

This fetched even the most stubborn, for it hinted to every adult in the audience that he was the snake in this paradise of innocence, that there was something intrinsically disgusting in the condition of being grown-up. There was a great shuffling of coats, hats, and handbags. Mothers dropped packages on the floor, a little girl cried, but at length the resettlement was accomplished, and the sheep were separated from the goats.

Whenever a new party came in, the earlier arrivals would, out of a kind of concerted malice, allow the parent to get herself well lodged in the center block of seats before breaking it to her that she was out of place. Indeed, the greater part of the audience was disinclined to make the revelation at all; its original feelings of mistrust had returned; it saw something ugly in this arbitrary manipulation of the natural order of seating, this planned spontaneity. Though it looked forward to the confounding of the newcomer, it would not take the side of the management; in an attitude of passive hooliganism it waited for the dark.

But disaffected as it was, the audience contained the inevitable minority of enthusiastic coöperators who rejoice in obeying with ostentatious promptness any command whatsoever, who worship all signs, prohibitions, warnings, and who constitute themselves volunteer deputies of any official person they can find in their neighborhood. These coöperators nudged, tapped, poked, signaled, relayed admonitory whispers along rows of children, until every misplaced adult became conscious of the impropriety of his position and retreated, in confusion, to the perimeter of the house. By the time the curtain went up, the adults formed three sides of a box which contained the children but left the cover open to receive the influences of the stage.

II

Almost at once the object of the first lady's question became apparent. Laboriously, the curtains of the miniature stage parted and an unusually small puppet, dressed as a boy, was revealed, bowing and dancing in a veritable tantrum of welcome. This was Sunny. "Hello, boys and girls," he began in the shrieky voice that is considered *de rigueur* for puppets and marionettes. "Welcome to our theater." "Hello, Sunny," replied a self-assured child, patently the son of one of the coöperators. He had been here before, and he did what was expected of him. "Hello, John, how are you today?" the puppet screamed in answer, and now he passed from child to child, speaking to each by name.

The children, for the most part, looked at each other in wonder and astonishment. They were at a loss to account for the puppet's knowing them; they did not relate cause and effect and doubtless had already forgotten the question and answer in the lobby. After the first consternation, the voices that answered the gesticulating creature grew louder and firmer. The children were participating. Each one was anxious to show himself more at home than his neighbor, and soon they were treating the puppet with positive familiarity, which he encouraged, greeting every bold remark from the audience with peals of shrill artificial laughter. Before the actual play began he had drawn all but the very youngest and shyest into an atmosphere of audacity.

Along the sides of the human box, the parents were breathing easier. Gladly they divested themselves of their original doubts. It was enough that the children were entering into the spirit of the thing. That reciprocity between player and audience, lost to us since the medieval mysteries, and mourned by every theoretician of the drama, was here recovered, and what did it matter if the production was a mockery, a cartoon of the art of drama? What did it matter that the children's innocence had been taken advantage of, that the puppet who seemed to know them knew only their names? And as for the seating arrangements, perhaps in the modern world all spontaneity had to be planned; as with crop control and sex, the "unspoiled reaction" did not come of itself; it was the end-product of a series of maneuvers.

The curtains closed on Sunny, with the children yelling, "Goodbye." The main attraction, "Little Red Riding Hood," was about to

begin, when a party of late-comers made its way down the aisle. There were eight or ten children and a dispirited-looking young teacher. They took places in the very first row and were a little slow getting seated. The children kept changing places, and the teacher was either ineffectual or a principled anti-disciplinarian, for she made no real effort to interpose her authority.

The curtains on the stage above them moved, as if with impatience, and a human hand and then a face, grotesquely enlarged to eyes adjusted to the scale of puppets, appeared and then quickly withdrew. This apparition was terrifying to everyone but those for whom it was intended, the school children in front, who had as yet no standard of comparison and continued their bickering unperturbed. The face had come and gone so abruptly that nobody could be sure whether it belonged to a man or a woman; it left the audience with a mere sense of some disembodied anger—a deity was displeased. Could this be Sunny? the parents wondered.

At length, the party in the front row composed itself. Little Red Riding Hood and her basket were revealed as the curtains lurched back. To the left of the puppet stage, a little box opened, and there was Sunny, ready with a prologue, adjuring the children to watch out for Little Red Riding Hood as if she were their own little sister. The box closed, the action began, and the children took Sunny at his word. From the house a series of warnings and prophecies of disaster followed the little red puppet out its door. "Look out," the children called. "Don't obey your Mummy." "Eat the basket yourself."

In all these admonitions none were louder than the party in the front row. These children, indeed, appeared to be the ideal audience for Sunny and his troupe; they were the unspoiled reaction in test-tube purity. While other boys and girls hung back, murmured their comments, or simply parroted the cries of the bolder children, the ones down in front were inventive and various in their advice—so much so that it seemed hardly possible that the play could go on without the actors' taking cognizance of what these untrammeled children were saying, and one almost expected Little Red Riding Hood to sail off from her lines into pure improvisation, and a kind of *commedia dell' arte* to ensue. But the puppets kept rigidly to the text, oblivious of interruptions and suggestions, and the usual situation was reversed—it was not the audience which was unresponsive but the players.

By the middle of the second scene, when the wolf had made his

appearance, the whole theater was in a condition of wild excitement. Some children were taking the side of the wolf, urging him to make a good dinner, and some, traditionalists even in unrestraint, remained loyal to the grandmother. The contest on the stage was transported into the pit.

III

At the end of the second scene, Sunny came out once more, and now the boldness of the children perfectly matched the provocations of the puppet. Saucy answer met impudent question. Sunny was beside himself; from time to time, a witticism from the house would capsize him altogether and he would lie panting on the stage, gasping out the last exhausted notes of the hee-hee-hee. Liberty and equality reached such a pitch of frenzy that it seemed the most natural thing in the world that a boy from the front row should climb up onto the stage to speak directly to Sunny.

The audience watched him go without the slightest sense of a breach of decorum. The puppet, however, drew back into his box at the approach of the child. Slowly, his cloth body began to wriggle and twist in an uncanny pantomime of distaste and fear. The child put out his hand to touch the puppet, and now the doll was indubitably alive. A shudder ran through it; it shrank back against the curtains and doubled itself up, as though to leave no intimate surface exposed to the violator's touch.

As the hand still pursued and it seemed as if no power on earth could prevent the approaching indignity, the puppet cried out. But its voice had changed; the falsetto shriek had become a human scream. "Sunny doesn't like that," called an agonized woman's voice from behind the curtain. The note of hysteria struck home to the boy, separating him from his intention. He leaped back, stumbled toward the stairs, slipped on them, and fell into the orchestra pit. Two of the fathers rushed forward. The teacher joined them, peering anxiously over the brink. The child was retrieved, unhurt, and firmly put back into his seat. In the commotion, Sunny had disappeared.

Fortunately, the children hardly missed him. For the moment, they were more interested in the mechanics of the little boy's fall than in its cause. "What is an orchestra pit?" they called out to the mothers who had tried to explain, and some got out of their seats, proposing to investigate. "Afterwards, afterwards," the mothers' voices ordered. "The show is going to begin again."

But was it? The parents, glancing at each other, wondered. Had

they not witnessed, just now, one of those ruptures which are instantly and irrevocably permanent, since they reveal an aversion so profound that no beginning, i.e., no cause can be assigned to it, and hence no end, no solution can be predicted? Like guests sitting around a dinner table which the hostess has just quitted to pack her trunk in a fury, the parents fidgeted, waiting for a sign which would tell them that it was not really necessary to go home to meet again the emptiness of their own devices, yet knowing perfectly well that the only thing to do was to go and go at once, before anything else happened. But inertia, the great minimizer, provided them with the usual excuses. They told themselves that they were letting their imaginations run away with them, that nothing of any consequence had happened—an incompetent teacher had let her charge misbehave.

And as the minutes passed and the curtains did not move, the sentiment of the audience turned sharply against the teacher. "Damn fool of a woman," murmured the father of a boy to the pretty mother of a girl. "I certainly wouldn't send a child to *her* school," replied the mother, brightening up. As if aware of the whispers of criticism, the teacher stiffened in her seat and stared blindly forward, feigning unconsciousness.

In the middle of the house, the children were also turning the experience over, clumsily trying to fix the blame, but they were not so adroit, so practiced as their parents, and small frowns of dissatisfaction wrinkled their brows. "Was that little boy naughty?" called a little girl's voice, at last. "Yes," answered her mother, without a moment's hesitation. "Oh," said the little girl, but her look remained troubled.

"And *now*, boys and girls—" It was Sunny, cordial as ever, and the third scene was about to start. There was no doubt that the puppet was himself again; he bowed, he clapped his hands, he danced, he screeched, in his old dionysiac style. Bygones were bygones, all was forgiven, childhood was off on another spree.

Yet the children at first were wary and glanced toward their parents, seeking instruction, for they no longer knew what was expected of them. The parents nodded encouragement, and as the children still hesitated, the adults screwed their own faces into grimaces of pleasure, till everywhere the children looked, on the sides of the audience or, above them, on the stage, there was a large, energetic smile bidding them enjoy themselves. The more docile children began to laugh, rather mechanically; others joined in, and in a few

moments the crisis was past and the mood of abandon tentatively re-established. The play proceeded, and before long the children were barking and howling like wolves, the timid little girl was whimpering with terror, and the parents were quietly rejoicing in the fact that another morning had been got through without serious damage to the children or emotional cost to themselves.

The last scruple died as Little Red Riding Hood was rescued and the play came safely to an end. The curtains closed, but the children were not quite disposed to go. They remained clapping and shouting in their seats, while their parents gathered up hats and coats.

At this moment, when all danger seemed past and former fears groundless and even morbid, the same little boy in the front row jumped up and asked his teacher a question. "Yes," she said, in a voice that penetrated the whole auditorium, "I think it will be all right for you to go backstage now."

Something in the teacher's tone arrested everyone; even those parents who had succeeded in getting their children halfway up the aisle now paused to watch as the party in the front row made a little procession up the stairs. The drama was not quite over; a reconciliation must follow between the puppet and the child; the child must handle the puppet, but ceremoniously, backstage, and with the puppet's permission.

Indulgently, the audience waited. The little procession reached the stage. Other children, emboldened, were starting down the aisle after it, when the curtains parted. There, her white hair disheveled, her well-bred features working with rage, stood the woman everyone had met in the lobby and who was now instantly identifiable as the apparition of anger, the face between the curtains. "Get out, get out of here, get out." She barred the way of the approaching group. "You dreadful, horrible children."

The voice, screaming, was familiar too; it was, of course, Sunny's. "You horrible, horrible children," she repeated, her *r*'s trilling out in a kind of reflex of gentility. The children turned and ran, and she pursued them to the stairs, a trembling figure of terrible malevolence, in whom could be discerned, as in a triple exposure, traces of the gracious hostess and the frolicsome puppet.

From behind the curtains came someone to seize her. A man from the box office ran down the aisle to pacify the teacher, who, now seeing herself on firm ground, was repeating over and over again, "That is no way to talk to a child." The audience did not wait to see

the outcome. In shame and silence, it fled out into the rain, pursued by the sound of weeping which intermingled with the word *child,* as pronounced by the teacher in a tone of peculiar piety and reverence, her voice genuflecting to it as though to the Host.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

1. This story is unlike any of the others preceding it. In "Tobermory" there is an obvious and immediate problem to be solved: getting rid of Tobermory. The attitude of Lady Blemley's group toward Cornelius Appin is not hard to determine. What do you think the author's purpose is in "The Unspoiled Reaction"? In seeking an answer to this question you may find it helpful to do two things: (a) trace the attitude toward the puppeteers, as it is stated or implied throughout the story, which is held by each of these—the parents, the children, the teacher; (b) trace the attitude toward children, as it is stated or implied throughout the story, which is held by each of these—the puppeteers, the teacher, the parents.

2. What is the significance of the title for each of these—the children, Sunny, Sunny's puppeteer, the teacher, the parents?

3. About how many of the characters are you given sufficient information for you to visualize them as individuals, each with a distinctive physical appearance? Just how important is physical appearance in this story?

4. Do you think the author should have, or could have, used more conversation?

5. Do the following expressions fit into the atmosphere of the story: *entrepreneuses* (p. 675); *de rigueur* (p. 678); *commedia dell' arte* (p. 679)?

Suggestions for Writing

Suppose you were a newspaper reporter or an editorial writer who happened to drop in at the theater of the puppeteers on the particular day of this story. Write either a factual account of what happened or an editorial based on what you saw.

*The White Hound**

by WARD DORRANCE

The door opened slowly, revealing a section of blond parquet. Ronald set his bags down and pressed a wall button. A lamp dimly lighted a small, stark white entry hall which opened immediately into a drawing room through an arch flanked by plain columns. Beside the lamp, on the same table, a gold oval tray held a gray correspondence card with a message in thick white ink. Leaning over, Ronald read: "Dining at Archer's. Home by ten. Mary."

He halted near where he knew the drawing room lamp to be and reached for the chain. As the light came on, he looked back over his shoulder at the mantel clock.

"Nine twenty-seven," he said aloud.

He stood a moment, rolling the flesh of his cleft chin together between his thumb and forefinger, narrowing his lashes against the gold, black and popcorn white of the room. Its brightness hurt his eyes after the dark plane ride. Its spotlessness increased the discomfort of his wilted collar, his damp armpits, his rumpled trousers. Its solidity, by contrast, quickened the sensation of swaying, of sudden drop and wavering recovery, which was still with him from the plane.

Letting his hands fall to his sides, he walked to the black divan and slowly seated himself on its white upholstery. He felt slightly ill, as he had felt in the plane when short, vertical drops had made it seem that his scalp remained in place while a weight in his stomach stretched his torso down. Leaning back, he let his eye travel to the painting over the fireplace which showed a deep-hearted lily, petals reflexed, with gold anthers poised on foreshortened stalks. The frame was black. An ebony electric clock rested on the mantel below.

He moved to the right arm of the divan and, as if absent-mindedly, thrust a finger into the ear of a porcelain cat on the smoking table.

* From *The Hudson Review*, Summer, 1948. By permission of the publishers and the author. Copyright 1948 by The Hudson Review, Inc.

Looking down, he examined the web of cracks in the creature's head, not to see them, but to avoid the clock. It was watching the door for Mary's entry.

She would be coming in a moment. In a moment her skirt would fill the doorway and rustle through it. She would be bare-shouldered and have no hat, in black lace, in white satin, or sheathed like a mermaid in gold sequins. She would smell of the cold night air, of carnation perfume and green chartreuse. She would come soundlessly over the deep white nap of the rug, brightly inquiring.

"And how shall I tell her?" he asked.

He swallowed, and turned his head from side to side. He must first, he told himself, collect the facts as he recalled them before the billiard shot that had dispersed them, though the answer did not lie in their mere realignment. Some he could discount at once. There was nothing significant in his business trip while it remained a business trip. However, business had been over when he met Pomfret in the country drug store. It would take showing to convince Mary, but there had been something in that moment; something on which the rest had turned. Why had he, for instance, gone home with a loosely apparented "cousin" because the man, opening his mouth to ask for a pack of Camels, exclaimed instead: "Why Cousin Ronald! Seems like we might have had word!"

They had stood a moment, because of the surprise, smiling with more delight than either felt, while the old druggist, to make room for his elbows on the counter, moved a card of pocket combs so that it overlapped a card of breath-refreshers, and pushed aside a dusty pheasant from which one button-eye had dropped. He looked alertly from man to man, though neither answered when he asked: "You gentlemen some kin?"

Pomfret then reached into his pocket for change, counted out the right number of pennies for the tax, and took up his cigarettes.

"You've put on weight," he said to Ronald.

"Can't say the same for you," Ronald told him, and Pomfret, grinning, shook his head.

He was tall, spare and soft-spoken, with the profile and port of a public leader in the last century, but vacantly, comically or pathetically—here among displays of perfumes and alarm clocks—as if he had either inherited a senator's nose without his force, or had been born a Moses in a day of air-cooled bars. He was a lawyer (of sorts, Ronald had thought, seeing his outward look of needing a tiding

over): he lived on a "home place" with Helen, a pretty wife Ronald had remembered, and a little son born since Ronald's last visit. Ronald had gone with him, he now decided, because of the concentric circles around the dropped word "cousin," and because he was pleased by Pomfret's phrase "we should have had word." He had forgot that his country kin spoke of news as if it came by smoke signals, or runners staggering from a wood.

There was nothing in the black drive home, past shapes of peach and pecan trees, to chill the warmth of re-union, or, for Ronald, to check the excess of his condescension in humouring a decent fellow. When they turned in an avenue and the headlights finally—the distance seemed improbable—caught the feet of oyster-coloured columns, Ronald held his breath to see what he had also forgot; that these old houses could be so big.

Pomfret entered the circle which ended the avenue, stopped before a gate and switched off the lights. Both dismounted. Ronald stood, with his chin up like a blind man, breathing the night air. It was chill on the skin of his nostrils and sharp with the smell of wood smoke. Pomfret walked around the car and led him to a gate which grated open at Pomfret's touch and, when they had gone through, was pulled back by the weight of plough points on a chain. Above their flat tinkle Ronald heard the latch click like a pistol hammer. He followed Pomfret toward the house, shuffling over the uneven bricks of the walk, feeling for each of the gallery steps until a negro opened the front door and he could advance, blinking but confident, into a great lighted hall. He noted that Pomfret, having allowed the butler to take their coats, courteously helped him store them. The man was very old.

Then, gaily offering aid himself, Ronald opened the drawing room door, which first stuck. His smile faded and his eyes grew wide as it receded, showing a chamber of sculptured chestnut, garnet-upholstered, watered by a dappling of prisms. His hostess was rising from a hearth bench. She stood bare-shouldered in blue silk, mildly there, as if under the tissue of a frontispiece, taking time to recognize his youth in his middle age before she brought off, more by an effect of acoustics than volume, a "Cousin Ronald!" He started toward her, needing to see her only, but aware that he stepped, on the balls of his feet, over a rug worn shallow in the open, deep under self-supporting colonies of tables (one of them fringed to the floor) each with its complement of lamps, keepsakes, chairs, loveseats, all tufted, braided,

galonnés. He took her elbows and kissed her like an inexperienced boy, catching only the corner of her mouth, relieved as if, on her borrowed faith, he had crossed water afoot.

Pomfret came up behind him, went around him and stood by Helen. They smiled like the end couple of a halted cotillion, best visible because last dead, seeming to think it easy for Ronald to play the guest. He tried. But he started on seeing the child.

It—he thought "it" instantly, in deference to its tininess as if to its Excellency or Grace—was four or five years old; a boy. He stood square-shouldered, contained, rehearsed, among the folds of his nurse's skirt in the door of a second parlour, lined with mirrors between engaged columns. He stepped out evenly at some signal of the woman's, neither toddling nor shy, in such mimicry of the advancing *padrone* that Ronald had first to put down a strained amusement, as if he had seen a kitten in a doll's hat. He did so quickly, corrected less by the repetition in perfection of the parents' welcome than by the timbre of the child's "Good evening." It made him start, as if he had been addressed by a fox in a path, and, squatting on his heels, he pulled the boy toward him. The boy came, but standing at Ronald's knee, he turned his head away, embarrassed or resentful, Ronald was not sure which. Ronald released him at once and rose, but he had seen that the baby face was haggard with grown-up woe.

The parents said nothing. Ronald, too, was silent, and the butler entered with sherry. It was dark, long-steeped, and spent its strength as on a target.

While he drank Ronald watched the child (blond, pink, "angelic" in the medical sense, he thought), how he chose not a small but a great chair with an urn spilling grapes and pomegranates between rampant griffins on its carved back. It stood under a wall sconce of prisms in a kind of heraldic device. He pulled himself up by a bract of acanthus terminating the arm and sat, legs apart, with (at first sight) the spleen of baby dukes at ceremonies. But Ronald, seeing him repeatedly bite his lips, felt doubly sure that he had, for this occasion, set aside a grief. He sensed the parents' shared relief when dinner was announced.

The dining room lay vast, for its small party, under a chandelier of crystal rope and pendants, wainscotted shoulder high, with space, between plate rail and ceiling, for three life-size portraits. The gold bottoms of the frames, the feet of the sitters (one a lady with tiny shoes) shone waveringly in the light of candles on the table.

As he ate, Ronald stole sharper glances at his hosts. The wife's gown was frayed at the armpit, stained in one place by its rusty hooks, and so *décolleté* as to seem about to give her the formal licence of a shepherdess in a print. This, with her husband's string-tied look of having at some time run for office, contrasted drily with their: "Well I'll declare!" at some remark of his. They conversed in the easy phrases of grammars, chiefly about old servants. Once, as the hostess ended an anecdote telling how she, then a bride, had taken a bowl of lard and flour to the cabin so that Aunt Frony the cook, approaching childbirth, might mix the biscuit dough in bed, moaning for the helpless lambs, she concluded: "Poor Frony, dead these years, God have her soul!" At that moment there came, from beyond the candle light, an "Amen, Miss Helen, ma'am."

It was the old butler. His words, thrown off in a turning about his serving table, were meant, Ronald saw, not as an interruption nor a personal comment, but an alto enriching his lady's note. They all lived for the same thing.

Ronald examined the man as he came into the light with a tray of ices. He was touching, sure enough, with his shuffle and his lichen-coloured wool and his quiet captaincy of the room. But how long, Ronald wondered, watching his hostess lay the wishbone of a quail on her plate while her husband, waiting, ran a finger around the rim of his wine glass, how long will these unsuspecting folk hold out, when their few old darkies go?

That night he was restless before he slept, knowing that he lay under an absurdly high cliff of rosewood headpiece and that the room they had given him smelled, as his mother's rooms had smelled, of orris, lavender and dusty carpet. It was the odour, or one of the odours, of the past; a past that had been already long past when he was a boy.

A moon had risen on the far side of the house, spreading enough diffused light to prove that he might have guessed what was in the room before he saw it, from memory of others like it. He rolled his head toward the window.

To the left he made out a wash stand, with bowl and pitcher; to the right a dresser with a brush, a bay rum bottle and a painted china box with a hole in the lid to receive the combings of a woman's hair. Above it a mirror stood some five feet high, with branching sconces. The crest of its frame was two-pitched over a pediment, topped by a shell-shaped ornament. The glass dully gathered what light there was

—enough to reflect the dark oval of a portrait and the loop of a rose-back chair by the hall door.

There was nothing else but a mammoth wardrobe and the bed Ronald lay in.

He looked up. The headpiece was all of twelve feet high and the foot, he saw, looking down, was a full third of that. The width of the mattress was in proportion. From the middle, his out-stretched hand did not quite reach the edge. His toes made a ridge oddly close to his chin, under the covers.

He shut his eyes. The clearest of the thoughts that held him from sleep was that the bed was first of all not a resting place but rather, literally, a *meuble de famille.* It was built for legal acts, to be recorded on headstones and fly-leaves of Bibles. His casual, single presence in it fretted and embarrassed him, as if he had been tricked into sharing a dubious prank. A prank played upon whom? he asked. Was anyone there? No man, no woman; no. But the big hollow room was solidly there. The hall outside it led to the stair and the stair to the parlour where old mistresses had yielded to the young, each with her thimble of wine and lace-edged napkin. From there the way led back through an enfilade of neutral mirrors to a kitchen where copper pots on the wall shone in the light from lifted stove lids.

One thing at least, Ronald thought, was sure. This house should have gone with other landmarks of his youth. But here it was, huge and valid, resonant, fragrant, lived in. It demanded, he felt persistently, a statement of blamelessness from him. The proportions of its rooms, the deep embrasures of its windows, its random floor boards and serpentine stair all seemed to inquire why he had gone, where he had been and if he had waxed fat upon his treason? What had he to show for twenty childless years with Mary? What but his share in the accounts of Collins-McComber, Dunbar and Steinmetz?

This, he thought, eyeing the shapes of the dresser and wardrobe, and the window's rectangle of skimmed-milk light, was largely an effect of the country night. He would leave in the morning and shake it off.

It did not happen so, and not alone because he had forgot that there was no train before eleven-twenty.

He was awakened by a scream. It caught him while he was not sure that it was light or where he was, and before his muscles could relax, he heard words:

"Sho he daid. They th'ow lime down he grave hole."

The voice was boyish and negro. It did not go on. Ronald heard running feet, a slap, and a woman (the nurse, no doubt): "You Hinry, git! What you doin' in Mr. Junius' room?" And there was a third voice —Pomfret's—saying: "Junius! Junius! This is father!"

Ronald rose, shaved with cold water since, in the confusion, no one remembered to bring him hot, and found his way to the front stair. Pomfret was standing in the hall below looking up, lowering his head as Ronald descended, his lips forming the first words he wished to speak. Ronald, smiling, stopped him with: "I know. I heard. Something's happened."

"Then you see we're in a little trouble with the boy," Pomfret said, relieved.

Ronald did not answer. Pomfret was holding the front door open for him. They took chairs behind the columns on the gallery and sat silent, Pomfret with his legs crossed, staring down at cracks on the stone floor; Ronald with his chin on his hands, elbows on his knees, looking off over the country. The sky was heavily overcast.

Past the uneven rural lawn, edged with overgrown shrubs, an avenue of cedars descended to the road. Beyond that, the clean rows of a pecan grove mounted a slope and dipped. There was then a valley of some breadth. Trees at the next rise were appreciably smaller to the eye than those at the break of the roll, and the far rows resumed their line a little to the right of the near.

Ronald kept his mind from straying to the scene and held himself ready to turn to Pomfret, when Pomfret decided to speak.

But Pomfret, gazing up now at the sky, delayed.

"It's warmish and going to snow," he finally murmured, and sat up straight with such resolution that Ronald looked at him quickly.

"I'd better tell you about it," he said, and Ronald nodded.

He heard then that a man, Rob Garland, had been hanged the day before, for stabbing a farm hand to death at a dance. He was a poor-white, though the term hardly fit, Pomfret said. He was bolder than most, poor not so much from shiftlessness but because he chose to live by his rifle, refusing to work except in season, as a guide to city hunters. He had got on the good side of the baby, Junius, by stopping to talk with him as he crossed the place.

"The kid thought everything of him," Pomfret said.

Ronald shrugged. "You know how it is when a grown man notices a boy."

He saw Garland as a type who would wear a "ruby"-studded belt

and smell of gun oil—occasionally of green hides—and have, now and then, a fish scale in the hair on the back of his hand.

"Garland stopped to play with him whenever he saw him," Pomfret was going on.

"A real visit," Ronald thought, "no fraud nor condescension. Probably he always found something in his pocket: a monkey carved from a peach seed, the skull of a bird in a wad of cotton, a vial of fox urine to sprinkle on leaves around a trap."

"Milly is a white cur," Pomfret was saying. "Pink-rimmed eyes, but not an albino's exactly. . . ."

Ronald smiled.

"It bothered Helen. Junie'd keep saying things like: 'Rob says if a calf's low sick you bring it to by rubbing its tail with cobs.'" Pomfret hesitated. "Nothing ugly," he went on, when Ronald let him catch his eye, "just common, and it got on Helen's nerves. He'd say such stuff and look at us, licking the back of his spoon. . . ."

"Judging you, maybe," Ronald thought. "Trying to name his sense of the contrast between the man's vitality and your gentility."

". . . but he took it hard when she wouldn't let him see Rob and Lord knows what we'll do now. It was bad enough telling him Rob was dead, before the little nigger got at him this morning."

Ronald nodded and glanced back at the front door, hearing a bell.

"Come on," Pomfret said. "Seems like it's time to eat."

Ronald followed slowly. He remembered now that in the brief walk though the parlours to the table, his mind had considered two things, seemingly unrelated. It happened in a flash, but took time to tell.

There was on the one hand, on re-entering the rooms, the impression of submitting himself again to the teasing of their secret, as if he were in an abandoned ship, adrift intact, with food on the table and, in the air, a whisk of last motion. He wished again to protest that he had not deserted (that was the word which occurred); or, if he had deserted, it had been to a victor whose discipline was punishment enough.

Simultaneously there was his sympathy for the boy, Junius. He recalled how he, at the same age, had been told his dog was dead, and how he had tried to understand when his mother had said that no he would never, that is, not ever, see Lige again.

The two themes were unrelated, but he saw now that they fed on

one another. The house set atavisms in motion, quickening his perception of the boy's anguish. And the anguish, his own by contagion, robbed him of the detachment in which he could see an atavism as no more important than a twinge of rheumatism.

When he reached the dining room door, he put everything out of mind except a wish to help. The boy was standing on a bath towel on the waxed hearth bricks, tiny, unclad, pink between the high brass andirons, before the chimney where the flames stood quietly striving in grooves of the blackened throat. His mother, on her knees, was wringing a cloth in the steam of a basin held by the nurse.

"It seemed better to bathe him here," she said without looking up, and he received her rinsing and drying, holding up an arm, extending a foot, as unconcerned for his nakedness as an old nobleman whose station entitled him to move, even during the toilette, as if the servants were not there.

"An *old* nobleman," Ronald thought, because the child's face was nearly as simian in its pucker as that of the butler, who entered with the coffee for which they sat.

The child, in a nightgown and little striped robe, was placed opposite Ronald. Ronald saw that there was no rescuing him, no lowering of adult salvage gear to the ledge where he had fallen. No one spoke of him or to him; but all, parents, guest, butler and hovering nurse, looked only at him when they raised their eyes. He sat quietly without eating, examining his nails, staring off through the window, as able, evidently, since the ruin was total, to sit there as elsewhere. But toward the end of the meal, when he gasped and stiffened against his chair, Pomfret threw down his napkin.

He circled the table and took the child's hands.

"Junie," he said. "You know Trail and Muse and all Daddy's dogs?"

The baby nodded, sucking in his breath.

"How'd it be if we took 'em out for a race? Cousin Ronald will come with us. There'll be time," he said, turning to Ronald. "You have three hours before your train."

While the women zippered Junius into a red woolen snow suit, one piece complete, from helmet to toe, Pomfret got Ronald into old khaki pants and a hunting coat. It was the first time in years that he had had on less than a good shop's best.

Out of doors, Pomfret carried the child in his arms and Ronald managed to keep up, stumbling on the uneven pasture turf. Mean-

while the hounds exuberantly came and went, one showing its rump and upturned tail as it leaped away, another its wet protruding tongue as it bounded back. When he could lift his eyes from a smooth stretch, Ronald watched them. Once, stopping to glance back, he saw that only the roof and chimneys of the house were visible. Pomfret was leading them down a slope, with outcroppings of rock, toward a little valley.

He kept up questions as they walked, to divert the boy.

"Junius," he said, "look at Drum, lifting his leg against the weed over there. You know he's Muse's grandson? You know he wouldn't stop for a rabbit, even on a bright night?"

But the boy laid his face against Pomfret's lapel and would not answer.

The way now led across flat ground to a creek. Before a backdrop of timber, a bare knoll stood. Eaten in half by freshets, it showed, in cross section, a hump of dark top soil, thinning to a layer of clay studded with scattered stones. At the left a fallen dogwood sapling lay, combing the water. To the right a wood rose behind graduated foothills of second growth brush. Ronald saw that the knoll was a stage. The hunt would pass over it.

On the near bank, where they stood, the land close to the stream was pocked by the feet of cattle. The tracks nearest the water were filled with seepage. There was a good deal of manure about and the odour in the open, Ronald noticed, was not unpleasant. Pomfret halted some fifty feet back from the bank, just beyond the branches of a pin oak. The tree's dry foliage, clinging long after frost, gave out a thin rattle, though Ronald scarcely felt a stir of air.

Pomfret then began to build a fire. He made much of the way to set it, asking Junius for dead grass to wad under a tepee of twigs, letting him light the match, showing him a rooster-comb of flame that suddenly stood up from the smudge.

All three held their hands to it a moment without speaking, while the hounds went off, closely huddled, about their business. Pomfret squatted on the balls of his feet, his arms crossed on his knees, with Junius pressing close against him, and Ronald sat down awkwardly, careful, from habit, of the crease in his trousers. He felt the chill, unequal ground beneath them, and now and then he reached under one hip or the other to remove a pebble or a piece of bark.

After a while, as Pomfret was whispering that the cry might break, it broke: a *yowl-it, yowl-it, yowl-it* in four parts.

"At the old home place," he said happily, motioning for Ronald to see how the glaze of disinterest had left the boy's eyes.

"Grandmother Alastairs's?" the child asked.

"Uh-h'm. You know the fox has got his hole under the door stone."

Pomfret finished in a whisper, guilding the boy by the shoulders to show him. A red fox was capping the knoll across the creek. It loped up, over, down and out of sight in the brush, easily, as if in some ineluctable path, like a duck in a shooting gallery. Presently the hounds broke out of the dead weeds to the left of the knoll. They raced across it, but to the right of it; somehow tricked, they moved apart in overlapping circles, whining.

It had begun to snow. A few flakes dropped at first, each traceable below a given level of the solid gray above; each rocking alertly on its small axis. Then the fall thickened until the wood opposite showed through a curtain of ragged dots. They blinked soundlessly from sight on the creek, pocking the surface. They hissed in the fire and rolled into balls of lint a moment on the ground before they melted. The baby picked some from a withered umbrel of Queen Anne's lace near the level of his eye and touched it to his lips, smiling.

"It tastes like rain, Daddy," he said.

Pomfret, to please him, reached to get some too, but at that moment, without warning, a single cry broke from the four hounds. Ronald jumped to his feet. Pomfret gathered the boy to him.

"Watch Muse outheel 'em!" he shouted, as the pack darted away to the right. And when it was gone, he "watched" the hunt by its silences and tongueing, detailing it aloud to hold the boy's attention. Once, as the cry came after a long interval, his chin went up.

"There's a strange hound running," he said.

"How can you tell?" Ronald asked.

Pomfret frowned and held up his hand. Ronald closed his eyes and in a moment stretched them wide. He had heard a long *ai-oo* above the chop-mouthed cry of Pomfret's hounds. Pomfret nodded at him rapidly, then looked away, seeing that Ronald did not understand. Both, moreover, were watching the boy.

Junius had advanced a little from the fire and faced left, clutching the breast of his snow suit, breathing through his mouth so that Ronald heard him over the crackle of burning sticks.

In a moment the fox parted the stems of deerberry to the left and, free of obstructions, made across the knoll, this time intent and quick. Its brush was low. The hounds were thudding close behind. Pomfret

seized his horn and blew it so close, so loud, that Ronald lowered his head and put his hands to his ears.

The hounds came into sight at once; five, not four. The first was a white cur, yellowish in the new snow, speeding purposefully, business-like, not even triumphant, impersonally riding her legs.

Pomfret's pack wheeled across the creek. The first hound waded straight across. The second and third stopped to lap. The fourth halted to lower himself in the shallows, panting. The intruder went on with the hunt alone, then, while her thrashing through the woods could still be heard, there had come the squeal, the scream which Ronald had kept hearing in the plane from Atlanta.

At its loudest, it stopped. There was the sound of trotting in dead leaves as the hound came back to join them, but no one moved until she crossed the knoll with a red fur in her mouth, its pointed nose limply catching on the stubble. Then Ronald swallowed and saw Pomfret give the boy his hand without looking down. They watched her slide off the bank in a dribbling of gravel that broke up her reflection as she waded in and struck deep water. It did not surprise her. She snapped for a better hold on the fox, then swam toward them, showing her skull at the tip of a lengthening wake.

Her pink-rimmed eyes, Ronald suddenly thought, were the colour of hulled grapes.

She walked from the shallows stiffly and humped her back and shook herself. The fox's head lolled like a gourd in the foot of a stocking. She dropped him and lay down by the fire a little way off from the blooded hounds. They watched her, but made no motion toward her. She looked about her genially, placing her right paw over the fox's brush. Otherwise she paid it no heed even when, delicately, it began to arch its back and its legs stiffened and the white of one eye appeared and the jaws opened and closed noiselessly before it lay quiet, a pulse still beating in the sunken triangle at the joint of hind leg and spine.

No one spoke. Afterward Ronald remembered how the two men had time to look at one another, Pomfret with the comfort, this time, that Ronald understood, before Junius took a step toward the white hound. Both put out a hand to stop him. Both let him fall. He lay with his face to the ground, one shoulder hunched above the other, digging at the earth with the toe of one foot as Ronald had seen men do, shot on island beaches.

That had been all there was to it. They carried the child to the

house and called the doctor, and before he came Pomfret drove Ronald to the train. Helen left Junius with his nurse for the moment it took to follow them to the car. She reminded Ronald that his wife had never visited them. "You all come!" she managed to call, as Pomfret started the motor.

There had been the train ride to Atlanta, a taxi to the plane; the plane with its tilted horizons, La Guardia and a second cab, and the elevator with its door gliding back a moment after one thought it ought.

All that, surely, should have shaken him free. But here in the chic, bone-clean Town and Country room, snow was falling, broad, loose flakes making fish eyes, dropping past the lamp. Ronald was suddenly aware—he had not heard her enter—that his wife had come in from dinner, in satin, white unless he saw it yellow amid the whiter flakes. He watched the movement of her knees grow faster under the rustling cloth as she came forward, arms outstreched, and saw the genial welcome of her eyes darken with misgiving as he rose to kiss her, but in answer to her question: "Are you ill?" he guardedly said no, he thought he was just tired.

* * *

Commentary and Questions

1. Determining the author's purpose in this story is simpler than in "The Unspoiled Reaction." What is the central conflict here?

2. Discuss these contrasts as they become apparent during the course of the story: between the present and past of Pomfret's family; between Garland's "vitality" and Pomfret's "gentility"; between Ronald's present and past.

3. Does Ronald's wife play a significant role in the story? Could the introductory and concluding sections (in Ronald's home) be omitted without changing the emphasis of the story?

4. Both Junius and Ronald are aware of the loss of something. That loss sets up a conflict in the mind of each. By the end of the story is each conflict resolved?

5. What is the significance of the white hound?

6. This story could be made much shorter if certain descriptive passages were merely summarized or were entirely omitted. Do you think the story would gain or lose force by such changes? Make your discussion concrete by considering such passages as these: ". . . as if he had either inherited a senator's nose without his force, or had been

born a Moses in a day of air-cooled bars" (p. 685); ". . . his country kin spoke of news as if it came by smoke signals, or runners staggering from a wood" (p. 686); ". . . like the end couple of a halted cotillion, best visible because last dead . . ." (p. 687); ". . . as if he had been addressed by a fox in a path . . ." (p. 687); the flakes of snow "blinked soundlessly from sight on the creek, pocking the surface" (p. 694).

Suggestions for Writing

1. Retell the story of Ronald's visit from Pomfret's point of view.

2. Soldiers who at the time complained the most bitterly about army experiences have been known later to look back at army life with nostalgia. Does Ronald belong in this category?

Index

Adler, Mortimer, *How to Read a Dictionary,* 579
Allen, Frederick Lewis, *Crash!* 150
American Student as I See Him, The, by Gilbert Highet, 279
Anderson, Maxwell, *The Essence of Tragedy,* 356
Andler, Kenneth, *Surveyor in the Woods,* 57
Anonymous, *Letter to a Seventeen-Year-Old Son,* 369
Are Families Passé? by Ruth Benedict, 254

"Bard" Competes with "The Body," The, by C. A. Lejeune, 349
Barnett, Lincoln, *The Universe and Dr. Einstein,* 219
Becker, Carl L., *Frederick Jackson Turner,* 82; *Words and Things,* 588
Benedict, Ruth, *Are Families Passé?* 254
Benét, Stephen Vincent, *By the Waters of Babylon,* 654
Bennett, M. K., *Population and Food Supply: The Current Scare,* 528
Bishop, Morris, *The Last Days of Football,* 399
Brown, John Mason, *The Case Against the Comics,* 386; *Olivier's* Hamlet, 338; *Pleasant Agony,* 566
Brown, Rollo Walter, *"Kitty" of Harvard,* 69
By the Waters of Babylon, by Stephen Vincent Benét, 654

Cancer Research: Integrator of the Sciences, by Paul A. Zahl, 211
Capp, Al, *The Case for the Comics,* 389
Case Against the Comics, The, by John Mason Brown, 386
Case for the Comics, The, by Al Capp, 389
Children's Page, by John P. Marquand, 636
Churchill, Winston, *Dunkirk,* 433
Class of '49, The, by the Editors of "Fortune," 241
Clemens, Samuel L.: *see* Twain, Mark
Coates, Christopher W., *The Kick of an Electric Eel,* 118
Cohn, David L., *Moonlight and Poison Ivy,* 393; *Who Will Do the Dirty Work?* 408
Conant, James Bryant, *Lowering the Economic Barriers,* 378
CRAFT OF WRITING, THE, 553
Crash! by Frederick Lewis Allen, 150
Cub-Pilot, by Mark Twain, 18

Daniels, Earl, *Outline for a Defense of Poetry,* 466
Daring Deed, A, by Mark Twain, 611
Davis, Robert Gorham, *Logic and Logical Fallacies,* 594

Dorrance, Ward, *The White Hound,* 684
Drucker, Peter F., *Henry Ford: Success and Failure,* 265
Dunkirk, by Winston Churchill, 433

Early Macy Advertising, by Ralph M. Hower, 514
Editors of "Fortune," *The Class of '49,* 241; *The Machine and the Farm,* 103
Editors of "Life," *Lana Turner's Fourth and Positively Last Time,* 328
Edman, Irwin, *The Next Step,* 403
Essence of Tragedy, The, by Maxwell Anderson, 356
EVALUATION, 239
EXPERIENCE AND OBSERVATION, 3
EXPLANATION, 101

Fadiman, Clifton, *My Life Is an Open Book,* 49
Feel, The, by Paul Gallico, 5
"Fortune," Editors of, *The Class of '49,* 241; *The Machine and the Farm,* 103
Frederick Jackson Turner, by Carl L. Becker, 82
From Riches to Rags, by Dixon Wecter, 166

Gallico, Paul, *The Feel,* 5

Hatch, Robert, *Olivier's* Hamlet, 344
Henry Ford: Success and Failure, by Peter F. Drucker, 265
Here Is New York, by E. B. White, 290
Highbrow, Lowbrow, Middlebrow, by Russell Lynes, 309
Highet, Gilbert, *The American Student as I See Him,* 279
How Dense Is the Mass? by Gilbert Seldes, 421
How to Read a Dictionary, by Mortimer Adler. 579
How to Write Like a Social Scientist, by Samuel T. Williamson, 560
Hower, Ralph M., *Early Macy Advertising,* 514
Huxley, Aldous, *Who Are You?* 186
Huxley, Thomas Henry, *The Method of Scientific Investigation,* 203

In Defense of the High-brow, by Winthrop Sargeant, 326
Indispensable Opposition, The, by Walter Lippmann, 457
Industrial Revolution, The, by Norman Ware, 143
Is Reading Here to Stay? by Joseph Wood Krutch, 417
It's the English in Us, by Gerald W. Johnson, 443

Johnson, Gerald W., *It's the English in Us,* 443
Jones, Howard Mumford, *A Review of* Raintree County *by Ross Lockridge, Jr.,* 334

Kick of an Electric Eel, The, by Christopher W. Coates, 118
"Kitty" of Harvard, by Rollo Walter Brown, 69
Krutch, Joseph Wood, *Is Reading Here to Stay?* 417

Ladies' and Gentlemen's Guide to Modern English Usage, by James Thurber, 554
Lana Turner's Fourth and Positively Last Time, by the Editors of "Life," 328
Langewiesche, Wolfgang, *Winds That Blow Straight Up,* 129
Last Days of Football, The, by Morris Bishop, 399
Leader of the People, The, by John Steinbeck, 621
Lejeune, C. A., *"The Bard" Competes with "The Body,"* 349

Letter to a Seventeen-Year-Old Son, Anonymous, 369
"Life," Editors of, *Lana Turner's Fourth and Positively Last Time*, 328
Lippmann, Walter, *The Indispensable Opposition*, 457
Logic and Logical Fallacies, by Robert Gorham Davis, 594
Lowering the Economic Barriers, by James Bryant Conant, 378
Lynes, Russell, *Highbrow, Lowbrow, Middlebrow*, 309

Machine and the Farm, The, by the Editors of "Fortune," 103
Marquand, John P., *Children's Page*, 636
McCarthy, Mary, *The Unspoiled Reaction*, 675
Mencken, H. L., *Scented Words*, 572
Method of Scientific Investigation, The, by Thomas Henry Huxley, 203
Miserable, Merry Christmas, A, by Lincoln Steffens, 42
Moonlight and Poison Ivy, by David L. Cohn, 393
Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown, by Virginia Woolf, 488
Munro, H. H.: *see* Saki
My Life Is an Open Book, by Clifton Fadiman, 49

NARRATION, 609
Next Step, The, by Irwin Edman, 403

Olivier's Hamlet, by John Mason Brown, 338
Olivier's Hamlet, by Robert Hatch, 344
Open Window, The, by Saki (H. H. Munro), 617
Outline for a Defense of Poetry, by Earl Daniels, 466

PERSUASION, 367
Pleasant Agony, by John Mason Brown, 566
Population and Food Supply: The Current Scare, by M. K. Bennett, 528

RESEARCH, 511
Review of George Washington: A Biography *by Douglas Southall Freeman, A*, by Louis B. Wright, 330
Review of Raintree County *by Ross Lockridge, Jr., A*, by Howard Mumford Jones, 334

Saki (H. H. Munro), *The Open Window*, 617; *Tobermory*, 667
Sargeant, Winthrop, *In Defense of the High-brow*, 326
Scented Words, by H. L. Mencken, 572
Seldes, Gilbert, *How Dense Is the Mass?* 421
Steffens, Lincoln, *A Miserable, Merry Christmas*, 42
Steinbeck, John, *The Leader of the People*, 621; *The Turtle*, 15
Surveyor in the Woods, by Kenneth Andler, 57

Thurber, James, *Ladies' and Gentlemen's Guide to Modern English Usage* ("Which," "The Perfect Infinitive," "The Subjunctive Mood"), 554
Tobermory, by Saki (H. H. Munro), 667
Turtle, The, by John Steinbeck, 15
Twain, Mark, *Cub-Pilot*, 18; *A Daring Deed*, 611

Universe and Dr. Einstein, The, by Lincoln Barnett, 219
Unspoiled Reaction, The, by Mary McCarthy, 675

Ware, Norman, *The Industrial Revolution*, 143

Wecter, Dixon, *From Riches to Rags,* 166
White, E. B., *Here Is New York,* 290
White Hound, The, by Ward Dorrance, 684
Who Are You? by Aldous Huxley, 186
Who Will Do the Dirty Work? by David L. Cohn, 408
Williamson, Samuel T., *How to Write Like a Social Scientist,* 560
Winds That Blow Straight Up, by Wolfgang Langewiesche, 129
Woolf, Virginia, *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown,* 488
Words and Things, by Carl L. Becker, 588
Wright, Louis B., *A Review of* George Washington: A Biography *by Douglas Southall Freeman,* 330

Zahl, Paul A., *Cancer Research: Integrator of the Sciences,* 211