

STEPHEN



*Here  
Are My  
Lectures!*

LEACOCK

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*HERE ARE MY  
LECTURES*

*By*

*Stephen Leacock*

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## PREFACE

All men write memoirs. Great commanders, in their old age, refigure their battles with pen and ink. Magicians explain their magic. Confidence men, from their repentant cells, expound their bygone wickedness. Bar-tenders in the sunset of their lives write manuals on mixing drinks.

So let it be with me.

A year ago I retired from college lecturing, at the urgent request of the college trustees, who were very firm about it. Now, at the request of innumerable friends all over the country, I am retiring from lecturing on the public platform as a humorist.

This is a rôle I never dared to assume till many years after I had begun work as an academic lecturer. Indeed I first attempted it in order to raise money for the Belgian refugees during the Great War—either the audience must come or the Belgians must die. In this capacity I covered a great deal of ground in 1915 and 1916. Indeed the King of the Belgians had very generously said that he didn't care how much ground I covered as long as I paid my own expenses.

It was very difficult at first. I remember that at my first 'humorous' lecture at St. John, New Brunswick, the Chairman announced it as 'international law,' and the audience believed him. I recall also a gloomy evening in Vermont when the Chairman, in rising to thank me, said in a solemn tone: 'I forgot to mention, ladies and gentlemen, that this lecture was given for nothing. We didn't give Mr. Leacock any fee, and we didn't bring him here.' That set everything right.

But in any case I was able to send quite a lot of money to the French town of Nantes where many refugees were. As I have elsewhere narrated, in my book on my Discovery of Western Canada, the Mayor of the town wrote and thanked me, and expressed admiration at the long journeys I had made. I imagine he used a French atlas of the days of Louis XIV and picked off it the only names he recognized. He wrote, 'We observed, with admiration, that you have made the dangerous voyage of the Lake Superior and penetrated as far as Fort William and Duluth, in the country of the savages.'

But later on I acquired a certain facility in lecturing and received many compliments. My friend Irvin Cobb, who was lecturing on the public platform at the same time, once said that he had no hesitation in classing me as the second humorist in America. And the other day, when I spoke at Edmonton, the Chancellor of the University of Alberta said that he had never in his life listened to anything more brilliant, and that he hadn't listened to more than a

few opening sentences anyway. The Chief Justice of the Province, who was also present, concurred, except as to the opening sentences.

But perhaps the estimate of anybody's talent made in his own home town is apt to be the most nearly correct. Such an estimate I got lately in my home town of Orillia, Ontario. It was at a dinner held in Carter's Upstairs Dining Room—it's just opposite Macnab's Hardware; you can hardly miss it. The dinner was given in my honour by the Anti-Mosquito Society of East Simcoe, of which I am life President. In presenting me with a mosquito net the committee of reception spoke of me as 'one of our foremost humorists of East Simcoe.'

So I can take my stand on that.

In spite of any success or encouragement in lecturing, the time came when I had to give it up. I had lectured in the East so often that I had said everything I knew to everybody who would listen. So I took a trip to the West and lectured all the way to the Pacific Ocean. After I had spoken in Victoria, on Vancouver Island, I realized that I must either stop lecturing or learn Japanese and go on.

So I have decided to take my place with the memoir-men. Here are my lectures. Here with them are a lot of odd stories that I used to drag into them as best I could; or, failing that, tell them to little gatherings of hospitable friends after the lectures, in that warm hour when the lecture is over and everyone delighted; or tell them to the Pullman car porter, man's last friend.

STEPHEN LEACOCK

Montreal, Nov. 1, 1937.

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# I

## HOW SOON CAN WE START THE NEXT WAR?

*(With apologies to the many audiences who have heard me promise to start it, without my having yet made good.)*

I purpose to discuss the question: How Soon Can We Start the Next War? And I want to say at once that on this question I am an optimist. I think that things are coming our way. Now, I don't say that we can have the war for this autumn. It's getting a little too late and the football season has been interfering with it; and of course Xmas is approaching and that's apt to bring along with it a rather nasty outbreak of good will which is troublesome while it lasts. But even allowing for these temporary delays I think we can all look forward pretty confidently to what we may call a general conflagration in the near future. Some of our friends already talk hopefully of an Armageddon which may end in world chaos. So I think that we shall certainly get something; if not this winter at any rate early in the spring.

But I want to say at once that if this world war does come, we on this North American continent—Canadians and Americans—can take very little credit for it. I say it straight out; we have not been doing our share. We have been hanging back at a time when over in Europe they have been making such splendid efforts towards a general war.

We have to realize that in the older civilization they have developed a mechanism that we haven't got—a system of 'conversations' and 'incidents' and 'protocols' and 'ultimatums,' by which No. 10 Downing Street talks to the Quai D'Orsay, and by which they both address an identical 'communique' to the Ball Platz which, being a Ball Platz, plays it right across fast to the Yildiz Kiosk, and from there to the Escurial, and then home. All that we seem able to do is to send a Minister in a plug hat from Ottawa to Washington to play golf, and bring back two others like himself to Ottawa to fish in the Gatineau. You can't make a war out of that stuff.

We have to remember, too, that they have long since got the map of Europe all fixed up for war. They have a set of 'corridors,' by which one nation's territory runs right through another's and out on the other side; and they have little places called 'enclaves,' meaning a piece of one nation's territory entirely surrounded by the territory of another. Then there are bits with special names like the Sandjak of Novi-Bazaar, and the Casino of Monte Carlo, and the Folies Bergère republic—one reads of them. There is territory that is 'internationalized' and 'neutralized' and 'sterilized' and 'stupefied.'



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Now if we want to take our proper place in the world we have got to get these things. A little while ago—I hope I am not violating official secrets in telling you about it—I was instrumental in starting a correspondence between our Canadian External Affairs Department at Ottawa and the American Secretary of State at Washington in regard to the possibility of opening a ‘corridor.’ Our Department telegraphed:

*Would like to offer you a corridor to the Hudson Bay, air-conditioned.*

The American Secretary answered:

*We are ignorant of where the Hudson Bay stops (stop) But that sort of thing never stops us (stop) Gladly accept corridor and offer you in return enclave west side of Chicago.*

Our Government sent a telegram back in reply:

*Not very keen on west side of Chicago; how about Hollywood, California?*

Here the matter stands at present. It is what they call in European diplomacy an *impasse*. If you keep it up long enough, you get a war.

But there is more in the situation even than that. In Europe, for centuries and centuries, they have cultivated the idea of *nationality*, till they now have themselves divided up in their minds into nations, in which they understand that every person in one nation is altogether different from every person in any other nation. In this way of thinking one Englishman is just the same as every other Englishman, and all of them quite different from all Frenchmen; and every Frenchman is just like every other Frenchman and all different from every kind of German—and so on right down to Chinese and Canadians. There was a lot of truth in this a thousand years ago; there is hardly any now. But European politics are still working on this system. It was grand in the days of Charlemagne; now, worse than meaningless, it is the chief impediment to progress.

But there the imaginary nations are, still persisting in their existence.

You see them best perhaps, as you do so many things, in comic literature. Believe me, ladies and gentlemen, if I were allowed to talk upon humour as a serious matter I would try to show you that perhaps sometimes we can get a clearer view of the world by reading what is called its humour, looking at its

comic characters, than by looking at its serious phases.

First, the imaginary Frenchman, still seen in the comic stage and still used as the basis of the world's politics; always called Alphonse or Gaston; wears a bell-shaped coat; eats frogs; prefers other men's wives to his own; good taste but no morals.

Put beside him the Englishman; hay-coloured hair and straw-coloured whiskers; has only one eye—the other is glass. Why Englishmen prefer to have a glass eye, I don't know. But it is so. To be a *real* Englishman you must have only one eye; and you must use words like 'rippin' and 'toppin', and say 'my deah fellah, I haven't seen you since the Baw Wah, eh, what.' The Englishman has a title, or his cousin has, and is very stand-offish but needs watching or he'll borrow money.

Contrasted with him is the imaginary Irishman; always saying 'Arrah' and 'Macushla' and 'Mavourneen'; always ready for a fight; no respect for law; makes a fine policeman.

Next to him is one type that I admit has something in it, the Scotchman. I lean towards him, but not from any point of descent. I have no Scotch in me except what I put in. But you know that imaginary Scotchman who, I will say, has perhaps kept his national characteristics more stubbornly than the others; very hard, very dour; believes in hell—hopes to go there; looks on any other place as not economical enough.

Contrast with this what one might call the true international spirit and the international type, just coming, perhaps, into existence. I can illustrate it by quoting a little anecdote that I read in the paper the other day.

A young man at a dance approached a girl and said, 'I'd love to ask you for a dance, but I have to admit I'm just a little stiff from polo.' 'Oh,' said the girl, 'I don't care where you come from; let's dance.'

That was a truly international girl. We ought to have more like her.

But having all these imaginary beings going strong, we keep up the conviction that the world is divided into nations. Mind, if I were speaking to you this morning as a political scientist—a forbidden rôle—I would be willing to say that, yes, of course in the past the nation was a wonderful thing; the nation as a conception in history was at one time the salvation of Europe. At the time when all Europe was strewn with the wreckage of the Roman Empire, prostrate under barbarian invasion, at the time when the peace and civilization of the Antonine Emperors had been scattered into fragments, the upbuilding of the European nations, around a castle here or a cliff there or a harbour somewhere else, the upbuilding of the European nations is a wonderful story. 'Nationalism' and 'Progress' were one and the same thing. And with that story still goes the marvellous allegiance, the pride of race, which has been so wonderful for all of us—the tattered flags, the long history of victories and

struggles that have made our countries what they are. All of that we must never forget, never throw aside. For the trouble with the new cosmopolitanism is that it tries in vain to turn its back on history. You can't do that. There is no need to. But when the world gets a little wiser, all our history will become a common product in which each and all of us can take pride in the achievements of the other people.

Look at our North American history and realize that, now the fires of anger have died out, there is no sorrow in the record; there is only the twin glory of an equal contest, a Wolfe and a Montcalm pitted against one another, and an American Revolution in which, as usual, both sides are right. They always are. In any epic contest, like the civil war of long ago in England, and the civil war of yesterday in America, both sides are right, or the war would never go on. We must never think that internationalism, which I am preaching indirectly, should force us to turn our backs on the splendour of national history. That has been the inspiration of every great people.

But the world has got to realize that time moves on, that the salvation of one era is the ruin of another, and that the thing carried over from one generation to another, once noble, can lose its meaning, and perhaps spell disaster. The world must unify or die. And it cannot be done with books or pen and ink or with corridors or enclaves. The Quai D'Orsay can't do it; 10 Downing Street or the Ball Platz can't do it. Nothing can do it except a new spirit in the human heart.

Let us pass on then to measure some of the forces working in each direction, for nationalism and against it. And first we have that powerful instrument, the League of Nations. Those are the boys who make trouble! The League of Nations, without whose kind offices we would never know half the quarrels that are going on in the world. But they keep us well informed. We have had more accurate history of other people's wars since the League began to function than we ever dreamed of.

I have been privileged to see a little of their correspondence for next year. They hope next year to be able to do something as between Wales and Scotland. And I have here an advance copy of a letter from the Secretary of the League of Nations to the business manager of the Presbyterian Church in Scotland:

*Reverend Sir:*

*I write on behalf of the League to inquire whether you would feel interested in getting up a war this season between the Scotch and the Welsh. As you are doubtless aware, the Welsh have been saying a lot of dirty things about Scotland. There was one here in our office yesterday said he could lick any three of you north of the Tweed. And*

*we think we ought to bring it to your notice and ask if you are prepared to stand for it. If not, the League offers its publicity at any rate that you think suitable. We will also supply propaganda. We have a good deal of dirty stuff against them ready to give to you and we will help you to float an international loan in the United States—and sink it there.*

Ah, but observe the answer, and in this answer, which the Scotch are to send, you see the first slight warning note that perhaps there may be difficulties in getting up a war. This is from the business manager of the Presbyterian Church:

*Cable*

*Secretary, League of Nations, Geneva.*

*Collect.*

*Regret to say that war with the Welsh practically out of question  
Stop Great interest international bagpipe competition Inverness  
keeps our people breathless Stop Apprehend war financially  
injurious to the interest Scotch International Aberdeen Terrier Show  
Stop*

Aha! Notice that. The dogs, wiser than men, know nothing of our little quarrels. The Aberdeen terrier, an international character, wagging his tail in every quarter of the globe and holding his international show! We have to deal with him. So you see the Scotch, much though they would like to get into this business, are held back. Their cable ends:

*Suggest you apply instead Japanese Bureau of Oriental Love  
Stop But send us that Loan Anyway Stop*

Again I would not wish to be disparaging of the League of Nations. Everybody says it is a good thing, and it must be. Some day, if we live long enough, we shall see it in real operation. And it is not the fault of the League; it is the fault of us, its ‘unseen assassins,’ as Norman Angell calls us. There can never be a league of nations, there can never be any institution, until there is a spirit outside which sanctions and maintains it, a spirit which corresponds to it. And the world is not yet ready for that.

But even then it is well to keep the form, perhaps, while still the substance is lacking. Let us be like Pygmalion and have the statue first and put the right spirit into our Galatea afterwards, and let the League at any rate stand for an aspiration of the future.

Of course, mind you, when I say that we, each and all of us, are working

against the common welfare, perhaps you do not realize how much there is, how many small minor annoyances in which all Americans sneer at all Englishmen or all Englishmen sneer at all Americans.

You remember that famous character of Alphonse Daudet's, Tartarin of Tarascon, that mock-hero of southern France filled with the meridional spirit. You recall how it was rumoured that he was, after all his tall talk, not going to Africa to hunt the lions, and there was a mob collected around his house to mock at him, and Tartarin, facing the crowd, threw himself up into one of his noble postures and said—'*Des coups d'épée, messieurs, mais pas de coups d'épingles!*' ('Strike me with a sword if you like, but not with pinpricks.') It is the pinpricks very often that are the major offence.

I have gathered here (as Exhibit No. 4) some little extracts that were actually taken from the press, just coloured a little, not much, and they—well, sometimes truth is not good enough, and half the truth is better, just as half a brick carries further in an argument than a whole one. I have gathered together specimens of those pleasing little comments that pass back and forth across the Atlantic, in which some English traveller comes out here, takes a look for a week, let us say, at our education, and then denounces it. You see if he had *approved* it that wouldn't be news. News has to be dirty and disagreeable. Happiness is never news, only misfortune.

Well, you get this kind of thing: Extract from the New York Press:

#### NEW YORK, SUCH AND SUCH A DATE DENOUNCES AMERICAN EDUCATION

*Mr. Farquhar McSquirt, who holds a high position in the kindergarten department of the Scottish Orphan Asylum at Dumn Foolish, landed yesterday from the 'Moratorium' on a tour of American and Canadian schools and at once uttered a scathing denunciation of education on this continent. He considers that the whole system of education in America is punk. He admits the pupils attend school, but denies that they learn anything. He considers that the average boy of twelve in the Orkney Islands knows more than a graduate of Harvard.*

So he may, perhaps. It wouldn't hurt him.

*The American student, he says, has never learned to think, whereas the Scotch boy begins to think soon after he learns to talk*

Well, he goes on with half a column of that kind of thing. And then of course, when he has said all that, half a dozen college presidents have to be

called up to know whether that is so. And then they say, in denying it, that they ‘have not the honour of knowing Mr. McSquirt *personally*,’ etc.—That is the dirtiest thing you can say about any man. If you want to get after a person good and hard, just say you don’t know him, personally—never heard of him.

However, before they have time to wipe it all up, the account is balanced from the other side, from London. Thus:

### DENOUNCES OXFORD

*Mr. Phineas Q. Cactus, TQ, PF, president and principal of the Texas Agricultural Institute for Feeble-Minded Navajo Indians, uttered a scathing denunciation of the University of Oxford. He says that after a man leaves Oxford he is fit for nothing except the House of Lords, or the church, or the bar. He claims that the average Oxford professor would make only a poor showing as a cowboy in Texas.*

But of course the most cruel denunciation is when they start at our women. Now, there you touch us where we live! When any outsider dares for a moment to criticize our English women, or our American women, then we rise, the whole nation solid in a lump. Listen to this:

### DENOUNCES AMERICAN GIRLS

*Lady Violet Longshanks, a direct descendant of Edward I in the male line, landed yesterday from the ‘Rule Britannia’ and at once gave an interview to the press which has practically jarred society off its hinges. Lady Violet who represents the ‘haut ton’ of the oldest ‘noblesse’ and is absolutely ‘carte blanche,’ gave expression to a scathing denunciation of the American Girl. She declares that the American Girl has no manners, doesn’t know how to enter a room, still less how to get out again when she is in, and doesn’t even know how to use her feet.*

Well, that is awful! So, naturally, of course, the press send out warm tokens of assurance to the effect that the American girl *will* use her feet if Lady Violet doesn’t get a move on back to England.

Then back comes a similar denunciation from the other side:

### DENOUNCES ENGLISH GIRLS

*Mrs. Potter Pancake, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, President of the American Women’s International Friendship League, has just jarred*

*English society off its base by a denunciation handed out from the window of her hotel against English girls. Mrs. Pancake says the English girl is without grace and her movements inferior to those of a horse. She attributes this to the fact that the English girl drinks gin in inordinate quantities.*

Well, of course, when you get to that, that might lead to a serious situation, but in England they have one or two old-fashioned remedies that can always be brought out to put oil on the troubled waters. For instance, somebody can ask a question in the House of Commons. Just why they do it, or what the questions mean, I don't know, but in this connection, of course, somebody would probably have risen up and asked whether 'ministers'—they never use the definite article there—Students of language please take notice of this queer old-fashioned habit—whether ministers are aware that English girls are less graceful than a horse. The answer to this question, it seems, is that ministers are not aware, but will bring a horse and a girl, and see.

But better still, in any dilemma, of course, we can appeal to the Primate of the Church, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and it is a part of his functions, carried down since Edward the Confessor, to say something soothing, something that, without giving offence, leaves the whole thing—well, this is what he said in this case, that he had yet to know of any English girl drinking gin in what *he* considered inordinate quantities.

So there you have the press. One wonders, how can the world stand up against this tidal wave of minor annoyances? How can the barriers between the nations, the ramparts that have to be levelled to an open plain of friendship—how can they ever be abandoned if there must always be the need of repelling these invidious attacks?

Then as soon as the press run short of these personal denunciations, the military experts step in with another set of interviews, this time about the character of the next war. To give it the proper thrill of interest they refer to it as the next 'World War.' It is understood that everybody will want to get into it on one side or the other. The only difficulty the experts find is with the *alignment*. That means who fights who. It is one of the most important things about a world war to get it properly 'aligned,' because if it's not it runs out on you after a few years. The last war, it appears, was badly aligned. We ought to have given the Germans the Portuguese and lent them at least some of the Chinese. Properly aligned, it would have been going on still.

Hence the importance of alignment for the next World War. Here for example is, in substance, an interview given recently to the New York press, by Colonel the Honourable Fizzle Bungspark, a member of the British general staff, and, as everybody knows, a son of Lord Angletoad—in fact, so far,

nobody has ever doubted it.

*The colonel [writes the interviewer] is confident that in the next World War (which may begin in the spring), the most probable alignment is Great Britain, France and the United States against Germany and Russia; but he thinks it might be Great Britain, Russia and Germany against France, the United States and Portugal. On the other hand, the colonel admits that if the Chinese wish to come in it would be scarcely possible to keep them out. The Chinese, he says, have practically reached the level of a Christian nation. Their knowledge of poison gas is as yet a little inferior, but they will rapidly be able to take their place on an honourable footing in the coming contest.*

After the sensation over the Colonel has died down a little, there lands in New York a great French Air Expert, and another interview follows, this time not on alignment but on *matériel*. This is the French word that means what they hit you with.

*General le Marquis de Rochambeau LaFayette, director in chief of the French Aerial Forces, was interviewed yesterday as to the prospects of world peace. The General, whose name is Charles Marie Felix Rochambeau LaFayette de Liancourt, belongs to the old 'noblesse' of France and is a cultivated French gentleman of the old school, a veteran of seven wars, decorated with the 'croix de guerre,' the 'croix de feu,' the 'nom de plume' and the 'cri de Paris.' He thinks the next war will begin or perhaps be preceded by blowing up New York from the air. 'The skyscrapers and hotels' he said, 'will offer an admirable 'point de mire,' but he is afraid it will be hard to hit the churches, unless more space is cleared around them. But the public streets and squares will offer plenty of targets.*

That's good! And yet somehow I don't like this *target* business! It gives one the jumps. It seems to mean that, in the next war, *we*, *we ourselves*, get blown up—right here! Now that's ridiculous!

The old, old wars were so safe, so far away, so romantic. A hundred years ago an expedition sailed away to God-knows-where. The band played and they went away, and then presently they came back from God-knows-where, looking a little bewhiskered and brown, but they had licked somebody somewhere, and everything was grand! And then war began to get a little nearer and a little nearer and to take a heavier and heavier toll, and now they



actually propose to drop the bombs on us. That makes me think it is time to quit the war business.

But that isn't the whole of it.

We have got a new and first-class implement of war all forged in the new mechanism of publicity. If there is a war, we are going to have the hideous, gloating satisfaction of following, as we can now in unhappy Spain, every stage of slaughter and holocaust—gloating, exulting, with all the worst that is in us, reading, with that kind of half-hidden delight, of the horrors and misfortunes that go with war. In the old times some kind of shield and shelter, some kind of darkness, hung over those black spots. When Saragossa was torn, as Madrid is now, the world knew nothing of it at the moment. When Napoleon's army froze and suffered in the snow, the world did not see it with television, as it will when the next great army goes under. For now we have got already, or will have for the next war, a hideous commercial instrument of money-making that will sell us the sight of the war, day by day, and agony by agony.

It is not the fault of anyone. What I am trying to say is that humanity has now been caught up by forces for which no single person is to blame—not the capitalist, not the Socialist, not even all together. What the Greeks called Ananke, the fate of man. But whereas the Greek submitted to Ananke and let himself be borne along, like Œdipus, by fate, we have learned a different attitude; and I think we won't suffer it for ever, but we shall manage, somehow, to bend ourselves into a different direction and alter our fate.

But I am not saying the fault is that of any one person or country or any particular creed. It is a huge collective fault, and with it goes that strange thing 'publicity' by which war will be turned into money.

Let us suppose they had had publicity in the wars of the past, that everything came over the radio as it happened. Let us imagine that when Duke William of Normandy went across the Channel to invade England, the radio followed him and could send back the news to a Norman castle, and they could tune in and hear what was happening at Stamford Bridge and Senlac Hill and how the battle was going.

Carry yourselves with me to a Norman castle. It is the castle, let us say, of a Norman knight who has gone with William of Normandy. We are in the castle of Count Gueshard de Discard, one of the companions of William. Count Gueshard has gone, but his wife, Lady Margaret of the Rubber Neck, and her beautiful daughter, Lady Angela of the Angle Eye, are there. They are supposed, by an anachronism, to have a radio there and they are tuning in to try and get some word of what is happening over at the Battle of Hastings.

It is difficult at first. When they try to tune in they strike a Welsh Bard—as you would now. The bards are not like the good; they don't die young. But

after having tried in vain, Lady Margaret and Lady Angela twist the dials on this mediaeval instrument in their bower. (That means something like a stone cow-stable, what the historians call a ‘tapestried bower.’ It is, as I say, like a stone cow-stable with old cloth hung up; no glass windows, and rushes and dirt on the floor.) But by anachronism there is a beautiful radio at the side, to skip ten centuries for them, and thus they tune in; and then the voice of the announcer, sounding just the same a thousand years ago as it does now:

*Announcer: Now, folks, this is Senlac Hill, and we’re going to put a real battle on the air for you, and it’s going to be some battle. The principals are Harold, King of England—lift your helmet, Harold—and William, the Dook, or, as some call him, the Duck, of Normandy. Both the boys are much of a size, both trained down to weight, and each has got with him as nice a bunch of knights and archers as you’d see east of Pittsburgh. Umpires are: for Harold, the Reverend Allbald of the Soft Head, Archbishop of Canterbury; for William, Odo the Ten-Spot, Bishop of Bayeux. Side lines, Shorty Sigismund and Count Felix Marie du Pâté de Foie Gras. Referee, King Swatitoff of Sweden, ex-Champion of the Scandinavian League. Battle called at exactly ten a.m. They’re off. The Norman boys make a rush for the hill. Harold’s centre-forwards shoot arrows at them. William leads a rush at the right centre. Attaboy, William! That’s the stuff! Harold’s boys block the rush. Two Norman knights ruled off for interference. William hurls his mace. Forward Pass. Ten-year penalty. Quarter time.*

The radio stops.

*Lady Margaret: How terrifically exciting! Do you think we are winning?*

*Lady Angela: It is very hard to tell. I’ve often heard Papa say that in the first quarter of a battle they don’t really get warmed up.*

The radio starts.

*Announcer: Battle of Senlac. Second Quarter. Change of Ground. Duke William has won the west end. The Normans make a rush against the left centre. Hand-to-hand scrimmage with Harold’s front line. Many knights unhorsed and out of the game. Several men hurt on both sides. Count Guesshard de Discard receives a crack on the bean with a mace.*

*Lady Angela: Oh, Mamma, Papa got one on the bean.*

*Lady Margaret (Laughing): He certainly did. I can just see your papa's face when someone landed him one!*

*Lady Angela: What happens to you, Mamma, if Papa gets knocked out?*

*Lady Margaret (Looking at her little steel mirror): I don't know, but I think Cousin William is to give me to one of his knights.*

And if you think that exaggerated, oh, no, that isn't it. Not at all!

*Announcer: Second half of the game—*

And just then the radio, even in 1066, suddenly got full of static, and only static, and when they get it going again, the battle is all over and the announcer is saying:

*The foul Saxon, Harold, lies dead across the fifty-yard line with his whole centre scrimmage dead round him. Spectators leaving in all directions in great haste. The noble William is everywhere victorious. Norman crowd invading the club house. Number of injured and dead knights being piled up at the side of the field. Among the dead are Count Roger the Sardine, Count Felix Marie du Pâté de Foie Gras, the Seneschal Pilaffe de Volatile and Count Guesshard de Discard.*

*Lady Angela: Ah, do you hear that, Mamma? Odd's life, Papa's killed. That must have been that smack on the bean. I had a notion that Papa would get it, hadn't you?*

*Lady Margaret (Picking up the little steel mirror again and adjusting her cap): Oh, I was sure of it. A juggler prophesied it to me last Whitsuntide. I wonder which of the knights Count William will give me to. Isn't war exciting, darling?*

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Oh, yes, and still is—still is. But in those days on such a different footing—on such a very different footing—from what it is now.

So here you have, as far as I can give it in that kind of picture, some notion of the two forces between which humanity is torn. Fortunately there are, though less spectacular, enormous forces moving the other way—economic forces, forces which are beginning to insist that the world economically and physically is all one, that the old days when a valley made a nation and a river separated two peoples and the world was broken by its own geography, that that is finished, and that modern power and modern flight and the whispering

currents that pass everywhere—those uniting forces and the forces of disunion are locked in a deadly struggle.

There is, I believe, one school of theologians which has pictured human fate from its earliest times as being the prey sought for by two spirits, the one of light, the other of darkness, fighting over humanity as the Greeks and Trojans fought over the body of the dead Patroclus. And if that is true in one form or another, there was never a better illustration of it than in these anxious and critical times in which we are living, in which the bygone forces that made the nations may still drag us into war, in spite of the fact that a Frenchman is not a Frenchman, that he is a *man*, and an Englishman is a man, and an Irishman a man and a half.

The unity of mankind has powerful allies. Science calls for it. Men of science are compelled to move together. Invention cannot be separated. And behind those forces there goes, in the good sense, athletics—all of that defies national boundaries and tries to build up for us a different kind of world.

Which is going to succeed I do not know, but I do know the duty that is laid upon every one of us to do what best he can to mould opinion, to shape destiny, to be, within our little sphere, blameless for these awful things which still might happen. It almost looks as if we could see over in Europe the handwriting on the wall that means coming disaster. Please Heaven, not. But every step that is taken by the major governments shows how close they know the crisis may perhaps be.

There are no people more sane and steady than those who govern England. With them government is not and never has been a matter of the collective votes of the majority of the people. That sounds a strange statement. That sounds contrary to the plain fact of parliamentary elections. But I repeat it. In England government has never merely represented the majority vote of the people. It has represented something hard to define without being lost in the mazes of philosophy—but a kind of collective wisdom, collective loyalty of a governing class. Those are brutal words, easy to misuse, hard to understand properly—not a tyrant class, but a class of people like Stanley Baldwin, with an infinite sense of responsibility, people to whom office and opposition are all one, and both mean service. It has been my privilege to know some of those men who in the last thirty years have governed England, and I am convinced that there is not in the heart of any one of them any other motive than that of the welfare of all mankind, of Europe and of England. When you see the steps that are being taken even by such a government as that, the fortification of what was once a self-protected island, the air that hums with danger, the sleep that may be broken at any moment, then such a situation calls aloud for sympathy.

Do not think that we can escape it here. Do not think that we can shelter

ourselves behind the ocean and look upon this wreckage as destined only to blot the continent of Europe and never to matter to America. If it comes it will spread like a plague, driving across the continents with all the evil winds of disaster behind it. We are as much interested as they. '*Hodie mihi, cras tibi,*' so wrote the mediaeval monks on the stone coffins of their dead. 'Mine to-day, yours to-morrow.' 'Your fate will be mine and your salvation shall be mine.'

So we must plead unceasingly for an earnest sympathy with Europe, wiping out all the angers of the past, wiping out all the questions of whose are the honour and whose the guilt of the late war, remembering not the brutality, but only the bright pages of the heroism, the golden pages that open in either direction, pages that open as well for our so-called enemies as for ourselves.

We must remember that there are no people better situated than you in the United States and we in Canada. We can show an example of what is to be done for salvation. We do not need for our friendship a pen and ink, a contract, a document, a scrap of paper. We do not need that. We are bound by our hearts. We have long since decided that politically our ways lie separate, but the very fixity of that resolve makes it easier and better and finer for us to let our ways mingle as closely as ever they possibly can. At times the English get worried about the so-called 'Americanization' of Canada. They don't realize that that is the best thing that ever happened for Canada, for the States, for the Empire, for the world at large. It gives us the aspect of one single continent, from the frozen sea to the Rio Grande, bound together as we are by friendship only, mutual agreement and co-operation, and relying only upon the path of peace.

I tell you this: If the world is to be saved, that is the path of salvation in Europe. They may take it; they may not. The sky is heavy with a lurid light threatening to break from the clouds. There is the cool fresh air blowing above. Which can conquer? We don't know. You and I and all of us if we live a few years will know of wonderful happenings in the world, for the path has got to be made straight or the path will lead over the abyss. The problem cannot wait. It has grown too acute. The world has no time for bungling, or muddling through. That was good enough for the older civilization, but not for us now.

What I have been trying to say is that there is a responsibility, not only on them, but on us, on you in the States and on us in Canada. All the nobler assets of youth and courage and optimism are needed in the struggle. There is room for every one of us to take our part in this coming struggle over the fate of mankind.

## MUTUAL ESTEEM

*When I was lecturing at Victoria, B.C., I went into the hotel barber shop to get my hair cut. The barber passed his comb back and forward through my hair and said:*

*'Well, sir, if I had a head of hair like yours, I'd make an awful lot of money selling hair tonic.'*

*'Yes,' I answered, 'and if I was as bald as you are, I could double my fees as a humorist.'*

*We parted with expressions of mutual esteem.*

*I told the story that night to my audience. But he's still telling it to his.*

## II RECOVERY AFTER GRADUATION *or* LOOKING BACK ON COLLEGE

I am to address to-night this large and enthusiastic college audience on ‘Recovery After Graduation’ and whether it is possible. Some of you, I see, looking around at your professoriate on this platform, shake your heads. You feel that recovery is not possible. But you must not misunderstand my meaning. I am not speaking of *complete* recovery, which, I quite agree, is out of the question, but of partial recovery. I shall try to show you to-night that, while in some ways the effects of education are irreparable, it is yet possible in later life so to correct the mistakes of college training that one can preserve one’s education as a *reductio ad absurdum* for old age.

In this task let me explain my qualifications. I come before you as what is called a ripe classical scholar—you know them—they get so ripe that they fall off the stem like pumpkins. I have spent all my life, over sixty years, in school and classrooms; I began at four years old and only stopped when they made me. If I am not educated, I don’t know who is. I must be, and yet I confess that when I try to gather together what is left of my education there seems little of it except wreckage. There’s a lot of it, but it hardly seems more than a set of disconnected fragments.

Take Latin. What have I left of it after an intense study of ten years? Well, mainly such things as this, that *ad, ante, con, in* and *inter, ob, post, pro, sub* and *super*—*govern* something. But what they govern I don’t recall. Then there’s another crowd—*glis, lis, vas, nix, mas, mus, faux, strix*—I know that they are irregular, highly irregular (They certainly look it), but I forget what their particular line of irregularity is.

Or take Geometry—what we used to call Euclid because we had to learn it just as he wrote it. I know a lot of it still, but the vital parts have dropped out. For instance, I know that the angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal, and if the equal sides are produced—something terrific happens! But what, I can’t recall.

In short, the more I look at my education the more there seems to be about it something purposeless, something that could vanish and leave no trace, having no real meaning or inspiration.

So I turn to ask where I got it.

I began my education in England at the age of four in what was then called

a Dame's School. I can still recall the misery of standing up with a little class in front of a big map and raising my hands up and down with the others and choking down my tears as I repeated: 'The top of the map is always north, the bottom south, the right hand east, the left hand west.' In spite of my tears I had a bright intelligence, and it seemed to me that if the map was turned upside down this would be the other way. But in the little Dame's School nothing was ever *explained*. You had to learn it just as it stood.

In the same way, when the geography class was done, we learned by heart, out of a little book called Grammar, the statement that 'There are eight parts of speech, the noun, the pronoun, the adjective, the verb, the adverb, the preposition, the conjunction and the interjection.' It was just a mass of words. We hadn't the least idea of what a part of speech meant.

This was my first introduction to that central problem in education, whether to teach by explanation or teach by beginning without any. All modern theories and all modern schools make much of the idea of teaching by what explains itself, by 'proceeding from the known to the unknown,' and from the concrete to the abstract. But there's something in the Dame School method after all. You get there. And yet I don't know—I realize that that top-of-the-map stuff has given me a false conception of the physical world ever since. The South Pole really seems to me to be down under somewhere. If the teacher had had a modern method and stood us on our heads—ah, then we would have grasped it.

From the Dame's School I passed to other institutions. It was my lot in life to come out to Canada at the age of six and to settle too far away from towns or railways to admit of regular schooling. Even the nearest little red school of the township was too far away for us to walk to. So for a year or so we were taught, my brothers and I, at home. There were in those days a number of little manuals that were specially prepared to meet such cases. Affectionate mothers in exile, whose own education had lapsed, could gather their little flock round their knees and teach out of the manuals prepared by Mrs. Magnall and Mrs. Marcett and Peter Parley. These were wonderful little books all composed in question and answer. As most of the questions were what lawyers call 'leading questions'—suggesting their own answer—the method was what might be described as a cinch. I have written a whole essay on it, in one of my books, to which I refer you for it in detail (And see that you go to it), but I can only give you an odd sample of it here. Mrs. Magnall, for example, had a compendium of general history in which she would ask:

*Did not the Rowans claim to be descended from Romulus and Remus? And the answer (written in the book as Ans) echoed back: They did.*



*Was not the first Roman King of whom we have any authentic account Numa Pompilius? The answer satisfied all doubt: He was.*

Progress under this system was rapid beyond anything in our present colleges. An intelligent child could scoop up the whole of Assyrian history in half an hour.

*Was not the Assyrian King Ashur-ban-ipal called by the Romans Sandanapalus?*

Ans: *He was.* Think of the accuracy and the profundity of it!

There is something appealing in the *naïveté* of the yes-and-no system.

*Did not the ancient Britons stain themselves with woad?*

Ans: *They did.*

No court of law would admit the validity of this as evidence. Any judge would rule it out as a leading question. But the devoted mothers were not a court of law. If there was anything wrong with Mrs. Magnall's method, they never saw it. Indeed, at times the situation was reversed and the pupil in the dialogue, having been content with *Yes, Yes, Yes*, for a whole series of questions, suddenly broke out with a perfect coruscation of brilliance, erupting dates, names, and facts with an effulgence that would have dazzled Macaulay.

Mrs. Magnall: *What great event happened next in Greece?*

Ans: *The Peloponnesian War, in which Athens, together with Attica, Bœotia, Locris, Doris, Phocis, Ætolia, and Acharnania, was leagued against Sparta, Megara, Corinth, together with the Islands of Chios, Lemnos and Samos.*

*Was the war of long duration?*

Ans: *This internecine struggle lasted from 431 B.C. till 404 B.C. and witnessed a carnage second only to that of the ravages of the Persians in Cappadocia. In Corinth no less than 2,882 houses, 4 temples, and 17 stadii, or open playgrounds of the *discolobi*, were destroyed, in one single assault of the Bœotians.*

*Name some of the chief figures of the contest.*

Ans: *Pericles, Praxiteles, Proxenes, Lysander, Anaximander, Timocles, Themistocles.*

After which Mrs. Magnall, completely knocked out, says: *You answered well. That concludes the history of Greece.*

It ought to.

With the question book and the Peter Parley there went another queer sort of book long out of use, called a Chronology. It was for learning dates. The one I remember was *Slater's Chronology*. It started with the idea that you had to know the date of everything, and it took it for granted that no one could remember dates without artificial aid. This was before the days of telephone numbers, which have trained the human mind to think in figures. Anyone who can remember the number of a farmer's party line on a suburban exchange, with supplementary rings to it, will have no trouble with the Norman Conquest. But Slater felt that the race needed help and he gave it. He invented a set of key sentences, easily remembered, the letters of which most ingeniously indicated the date of the event talked about. Most ingenious, as long as you remembered the key. For example, the book began with the date of the creation of the world—a point of nice importance—I wish I knew it. The secret lies somewhere in the key sentence 'Read of Adam's Sin and Sore Repentance.' But for me the secret has been lost. Slater knew when the world was created; so did I, as a child. Now it is gone.

But from this kind of home teaching I passed on, at twelve years old, to a real school, a typical classical school on the English model, Upper Canada College. There, and during a course at the University of Toronto which followed, I received an old-fashioned training in the classics and humanities. I am still wondering whether the whole thing was ridiculous or marvellous. I have no prejudices in the matter and I don't know which it was. So I can give offence to no one in speaking of it. Under that system of education we learned nothing of science—no geology or physics or biology or chemistry—nothing of all those things that give us, as far as we have it, our explanation of the world we live in—as far, that is, as up to where it vanishes in ignorance and mystery. We had nothing of all that. We had nothing of commerce, economics, and what is vaingloriously called social science. Of that I am glad. I have no doubt where those subjects belong. We had nothing of modern history, since the beginning of the reign of Queen Victoria, and nothing of modern international relations. What we did have was English, Latin, and Greek—and, when we had grazed off the surface, we dug down into the roots. We learned by heart such things as the allies in the Peloponnesian War (See above, where quite a few are probably correct), the route perhaps followed by Ulysses, and perhaps not, in the Ægean Sea, or the names of the nine Muses, with assorted Gods, Goddesses, and Devils. We attached an inordinate importance to saying 'Sophocles' instead of 'Sophōkels.' We turned incomprehensible Latin into

worse English and turned beautiful English poetry into Latin verse that sounded as harsh as the back-fire of a gasoline truck.

On the face of it, it all seems crazy. Yet sometimes I am haunted with the idea that the system turned out singularly cultivated men. I remember the case of an English Bishop, whom I have elsewhere quoted, as defending the classics by saying, 'After all, Greek made me what I am.' In his case of course it sounded ridiculous, but in my own, I am not sure.

The truth is perhaps that a classical education in attempting one thing effects another. In trying to get you imbued with the language and literature of the ancient world (both of them, as I see it now, things of no consequence except as history), it trains your mind with a hard discipline that fits it for modern life. The best way to learn business correspondence is to try to translate Latin prose. The silly instruction of a commercial school teaches business correspondence by explaining that F.O.B. means 'free on board,' and that letters should begin, 'Yours of the 4th ult. in re Smith to hand and in reply would say——' But the F.O.B. stuff can be learned by a classical boy in an hour (literally so, all of its forty or fifty abbreviations) and the 'reply-would-say' stuff is just rotten English. Any boy who could write the clear, regular sentences that I and my fellows learned to write at seventeen would be a shining light in a business office.

So there it is. Education can only succeed in being practical by not trying to be so. Just as happiness never comes when called but only at back rounds when disregarded in favour of duty. And as to the ancient world and the Peloponnesian War and the wanderings of Ulysses—well, the very distance of it all, the unworldliness of it, opens as it were another door out of our daily life, leading to the magic garden of imagination. I doubt if you can open it as well with studies of the trade routes of to-day and statistics of the Panama Canal. Perhaps it is better to hear in school of tumults long since hushed in silence and of battles long ago, over which time's hand has long since obliterated pain—better for those at school, these Peloponnesian allies in tall helmets and tossing plumes, massed into phalanxes, than the recital of the daily agony of a tortured Spain.

So perhaps the old education was best. Yet it did carry the fault that a lot of it was terribly artificial. It was all so full of learning by heart, of lists and tricks and devices as to how to remember things, that it seemed, much of it, mere mechanics. I remember that even in such mechanics I and my fellows acquired a very high ingenuity. We became experts at passing examinations, just as burglars are experts at picking locks. This of course could chiefly be done in the classics. In mathematics it was hard to 'get by.' Yet I remember inventing a system for the solution of equations by writing down one of the expressions concerned at the top left corner and the other at the bottom right and then

filling in under one and above the other anything and everything that seemed equal to either of them. When these met in the middle the thing was done. Since all equals are equal, it was all correct. It meant, of course, that in the middle was a brilliant piece of synthesis in piecing the equality terms in the centre. This, the examiner, being himself a mathematician, would admire and envy.

But pieces of good fortune in mathematics were few and far between. In the classics and philosophy it was quite different. After I had ceased to be a professor and could safely divulge the secrets of the trade, I once wrote down for my ex-students some precepts on the art of passing examinations. I requote a sample or two in this place.

Here first is the case of Latin translation, the lists of extracts from Caesar, Cicero, etc., the origin of each always indicated by having the word Caesar, etc., under it. On this we seize as our opportunity. The student doesn't need to know one word of Latin. He learns by heart a piece of translated Latin, selecting a typical extract, and he writes that down. The examiner merely sees a faultless piece of translation and notices nothing—or at least thinks the candidate was given the wrong extract. He lets him pass.

Here is the piece of Caesar as required.

*'These things being thus this way, Caesar, although not yet did he not know neither the copiousness of the enemy nor whether they had frumentum, having sent on Labienus with an impediment, he himself on the first day before the third day, ambassadors having been sent to Vercingetorix, lest who might which, all having been done, set out.*

*'Caesar. Bellum Gallicum, Op. Cit.'*

The summation of what is called the liberal arts course is reached with such subjects as political theory, philosophy, etc. Here the air is rarer and clearer and vision easy. There is no trouble at all in circling around the examiner at will. The best device is found in the use of quotations from learned authors of whom he has perhaps—indeed, very likely—never heard, and the use of languages which he either doesn't know or can't read in blurred writing. We take for granted that the examiner is a conceited, pedantic man—as they all are—and is in a hurry to finish his work and get back to a saloon.

Now let me illustrate.

Here is a question from a recent examination in Modern Philosophy. I think I have it correct or nearly so.

*Discuss Descartes' proposition, 'Cogito ergo sum' as a valid basis of*

epistemology.

Answer: *Something of the apparent originality of Descartes' dictum, 'Cogito ergo sum,' disappears when we recall that, long before him, Globulus had written, 'Testudo ergo crepito,' and the great Arab Scholar Alhelallover, writing about 200 Fahrenheit, has said, 'Indigo ergo gum.' But we have only to turn to Descartes' own brilliant contemporary, the Abbé Pâté de Foie Gras, to find him writing 'Avez vous vu le jardin de ma tante?' which means as much or more than Descartes' assertion. It is quite likely the Abbé himself was acquainted with the words of Pretzel, Weiner Schnitzel and Schmierkäse; even more likely still he knew the treatise of the low German, Fisch von Gestern, who had already set together a definite system or scheme. He writes: 'Wo ist mein Bruder? Er ist im Hause. Habe ich den Vogel gesehen? Dies ist ein Gutes Messer. Holen Sie Karl und Fritz und wir werden ins Theater gehen. Danke Bestens.'*

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All that, you will be glad to know, is just the introduction. We are now getting near to the lecture itself. What the introduction has been trying to say is that there seems to be something wrong with education. Instead of learning things for their own sake, because we want to, we learn things as a purely mechanical exercise, because we have to. Unless we go through the organized compulsory curriculum of a school and college we can't get the legal qualification to enter a profession. In order to be a dentist we must first know what a logarithm is, and in order to be a horse doctor you have to learn Latin. The idea is that any man who has tackled a Latin irregular verb has no trouble with the inside of a horse. Sometimes it works. Last summer up at the little place I call my farm I sent for a veterinary surgeon to come over and see what was wrong with my old horse. He came and looked puzzled and said that he guessed the horse was in a sort of decline. A few days later I fetched him again, but still all he could suggest was that the horse had fallen into a decline. When he came and gave the opinion the third time, I said: 'Ah, now, that's the third declension. I know all about that.'

Thus the great central problem opens up as to how far education has got to be compulsory and how far purely spontaneous—learning for learning's sake the things we want to know. At first sight and without afterthought anyone would say that ideal education, if it were possible, would be the untrammelled pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. It would probably be added that the ideal is not possible and hence education must be organized and compulsory and disciplinary. But it is doubtful whether the other thing is the ideal arrangement even if possible. Compulsion has its uses. If a boy learns nothing at school except to keep seated and silent, that in itself is good. We have to be made to do things; our frail human nature otherwise couldn't live up to its own

aspirations. Take as a minor instance such a case as compulsory attendance at lectures. Must the student be made to go, and checked off on a list like a factory hand? Yes, I think so. When I first went to teach at McGill, where such a rule was in force, I was horrified at it. I had been used to what seemed the superior liberty of other colleges, seeming more worthy of a man. But in reality students cut lectures from idleness, from whim, or from accident, and later on wish that they had been made to be present.

I recall the case of my late distinguished colleague, Dr. Francis Shepherd, Professor of Anatomy and sometime dean of the Faculty of Medicine at McGill University (*clarum et venerabile nomen*). Dr. Shepherd lectured on Anatomy at nine o'clock every morning. It was his custom, as nine o'clock drew near, to stand at the door of the classroom, his watch in his hand. At the exact hour of nine he entered the room, closed the door, locked it, and began his lecture. Any student locked out was counted absent; locked out eight times in the session he lost a year of his academic life. And who liked the system? The students did. They boasted of it. There is a whole generation of medical men who were brought up on it and still talk about it. I introduced it into my own classes in imitation of Dr. Shepherd, but I discontinued it as I found it meant locking myself outside rather too often. In the twenty years of his lecturing on Anatomy he was never once late.

Or take the compulsory college dress, the cap and gown, without which in my undergraduate days no students might enter a lecture-room. To some minds the rule seems ridiculous and barbarous. I don't find it so. Some false notion of equality and democracy has created a public opinion against it. It has had to go. Yet great, I think, is the loss. The college gown of my undergraduate days cost one dollar and fifty cents. It lasted a lifetime, and might indeed have served for burial. It was not killed by the cost of it, though its declining use drove the cost up. Public opinion killed it. Yet never was there anything more consistent with the dignity and democracy of knowledge. The good old gown, like charity, covered up a multitude of shabby clothes. It obliterated all distinctions of rich and poor, and for those who knew its shape and cut it was the symbol of a whole cycle of history. The doubled sleeve of the gown was in reality and originally a bag in which the impecunious student of the Middle Ages might place the food supplied to him by kindly donors. It was the hallmark of his local right to beg. You will note that even to-day the doubled sleeve of the gown of the doctor of philosophy has a larger cubic content than any other, and that these gowns, with their capacious sleeves, are only worn, as a rule, by the presidents of colleges!

Look back, then, over modern education, and you see the conflict between these two principles of spontaneity and compulsion running all through it and still at work. When our education first emerged from the cloisters of the church

to become a general instrument of human knowledge, the principle of compulsion dominated it. Boys were taught at the point of the rod. 'Spare the rod and spoil the child' was the maxim of the teacher.

One recalls as a typical figure at this period of education the great Dr. Busby of Westminster School. He used to boast that he had laid his rod on no less than sixteen bishops. He was so majestic that he would not let even King Charles II walk in front of him.

'A great man,' said Sir Roger de Coverley, 'he caned my grandfather.'

Dr. Busby's little charges learned, as I say, at the point of the stick. It didn't matter whether Smith Minor, entering Form I, wanted to learn or not. He had to. For him knowledge was not a garden. It was a steep and rough ascent on a rocky path—*gradus ad Parnassum*. Up he went, with the stick to keep him moving. He learned what he didn't want to learn. He didn't understand what it meant, or where it led to. He was driven, like a donkey going to market, over the *pons asinorum* of Euclid. He learned the fact that similar triangles are in the duplicate ratio of their homologous sides. God knows he didn't doubt it. He learned that the logarithm of a number to a given base is the index of the power to which the base must be raised to produce the given number. He was not allowed to ask why. But with it all there went, however, in a certain sense the honourable satisfaction of a task undertaken and done, a difficulty faced and conquered.

Such was the Busby method, and there was a lot in it. But an entirely different idea presently grew up in France and found expression from Jean Jacques Rousseau in his book *Emile, ou de l'Education*. Rousseau was a queer creature, contemptible in his private life, yet destined to typify, in the domain of government, of morals and of education, the opening of a new era. Rousseau's eminence probably consisted in his finding the words to say what everyone was already thinking. The psychologists tell us that that is about as far as 'originality' gets. We have apparently just two or three mass thoughts at a time, like a herd of cattle, and what we call our opinions are caught by infections from the crowd. At any rate Rousseau's doctrine of the state of nature as a lost paradise, of a return to natural liberty as the key to happiness, as they say in French, *faisait fortune*. His *Contrat Social* of 1762 went round the world, and his picture of little Emile's education became the basis of great changes.

Little Emile and his lot was an exact contrast to Smith Minor. The two boys are long since dead, but their souls are still with us. All of us, who have taken pedagogical courses, have heard enough, and too much, of the spontaneous system of education, proceeding from the known to the unknown and from the concrete to the abstract. As a matter of fact all such ideas are only half truths. Take as an example the teaching of elementary English grammar.

As Smith Minor learned it, it began with the brutal, straight-out statement, ‘There are eight parts of speech: the noun, the pronoun, the adjective, the verb, the adverb, the preposition, the conjunction and the interjection.’ He had no idea what this meant or where it was leading to. It was licked into him.

But little Emile—ah, no! He wandered among the flowers murmuring words at will, until presently he should say, ‘Dear mama, how funny words are!’

‘Are they not, darling,’ replied his mother.

‘I believe that some of them, dear mama, might be called adverbs.’

‘They are, darling, they are.’

Later, let us say, the two little boys learned navigation, with a view to entering the navies of their respective countries. Smith Minor was brutally made to learn by heart that longitude meant the number of angular degrees east or west of Greenwich. Emile had to wait till he met an angular degree in the words and got in a question about it. In time no doubt little Emile wandered on to the quarter-deck of a French man-of-war. Yet, after all, which navy beat the other?

In other words, I am trying to say that in much of our education (in practice at least) it is quicker to go from the unknown to the known. To proceed *ad obscurum per obscurius* is often as useful as to go through a tunnel to save walking round a mountain.

We turn to see to what extent we can allow each of these conflicting principles a place in our education. Plainly enough in a democratic state where everybody has to learn to read and write there must at least be a set curriculum of times and hours, of grades and classes, of promotions and graduations. You can’t get away from it. But at least you can try to see that the shadow never takes the place of the substance, nor the machine attempt to replace the principle of life.

The best example is seen in written examinations. In my opinion they are the curse of education. They are also absolutely necessary. They spoil everything. And you can’t do without them. Education without compulsory mechanical tests would, for the common run of us, turn to mush. If all I need for a degree in Persian literature is to go away and read it, or rather to come back and say I read it, I’ll get it fast enough. That would do for a genius—that was the education of Isaac Newton and of Gibbon—but it is not for you. You’ve got to be examined as carefully as a horse.

Yet, on the face of it, it is utterly ridiculous to attempt to reduce real knowledge to set forms of questions and answers that can be valued as a carpenter measures lumber. The exaction of a high percentage of excellence in a written examination compels an altogether unnatural and unwholesome accuracy of information. What is needed first is the broad outline of a subject



and a deep interest in knowing about it. The attempt to get a high percentage on a written examination defeats its own end—each last increment of accuracy is obtained at higher and higher cost. The reality of the subject is lost in the agony of trying to remember it.

Thus, in learning languages, accuracy at first is out of place. A boy who learns all the French irregular verbs out of a list, before he uses French and reads French, will never get beyond a list. He might get a job in a French laundry, but that's all.

The same is true of history and of knowledge in general. What is first needed is a thorough *smattering* so to speak, not accurate detail—the landscape first, the trees after.

Yet the moment we break away from the unnatural disciplinary test of the written examination, what is to take its place? We can't let students enter, pass, and qualify on their faces—or at least only the girls.

Here for example is Master Willie Nut about to enter college. So in order to get away from the written examination method they try him out on the new and popular 'questionnaire' scheme—the method of confidential inquiry from those who ought to know. A paper of questions is sent round to Willie Nut's friends, something like this:

1. *What is your general idea of the character of Willie Nut, Junior?*

2. *How would he measure up in an emergency? . . . If someone dropped a brick on him, how would he react to the brick? . . . If he fell off a fifteen-storey building, what would he do?*

3. *What percentage would you say there is in Willie Nut's character, (a) of personality, (b) of likability, (c) of enthusiasm, (d) of homogeneity, (e) of spontaneity, (f) of visibility?*

4. *Would you consider young William Nut a leader? . . . and, if so, of what? . . . of men or of women? . . . What proportion of women would he lead?*

5. *Getting down to facts, tell us if Willie Nut has ever been in jail, and if so where and for how long. Tell us at the same time any other dirty thing about him that occurs to you.*

If the questionnaire were sent round to Willie's enemies, it might be possible to get a fairly generous appreciation of what he amounts to. But, sent to his friends, it sinks him. The confidential opinion of a man's friends is enough to send him to jail.

Another new idea is the Intelligence Test—intended to find out, not what Willie has learned by heart, but how snappy a mind he has, and whether he has

caught up the items of general knowledge—such as the diameter of the earth's orbit, and the number of hydrogen atoms in a cubic inch—without which no business man ought to be one. He must know also the general idea of the guiding outline of history, such as whether the Trojan War came before the French Revolution.

Hence Willie Nut's intelligence test involves questions of three kinds. First is the snappy, psychology stuff to get his brain reactions, like this:

1. *Blink your eyes six times while counting five. Reverse the process and unblink them five times while counting six.*
2. *Wave your left foot slowly twice around your head.*

Then comes the division of useful and necessary information, such as:

1. *What is the difference, in kilograms, between a long and a short ton?*
2. *Explain the action of a photo-cell.*

Last of all comes the broad view of historical and current information. Here the examination suddenly turns soft. It is felt that after all we mustn't expect too much. So they put it to Willie, something as follows:

1. *What nation sailed in the Spanish Armada?*
2. *Who was the first President of the United States? Who will be the last?*
3. *How many legs has a dog?*
4. *What is the French for 'adieu,' 'omelette,' 'pâté de foie gras'?*
5. *What relation is King George the VI to his great-grandmother Queen Victoria?*
6. *How much is one and one?*

Looking over such substitute methods as these makes us realize that, to a great extent, we must keep the old-fashioned disciplinary examination. But if we do so, we must never forget how mechanical it is and how it tends to kill the soul of education.

I know of no department of learning where this is more the case than in that of pure literature, the humanities. Our own literature, in our own language, is a thing that we ought not to need to study, in the narrow sense, but to cultivate and to enjoy with spontaneous freedom and without ulterior purpose. Yet when the college takes hold of it, what a changed thing it becomes! We see our literature divided into periods and schools, all to be learned by heart and

remembered. For example, we must be able to write down the six chief beauties of Milton, and the seven leading characteristics of the Elizabethan age, and the four vices of the Restoration. We are to memorize the effect of Shakespeare on Spenser and the effect of Spenser on Shakespeare. We must track out any chief tendencies as soon as they begin to swell, and to accept and memorize a standardized list of judgments, an orthodox and accepted measure of the excellences and eminences of our literature. It is for the most part a catalogue of the dead made by the dead, such as lies in the heart of an Egyptian pyramid. All this must be learned from little books and manuals, and written down from lecture notes given by a professor who had it all from a dead one, forty years ago.

All of this is contrary to the very first principles of human thought or progress. Literature thus treated is killed. Better to have our own opinion, good or bad, than a mechanical acceptance of the opinions of other men or, worse still, a pedantic affectation of appreciation, for superiority's sake, where no reality is. It is told that King George III once said, 'Was there ever such stuff as Shakespeare?' I have often thought that the good old king at least had the root of the matter in him. He said what he thought and made no attempt at flight on other wings than his own. He was of course wrong in his judgment. There is lots of stuff far worse than Shakespeare. But he was right in his sincerity.

As for Shakespeare, I must admit that he is all spoiled for me. I cannot profess to judge. I often realize now the wonder of his phrase and the long reach of his thought.

*Out, out, brief candle; life's but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is seen no more. It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury and signifying nothing.*

Pretty hard to beat that! But for me, I repeat, Shakespeare was spoiled at college. I was sentenced to two years of him, and carried out the sentence and was duly parolled. But I could not then and cannot now accept the silliness of the Shakespearean manuals, the reconstruction of his life based on nothing, and the critique of his dramatic work, based on ideas or ideals of the drama of which he never thought. In his day the drama was heroic action and declamation, grand speeches in a grand manner, so that the Prince of Morocco, a coloured man (I mustn't say a coon) from Africa, talked like Sandy Macbeth from the Highlands. Our modern drama, as the intimate picture of life as it is, had not yet come into existence.

Here let me read off to you some of the stuff that I had to suffer from. I

have written it down as closely as I remember it, from the books we used:

1. *LIFE OF SHAKESPEARE.* *We do not know when Shaksper was born nor where he was born. But he is dead.*

*From internal evidence taken off his works after his death we know that he followed for a time the profession of a lawyer, a sailor and a scrivener, and he was also an actor, a bartender, and an ostler. His wide experience of men and manners was probably gained while a bartender. (Compare Henry V, Act V, Scene 2, 'Say now, gentlemen, what shall yours be?')*

*But the technical knowledge which is evident upon every page shows also the intellectual training of a lawyer. (Compare Macbeth, Act VI, Scene 4, 'What is there in it for me?') At the same time we are reminded by many passages of Shaksper's intimate knowledge of the sea. (Romeo and Juliet, Act VIII, Scene 14, 'How is her head now, nurse?')*

*We know, from his use of English, that Shagsper had no college education.*

*HIS PROBABLE PROBABILITIES.* *As an actor Shicksper, according to the current legend, was of no great talent. He is said to have acted the part of the ghost and he also probably took such parts as Enter a citizen, a Tucket sounds, a Dog barks, or a Bell is heard within, [Note—We ourselves also have been a Tucket, a Bell, a Dog and so forth in our college dramatic days.—Ed.]*

*In regard to the personality of Shakespere, or what we might call in the language of the day, Shakespere the Man, we cannot do better than to quote the following excellent analysis done, we think by Professor Gilbert Murray, though we believe that Brander Matthews helped him a little on the side:*

*'Shakespere was probably a genial man who probably liked his friends and probably spent a good deal of time in probable social intercourse. He was probably good tempered and easy-going with very likely a bad temper. We know that he drank (Compare Titus Andronicus, Act I, Scene 1, 'What is there to drink?'), but most likely not to excess. (Compare King Lear, Act II, Scene 1, 'Stop!' and see also Macbeth, Act X, Scene 20, 'Hold, enough!') Shakespere was probably fond of children and most likely dogs, but we don't know how he stood on porcupines.*

*'We imagine Shakespere sitting among his cronies in the Mitre Tavern, joining in the chorus of their probable songs, and draining a probable glass of ale, or at times falling into reverie in which the*

*majestic pageant of Julius Caesar passes across his brooding mind.'*

*PERSONAL APPEARANCE.* In person Shakespeare is generally represented as having a pointed beard and bobbed hair, with a bald forehead, large wild eyes, a salient nose, a retreating chin and a general expression of vacuity, verging on imbecility.

*SUMMARY.* The following characteristics of Shakespeare's work should be memorized—majesty, sublimity, grace, harmony, altitude, also scope, range, reach, together with grasp, comprehension, force and light, heat and power.

*Conclusion: Shakespeare was a very good writer.*

But by all this I do not mean to imply that courses in English and books and teachers are not necessary. The worst lecture ever given in this University—and that is saying a great deal—is better than no lecture at all. We cannot learn and think and enjoy in solitude. All art and literature implies a recipient mind, and intercourse. The more you share and divide it, the greater it is, and the more for all. An inspiring teacher is a marvel of light, and even a dull teacher is at least a window on the world. I regard courses in English literature as the very highest reach of our studies in the humanities; to remove them, and rely upon a student's spontaneous desire to read, would lead nowhere. It would but turn the fresh springs of curiosity and interest to wander and perish in the sands.

Yet we must remember that however much we may help and stimulate and advise a student in reading literature, the basis of appreciation must be there in the student himself. You can take a horse to the water, but you can't make him drink. You can take a student to a textbook, but you can't make him think. In the long run his mind is his own. I remember, years ago, when I was acting as an examiner in literature in a University, I set an examination paper in the usual affected and pedantic way, containing an extract of some very high-class and incomprehensible poetry, and put as a question: 'Give your personal estimate of this poem.' Among a litter of answering conceit came one truthful response: 'I think it's rotten.' I gave that man full marks.

Poetry of course is the most unteachable thing of all, and the field most open to affectation, pedantry, and academic snobbishism. For which reason for many plain people the word 'poet' and the word 'nut' are fairly synonymous. I remember that in my youth, in the country, local poets were classed as a sort of village idiot. Don't misunderstand me. I am all for poetry. In its highest reach it can do in a few lines what prose cannot convey in a volume. . . . How convey in plain prose the sunlight shadow, the infinite pathos . . . of such lines as

*Tears idle tears. And yet I know not why. Tears from the depth of some divine despair. . . . In looking at the happy autumn fields, and thinking of the days that are no more—*

But of the poetry actually written, at least nine-tenths is utter trash and nine-tenths of what is left hardly worth bothering about. The little bit that remains is like the grain of gold left in the river bed. But all the more difficult is it to *teach* poetry; all the more impossible to cut it and dry it, label it with notes, and sentence students to be examined on it. I have just quoted Tennyson. He wrote better poetry and worse poetry than any man of his age. But for me some of his best was spoiled by academic use. Let me recall to you the last of his remembered verses, written in old age, written when the pedantry and pose of earlier years had passed, when, as an old man, nearing the end, he walked along the sand and shingle of the Isle of Wight and looked out over the darkening waters of the English Channel, moving out with the ebb tide, and saw a new and infinite horizon beyond the shadow of the falling night:

Sunset and evening star,  
And one clear call for me!  
And may there be no moaning of the bar,  
When I put out to sea,  
But such a tide as moving seems asleep,  
Too full for sound and foam,  
When that which drew from out the boundless deep,  
Turns again home.

In those wonderful lines is carried all the silent sweep of the moving water, all the mystery of life and of that which is beyond. But for me it is all spoiled because we *did* the poem in class—did it, or had it, or took it, or swallowed it—I forget the college phrase. At any rate I made my notes on it, and though I haven't the text of them I remember that they ran something like this:

1. Twilight. *At what time does the sun set at the summer solstice in the Isle of Wight?*
2. Evening Star. *Explain the phenomenon involved and show that there is nothing in it.*
3. Moaning of the Bar. *How is foam connected with the bar? What is meant by 'too full'?*

So much for literature and poetry and the reality of study. How on earth can poor Willie Nut, the student, preserve his soul against such pressure? And

more than that. Pressing on him all the time is the brutal economic fact that presently he's got to earn his living, and if he doesn't learn what he's told, and pass on it, he won't get a degree and he can't be a horse doctor. So he mustn't *dare* to get really interested, to read for reading's sake—or not till he has committed to memory the six beauties of Keats, and the fact that Wordsworth was born in Cockermouth, Cumberland. To wander from the path would mean to fall over the cliff. The student, in other words, has not come to college for the sake of being at college. What he wants is to get *out*. His interest in the temple of learning is in getting out of it. So he takes what is coming to him, gets inured to it, and accepts a sentence to six months' algebra, a half course in religion, three months' geology, or four months' morality like a man in the dock of a police court.

But as you never can kill out human nature, it manages to restore and heal itself in a way of its own. Willie Nut, since he can't be a real student, a student of the Middle Ages bent on the search for truth and expecting wistfully to find it—since he can't be that, he takes it out in 'college life' and 'college activity.' Willie Nut lives in a tumult of college societies, class elections, journalism, sports, rah-rahs and meetings. And across the campus are his co-eds, gay and bright in the autumn sunshine, as contemptuous of knowledge as Eve in the garden of Eden.

Enter any of Willie Nut's buildings. He has bunches of them, halls and dormitories, given by wealthy magnates as the penalty for sin. On the walls are the notices that indicate his life.

*All up, Boys, for the big basket-ball game to-night. We want to see every man turn out and root and shout for Alma Mater. Remember, this is the first big game there has been for ten days, and there will be no other for over a week. Every man up!*

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*All student voters are invited at 11.30 to come into Hoot-It-Up Hall and see a free exhibition of conjuring given for the benefit of the students by Signor Ninni, the distinguished Italian conjurer now appearing at the Star Theatre. What we need at Alma Mater is all-around culture. Conjuring is just as much a part of the student's work as mathematics or football. All up!*

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*Fellow students! To-night is the big night—the one night in the year. Leave aside all books for this one evening and turn out for the ALMA MATER FOLLIES. The performance is staged for 8.00 P.M. in the*

*Alma Mater Theatre and runs till 1.00 A.M. Tickets \$5.00 a seat and up.*

*All reports say that the Follies this year will be bigger, brighter, and brainier than in any year before. Special features this year include a buck and wing clog dance by the Trustees of Alma Mater, champion mouth organ solo by the Dean of Research, and a huge ensemble chorus composed of all the girls worth looking at in Alma Mater. All up!*

Here and there perhaps a slightly different note is struck by the notices. Life cannot be all noise and sunshine. Here is one that is not without a touch of pathos. It is a note cut from one of Willie Nut's college Dailies and put up on the board.

*The Daily is under the melancholy duty of chronicling the death of one of our fellow-students, Mr. J. Smith, under very distressing and baffling circumstances. The doctors who attended our deceased fellow-student declare that he died from over-study. This seems inexplicable, but apparently the medical facts warrant no other conclusion.*

*That any student at Alma Mater College could be exposed to a danger of this sort is extremely difficult to believe. It may have been that the mistaken young man was purveying books to his room and making surreptitious use of his room as a place of study. This, of course, would be extremely difficult to prevent.*

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But no, we needn't be afraid that student Smith died of over-study. The days of that disease are past. A couple of generations ago the idea of a student was that of a pale, cloistered creature, living on midnight oil. No doubt he looked unhealthy. I remember, from my early school days, a poem in some American text-book of half a century ago, called *The Student*, or something of the sort. It invoked him in the words, 'Why is your face so pale?' or words to that effect, and he answered, in rhyme, which of course came easily to a well-oiled student: 'It is bleached thus white, in the mind's clear light, which is deepening day by day!' He should have answered, 'It is bleached because the membranous tissue of my stomach is worn out by living indoors and feeding on oil and pickles.'

But to-day the student no longer burns the midnight oil! No fear—make it gasoline, 2 A.M. and a couple of Co-eds, Rah! Rah! The new poem will have to be labelled *The Stewed Student*, and somewhere round the campus a



monument will have to be put up, as a commemoration of a type now vanished, *To the Unknown Student*.

And beside it a monument, *To the Unknown Professor*; for that type, too, is vanishing. Or, no, perhaps, not a monument but a stuffed specimen in a museum with a Latin label:

PROFESSORIUS HIRSUTUS CAMPESTIS (HAIRY PROFESSOR OF THE CAMPUS).  
JAWBONE OF SPECIMEN WORN THIN. OIL AND STEEL AGE.

For the old-time professor is gone just as completely as the student. But many of us can still recall him—dreamy and woolly in appearance, a snow-white beard that he had never had time to trim, ignorant of the world, his classroom his kingdom. There he lectured in his own peculiar way, an easy mark for the jests and the tricks of his students, carried away with his subject, always a little over-excited, a little silly, with little touches of vanity over his own scholarship and acuteness that kept alive the fire of life. But notice—he was the real thing; the very students who jibed at him felt somehow that this was *learning*, this the world of thought outside and beyond the sordid world of life, and from the professor's egotism and enthusiasm at times caught fire themselves and hurried to the library to read. Gone! And you can't get him back. You can't advertise, 'Wanted, a professor, a little excited, a little silly, must have whiskers—salary no object to him.'

Gone, all gone! The professor of to-day is a *hustler*. He has to be, or they'll fire him. He's an advertiser. He's got to be, or they'll let him go. He's a mixer. He must be, or they'll drop him. They've enough words and enough ways of firing a professor to keep him frightened and efficient all day long: busy with departmental correspondence from anybody to everybody, with meetings and committees—in fact he's just like Willie Nut.

The last of the real ones are passing out. I recall, and have described elsewhere, how a colleague of mine just before I left McGill, rumpling his hands through the fluff that thirty-five years before had been hair, and speaking in the rising bleat that the voice acquires by thirty-five years in the classroom, said to me: 'My, my! Things change! Thirty-five years ago, when you and I first came, there were a lot of queer old characters among the professors! There are none now! They're all gone.'

I answered gently, 'Not yet, not all,' and he went shambling off down the corridor, his head wobbling like a mantelpiece ornament.

## WHICH WAS IT?

*I once had occasion to send a cable to a student whose name was Bye and who had gone with a scholarship to Jesus College, Cambridge. I called up one of our Canadian Companies by telephone and I said, 'I want to send a cable.' An even, polite voice said, 'Yes, will you please dictate it?' I began very clearly and firmly, 'Bye, Jesus.' A voice came back short and indignant, 'What's that?' I repeated, 'Bye, Jesus.' There was silence for a time and then a man's voice said: 'What's this message you're proposing to send? How does it begin?' I said a little angrily, 'It begins, "Bye, Jesus."' 'Does it?' he said. 'Well, profanity doesn't go over these wires.'*

*So I called up the other company, and a voice even softer and more melodious than the first one answered. 'I want to send a cable,' I said. 'Yes, will you please dictate it.' I began, 'Bye, Jesus,' then I paused. 'Yes,' said the soft voice encouragingly, 'By Jesus'—and waited for me to go on. 'You don't mind taking that as a message?' I asked. 'Oh, no,' she answered. 'We get lots of that round our head office.'*

*But I'm not saying which company it was. Anyway it was years and years ago.*

### III

## WHAT I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THE DRAMA

*(With grateful recognition of the indulgence of the various Dramatic Clubs who have heard me explain it.)*

I am to talk to-night on the subject: What I Don't Know About the Drama. The Chairman has just wittily described this as a very wide subject. I had intended to use this joke myself if the Chairman hadn't got so smart about it. As a matter of fact he had a look at my notes before we came to the platform and I explained this one to him, and when he got it as best he could, he said it was quite funny and said he must remember it. He did.

However, let that pass. Let me first, before giving you my personal views on the drama, explain very briefly my qualifications for the task. I am what may be described as a finished actor—finished about twenty years ago. And my long and varied experience on the stage, before being finally persuaded to leave it, has served me as a background of practical knowledge as a dramatist or playwright.

I don't mean to imply that I have ever acted in any of the great Metropolitan centres. I never have. I have never even acted in my home city of Montreal. But I have acted in Verdun, the suburb where the Provincial Asylum is. The inmates were wild over my work. They wanted me to stay. They saw no reason why I shouldn't.

Nor have I ever acted in Boston. But I have acted just outside of it, in Chelsea, where the police limits end. In fact, generally speaking, wherever the police limits end, I begin.

A lot of my earlier work was done with a touring company, one of a chain of companies acting in that grand old drama *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. I am sure you all know it so well that I needn't describe the plot to you. In any case I couldn't; I wasn't part of the plot. My work was in the great climax scene, where the fugitive slave girl, Eliza, her unborn babe in her arms, is fleeing across the Ohio—leaping from one ice floe to another in the swollen flood of the river. That's where I acted—I was a chunk of ice in the Ohio, the third one from the Kentucky side, working under a blue curtain.

I put my heart into it. I said to myself: 'If I am to be ice, I'll be the most dangerous ice in the river. If Eliza puts her foot on me, up she goes!' Well, I worked away conscientiously night after night until it happened one night the general manager of our chain of companies was down front. And he saw my work and he said: '*Who* is that ice? The third from Kentucky?' And they told

him, and he sent for me and he said: ‘Look, I’ve seen your work. You’re too good for ice. How would you like to be First Bloodhound!’

That was my first big move up. And after that I had a number of parts, not exactly character parts in the different plays, but what you might call ‘Key-parts,’ the ones you see written in the stage directions. I have been *A voice is heard without*, and *A bell rings*, and I’ve been a Groan, and an Explosion, and a Fairy, and, of course, Thunder and Lightning ever so many times. And I’ve been in Shakespeare as a Tucket—you know how it says: *Enter the Duke of Burgundy with a Tucket*—and I’ve been a Link—*Enter the Duke of Gloucester with a Link*—and a Hobo—*Enter Belgium with Hoboes*. I am afraid my language is getting technical, but I won’t apologize as I know that the members of your club are themselves technicians.

From those earlier experiences I moved along into what has always been to me a favourite field, the old-fashioned melodrama. The play I was in was one of those typical melodramas of the New England coast, called *Cast up by the Sea*, or *Thrown up by the Waves*, or something like that—anyway one of those Foam and Storm plays of the New England seaside that used to be so popular. There was a lighthouse in it, and the lighthouse keeper was a farmer, and his daughter Liz had run away with a young man, a sea captain, and gone to sea, months before; and this night, when the play reaches its height in the third act, there’s a great storm raging, and Liz and her husband, on their ship (He’s captain of it), are going to be wrecked right there beside the lighthouse.

It’s a wild night in the third act. There’s a group of fisherman-farmers all in oilskins down on the shore looking out to sea. One points and says, ‘There’s lightning in yon cloud!’ There wasn’t. It was me. The speech was my cue for the first lightning. After that I gave it to them at three-minute intervals.

At that minute there comes a shout from the clustered fishermen on the Fore Shore.

‘A ship! A ship! There’s a vessel out on the reef. See! Look!’

They run up and down, pointing and shouting. And far out on the waves, lit for a moment by a flash of lightning, the audience sees a dismayed schooner (She’s made of cardboard) out beside the breakers on the reef.

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Then in a vivid flash of lightning, a double charge, they get a full view of the ship out on the rocks (It was *white* cardboard and showed up well) and they recognize it and all begin to shout, ‘It’s the *Good Hope*.’ You see that was the schooner that Liz ran away in with her husband, the captain of it.

Then someone shouts: ‘She’s struck the reef. She’s breaking. They’re lowering the boat. Look! Look! There’s a woman in the boat!’

They all have to keep terribly excited and run up and down and get in the road of the wind, as I made it—there wasn’t enough for everybody unless they

kept moving.

Then they shout: 'Fetch Hiram Haycroft! There's only him can pilot the lifeboat to the reef!'

Then someone else says: 'He's at the light! He can't leave the light!' And a lot of them yell, 'He *must* leave the light!'

And at that minute Haycroft's wife, Liz's mother, lets a shriek out of her: 'It's Liz! It's Liz!' And the crowd yell, 'Now he must come,' and rush in a mass for the door leading up to the lighthouse. And just as they do it, you see the boat and Liz vanishing in white foam from a calcium light on the reef. . . .

Then came a sudden change of scene—all done in three minutes, from the shore to Lighthouse Tower. It was what used to be called a 'transformation scene.' It involved an eclipse of darkness punctured by little gas jets, and a terrible thumping and bumping with an undertone of curses. You could hear a voice in the darkness say quite distinctly, 'Get that blank blank drop over there,' and you could see black figures running round in the transformation. Then there came an awful crash and a vision of a back curtain sliding down amongst the dark men. The lights flicked up again and all the audience broke into applause at the final wonder of it.

Look! It's the lighthouse tower with the big lights burning and the storm howling outside. How bright and clear it is here inside the tower, with its great windows looking out over the storm, sixty feet above the sea.

He stands beside the lights, trimming the lamps, calm and steady at his task. The storm is all about him, but inside the lighthouse tower all is bright and still. Hiram peers a moment from the lighthouse window. He opens the little door and steps out on the iron platform high above the sea. The wind roars about him and the crest of the driven water leaps to his very feet. I threw it. He comes in, closing the door quietly and firmly behind him and turns again to his light.

'God help all poor souls at sea to-night,' he says. That was my cue to throw a bucketful right at him.

And then with a rush and clatter of feet they burst in upon him, the group of fishermen, Martha his wife, crowding into the lighthouse tower and standing on the stairs.

'Quick, Hiram, you must come! There's been a wreck. Look, there's a boat going on the reef. The men are ready in the lifeboat. You must steer her through. It's life or death. There's not a moment to lose.'

Hiram looks for a moment at the excited crowd and then turns quietly to his task.

'My place is here,' he says.

There is a moment's hush. Martha rushes to him and clutches him by the coat.

‘Hiram, they haven’t told you. The schooner that was wrecked to-night is the *Good Hope*.’

Hiram staggers back against the wall.

‘And the boat that’s drifting on the reef, it’s Liz, it’s our daughter.’

Hiram stands grasping the rail along the wall. He speaks panting with agitation, but firm:

‘Martha—I’m sworn to tend the light. If the light fails, God knows what it means to the ships at sea. If my child is lost, it is God’s will—but—my place is here.’

And he turns back to the light.

---

That was the signal for a double flash of lightning, two cylinders of thunder, and a bucket right at him.

That’s the kind of climax we used to love to have in the old Melodrama—everything apparently hopelessly lost and then sudden salvation.

Martha, the farmer’s wife, points to a great coil of rope which her quick intelligence has perceived hanging on the wall of the tower. As a matter of fact it was so big and so obvious that even the people in the gallery seats had noticed it right away.

‘The rope!’ she says. ‘The rope!’

Hiram turns.

‘You’re right,’ he says. ‘There’s that one chance.’ With a fisherman’s quickness of hand he ties a bowline knot at the end of the rope. Then he throws open the door and slips out on to the iron platform in the great roar of wind and sea—that needed two of us, one for the wind, one for the sea.

The audience see the long rope go hissing out into the night air, and when Hiram hauls it up again what do you think is on the end of it?—Liz!

Her husband drowned? Oh, no, he got him on the next throw and some of their valises but not all of them. And the play ended in a flood of happy reconciliations, with the storm all gone (I shut it right off after the second valise) and sunrise—the dawn of a new life—just appearing in the west, where the sun had set earlier in the act.

So that was the good old Melodrama of forty years ago, when some of us were forty years younger than we are now. We still look back to it with affection. Let me try to contrast it with the High Brow Drama of to-day. Forty years ago the theatre was carried on by straight hand-to-hand acting. The actors were well-armed, determined people and they fought the play through. Of course, they took their lives in their hands; they were liable to be drowned, shot, or blown up anywhere in Act II, III, or IV. It always seemed a miracle that they were still alive in Act V, with the dead body of the villain smoking on the floor, the missing will found, and the heroine clasped in the hero’s arms,

which went once and a half around her.

This used to be called Melodrama and it was played, at its best, at ten-twenty-thirty cents. Any lift in the price put a false polish on it and spoiled it.

They say that the old Melodrama is still there if you know where to find it. But for most of us, whether we like it or not, its place is being taken by the new High Brow Drama. These two dramas, the High Brow and the Melo, are wide apart. The new High Brow is not exactly played in the theatres. At least it is 'given' in Little Theatres, Repertory Theatres, Community Theatres, College Auditoriums, and places like that.

The old Melodrama needed nothing but lots of sawdust, chewing tobacco, and bright open gas lights. It didn't even need fire escapes. If the audience got burned, that was too bad, but there were lots more.

The new High Brow is played among soft lights, huge ferns, heavy curtains, dim corridors, and attendants with dark lanterns.

The old Melo was played for money, just straight-out money. It had no artistic purpose whatsoever; any of the actors was ready for murder or suicide or infanticide—ready, in fact, for anything, for money.

But the new High Brow Drama is not put on for money. It is done in connection with town-planning, park-making, slum-killing, children's welfare, and maternity hospitals. The people who play it don't care about money; the people who write it are too artistic to think of money.

That's why the prices are what they are—not the old ten-twenty-thirty (infants in arms free), but seats at one-dollar-fifty, two-dollars and two-fifty. In fact you had better pay two-fifty and be done with it. You see you have to go; either your daughter is acting in it, or your friend's sister wrote it, or your son-in-law staged it. All the town is caught in the same net. So there you are in your two-fifty seat in your local Community Repertory Theatre, waiting for it to begin. Don't hurry it. It will start in an hour or so. The old Melo began on time; because the actors had their supper at the hotel at six o'clock and had nowhere else to go. But the new Repertory Community takes a lot of starting.

But even when it does start, somehow there seems something wrong with it, at least for those of us who remember the old Melo of forty years ago. It all seems too—how shall I call it?—too quiet. There's not enough *action* to it. The people in it do too much talk—just talk all the time, they never get down to business.

For instance, take the first act. There's the heroine on the stage with a man. You can't exactly make out who he is because there's no decent gas light and you can't see to read the programme. But it doesn't matter. All he does and all she does is just *talk*. In the old play, if the fair heroine was left alone with a man, he was supposed to start something—either tie her by the feet and throw her out the window, or else soak her with chloroform. This got the play off to a

good start. But in the new Community-Repertory-Art-for-Art's-Sake the heroine is perfectly safe. The fellow isn't man enough to lay a hand on her.

So presently the man goes out and the heroine is left alone. Here again notice the difference. In the Melodrama if the heroine had been left alone in that room she would have started skipping round, looking in every drawer and corner to find a missing will or a document to prove that her mother had been really married. But instead of that she just stays in the room alone, *analysing* herself. She is, so it seems, trying to realize herself; in fact, she distinctly says that she is trying to reconstruct her life. This leaves the audience very vague as to how she is doing it and what it is that she wants to do.

Now another character comes in. As he enters, for a moment the audience think that something is going to happen. But nothing does. The new man seems to have the same talk-mania as the one who went out. He, too, is working out some 'problem.' All the characters in a new Community Park and Playgrounds Theatre play are full of 'problems' up to the neck.

Just once in this scene there is a piece of tense thrilling action. The man actually lights a cigarette with a match and smokes it. All the audience hope to heaven he'll set himself on fire. But he gets away with it. Once again as he goes on talking, talking, talking, another piece of action comes in. The man rings a bell and a butler comes in with cocktails. That's a dirty one on the audience. They don't get any.

But the butler is supposed to be one of the great hits of the play. He just comes in and says, 'Cocktails, sir?' and goes out again. But he goes out so perfectly, and is so completely gone when he goes, that it is felt to be a fine piece of acting. If the audience of to-day had ever seen a train-wreck in Act III of the old Melo, or 'road agents' hold up a stage-coach in the Rocky Mountains in Act IV, they'd know what acting really can reach to.

You see the point of the old play was that things not only happened, but they kept on happening more and more. Finally they reached a terrific climax. The hero, for example, had been shot dead by the train wreckers, who had ridden off with the loot, and the heroine had been tied down across the railway track for the next train to run over her. In fact things looked pretty gloomy. Even a trained audience began to feel uneasy about the situation. Especially so, when they heard the clang of an engine bell and realized that a train was approaching over a long cardboard trestle bridge two miles away, with a twist in it.

The engine comes in sight. You can see the engineer and the fireman leaning out of the cab, but they don't see the heroine. Then just at that moment the hero—he's not dead, but he's fixed up the slings and bandages to show how near dead he must have been—makes a flying leap from the rocks of the embankment into the cab of the locomotive. He grabs the throttle and tears it



out by the roots. The speed slackens. The hero dashes forward on to the cowcatcher, leans away ahead with a knife in his hand, severs the heroine's bonds, and swings her into safety.

The whole theatre rocks with enthusiasm. After that, the killing of the bandits in a mountain cave with nitrogen bombs is simplicity itself. In the cave, after the explosion, are found all the necessary marriage certificates, birth certificates, lost wills and other missing documents. The play only needs a mountain marriage with a comic clergyman to cork it up tight and end it.

Now I don't see why we couldn't keep some of these features of the good old ten-twenty-thirty by incorporating them in the modern Little Theatre Play. I admit that we need the Little Community Repertory Maternity Theatre. After all Art is Art, and if we *never* get on to it, where shall we be? And anyway, town planning is a good thing, and if you don't support a Maternity Hospital what sort of man are you?

But just as a suggestion, why shouldn't the characters of the up-to-date talk play do all their analysing and talking as part of the real action in a real play? For example, let the heroine get tied down across the rails and *then* let her start to analyse herself; *then* let her try to think things out, to ascertain just how to fit in with her new environment.

While she is at it, let the train come along. Of course I admit that in the High Brow play it mustn't come fast; they've a lot of talking to get through first. We mustn't break what is called the continuity of it, or, if we do, the artistic harmony all goes to smithereens. So here is the engineer sitting in the cab with the fireman quietly talking about differential freight rates and the difference between cost of service and operating charges. Once perhaps we might let the engineer say, 'I sometimes ask myself, Wilfrid, what I would do if I ran over a woman.' That will give the audience a real thrill—as close to it as we dare let them come. After that the engineer will heave a deep sigh and start a game of chess with the fireman.

Now at this juncture without danger of being too crude, or too inartistic, I think we can let the hero quietly enter the cab and sit down on the steam pipes. Let him begin to talk with the engineer about predestination, and whether individual will power is dependent on mass impulse—or not. Now the engineer may say: 'Speaking of prestidigitation, I have a queer presentiment that I am about to run over a woman. I think I'll go and look.'

While he is gone the fireman starts a talk, about fire. The engineer comes back and sits down and says gloomily that there *is* a woman on the track, but that the speed of the train is slackening so fast that it is losing half its remaining velocity with each half minute. They are half as near to the woman as they were half a minute ago, but he reckons that that's about as near as you can ever say you got to a woman.

With that the curtain falls and the play ends on just that strange note of uncertainty, that perplexing unanswered questioning, that alone makes great drama. The Germans call it, I think, *Weltschmerz*. I forget what the Turks call it—probably much the same.

---

You will have realized from what I have said about reconstructing the melodrama to turn it into a High Brow play, that I am speaking from experience as a playwright. I don't say that my plays have been much acted or indeed acted at all. But that is in their favour. They can't be acted. It is recognized that many of the greatest dramatic works are not acting plays, and indeed hardly even *reading* plays—they are just plays. Mine are like that.

I remember very distinctly my first success with Melodrama. I took the manuscript to a manager.

'Where is the first act laid?' he asked.

'In a lighthouse,' I answered.

'Good, and where is the second laid?'

'In a madhouse.'

'Fine, and where have you laid the third act?'

'In a monkey house.'

'And the fourth?'

'In the House of Lords.'

'First-rate,' he said, all of it, 'but you have forgotten to put a condemned cell, and a crypt, and a vault, and London Bridge at midnight.'

'All right,' I said. 'Give it me back: I'll add four more acts and another set of actors acting in two shifts.'

But in the end they couldn't use it. They couldn't cast it—didn't know where to throw it.

However, it made little difference to me, as I soon was busy in other directions. About that time—it's away back—there was a great demand for Ibsen plays, plays by Henrik Ibsen, though the people in the country called him Henry Gibson. The demand was so great that Ibsen working alone couldn't fill it. Some of us had to help him, and so I put together one or two Ibsen plays and allowed them to be acted under his name. Let me just in a few minutes try to give you an idea of one of them, not in the original Norwegian, but in the kind of English that is chopped out of the Norwegian with an axe.

Here is the list of the characters in the play:

SLUMP

*A builder*

VAMP

*His wife*

DUMP

*A professor of thermodynamics*

|             |                          |
|-------------|--------------------------|
| SIMP        | <i>A maidservant</i>     |
| YOOB        | <i>An accountant</i>     |
| SCOOP       | <i>His sister</i>        |
| PASTOR GYMP | <i>A pastor</i>          |
| CRAMP       | <i>His mother-in-law</i> |

etc.....etc.....etc.

. . . and as many more with names of that kind, and with occupations of that sort, as there is room for on the page. Some of them may not get into the play at all. But that doesn't matter. An Ibsen *Dramatis Personae* is a thing by itself.

SCENE: *A room in SLUMP's house. There are flowers on the table.*

SLUMP: What beautiful flowers.

VAMP: Yes, they are fresh this morning.

*SLUMP and VAMP speak one after the other in short turns, like sawing wood with a crosscut saw. But there is no need to indicate which is speaking. It doesn't matter.*

Are they indeed?

Yes, they are.

How sweet they smell.

Yes, don't they?

I like flowers.

So do I. I think they smell so beautiful.

It's a beautiful morning.

Yes, the spring will soon be here.

The air is deliciously fresh.

Yes, it is, isn't it?

I saw a bobolink in the garden.

A bobolink already? Then the summer is soon here.

Soon indeed, the meadows are already green.

I like the green meadows.

Yes, isn't it?

The angle of the sun is getting high.

I suppose it is. I noticed yesterday that the diameter of the moon was less.

Much less, and the planets are higher than they were. Their orbits are elongating.

I suppose so.

VAMP: How I love the spring!

SLUMP: So do I. The evaporation of the air closes the pores of my skin.

---

This completes round number one. It is meant to show Norwegian home life, the high standard of education among the Norwegians and, just at the end, the passionate nature of Vamp.

The spring fills her with longings. It also shows where Slump stands. For him the spring merely opens the pores of his skin.

With this understanding we are ready for a little action.

*A bell rings. Then SIMP the maid enters, showing in DUMP, a professor of thermodynamics.*

Good-morning, Dump. Good-morning, Slump. Good-morning, Vamp.  
Good-morning, Dump.

DUMP: The spring will soon be here.

VAMP: I saw a bobolink in the garden.

DUMP: Yes, I saw a wagtail on the thatch of the dovecote.

SLUMP: Spring is coming.

DUMP: It will do my cough good.

VAMP: Yes, you will soon be well.

DUMP: Never well. (*He coughs again.*)

SLUMP: You think too much. You need pleasure. For me each time I finish a subcontract, I like to take my ease and drink sprott.

DUMP: I can't drink sprott. (*He coughs.*) I have a mortal disease.

VAMP: Don't say that.

DUMP: In six years I shall be dead.

SLUMP: Nonsense. Come, drink a glass of sprott.

No.

Have some yip?

No.

Take some pep?

No.

DUMP *goes and sits down near a window; the others look at him in silence.*

---

This completes round two. It is intended to establish the fact that Dump has a mortal disease. There is nothing visibly wrong with Dump except that he looks bilious. But in every Ibsen play it is understood that one of the characters has to have a mortal disease. Dump in the Ibsen drama will die of biliousness and ill-temper in six years. Biliousness and ill temper take the place of Ananke in the Greek tragedy.

SLUMP: Well, I must be about my work. Come, Simp, come and help me get my wallet and my compasses.

SIMP: Yes, sir.

SIMP and SLUMP go out. VAMP and DUMP are left alone.

VAMP: Come and sit down.

DUMP: I don't want to sit down. I'm too ill to sit down.

VAMP: Here, get into this long chair; let me make you comfortable.

DUMP: Why should I be comfortable? I'm too ill to be comfortable. In six years I shall be dead.

VAMP: Oh, no! Don't say that.

DUMP: Yes, I will. The bile is mounting to my oesophagus.

VAMP: Oh, no!

DUMP: I say it is. There's an infiltration into my ducts. My bones are turning into calcareous feldspar.

---

This dialogue is supposed to bring out the full charm of Dump. The more bilious he is the better Vamp likes him. It is a law of the Norwegian drama that the heroines go simply crazy over bilious, disagreeable men with only from six to twenty years to live. This represents the 'everlasting-mother-soul.' They go on talking:

VAMP: Let me dance for you.

DUMP: Yes, yes.

VAMP: Let me dance for you.

DUMP: No. Yes, yes. Dance for me.

---

Vamp is evidently smitten with that peculiar access of gaiety that is liable to overcome the heroine of an Ibsen play at any time. She dances about the room singing as she goes:

Was ik en Butterflog  
Flog ik dein Broost enswog,  
Adjo, mein Hertzenhog,  
Adje, Adjö!

DUMP (*Passionately*): More, more, keep on singing. Keep on dancing. It exhilarates my capillary tissue. More, more.

VAMP: Do you love me?

DUMP: I do.

VAMP: No, you mustn't say that. It's wicked to say that. What put that into your head?

DUMP: Dance for me again.

VAMP: No, I mustn't. Listen. I hear them coming back.

---

Of course after that the denouement is easy; anybody used to an Ibsen play

can foresee all the rest. Indeed Ibsen himself guessed it right away and said it was just the way he would have ended it.

But the Ibsen boom ran out and first thing us playwrights knew—I say ‘us playwrights’ because ‘we playwrights’ sounds too conceited—first thing we knew there was a great boom on Napoleonic Plays. They were all done under enigmatic sorts of titles like *Plus que Reine*, and *Moins de Rien*, etc. The best one I wrote was called *Des Deux Choses l’Une*. Here’s a little scene from it that is intended to reproduce the First Empire at its height and to show in particular the extraordinary devotion of Napoleon’s Marshals.

The scene is the Ballroom of the palace of the Tuileries. Standing around are ladies in Directoire dresses, brilliant as rainbows. Up right beside them are the Marshals of France. There is music and a buzz of conversation.

*Enter NAPOLEON followed by TALLEYRAND in black, and two secretaries carrying boxes. There is silence. The EMPEROR seats himself at a little table. The secretaries place on it two black dispatch boxes.*

THE EMPEROR: Marshal Junot.

*The MARSHAL steps forward and salutes.*

THE EMPEROR: Marshal, I have heard strange rumours and doubts about your fidelity. I wish to test it. I have here (*He opens one of the boxes*) a vial of poison. Here—drink it.

JUNOT: With pleasure, Sire.

*JUNOT drinks the poison and stands to attention.*

THE EMPEROR: Go over there and stand beside the Comtesse de la Polissonerie till you die.

JUNOT (*Saluting*): With pleasure, Sire.

THE EMPEROR (*Turns to another MARSHAL*): Berthier?

BERTHIER: Here, Sire!

*BERTHIER steps out in front of THE EMPEROR.*

THE EMPEROR (*Rising*): Ha! Ha! Is it you? (*He reaches up and pinches BERTHIER’s ear.*) *Vieux paquet de linge sale!*

*BERTHIER looks delighted. It is amazing what a French Marshal will do for you if you pinch his ear. At least it is a tradition of the stage. In these scenes Napoleon always pinched the Marshals’ ears and called them Vieux paquet de linge sale, etc.*

*The Emperor turns stern in a moment.*

THE EMPEROR: Marshal Berthier!

BERTHIER: Sire!

THE EMPEROR: Are you devoted to my person?

BERTHIER: Sire, you have but to put me to the test.

THE EMPEROR: Very well. Here, Marshal Berthier (*THE EMPEROR reaches*

*into the box*) is a poisoned dog biscuit. Eat it.

BERTHIER (*Saluting*): With pleasure, Sire. It is excellent.

THE EMPEROR: Very good, *Mon Vieux trait d'union*. Now go and talk to the Duchesse de la Rotisserie till you die.

BERTHIER *bows low*.

THE EMPEROR: Marshal Lannes! You look pale. Here is a veal chop. It is full of arsenic. Eat it.

MARSHAL LANNES *bows in silence and swallows the chop in one bite*.

THE EMPEROR *then gave a paquet of prussic acid to MARSHAL SOULT, one pill each to MARSHALS NEY and AUGEREAU. Then suddenly he rises and stamps his foot*.

THE EMPEROR: No. Talleyrand, no! The farce is finished! I can play it no longer. Look, *les braves enfants!* They have eaten poison for me. *Ah, non, mes amis, mon vieux*. Reassure yourselves. You are not to die. See, the poison was in the other box.

TALLEYRAND (*Shrugging his shoulders*): If your Majesty insists upon spoiling everything.

THE EMPEROR: Yes, yes, those brave fellows could not betray me. Come, Berthier. Come, Junot, come and let us cry together—

THE EMPEROR *and his MARSHALS all gather in a group, sobbing convulsively and pulling one another's ears*.

---

The Napoleon Plays had a great run. But I never felt that they represented such a high reach of dramatic interest as the Abraham Lincoln Plays. I don't mean the Civil War plays showing the armies and the fighting and all that. I mean the plays that show Lincoln, isolated in his loneliness, trying to understand the Constitution—and not getting it. I had a little play that I called *Forging the Fourteenth Amendment* that seemed to me to have wonderful power.

Oh, they couldn't act it. Impossible. Every manager gave me the same answer, impossible—couldn't get a hall small enough. But it was good just the same. I put into it Lincoln, Seward, Stanton, Artemus Ward, and the other members of the Cabinet, and here's how the chief scene goes:

*(The scene is laid in the Council room of the White House. There are present Abraham Lincoln, Seward, Stanton, Artemus Ward, and the other members of the Cabinet.)*

LINCOLN (*Speaking very gravely*): Mr. Secretary, what news have you from the Army of the Potomac?

STANTON: Mr. President, the news is bad. General Halleck has been driven across the Rappahannock, General Pope has been driven across the Roanoke,

and General Burnside has been driven across the Pamunkey.

LINCOLN (*With quiet humour*): And has anybody been driven across the Chickahominy?

STANTON: Not yet.

LINCOLN: Then it might be worse. Let me tell you a funny story I heard ten years ago.

SEWARD (*With ill-disguised impatience*): Mr. President, this is no time for telling stories ten years old.

LINCOLN (*Wearily*): Perhaps not. In that case fetch me the Constitution of the United States.

*The Constitution is brought and is spread out on the table, in front of them. They bend over it anxiously.*

LINCOLN (*With deep emotion*): What do you make of it?

STANTON: It seems to me, from this, that all men are free and equal.

SEWARD (*Gravely*): And that the power of Congress extends to the regulation of commerce between the States, with foreign states, and with Indian Tribes.

LINCOLN (*Thoughtfully*): The price of liberty is eternal vigilance.

[In the printed text of the play there is a note to the effect that Lincoln did not on this particular occasion use this particular phrase. Indeed it was said by someone else on some other occasion. But it is such a good thing for anyone to say on any occasion that it is the highest dramatic art to use it.]

LINCOLN (*Standing up from the table to his full height and speaking as one who looks into the future*): Gentlemen, I am prepared to sacrifice any part of this Constitution to save the whole of it, or to sacrifice the whole of it to save any part of it, but what I will not do is to sacrifice all of it to save none of it.

*There is a murmur of applause. But at this very moment, a messenger dashes in.*

THE MESSENGER: Mr. President, telegraphic news from the seat of war. General Grant has been pushed over the Chickahominy.

LINCOLN: Pushed backward or pushed forward?

THE MESSENGER: Forward.

LINCOLN (*Gravely*): Gentlemen, the Union is safe.

---

But of course all that kind of thing has drifted into the past. The moving pictures have taken over all the big scenic stuff, and the old melodrama is dead. All that is left for the acting stage now is the High Brow Drama as I have described it. Even that has got to be made small, delicate—*intimate*, that's the word; I couldn't think of it—what the French call *intime*. The French always go us one better. In the *intime* play there's a minimum of acting and a maximum of thought, very little speaking, or movement or sound. I've worked



out a little thing in three brief acts to be used as the final piece of an evening's entertainment. In the first act the characters don't speak at all, they just *brood*. In the second act they are not on the stage at all; it's empty; the effect is that of utter desolation. In the last act they are all dead. I think it will make quite a hit. Good night.

## OMINOUS OUTLOOK

*Talking of the Drama, I was once the organizer and chief actor of an amateur company which undertook in a small way to go on tour. In the first village where we were billed to play I went into the barber's shop to get a shave and gather information.*

*'How do you think our company will do here?' I asked.*

*The barber paused, with the razor in the air.*

*'Might do well,' he said. 'This is a good place for shows; there hasn't been but one company egged out of town all spring.'*

*'Egged out?' I said. The words were new to me and ominous.*

*'Yes, sir, egged out.'*

*'An immoral sort of show, was it?'*

*'Oh, no, but it got round town that the company was just amateurs and not real actors, and so the boys went in and put the eggs to them. Clip your moustache?'*

IV  
FRENZIED FICTION  
FIRST LECTURE. MURDER AT \$2.50 A CRIME

I propose to-night, ladies and gentlemen, to deal with murder. There are only two subjects that appeal nowadays to the general public, murder and sex; and, for people of culture, sex-murder. Leaving out sex for the minute—if you can—I propose to-night to talk about murder as carried on openly and daily at two dollars and fifty cents a crime.

For me, I admit right away that if I'm going to pay two dollars and fifty cents for a book I want to make sure that there's going to be at least *one* murder in it. I always take a look at the book first to see if there's a chapter headed 'Finding of the Body.' And I know that everything is all right when it says, *The Body was that of an elderly gentleman, well dressed but upside down.* Always, you notice, an 'elderly gentleman.' What they have against us, I don't know. But, you see, if it said that the body was that of a woman—that's a tragedy. The body was that of a child!—that's a horror. But *the body was that of an elderly gentleman*—oh, pshaw! that's all right. Anyway, he's had his life—he's had a good time (it says he's well dressed)—probably been out on a hoot. (He's found upside down.) That's all right! He's worth more dead than alive.

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But as a matter of fact, from reading so many of these stories I get to be such an expert that I don't have to wait for the finding of the body. I can tell just by a glance at the beginning of the book who's going to *be* the body. For example, if the scene is laid on this side of the water, say in New York, look for an opening paragraph that runs about like this:

*Mr. Phineas Q. Cactus sat in his downtown office in the drowsy hour of a Saturday afternoon. He was alone. Work was done for the day. The clerks were gone. The building, save for the janitor, who lived in the basement, was empty.*

Notice that, *save for the janitor.* Be sure to save him. We're going to need him later on, to accuse him of the murder.

*As he sat thus, gazing in a sort of reverie at the papers on the desk in front of him, his chin resting on his hand, his eyes closed and slumber stole upon him.*

Of course! To go to sleep like that in a downtown deserted office is a crazy thing to do in New York—let alone Chicago. Every intelligent reader knows that Mr. Cactus is going to get a crack on the cocoanut. He's the body.

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But if you don't mind my saying so, they get a better setting for this kind of thing in England than they do with us. You need an old country to get a proper atmosphere around murder. The best murders (always of elderly gentlemen) are done in the country at some old country seat—any wealthy elderly gentleman has a seat—called by such a name as the Priory, or the Doggery, or the Chase—that sort of thing.

Try this for example:

*Sir Charles Althorpe sat alone in his library at Althorpe Chase. It was late at night. The fire had burned low in the grate. Through the heavily curtained windows no sound came from outside. Save for the maids, who slept in a distant wing, and save for the butler, whose pantry was under the stairs, the Chase, at this time of the year, was empty. As Sir Charles sat thus in his arm-chair, his head gradually sank upon his chest and he dozed off into slumber.*

Foolish man! Doesn't he know that to doze off into slumber in an isolated country house, with the maids in a distant wing, is little short of madness? But do you notice?—*Sir Charles!* He's a baronet. That's the touch to give class to it. And do you notice that we have *saved* the butler, just as we did the janitor? Of course, he didn't really kill Sir Charles, but the local police always arrest the butler. And anyway, he'd been seen sharpening a knife on his pants in his pantry and saying, 'I'll do for the old Devil yet.'

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So there is the story away to a good start—Sir Charles's body found next morning by a 'terrified' maid—all maids are terrified—who 'could scarcely give an intelligent account of what she saw'—they never can. Then the local police (Inspector Higginbottom of the Hopshire Constabulary) are called in and announce themselves 'baffled.' Every time the reader hears that the local police are called in he smiles an indulgent smile and knows they are just there to be baffled.

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At this point of the story enters the Great Detective, specially sent by or through Scotland Yard. That's another high-class touch—Scotland Yard. It's not a Yard, and it's not in Scotland. Knowing it only from detective fictions I imagine it is a sort of club somewhere near the Thames in London. You meet the Prime Minister and the Archbishop of Canterbury going in and out all the

time—but so strictly incognito that you don't know that it is them, I mean that they are it. And apparently even 'royalty' is found 'closeted' with heads at the yard—'royalty' being in English a kind of hush-word for things too high up to talk about.

Well, anyway, the Yard sends down the Great Detective, either as an official or as an outsider to whom the Yard appeal when utterly stuck; and he comes down to the Chase, looking for clues.

Here comes in a little technical difficulty in the narration of the story. We want to show what a wonderful man the Great Detective is, and yet he can't be made tell the story himself. He's too silent—and too strong. So the method used nowadays is to have a sort of shadow along with him, a companion, a sort of Poor Nut, full of admiration but short on brains. Ever since Conan Doyle started this plan with Sherlock and Watson, all the others have copied it. So the story is told by this secondary person. Taken at his own face value he certainly is a Poor Nut. Witness the way in which his brain breaks down utterly and is set going again by the Great Detective. The scene occurs when the Great Detective begins to observe all the things around the place that were overlooked by Inspector Higginbottom.

*'But how,' I exclaimed, 'how in the name of all that is incomprehensible, are you able to aver that the criminal wore rubbers?'*

*My friend smiled quietly.*

*'You observe,' he said, 'that patch of fresh mud about ten feet square in front of the door of the house. If you would look, you will see that it has been freshly walked over by a man with rubbers on.'*

*I looked. The marks of the rubbers were there plain enough—at least a dozen of them.*

*'What a fool I was!' I exclaimed. 'But at least tell me how you were able to know the length of the criminal's foot?'*

*My friend smiled again, his same inscrutable smile.*

*'By measuring the print of the rubber,' he answered quietly, 'and then subtracting from it the thickness of the material multiplied by two.'*

*'Multiplied by two!' I exclaimed. 'Why by two?'*

*'For the toe and the heel.'*

*'Idiot that I am,' I cried, 'it all seems so plain when you explain it.'*

In other words, the Poor Nut makes an admirable narrator. However much fogged the reader may get, he has at least the comfort of knowing that the Nut

is far more fogged than he is. Indeed, the Nut may be said, in a way, to personify the ideal reader, that is to say, the stupidest—the reader who is most completely bamboozled with the mystery, and yet intensely interested.

Such a reader has the support of knowing that the police are entirely ‘baffled’—that’s always the word for them; that the public are ‘mystified’; that the authorities are ‘alarmed’; the newspapers ‘in the dark’; and the Poor Nut, altogether up a tree. On those terms, the reader can enjoy his own ignorance to the full.

Before the Great Detective gets to work, or, rather, while he is getting to work, the next thing is to give him *character, individuality*. It’s no use to say that he ‘doesn’t in the least look like a detective.’ Of course not. No detective ever does. But the point is not what he doesn’t look like, but what he does look like.

Well, for one thing, though it’s pretty stale, he can be made extremely thin, in fact ‘cadaverous.’ Why a cadaverous man can solve a mystery better than a fat man it is hard to say; presumably the thinner a man is, the more acute is his mind. At any rate, the old school of writers preferred to have their detectives lean. This, incidentally, gave the detective a face ‘like a hawk,’ the writer not realizing that a hawk is one of the stupidest of animals. A detective with a face like an orang-outang would beat it all to bits.

Indeed, the Great Detective’s face becomes even more important than his body. Here there is absolute unanimity. His face has to be ‘inscrutable.’ Look at it though you will, you can never read it. Contrast it, for example, with the face of Inspector Higginbottom, of the local police force. Here is a face that can look ‘surprised,’ or ‘relieved,’ or, with great ease, ‘completely baffled.’

But the face of the Great Detective knows of no such changes. No wonder the Poor Nut is completely mystified. From the face of the great man you can’t tell whether the cart in which they are driving jolts him or whether the food at the Inn gives him indigestion.

To the Great Detective’s face there used to be added the old-time expedient of not allowing him either to eat or drink. And when it was added that during this same period of about eight days the sleuth never slept, the reader could realize in what fine shape his brain would be for working out his ‘inexorable chain of logic.’

But nowadays this is changed. The Great Detective not only eats, but he eats well. Often he is presented as a connoisseur in food. Thus:

*‘Stop a bit.’ Thus speaks the Great Detective to the Poor Nut and Inspector Higginbottom, whom he is dragging round with him as usual. ‘We have half an hour before the train leaves Paddington. Let us have some dinner. I know an Italian restaurant near here where*

*they serve frogs' legs à la Marengo better than anywhere else in London.'*

*A few minutes later we were seated at one of the tables of a dingy little eating-place whose signboard with the words 'Restauranto Italiano' led me to the deduction that it was an Italian restaurant. I was amazed to observe that my friend was evidently well known in the place, while his order for 'three glasses of Chianti with two drops of vermicelli in each,' called for an obsequious bow from the appreciative padrone. I realized that this amazing man knew as much of the finesse of Italian wines as he did of playing the saxophone.*

We may go further. In many up-to-date cases the detective not only gets plenty to eat but a liberal allowance of strong drink. One generous British author of to-day is never tired of handing out to the Great Detective and his friends what he calls a 'stiff whisky and soda.' At all moments of crisis they get one.

For example, when they find the body of Sir Charles Althorpe, late owner of Althorpe Chase, a terrible sight, lying on the floor of the library, what do they do? They reach at once to the sideboard and pour themselves out a 'stiff whisky and soda.' It certainly is a great method.

But in the main we may say that all this stuff about eating and drinking has lost its importance. The Great Detective has to be made exceptional by some other method.

And here is where his music comes in. It transpires—not at once but in the first pause in the story—that this great man not only can solve a crime, but has the most extraordinary aptitude for music, especially for dreamy music of the most difficult kind. As soon as he is left in the Inn room with the Poor Nut, out comes his saxophone and he tunes it up.

*'What were you playing?' I asked, as my friend at last folded his beloved instrument into its case.*

*'Beethoven's Sonata in Q,' he answered modestly.*

*'Good Heavens!' I exclaimed.*

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Up to this point the story, any detective story, has been a howling success. The body has been found; they're all baffled and full of whisky and soda, and everything's fine! But the only trouble is how to go on with it! You can't! There's no way to make crime really interesting except at the start; it's a pity they have to go on, that they can't just stay baffled and full, and call it a day.

But now begin the mistakes and the literary fallacies that spoil a crime story. At this point in comes the heroine—the heroine!—who has no real place in a murder story but is just a left-over remnant of the love story. In she comes, Margaret Althorpe, wild and all dishevelled. No wonder she's wild! Who wouldn't be? And dishevelled—oh, yes, the best writers always dishevel them up like that. In she comes, almost fainting! What do they do, Inspector Higginbottom and the Great Detective? They shoot a 'stiff whisky and soda' into her—and hit one themselves at the same time.

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And with that, you see, the story drifts off sideways so as to work up a love-interest in the heroine, who has no business in it at all. Making a heroine used to be an easy thing in earlier books when the reading public was small. The author just imagined the kind of girl that he liked himself and let it go at that. Walter Scott, for example, liked them small—size three—'sylph-like' was the term used; in fact, the heroine was just a 'slip of a girl'—the slippier the better.

But Margaret Althorpe has to please everybody at once. So the description of her runs like this:

*Margaret Althorpe was neither short nor tall.*

That means that she looked pretty tall standing up, but when she sat down she was sawed off.

*. . . Her complexion neither dark nor fair, and her religion was neither Protestant nor Roman Catholic. She was not a prohibitionist, but never took more than a couple of gins at a time. Her motto was, 'No, boys, that's all I can hold.'*

That at least is about the spirit of the description. But even at that, description of what is called her 'person' is not sufficient by itself. There is the question of her 'temperament' as well. Unless a heroine has 'temperament' she can't get by; and temperament consists in undergoing a great many physiological changes in a minimum of time. Here, for example, are the physiological variations undergone by the heroine of a book I read the other day, in what appeared to be a space of seventeen minutes:

*A new gladness ran through her.*

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*A thrill coursed through her (presumably in the opposite*



direction).

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*Something woke up within her that had been dead.*

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*A great yearning welled up within her.*

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*Something seemed to go out from her that was not of her nor to her.*

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*Everything sank within her.*

That last means, I think, that something had come unhooked.

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But, you see, by this turn the novel has reached what the diplomats call an *impasse*, and plainer people simply a *cul-de-sac* or a *ne plus ultra*. It can't get on. They arrested the butler. He didn't do it. Apparently nobody did it.

In other words, all detective stories reach a point where the reader gets impatient and says to himself: 'Come, now; *somebody* murdered Sir Charles! Out with it.' And the writer has no answer. All the old attempts at an answer suitable for literary purposes have been worn thin. There used to be a simple and easy solution of a crime mystery by finding that the murder was done by a 'tramp.' In the old Victorian days the unhappy creature called a tramp had no rights that the white man had to respect, either in fiction or out of it. They'd hang a tramp as unconcernedly as they'd catch a butterfly. And if he belonged to the class called a 'villainous-looking tramp' he registered as A1, and his execution (indicated but not described) was part of the happy ending, along with Margaret Althorpe's marriage to the Poor Nut as a by-product on the side—not, of course, to the Great Detective. Marriage is not for him. He passes on to the next mystery, in which 'royalty' itself is deeply concerned.

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But all the tramp stuff is out of date. With a hundred million people 'on the dole' and on 'relief,' we daren't set them to work at murder. We have to get another solution.

Here is one, used for generations, but still going fairly strong. The murderer is found; oh, yes, he's found all right, and confesses his guilt, *but* it is only too plain that his physical condition is such that he must soon 'go before a higher tribunal.' And that doesn't mean the Supreme Court.

It seems that at the moment when the Great Detective and Inspector Higginbottom have seized him he has developed a ‘hacking cough.’ This is one of those terrible maladies known only in fiction—like ‘brain fever’ and a ‘broken heart,’ for which all medicine is in vain. Indeed, in this case, as the man starts to make his confession, he can hardly talk for hacks.

*‘Well,’ said Garth, looking round at the little group of police officers, ‘the game is up—hack! hack!—and I may as well make a clean breast of it—hack, hack, hack.’*

Any trained reader, when he hears these hacks, knows exactly what they are to lead up to. The criminal, robust though he seemed only a chapter ago when he jumped through a three-story window after throttling Sub-Inspector Juggins half to death, is a dying man. He has got one of those terrible diseases known to fiction as a ‘mortal complaint.’ It wouldn’t do to give it an exact name, or somebody might get busy and cure it. The symptoms are a hacking cough and a great mildness of manner, an absence of all profanity, and a tendency to call everybody ‘you gentlemen.’ Those things spell finis.

In fact, all that is needed now is for the Great Detective himself to say, ‘Gentlemen’ (they are all gentlemen at this stage of the story), ‘*a higher conviction than any earthly law has, et cetera, et cetera.*’ With that, the curtain is dropped, and it is understood that the criminal made his exit the same night.

That’s better, decidedly better. And yet, lacking in cheerfulness, somehow.

In fact, this solution has something a little cowardly about it. It doesn’t face the music.

One more of these futile solutions may be offered. Here’s the way it is done.

*The Great Detective stood looking about him, quietly shaking his head. His eye rested a moment on the prostrate body of Sub-Inspector Bradshaw, then turned to scrutinize the neat hole drilled in the glass of the window.*

*‘I see it all now,’ he murmured. ‘I should have guessed it sooner. There is no doubt whose work this is.’*

*‘Who is it?’ I asked.*

*‘Blue Edward,’ he announced quietly.*

*‘Blue Edward!’ I exclaimed.*

*‘Blue Edward,’ he repeated.*

*‘Blue Edward!’ I reiterated, ‘but who, then, is Blue Edward?’*

This, of course, is the very question that the reader is wanting to ask. Who

on earth is Blue Edward? The question is answered at once by the Great Detective himself.

*'The fact that you have never heard of Blue Edward merely shows the world that you have lived in. As a matter of fact, Blue Edward is the terror of four continents. We have traced him to Shanghai, only to find him in Madagascar. It was he who organized the terrible robbery at Irkutsk in which ten mujiks were blown up with a bottle of Epsom salts.'*

*'It was Blue Edward who for years held the whole of Philadelphia in abject terror, and kept Oshkosh, Wisconsin, on the jump for even longer. At the head of a gang of criminals that ramifies all over the known globe, equipped with a scientific education that enables him to read and write and use a typewriter with the greatest ease, Blue Edward has practically held the police of the world at bay for years.'*

*'I suspected his hand in this from the start. From the very outset, certain evidences pointed to the work of Blue Edward.'*

After which all the police inspectors and spectators keep shaking their heads and murmuring, 'Blue Edward, Blue Edward,' until the reader is sufficiently impressed.

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The fact is that the writer *can't* end the story, not if it is sufficiently complicated in the beginning. No possible ending satisfies the case. Not even the glad news that the heroine sank into the Poor Nut's arms, never to leave them again, can relieve the situation. Not even the knowledge that they erected a handsome memorial to Sir Charles, or that the Great Detective played the saxophone for a week can quite compensate us.

## ALL PRESENT

*I remember when I was invited some years ago to go back to the University of Chicago to make a speech, the President, introducing me there in the hall, said, 'Mr. Leacock is known in the outside world as a humorist, but here in Chicago we know him as the author of the Elements of Political Science.' There was a very discouraging silence, and I said, when I rose: 'I understand the readers of my Political Science are here in the hall. If so, will they both stand up?'*

V  
FRENZIED FICTION  
(CONTINUED)  
SECOND LECTURE. LOVE AT \$1.25 A THROB

It is a very great pleasure to see before me such a large, brilliant, and intellectual audience. I may add that I always open my lectures with that sentence. I have it here written, on the lecture desk, so as not to forget it.

To-night I am to give the second in my lectures on Frenzied Fiction. But I will describe it not exactly as a lecture, but as a *causerie*. You know the difference. When a lecturer knows what he is talking about, that's a lecture. When he doesn't, he calls it a *causerie*. If I were to speak to-night on solid ground like Ancient Babylon, or the Cave Dwellers of the Colorado Canyon, that would be a lecture, but not anything so light, so volatile, so unseizable as Love—though I assure you I propose to seize it.

I intend therefore in this and the following lecture to trace out love, as seen in fiction, from its simplest and most innocent forms up to those wild unrestrained outbursts of passion which will be the last part of the second lecture. Don't miss that.

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But I must begin at the beginning, a hundred years ago. In those days love was simple and idyllic. It was understood then—at least in the better class of society, the only class I lecture of or to—that the expression of love must be *restrained*, that the attitude of the lover must be that of a humble suppliant at his mistress's feet. Indeed it was hardly proper for him to pay his court to her in direct form at all—he had to get at her through her father and mother. To send an early rose to her mother or a cauliflower to her father gave the first indication of his awakening feeling. But stop; I can illustrate it for you with great exactness by reading to you a sample of a love letter of a hundred years ago. I found it lying in an old book, still faintly fragrant with the dead rose leaves crushed between the pages. Here it is, a letter of the year 1837 sent by messenger from Mr. Ardent Heartful, The Hall, Notts, England, to Miss Angela Blushanburn, The Shrubberies, Hops, Potts, Shrops, England, begging her acceptance of a fish:

*Respected Miss Angela:*

*With the consent of your honoured father and your esteemed mother, I venture to send to you by the messenger who bears you*

*this, a fish. It has, my respected Miss Angela, for some time been my most ardent desire that I might have the good fortune to present to you as the fruit of my own endeavours, a fish. It was this morning my good fortune to land while angling in the stream that traverses your property with the consent of your father, a fish.*

*In presenting for your consumption, with your parents' consent, respected Miss Angela, this fish, may I say that the fate of this fish which will thus have the inestimable privilege of languishing upon your table conveys nothing but envy to one who, while what he feels cannot be spoken, still feels as deeply as should feel, if it does feel, this fish.*

*With the expression of a perfect esteem for your father and mother, believe me,*

*Your devoted,  
Ardent Heartful.*

You will I am sure be glad to know that Mr. Heartful's suit was apparently successful. By a lucky chance the answer that he received lay preserved in the same book. It reads:

*Sir Joshua and Lady Blushanburn present their compliments to Mr. Ardent Heartful and desire to thank him for the fish which Mr. Heartful has had the kindness to forward to their daughter and which they have greatly enjoyed. Sir Joshua and Lady Blushanburn will be pleased if Mr. Heartful will present himself in person for such further conversation in regard to this fish as connects it with his future intentions.*

You see in those days if you gave a fish to a girl, and her parents ate it, that meant marriage.

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So that was the background on which people first began writing love stories. As a consequence there was brought forth as the earliest type the beautiful old love story, always laid in the country, always in the springtime with the hawthorns in blossom in the lane. In that story as soon as the hero and heroine come together you know that they are destined for one another. Here you see the heroine standing in front of her mother's cottage in Glamorokshire—the scene is the Welsh border where every name is music. She is standing there swinging her sun-bonnet, and carolling a song to herself. This shows how simple she is—probably the simplest girl south of Aberystwyth, which is saying a lot. And who is this manly young figure in a

Norfolk jacket who, or which, comes striding down the road? This—this is young Lord Ronald, heir to the widest estates in Glammorokshire—probably three hundred yards wide. And just as soon as young Lord Ronald comes to the cottage and stops and asks the girl for a drink, which she brings pure as crystal from the well, you know that they are destined for one another. It doesn't matter that he is of noble birth and that she is lowly born; the fact that he has an upper berth and she has a lower makes no difference. Nor does it matter even when Lord Ronald's uncle and guardian, the Old Earl, hears of it and says, 'Boy! if you persist in this insensate folly, I disinherit you.' Young Lord Ronald draws himself up—by his suspenders—with all the pride of his race, and says, 'If you do, I will work.' The reader always felt a terrible shock at this, and thought, 'Good Heavens! he's going to work!' In 1837 the notion that a young Lord Ronald might actually work seemed sacrilege. In 1937, with millions of people on relief, if young Lord Ronald said, 'I will *work*,' the Old Earl would just say with a nasty sneer, 'At what?'

But of course in the early love story Lord Ronald doesn't really get to work. Something else happens, some lucky chance. His guardian, for example, is killed in the hunting field, an aristocratic death that leaves no trace, and young Lord Ronald succeeds to the estate as Lord Glammorok and the two lovers are married. And it turns out that after all she, too, is of high birth, Welsh but high. She is a descendant of Ap Morgan Yap Tudor, who murdered Edward the Second, and of a long line of murderers on her mother's side. So they are married in the little church down the lane, and the bells ring, and Lord Ronald gives the ringers ten cents each, and the villagers shout and dance, and each gets an orange and a beef sandwich—in short one of those grand old pride-of-England feudal weddings of the aristocracy.

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That's the good old story. We have read it for generations, and some of us are reading it still. But many people, after the same story had been written and read about fifty years, began to find it just a little—how should I say?—tame. The hero and heroine seemed a little too sloppy.

So then came in—in the days when such people as Rider Haggard and Marion Crawford and Archibald Gunter were writing—a new kind of hero. This was the out-of-doors man, all boots and courage, riding around in the pampas among the pumas, or shooting through the sumacs of the Savannahs. In short, he was found anywhere under what he called 'God's Sky,' which excluded New York, Chicago, and Paris.

This open-air hero had his counterpart in an open-air heroine—a girl in a short kilt effect, with a sombrero hat, and a pistol in her belt a foot long.

These two had wild adventures together, which were always related by the hero so that he could blow hard about himself. Here they are in a typical scene:

*We are on the summit of the Rocky Mountains, Miss Middleton and I.*

Now you might think that a rather improper place for them to be—in 1887—without any chaperon within a hundred miles. But if there is any irregularity, it is made all right by the chivalrous way in which the hero always acts towards the girl. For instance, although we get to know that her name is Kate, he always calls her scrupulously ‘Miss Middleton.’ Any man who will call a girl ‘Miss Middleton’ on the summit of the Rocky Mountains is certainly a man of restraint.

*Each night (he says) I buckled the dear girl into the little leather tent we carried. ‘Good-night, Miss Middleton,’ I said.*

Then he goes out and sleeps on a clump of cactus.  
So that’s all right for propriety.

*We are on the summit of the Rocky Mountains, Miss Middleton and I. We are being pursued by a band of Apache Indians. We can hear their ferocious yells as they gallop after us. In front of us falls a precipitous cliff, two hundred feet down to the plain below. Our only possibility of safety, can I get Miss Middleton down that cliff?*

Can he do it? Just watch him.

*With my eye I measured the fearsome descent.*

You observe that. He’s a man of resource. He had no tape or string to measure it, so he just took out his eye and held it over.

*Then hastily I unwound from my body the two hundred feet of buskskin line that I carried about me.*

You observe that? Apparently he’s been carrying that line wound round him under his chemise ever since they left Omaha.

*‘Hold fast to the line, Miss Middleton’ I said, as I braced my foot against a projecting rock.*

*The noble girl seized the knotted end of the buckskin line. ‘All right, Mr. Smith,’ she said with quiet confidence. ‘I will.’*

*I braced myself for the effort. My muscles, like tempered steel, responded to the strain. I lowered a hundred feet of the line. I could*



*already hear the voice of Kate far down the cliff.  
'Don't let go the line, Miss Middleton,' I called.*

Now wasn't that an admirable piece of advice? To a girl a hundred feet down from the top of a cliff and still a hundred to go to get to the bottom! 'Don't let go the line!' No, I guess not.

*The girl's clear voice came floating up from below. 'All right, Mr. Smith, I won't.'*

So Miss Middleton is safely lowered to the foot of the cliff.

*Hastily I threw after her the tent, the pots and the pans, kicked the horses over, and then jumped down. The Indians, with yells of baffled rage (That's their other set of yells) ride off in retreat. (They won't jump two hundred feet those Indians—about 190 is their limit.)*

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Then follows, after they are saved, the long ride, day after day, over the prairies on their journey back to civilization, at the end of which they must part. And as they ride thus over the whispering grass—and goodness knows what it whispered—not a word of love escaped his lips—not a word. You know that of course he loves her—oh, yes, there was something in the way he held her over that cliff that showed it. There are two ways of holding a girl on a rope over a cliff. If you don't love her, you just let her dangle; you hitch the rope round a rock and take your breath and light a cigarette. But if you love her, she can tell it by your pants; she can hear them all the way down. So of course he loves her, but he just *won't* say so. That was felt to mean great strength in 1887.

*Each night (he says) I buckled the dear girl into the little leather tent as tenderly as had she been my sister.*

You know the tender way you buckle your sister into a tent—with a couple of quick hitches.

So they ride on like this, day by day, and he never speaks till the reader gets worried about it and thinks, Is he going to take that girl all the way back to Omaha and never say a word?'

Not till right at the end. They have reached the little railway depot at the railhead, where their sweet companionship must end. Then at last he speaks.

*'Kate,' I said, as I held the noble girl's gloved hand in mine a moment. She looked me in the face with the full, frank, fearless gaze of a sister.*

*'Yes?' she answered.*

*'Kate,' I repeated, 'do you know what I was thinking of when I held the line while you were half-way down the cliff?'*

*'No,' she murmured, while a flush suffused her cheek.*

*'I was thinking, Kate,' I said, 'that if the rope broke I should be very sorry.'*

*'Edward!' she exclaimed.*

*I clasped her in my arms.*

*'Shall I make a confession?'* said Kate, looking up timidly, half an hour later, as I tenderly unclasped the noble girl from my encircling arms. . . . *'I was thinking the same thing too.'*

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But somehow that type of story, with the Open-Air Hero and Heroine, wore just as thin as Young Lord Ronald and the Cottage Girl. It was found—about the time when this present century was young—that for a real love story two people are not enough. You need *three*.

A love story confined to two people is too slow, and runs inevitably to a happy ending. But get in a *third* person—and then you start something.

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I can illustrate it for you by giving you some extracts from a story I once wrote developing this theme of the eternal triangle. I may without immodesty say that this story was written for the Ten Thousand Dollar Pulitzer Prize offered that year. It didn't get it.

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The hero is a young Englishman of high family, Vere de Lancy, who conceals his identity by travelling under the assumed name of Lancy de Vere. The story opens in mid-Atlantic on board the steamship *Gloritania*, on which de Vere is travelling to America, his purpose being to write a book on the United States, dealing especially with the psychology of the millionaire classes. On the boat he has met a girl of marvellous beauty and mystery. Here the story can speak for itself.

*Somehow as they sat together on the deck of the great steamer in the afterglow of the sunken sun, listening to the throbbing of the propeller (a rare sound which neither of them of course had ever heard before), Vere felt that he must speak to her. Something of the mystery of the girl fascinated him. What was she doing here alone,*

with no one but her mother and her maid, on the bosom of the Atlantic? Why was she here? Why was she not somewhere else? The thing pulled, perplexed him. It would not let him alone. It fastened upon his brain. Somehow he felt that, if he tried to drive it away, it might nip him in the ankle.

In the end he spoke.

'And you, too,' he said, leaning over her deck-chair, 'are going to America?'

He had suspected this ever since the boat left Liverpool. Now at length he framed his growing conviction into words.

'Yes,' she assented, and then timidly, 'It is three thousand, two hundred and thirteen miles wide, is it not?'

'Yes,' he said, 'and seventeen hundred and eighty-one miles deep! It reaches from the forty-ninth parallel to the Gulf of Mexico.'

'Oh,' cried the girl, 'what a vivid picture! I seem to see it.'

'Its major axis,' he went on, his voice sinking almost to a caress, 'is formed by the Rocky Mountains, which are practically a prolongation of the Cordilleran Range. It is drained,' he continued—

'How splendid!' said the girl.

'Yes, is it not? It is drained by the Mississippi, by the St. Lawrence, and—dare I say it?—by the Upper Colorado.'

Somehow his hand had found hers in the half gloaming, but she did not check him.

'Go on,' she said very simply. 'I think I ought to hear it.'

'The great central plain of the interior,' he continued, 'is formed by a vast alluvial deposit carried down as silt by the Mississippi. East of this range of the Alleghanies, nowhere more than eight thousand feet in height, forms a secondary or subordinate axis from which the watershed falls to the Atlantic.'

He was speaking very quietly but earnestly. No man had ever spoken to her like this before.

'What a wonderful picture!' she murmured half to herself, half aloud, and half not aloud, and half not to herself.

'Through the whole of it,' Vere went on, 'there run railways, most of them from east to west, though a few run from west to east. The Pennsylvania system alone has twenty-one thousand miles of track.'

'Twenty-one thousand miles,' she repeated. Already she felt her will strangely subordinate to his.

He was holding her hand firmly clasped in his and looking into her face.

*'Dare I tell you,' he whispered, 'how many employés it has?'*

*The girl turned and faced him.*

*'Don't,' she said. 'I can't bear it. Some other time, perhaps, but not now.'*

---

De Vere lands in New York and loses track, in the Customs House, of the mysterious girl. In vain he searches every face he sees—about a million a day. He has, in his intense interest, almost lost track of the purpose of his visit, to meet a typical American millionaire and either study him psychologically or borrow his money. Then suddenly, mysteriously, unexpectedly, a note is handed to Vere by the Third Assistant Head Waiter of his hotel. It is addressed in a lady's hand. He tears it open. It contains only the written words, 'Call on Mr. J. Superman Overgold. He is a multimillionaire. He expects you.'

To leap into a taxi (from the third story of the hotel) was the work of a moment. To drive to the office of Mr. Overgold was less. The portion of the novel which follows is perhaps the most notable part of it. It is this part of the chapter which the *Hibbert Journal* declared to be the best piece of psychological analysis that appeared in any novel of the season. I reproduce it here.

*'Exactly, exactly,' said Vere, writing rapidly in his notebook, as he sat in one of the deep leather armchairs of the luxurious office of Mr. Overgold. 'So you sometimes feel as if the whole thing were not worth while?'*

*'I do,' said Mr. Overgold. 'I can't help asking myself what it all means. Is life, after all, merely a series of immaterial phenomena, self-developing and based solely on sensation and reaction, or it is something else?'*

*He paused for a moment to sign a cheque for \$10,000 and throw it out of the window, and then went on, speaking still with the terse brevity of a man of business.*

*'Is sensation everywhere or is there perception too? On what grounds, if any, may the hypothesis of a self-explanatory consciousness be rejected? In how far are we warranted in supposing that innate ideas are inconsistent with pure materialism? But come,' he continued, 'I fear I am sadly lacking in the duties of international hospitality. I am forgetting what I owe to Anglo-American courtesy. I am neglecting the new obligations of our common Indo-Chinese policy. My motor is at the door. Pray let me take you to my house to lunch.'*

*Vere assented readily, telephoned to the hotel not to keep lunch waiting for him, and in a moment was speeding up the magnificent Riverside Drive towards Mr. Overgold's home. On the way Mr. Overgold pointed out various objects of interest—Grant's tomb, Lincoln's tomb, Edgar Allan Poe's grave, the ticket office of the New York Subway, and various other points of historic importance.*

*On arriving at the house, Vere was ushered up a flight of broad marble steps to a hall fitted on every side with almost priceless objets d'art and others, ushered to the cloak-room and out of it, butlered into the lunch-room and foot-manned to a chair.*

*As they entered, a lady already seated at the table turned to meet them.*

*One glance was enough—plenty.*

*It was she—the object of Vere's impassioned quest. A rich lunch-gown was girdled about her with a twelve-o'clock band of pearls.*

*She reached out her hand, smiling.*

*'Dorothea,' said the multimillionaire, 'this is Mr. de Vere. Mr. de Vere—my wife.'*

*They stood looking at one another.*

*'So you didn't know,' she murmured.*

*In a flash Vere realized that she hadn't known that he didn't know and knew now that he knew.*

*He found no words.*

*The situation was a tense one. Nothing but the woman's innate tact could save it. Dorothea Overgold rose to it with the dignity of a queen.*

*She turned to her husband.*

*'Take your soup over to the window,' she said, 'and eat it there.'*

*The millionaire took his soup to the window and sat beneath a little palm tree, eating it.*

*'You didn't know,' she repeated.*

*'No,' said Vere. 'How could I?'*

*'And yet,' she went on, 'you loved me although you didn't know that I was married?'*

*'Yes,' answered Vere simply. 'I loved you, in spite of it.'*

*'How splendid!' she said.*

*There was a moment's silence. Mr. Overgold had returned to the table, the empty plate in his hand. His wife turned to him again with the same unfailing tact.*

*'Take your asparagus to the billiard-room,' she said, 'and eat it there.'*

*'Does he know, too?' asked Vere.*

*'Mr. Overgold?' she said carelessly. 'I suppose he does. Et après, mon ami?'*

*French? Another mystery! Where and how had she learned it? Vere asked himself. Not in France, certainly.*

*'I fear that you are very young, amico mio,' Dorothea went on carelessly. 'After all, what is there wrong in it, piccolo pochito? To a man's mind perhaps—but to a woman, love is love.'*

*She beckoned to the butler.*

*'Take Mr. Overgold a cutlet to the music-room,' she said, 'and give him his Gorgonzola on the inkstand in the library.'*

*'And now,' she went on, in that caressing way which seemed so natural to her, 'don't let us think about it any more! After all, what is, is, isn't it?'*

*'I suppose it is,' said Vere, half-convinced in spite of himself.*

*'Or at any rate,' said Dorothea, 'nothing can at the same time both be and not be. But come,' she broke off, gaily dipping a macaroon in a glass of crème de menthe and offering it to him with a pretty gesture of camaraderie, 'don't let's be gloomy any more. I want to take you with me to the matinée.'*

*'Is he coming?' asked Vere, pointing to Mr. Overgold's empty chair.*

*'Silly boy,' laughed Dorothea. 'Of course John is coming. You surely don't want to buy the tickets yourself.'*

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*The days that followed brought a strange new life to Vere.*

*Dorothea was ever at his side. At every theatre, at the polo ground, in the park, everywhere they were together. And with them was Mr. Overgold.*

Of course that kind of thing could only have one ending. Carried further and further in their love, De Vere and Dorothea end by eloping together. As a final idea they take Mr. Overgold with them, so that he can go on signing the cheques.

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*At a little before midnight on the next night, two motors filled with muffled human beings might have been perceived, or seen, moving noiselessly from Riverside Drive to the steamer wharf where lay the Gloritania.*

*A night of intense darkness enveloped the Hudson. Outside the*

*inside of the dockside a dense fog wrapped the Statue of Liberty. Beside the steamer customs officers and deportation officials moved silently to and fro in long black cloaks, carrying little deportation lanterns in their hands.*

*To these Mr. Overgold presented in silence his deportation certificates, granting his party permission to leave the United States under the imbecility clause of the Interstate Commerce Act.*

*Thus they passed out and the night swallowed them up.*

## THE TIME THAT DOESN'T FLY

*'Have you been in the penitentiary yet?' the Chairman of one of my lectures asked me; with great animation.*

*'Not yet,' I answered.*

*'You ought to go,' he said.*

*Then I realized what he meant—ought to go out and lecture there.*

*'I've lectured to them,' he said; 'you'll find them a great audience in one way. You have a pleasant feeling that you're not trespassing on their time.'*



VI  
FRENZIED FICTION  
(CONTINUED)

THIRD LECTURE. PASSION AT 25 CENTS A GASP

The lecture that I am to give to-night is practically a continuation of the one given last night on Love. As a matter of fact, it's the *same* lecture. I hadn't finished. I paused a moment to think of what to say next and the audience rose on me and left.

But in any case there is a natural change of topic at the point we had reached. We change from love to passion. The distinction between the two is what I propose to make clear to you to-night. The first big, broad difference is that love, being sold by the bookful, costs a dollar twenty-five a volume, or, if combined with murder, comes as high as two fifty. Passion, which is sold in monthly instalments, is much cheaper, costing as a rule only twenty-five cents an instalment. On the other hand, if you spend your money on a book of love, you always have at least the book. Passion in paper covers by the month is thrown away and forgotten. There is such a depth of meaning in that comparison that some of the older people here won't get it. But all the young people see it in a flash.

Let me further explain the difference between love and passion in the literary sense, that is the difference in the art of presentation that conveys the one or the other. Passion, as distinct from love, demands a new vocabulary—more intense, more colourful—crude and glaring as the sun on the African desert, with great splashes of yellow ochre and black shadow. It must be strung to a tense key, to the breaking point. In fact—well, let me illustrate it from a brief scene of a novel of exotic passion:

*His voice as he turned towards her was taut as a tie-line.*

*'You don't love me!' he hoarsed, thick with agony.*

*She had angled into a seat and sat sensing-rather-than-seeing him.*

*For a time she silenced. Then presently, as he still stood and enveloped her:*

*'Don't!'* she thinned, her voice fining to a thread.

*'Answer me'* he gloomed, still gazing into-and-through her.

*She half-heard, half-didn't-hear him.*

*Night was falling about them as they sat thus beside the river. A*

*molten afterglow of iridescent saffron shot with incandescent carmine lit up the waters of the Hudson till they glowed like electrified uranium.*

*For a while they both sat silent—looming.*

*'It had to be' she glumped.*

*'Why, why?' he barked. 'Why should it have had to have been or (more hopefully) even be to be? Surely you don't mean because of money?'*

*She shuddered into herself.*

*The thing seemed to sting her (it hadn't really).*

*'Money!' she almost-but-not-quite-moaned. 'You might have spared me that!'*

*He sank down and grassed.*

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*And after they had sat thus for another half-hour grassing and growling and angling and sensing one another, it turned out that all that he was trying to say was to ask if she would marry him.*

*And of course she said 'Yes.'*

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Another distinction is that the novel of passion, as opposed to the love story, is not afraid of plain speaking, of straight-out physiological details which the earlier novels dared not introduce. After all, why not be frank about everything? If human beings are, after all, just animals, or in a sense even just chemical and physical machines, why not be bold enough to describe things as they are? Let me quote as illustration an extra from a story which I wrote in collaboration with the late Emile Zola, and with a certain assistance to each of us from Huxley's *Elements of Physiology* and Sadler's *Diseases of the Dog*.

The passage describes the meeting of two lovers—what used to be called in old-fashioned language a lovers' 'tryst.' The modern term is a 'get-together.'

*Philip Heatherhead—or let us just call him Physiological Philip—as he strolled down the lane in the glory of early June, presented a splendid picture of young manhood. By this we mean that his bony framework was longer than the average and that instead of walking with a forward slant like an ape he stood erect with his skull balanced on his spinal column in a way rarely excelled even in a museum. The young man appeared in the full glory of perfect health: or shall we say, to be more exact, that his temperature was 98, his respiration normal, his skin entirely free from mange, erysipelas and prickly heat.*

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*At a turn of the path Philip suddenly became aware of a young girl advancing to meet him. Her spinal column, though shorter than his, was elongated and erect, and Philip saw at once that she was not a chimpanzee. She wore no hat and the thick capillary growth which covered her cranium waved in the sunlight and fell low over her eye-sockets.*

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*They met, and their hands instinctively clasped, by an interadjustment of the bones known only in mankind and the higher apes, but not seen in the dog.*

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*Philip found words first. He naturally would, owing to the fact that in the male, as Darwin first noticed, the control of the nerve ganglions is more rigid than in the female.*

*'I'm so glad you've come,' he said. The words were simple (indeed he could hardly have made them simpler unless by inserting that preposition 'that' and restoring the auxiliary from its abbreviated form). But, simple as they were, they thrilled the young girl to the heart— obviously by setting up the form of nerve disturbance which Huxley has so admirably described in his discussion of the effect of external stimuli on the decomposition of food.*

*'I couldn't stay away,' she murmured.*

*Philip drew the girl's form towards him till he had it close to his own form, and parallel to it, both remaining perpendicular, and then, bending the upper vertebrae of his spinal column forwards and sideways, he introduced his face into a close proximity with hers. In this attitude, difficult to sustain for a prolonged period, he brought his upper and lower lips together, protruded them forward, and placed them softly against hers in a movement seen also in the orang-outang, but never in the hippopotamus.*

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Just let me give you one more technical illustration of the difference between the language of love and that of passion. Take the case of love letters. You will recall from a preceding lecture the form and fashion of the love letter sent a hundred years ago by Mr. Ardent Heartful to Miss Angela Blushanburn. Compare it now with this passionate communication as sent to-day by Professor Albertus Dignus, senior professor of rhetoric, to Miss Maisie Beatit of the chorus of the Follies-in-Transit company at Memphis, Tenn.:

*Cuckoo! my little peacherino, and how is she to-night? I wish she was right here, yum! yum! I got her tootsie weenie letter this morning. I hustled to the post office so fast to get it I nearly broke my slats. And so it really longs for me, does she? and did you really mean it? Well, you certainly look like a piece of chocolate to me! In fact, you're some bird! You're my baby all right—*

and so forth for three pages.

After which we may imagine that the professor, the gust of passion spent, turns back to work on his essay, 'The Deterioration of the English Language Among the Coloured Races of Africa.'

With this preliminary explanation of the nature and language of passion, you are now equipped to undertake the scientific examination of a story of passion. I propose to build it up for you bit by bit as if we were writing it together for contribution to a magazine.

Let me indicate certain general principles that govern such a composition. First of all, there must be no long-winded introduction, no description of the Welsh Hills by moonlight which filled up the first four pages of the story of Lord Ronald, no long genealogical tree going back for generations. We don't want any of that. The characters don't even need names. In all the high-class magazine stories the hero is simply called *The Man*. You will find that at least fifty per cent of the stories to-day begin with those words, *The Man*, and the other fifty per cent begin *The Woman*.

Another point. Don't lay the scene of the story out of doors, or down a summer lane among the hawthorns. Bring it inside. Put it into some sumptuous modern hotel, or the foyer of a theatre (I don't know just what a foyer is, but it sounds good), or, best of all, put it into that alluringly wicked place called a 'midnight cabaret.' That's the spot, a midnight cabaret, among the rubber trees. Believe me, those rubber trees see more of love in one night than the hawthorn does in all its hundred years' existence.

And remember, don't have people in the story who are going to get happily married at the end of the book. That's all stale. Have people who can't get married at the end of the book because they're both married at the *beginning* of the book—both married to somebody else, do you see? That gives to the heroine the fascination of being labelled 'The wife of the other man.' Personally, I don't quite see where the fascination comes in. I know lots of wives of other men that I wouldn't walk round this hall for—and others again, I admit, that I would. But at any rate, I can see nothing at all in the 'Husband of the other woman.'

Those, however, are the people you need. And you bring them into the story, suddenly, abruptly—just throw them in. Here's how the man is brought

in:

*The Man lifted his head. He looked about him at the gaily bedizzled crowd that besplotched the midnight cabaret with riotous patches of colour. He crushed his cigar against the brass of an Egyptian tray. 'Bah!' he murmured. 'Is it worth it?' Then he let his head sink again.*

You notice it? He lifted his head all the way up and let it sink all the way down, and you still don't know who he is.

For The Woman the beginning is done like this:

*The Woman clenched her white hands till the diamonds that glittered upon her fingers were buried in the soft flesh. 'The shame of it,' she murmured. Then she took from the table the telegram that lay crumpled upon it and tore it into a hundred pieces. 'He dare not!' she muttered through her closed teeth. She looked about the hotel room with its garish furniture. 'He has no right to follow me here,' she gasped.*

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Now, from these descriptions the trained will recognize exactly who these people are and what they are doing. The Man? Don't you see he must be the husband of the Other Woman? Else why would he be out at night? And he's come to that cabaret because he wants to forget, he wants not to think. When he knocks that cigar to pieces and says, 'Is it worth it?' you feel like stopping him and saying, 'No, it's not worth it; it's twenty cents every time you do it.'

And the woman? Ah, yes, she's the 'Wife of the Other Man.' And what is she doing in that hotel? She's doing what is called 'working out her own salvation.' Any woman, too rich to have any other work, goes somewhere and works out her own salvation. She's come to that hotel because she wants to be alone, she wants to think. She went to the desk and said, 'I want to think,' and they said, 'Give her a room on the tenth floor and let her think.' She's up there now, trying to, and she can't. Notice the interesting psychological contrast between the man and the woman, always a big feature in stories of passion. The man can think all right, but he can't stop thinking and the woman can't get started. Once she does—well, just let them stay in that position and hold it a little, because this is exactly the point where a trained writer would work in subtle touches of description for both of them. We need these so that when things get started the man and the woman will seem more real to us.

The man is always described as if he were a horse. He is said to be 'tall, well set up, with straight legs.'

Great stress is always laid on his straight legs. No magazine story is acceptable now unless the man's legs are absolutely straight. Why this is, I don't know. All my friends have straight legs—and yet I never hear them make it a subject of comment or boasting. I don't believe I have, at present, a single friend with crooked legs. (I am referring here only to my *men* friends.)

But this is not the only requirement. Not only must the man's legs be straight, but he must be 'clean-limbed,' whatever that is; and, of course, he must have a 'well-tubbed look about him.' How this look is acquired, and whether it can be got with an ordinary bath and water, are things on which I have no opinion.

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Ah, yes, another important thing, after you've got his legs straight out and got him 'well-tubbed,' shave him. He simply has to be clean-shaved. This enables him to appear on the magazine cover as 'putting his clean-shaven face close, close to hers'—to her clean-shaven face, that means. You see, if he had whiskers he couldn't get so close, he'd lose at least a quarter of an inch.

It's a pity in a way that we are thus compelled to drop whiskers out of literature. I wish that before it is too late a movement might be started for the restoration of whiskers as an adjunct to literature. I do not wish to say too much about it, as I am to deliver an address on the subject at one of our greatest universities, presenting the whiskers in return for an honorary degree. But a word or two may be dropped here in anticipation. Think what whiskers once meant in our poetry. You recall Gray's Welsh Bard, standing up on a rock to curse at King Edward: *Loose his beard, his hoary hair streamed like a meteor to the troubled wind!* Can't you just see the sparks flying off him! Or take Longfellow's *Evangeline* with its matchless description of the great hemlocks covered with snow-like beards that rest on their bosom. *This* (he says) *is the forest primeval*. He's right. It is.

Or take if you like the peculiar psychology that goes with a beard. I'll give you an example. There was a forgotten writer called Louise de la Ramée, who signed her stories as 'Ouida.' The stories were all laid in the aristocratic class. No one under a baronet got in. And there was always a Duke, the Duke of Strath-something. And the Duke of Strath always had what was called a 'luxuriant beard.' What for? Why, to *think* with. Here's how he did it. *The Duke remained burl'd in thought, his hands idly passing through his luxuriant beard.*

Now if the Duke didn't have that beard it would read:

*The Duke remained buried in thought, his hands waving idly in the air about eighteen inches from his face.*

---

Or consider what opportunities whiskers afforded to the illustrators of books. Those of you who remember the old-fashioned stories will recall pictures of the heroine seated at the piano, and her lover bending over her to turn the music while his long side-weepers swept right down to the page. Long before he would dare touch her with his hand he could feel her out with his whiskers.

It's a great loss. But I mustn't linger on it. I turn to the description of the woman.

She is always said to be 'beautifully groomed.' Who these grooms are that do it, and how you get a job at it, I don't know. It is peculiar about the woman that she never seems to wear a *dress*—always a 'gown.' Why this is, I cannot tell. In the good old stories that I used to read, when I could still read for the pleasure of it, the heroines—that was what they used to be called—always wore dresses. But now there is no heroine, only a woman in a gown. I wear a gown myself—at night. It is made of flannel and reaches to my feet, and, when I take my candle and go out to the balcony where I sleep, the effect of it on the whole is not bad. But as to its 'revealing every line of my figure'—as the woman's gown is always said to—and as to its 'suggesting even more than it reveals'—well, it simply does *not*. So when I talk of 'gowns' I speak of something that I know all about.

Yet, whatever the woman does, her 'gown' is said to 'cling' to her. Whether in the street or in a cabaret or in the drawing-room, it 'clings.' If by any happy chance she throws a lace wrap about her, then *it* clings: and if she lifts her gown—as she is apt to—it shows, not what I should have expected, but a *jupon*, and even that clings. What a *jupon* is I don't know. With my gown, I never wear one.

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So now, when these two characters are fully developed like that, all we have to do is to bring them suddenly and unexpectedly together, and the story will make itself. And look how easy and natural the construction is, once we have a proper beginning. Here is the woman, sitting in the hotel trying to think—and the man in a cabaret a few blocks away, trying *not* to think. But the point is that he is staying at the same hotel, too, only she doesn't know that he is there and he doesn't know that she is there, so neither of them knows that both of them are there. Do you see it? Or shall I say it again? All right, I won't. Well, now we simply have to get the man back to the hotel and the thing is done. All good stories, you know, write themselves. Plot is nothing, character is everything. As far as plot goes, the life of each of us, of any of us, is plot enough, if you can put it over. Once make the characters stand out in vital reality, and whatever they do is plot.

So in this case:

*He rose unsteadily from where he sat (start him always from there) and staggered forth into the night air (he staggered forth; don't think it means that three other fellows had staggered first)—the fumes of what he had drunk still in his brain. (Some magazines hate all reference to liquor, so if you like you can avoid it by not giving him any fumes and saying, *The orange phosphate still gurgling within him.*)*

But whichever it is, fumes or phosphates, he comes staggering along the street and staggers in the hotel, and up and along the corridor, and, opening a door by mistake (the wrong door, I mean), he comes upon the woman seated there—and he stands there *fronting her full!* That doesn't mean that he was full when he fronted her, it only means that he was full in front of her. That doesn't seem to get it either, but you see what I mean.

Now, of course, in real life a mistake of this sort is nothing. Any person of proper *savoir-faire*, and sufficient *pâté de foie*, would meet it with a polite apology and retire. As a matter of fact this very thing happened to me in a hotel only the other day. I walked right into a lady's room and there she was seated in front of the looking-glass. But I merely bowed and said: 'Oh, pardon me. I see your room is 541 and mine 543. Excuse me.' And when she didn't answer, I said: 'They certainly make these figures in a very indistinct way. In fact, hotels are pretty queer places anyway.' And the woman said, without turning round, 'If you don't get out of this room, I'll ring for the porter.' So the affair ended with complete understanding.

But the people in the passion story can't do this. If they could, there'd be no story. Look what happens to the man:

*He stood there, rooted to the threshold.*

You notice that, as soon as the situation gets exciting, he starts to root.

*His veins simply surged. His brain beat against his face and his breath came in quick, short pants.*

Notice those quick, short pants; one might perhaps say 'shorts.'  
And the woman:

*Noiseless as his step had been, she seemed to sense his presence. A wave seemed to sweep over her—she turned and rose, fronting him full.*

This doesn't mean that she was full when she fronted him. Her gown—but we know about that already.



*'It was a coward's trick,' she panted.*

Notice now the dialogue that ensues at this climax of a passion story. It almost takes a special kind of language to put it over. Observe particularly the sort of verbs that have to be used.

*'Helene,' he croaked, reaching out his arms—his voice tensed with the infinity of his desire.*

*'Back!' she iced. And then, 'Why have you come here?' she hoarsed. 'What business have you here?'*

*'None,' he glooped, 'none. I have no business.' They stood sensing one another.*

*'I thought you were in Philadelphia,' she said—her gown clinging to every fibre of her as she spoke.*

*'I was,' he wheezed.*

*'And you left it?' she sharpened, her voice tense.*

*'I left it,' he said, his voice glumping as he spoke. 'Need I tell you why?' He had come nearer to her. She could hear his pants as he moved.*

*'No, no' she gurgled. 'You left it . . . it is enough. I can understand'—she looked bravely up at him—'I can understand any man leaving it.'*

*Then as he moved still nearer her, there was the sound of a sudden swift step in the corridor. The door opened and there stood before them The Other Man, the husband of The Woman.*

This, of course, is the grand climax, when the author gets all three of them—The Man, The Woman, and The Woman's Husband—in an hotel room at night. But notice what happens.

*He stood in the opening of the doorway, his arms half folded, across half his chest, and a half smile playing across half his face.*

Now that's very hard to do, that half smile. Try it—on either side of your face that you like—and you'll see how hard it is.

*'Well?' he said. Then he entered the room and stood for a moment quietly looking into the man's face.*

*'So?' he said, 'it was you.'*

*The man hung his head. He found no answer.*

You see he can't answer. He doesn't know whether to say, 'It was I,' or 'It

was me.’ Of course he *could* say, ‘I was it,’ and no doubt he *is it*. But just now he says nothing and the other man goes on moving around the room just quietly, not doing anything in particular.

*He walked into the room and laid the light coat that he had been carrying over his arm upon the table. He drew a cigar-case from his waistcoat pocket.*

*‘Try one of these Havanas,’ he said.*

Observe the calm of it. This is what the reader loves—no rage, no blustering—calmness, cynicism.

*He walked over towards the mantelpiece and laid his hat upon it. He set his boot upon the fender.*

*‘It was cold this evening,’ he said. He walked over to the window and stood looking for a moment into the darkness without.*

Without what, I don’t know. Anyway, he hadn’t got any, or couldn’t buy it in the hotel.

*He picked up again the light overcoat that he had thrown on the table. ‘I bought this coat in St. Louis,’ he said, ‘the year that we were married.’*

Ah, there, for the first time you get a note of something like emotion—‘The year that we were married——’ His voice trembles in his nose as he says it. You see what it means! He *loves* this woman still. Else why did he keep the coat ten years?

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And then, just when the reader fancies it’s all going to end quietly, then the shooting begins. All these people, of course, are armed, and they begin shooting one another up. It doesn’t matter much which shoots first, or whether they shoot in rounds, or in volleys. It’s done in all sorts of ways. Sometimes The Woman shoots The Man, or shoots The Other Man—or misses both of them.

But what they really ought to do is for one of them to open the window (they are ten stories up) and say to the others, ‘Let’s all jump out and rid fiction of some of the silliest stuff that ever got into it.’

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So that’s that, and that is just about an outline of the typical novel of passion, laid indoors in sumptuous surroundings. But at the same time you

can't quite abolish the idea of the open spaces and the open sky, and so there has to be another type of passion story. Here the scene has to be laid in some place that utterly isolates the hero and heroine from all the world—turns them back again to nature, to the storm, the desert and the sea, to fight again the primitive fight for life, and find love, fierce and primitive as life itself, springing out of it. . . .

For such a scene as this, for such combinations of strenuous endeavour and passionate love, there is nothing like a desert island. Shipwreck a man and a woman on a desert island and the thing is done.

I have here with me a little specimen story of this sort called *Broken Barriers; or Red Love on a Blue Island*, of which I will outline for you the opening part. The man and the woman are to be shipwrecked. How do we do it? Quite simple. We start with the hero, Mr. Harold Borus, and let him tell the story. Then he can blow about himself just like the open-air man on the pampas that we talked about before.

Off he goes to a good start:

*Little did I think as I stepped on board of the Megalomania at Southampton on a bright August afternoon that within two weeks I should be wrecked on one of the Dry Tortugas. Still less did I think*

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And the reader says: 'No, you poor nut, you can't think. Cut it out.' But Mr. Borus goes on saying all the things he didn't think.

*'I distinctly recall (he continues) remarking to the captain that I had never in all my numerous seafarings seen the sea of a more limpid blue. He agreed with me so completely that he didn't even trouble to answer.'*

The next thing is to start a storm and shipwreck Mr. Borus. In the old-time sea stories of Fenimore Cooper and Clark Russell, a storm at sea was carried out with a range of technical terms that rattled like loose blocks in the wind. This way:

*The gale had now reached its height. The fore-top-royal had carried away into the lee-scuppers where all attempts to lash it with gaskets to the taffrail had proved unavailing. The jib-boom was gone. The jolly-boat was in splinters. The bosun's mate was overboard, and the captain, whose speaking-trumpet still dominated the howling of the gale, called for all hands to cat the anchor and*

*splice the mainbrace.*

But that's not in the least the way the shipwreck of Mr. Borus is carried out. Here is his:

*We had hardly entered the waters of the Caribbean when a storm of unprecedented violence broke upon us. Even the captain had never, so he said, seen anything to compare with it. For two days and nights we encountered and endured the full fury of the sea. Our soup plates were secured with racks, and covered with lids. In the smoking-room our glasses had to be set in brackets, and, as our steward came and went, we were from moment to moment in imminent danger of seeing him washed overboard.*

It's all right to wash a steward overboard, or to wash the steerage passengers overboard or any other way—but not first-class passengers.

*On the third morning just after daybreak the ship collided with something, probably either a floating rock or one of the Dry Tortugas. She blew out her four funnels, the bowsprit dropped out of its place, the propeller came right off and the bar floated away on the sea. The captain, after a brief consultation, decided to abandon her. The boats were lowered, and, the sea being now quite calm, the passengers were emptied into them.*

*By what accident I was left behind I cannot tell. I had been talking to the second mate and telling him of a rather similar experience of mine in the China Sea, and holding him by the coat as I did so, when quite suddenly he took me by the shoulders, and, rushing me into the deserted smoking-room, said, 'Sit there, Mr. Borus, till I come back for you.' The fellow spoke in such a menacing way that I thought it wiser to comply.*

*When I came out they were all gone. Realizing that the ship must soon founder, I hastily made a raft out of a few steel beams that lay on the deck. Hurriedly loading it with such supplies as came to hand, I launched it and leaped upon it. The Megalomania sank just the moment of my leap.*

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*On the second morning on my raft (continues Mr. Borus), I was sitting quietly polishing my boots and talking to myself when I became aware of an object floating upon the sea. I drew it towards me with a hook. Judge my surprise when it proved to be the*

*inanimate body of a girl floating upon the waters of the Caribbean Sea.*

He needn't have been surprised, not if he was up to date in fiction. The Caribbean Sea is full of inanimate girls. You can hook them in anywhere.

Mr. Borus drags the girl on to the raft and removes her boots so as to rub her feet. His idea was, at least partly, to restore her circulation.

*I was just considering what to remove next, when the girl opened her eyes. 'Stop rubbing my feet,' she said.*

*'Miss Croyden.' I said (he had read her name on her garter), 'you mistake me.'*

*I rose with a sense of pique . . .*

Pique is apparently the thing they get in these circumstances; just what it is I don't know; anyway, Mr. Borus got it.

*. . . with a sense of pique which I did not trouble to conceal, and walked to the other end of the raft. I turned my back upon the girl and stood looking out upon the leaden waters of the Caribbean Sea.*

You know the way the Caribbean Sea heaves up and down under you when you stand on the end of a raft. It almost makes you seasick just to read of it.

*The ocean was now calm. There was nothing in sight.*

*I was still searching the horizon when I heard a soft footstep on the raft behind me, and a light hand was laid upon my shoulder. 'Forgive me,' said the girl's voice.*

*I turned about. Miss Croyden was standing behind me. She had, so I argued, removed her stockings and was standing in her bare feet.*

In all these stories there is supposed to be something about a woman in her bare feet, flip-flopping about a raft, that drives men crazy.

*The girl had twined a piece of seaweed about her hair.*

That's another touch! Seaweed! Wrap a little of that around a girl and a man turns into a caveman at the sight of her.

*'Miss Croyden!' I said, 'there is nothing to forgive.'*

*'How chivalrous you are!' she exclaimed.*

*'Not at all,' I said. 'It comes natural to me.'*

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So there they are alone on the raft; now is the time for Mr. Borus to show what a man of resource he is. With the aid of a bent pin on a long stick he finds out their longitude. With the help of a long line he lowers himself deep down into the sea to find his latitude.

*When I came up the rope again the girl was waiting for me.*

*'Oh, I am so glad you have come back,' she exclaimed, clasping her hands.*

*'It was nothing,' I said, wiping the water from my ears as melodiously as I could.*

*'Have you found our whereabouts?' she asked.*

*'Yes,' I answered. 'Our latitude is normal, but our longitude is, I fear, three degrees out of the plumb. I am afraid, Miss Croyden,' I added, speaking as mournfully as I knew how, 'that you must reconcile your mind to spending a few days with me on this raft.'*

All day Mr. Borus multiplies his attention for the comfort of Miss Croyden, and always with the greatest chivalry. All day, yes—but wait, eh?

*With the approach of night (he says)—*

Ha! Ha! that's what the readers have been waiting for—the approach of night. What about that, Mr. Borus?

*With the approach of night I realized that it was necessary to make arrangements for the girl's comfort. With the aid of a couple of upright poles I stretched a grey blanket across the raft so as to make a complete partition.*

*'Miss Croyden,' I said, 'this end of the raft is yours. Here you may sleep in peace.'*

*'How kind you are,' the girl murmured.*

*'You will be quite safe from interference,' I added. 'I give you my word that I will not obtrude upon you in any way.'*

*'How chivalrous you are,' she said.*

*'Not at all,' I answered, as musically as I could. 'Understand me, I am now putting my head over this partition for the last time. If there is anything you want, say so now.'*

*'Nothing,' she answered.*

*'There is a candle and matches beside you. If there is anything*

*you want in the night, call me instantly. Remember, at any hour I shall be here. I promise it.'*

*'Good night,' she murmured. In a few minutes her soft, regular breathing told me that she was asleep.*

*I went forward and seated myself in a tar bucket, with my head against the mast, to get what sleep I could.*

*But for some time—why, I do not know—sleep would not come.*

*The image of Edith Croyden filled my mind. In vain I told myself that she was a stranger to me; that—beyond her longitude—I knew nothing of her. In some strange way this girl had seized hold of me and dominated my senses.*

*The night was very calm and still, with great stars in a velvet sky. In the darkness I could hear the water lapping the edge of the raft.*

*I remained thus in deep thought, sinking further and further into the tar bucket. By the time I reached the bottom of it I realized that I was in love with Edith Croyden.*

*Then the thought of my wife occurred to me.*

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But for all the rest of the story and of how Mr. Borus's wife and Edith Croyden's husband land on the island, and for the terrific fight between Harold Borus and Croyden as cave-men—dressed in skins on purpose for it—for that I must refer you to the original book itself. It doesn't cost much; do buy it. But all that I have quoted from it here is just in a scientific way to illustrate a literary thing. That's all the lecture. Those still here had better go soon, as the light will be put out. You can find some other place to sit just as warm. Good night. Good-bye.

## TECHNICAL TERMS

*When I presently wrote my essay on the 'Restoration of Whiskers,' referred to in the lecture above, and it was published in New York, a cable was sent to me at McGill University from London, 'Will you sell all British rights on your whiskers for Xmas?'*

*I was away and the message was given to the janitor of the Arts building. He said it beat him.*

*It's pleasant to think that even the humble trade of letters has a little professional technique. The janitor was no wiser when he saw me cable back, 'Sorry whiskers sold world.'*



## VII MY FISHING POND

*(I told this story so often and so successfully as a story that at last I went and told it to the Editor of the Atlantic Monthly, and he told it to all the world. But there is no harm in retelling it here.)*

It lies embowered in a little cup of the hills, my fishing pond. I made a last trip to it, just as the season ended, when the autumn leaves of its great trees were turning colour and rustling down to rest upon the still black water. So steep are the banks, so old and high the trees, that scarcely a puff of wind ever ruffles the surface of the pond. All around it, it is as if the world was stilled into silence, and time blended into eternity.

I realized again as I looked at the pond what a beautiful, secluded spot it was, how natural its appeal to the heart of the angler. You turn off a country road, go sideways across a meadow and over a hill and there it lies—a sheet of still water, with high, high banks, grown with great trees. Long years ago someone built a sawmill, all gone now, at the foot of the valley and threw back the water to make a pond, perhaps a quarter of a mile long. At the widest it must be nearly two hundred feet—the most skilful fisherman may make a full cast both ways. At the top end, where it runs narrow among stumps and rushes, there is no room to cast except with direction and great skill.

Let me say at once, so as to keep no mystery about it, that there are no fish in my pond. So far as I know there never have been. But I have never found that to make any difference. Certainly none to the men I bring here—my chance visitors from the outside world—for an afternoon of casting. If there are no fish in the pond, at least they never know it. They never doubt it; they never ask; and I let it go at that.

It is well known hereabouts that I do not take anybody and everybody out to my fish-pond. I only care to invite people who can really fish, who can cast a line—experts, and especially people from a distance to whom the whole neighbourhood is new and attractive, the pond seen for the first time. If I took out ordinary men, especially men near home, they would very likely notice that they got no fish. The expert doesn't. He knows trout fishing too well. He knows that, even in a really fine pond, such as he sees mine is, there are days when not a trout will rise. He'll explain it to you himself, and, having explained it, he is all the better pleased if he turns out to be right and they don't rise. Trout, as everyone knows who is an angler, never rise after a rain, nor before one; it is impossible to get them to rise in the heat, and any chill in

the air keeps them down. The absolutely right day is a still, cloudy day, but even then there are certain kinds of clouds that prevent a rising of the trout. Indeed, I have only to say to one of my expert friends, 'Queer, they didn't bite!' and he's off to a good start with an explanation. There is such a tremendous lot to know about trout-fishing that men who are keen on it can discuss theories of fishing by the hour.

Such theories we generally talk over—my guest of the occasion and I—as we make our preparations at the pond. You see I keep there all the apparatus that goes with fishing—a punt, with lockers in the sides of it—a neat little dock built out of cedar (cedar attracts the trout), and best of all a little shelter house, a quaint little place like a pagoda, close beside the water and yet under the trees. Inside is tackle, all sorts of tackle, hanging round the walls in a mixture of carelessness and order.

'Look, old man,' I say, 'if you like to try a running paternoster, take this one.' Or, 'Have you ever seen these Japanese leads? No, they're not a gut, they're a sort of floss.'

'I doubt if I can land one with that,' he says.

'Perhaps not,' I answer. In fact I'm sure he couldn't; there isn't any to land.

On pegs in the pagoda hangs a waterproof mackintosh or two—for you never know—you may be caught in a shower just when the trout are starting to rise. With that, of course, a sort of cellarette cupboard with decanters and bottles and ginger snaps, and perhaps an odd pot of anchovy paste—no one wants to quit fishing for mere hunger. Nor does any real angler care to begin fishing without taking just a drop ('Just a touch; be careful; wo! wo!') of something to keep out the cold, or to wish good luck for the chances of the day.

I always find, when I bring out one of my friends, that these mere preparatives or preparations, these preliminaries of angling, are the best part of it. Often they take half an hour. There is so much to discuss—the question of weights of tackle, the colour of the fly to use, and broad general questions of theory, such as whether it matters what kind of a hat a man wears. It seems that trout will rise for some hats, and for others not. One of my best guests, who has written a whole book on fly-fishing, is particularly strong on hats and colour.

'I don't think I'd wear that hat, old man,' he says, 'much too dark for a day like this.'

'I wore it all last month,' I said.

'So you might, old man, but that was August. I wouldn't wear a dark one in September, and that tie is too dark a blue, old man.'

So I knew that that made it all right. I kept the hat on. We had a grand afternoon; we got no fish.

I admit that the lack of fish in my pond requires sometimes a little tact in management. The guest gets a little restless. So I say to him, 'You certainly have the knack of casting!' and he gets so absorbed in casting further and further that he forgets the fish. Or I take him towards the upper end and he gets his line caught on bulrushes—that might be a bite. Or if he still keeps restless, I say suddenly: 'Hush! Was that a fish jumped?' That will silence any true angler instantly. 'You stand in the bow,' I whisper, 'and I'll gently paddle in that direction.' It's the *whispering* that does it. We are still a hundred yards away from any trout that could hear us, even if a trout was there. But that makes no difference. Some of the men I take out begin to whisper a mile away from the pond and come home whispering.

You see, after all, what with frogs jumping, and catching the line in bulrushes, or pulling up a waterlogged chip nearly to the top, they don't really know—my guests don't—whether they have hooked something or not. Indeed, after a little lapse of time they think they did; they talk of the 'big one I lost'—a thing over which any angler gets sentimental in retrospect. 'Do you remember,' they say to me months later at our club in the city, 'that big trout I lost up on your fish-pond last summer!'

'Indeed, I do,' I say.

'Did you ever get him later on?'

'No, never,' I answer. In fact, I'm darned sure I didn't; neither him nor any other.

Yet the illusion holds good. And besides you never can tell. There *might* be trout in the pond. Why not? After all, why shouldn't there be a trout in the pond? You take a pond like that and there ought to be trout in it!

Whenever the sight of the pond bursts on the eyes of a new guest he stands entranced. 'What a wonderful place for trout!' he exclaims.

'Isn't it?' I answer.

'No wonder you'd get trout in a pond like that.'

'No wonder at all.'

'You don't need to stock it at all, I suppose?'

'Stock it!' I laugh at the idea! Stock a pond like that! Well, I guess not.

Perhaps one of the best and most alluring touches is fishing out of season—just a day or two after the season has closed. Any fisherman knows how keen is the regret at each expiring term—swallowed up and lost in the glory of the fading autumn. So if a guest turns up just then I say, 'I know it's out of season, but I thought you might care to take a run out to the pond anyway and have a look at it.' He can't resist. By the time he's in the pagoda and has a couple of small drinks ('Careful, not too much; wo! wo!') he decides there can be no harm in making a cast or two.

'I suppose,' he says, 'you never have any trouble with the inspectors?'

‘Oh, no!’ I answer, ‘they never think of troubling me.’ And with that we settle down to an afternoon of it.

‘I’m glad,’ says the guest at the end, ‘that they weren’t rising. After all we had just the same fun as if they were.’

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That’s it—illusion! How much of life is like that. It’s the *idea* of the thing that counts, not the reality. You don’t need fish for fishing, any more than you need partridge for partridge shooting, or gold for gold mining . . . just the illusion or expectation.

So I am going back now to the city and to my club, where we shall fish all winter, hooking up the big ones, but losing the ones bigger still, hooking two trout at one throw—three at a throw!—and for me behind it all the memory of my fishing pond darkening under the falling leaves. . . . At least it has made my friends happy.

## MY LADDERS A SEQUEL TO MY FISHING POND

Indulgent readers of the *Atlantic Monthly* will recall the fact that in that esteemed periodical a year ago I wrote an account of My Fishing Pond. I described the beautiful little secluded spot in a woodland hollow in which it lay. I caught, I think, in words something of the autumn glory that fell on it with the falling leaves. I admitted, quite frankly, that as far as I knew there were no fish in it. But that, I explained, I kept to myself; it made no difference to the expert fishermen, my friends who came on a casual visit to cast a fly at my trout. They were all impressed with the wonderful surroundings, had never seen a trout pond of greater promise, and easily explained, over a friendly drink in my pagoda, the failure of a single day.

I realize now that I never should have published this in the *Atlantic*. The Editor and I must have offended some tributary god of fishing. Nemesis fell upon me. When the winter broke and the ice went, a great flood of water carried away the dam, and flung it, cement, logs, and all, in a wild confusion of debris down the stream. There it lies now, and above it the pond, drained out flat to a bottom of wet weeds and old logs and stranded puddles—a feeble stream trickling through.

And the trout? Gone! washed clean away down the stream! I take my friends out now to the place and they explain it all to me until I can see it like a vision—the beautiful trout hurled away in spring flood and foam! My friends estimate them as anything from two miles of trout to five miles. But do you think those fishermen have lost interest? Not a bit! They are more keen on coming out to look at my pond and give advice about it than they were even in the days when we used, as they recall it, to haul out trout by the puntful.

They explain to me what to do. The miller who ran a little feed mill off the pond is going to rebuild the dam, and my friends tell me to put in ‘ladders’ and the trout will all come back! A trout, it seems, will climb a ladder! I can hardly believe it, but they all tell me that; in fact I have learned to say nothing, just to look utterly disconsolate till the visiting expert says, ‘Have you thought of ladders?’ And then I act the part of a man rescued from despair. They say it will take about three ladders of five feet each. How trout climb a ladder I don’t know; it must be difficult for them to get hold of the rungs. But a man said in Scotland he has seen a trout climb twenty feet. It appears that if you go out in the autumn you can lie on the bank of the dam and watch the trout splashing and climbing in the foam. Quite a lot of my friends are coming up here next

autumn just to see them climb. And even if it is out of season, they may throw a hook at them!

Fishermen, in other words, are just unbeatable. Cut them off from fish, and they are just as happy over ‘ladders.’ So we sit now in my little pagoda, and someone says: ‘Talking about ladders, I must tell you—whoa! whoa! not too big a one.’ . . . And away we go, floating off on the Ladders of Imagination.

## FISH STORIES

*I have always found that after listening to a lecture on ‘The Rise of Modern Democracy’ or ‘The Prospects of International Arbitration,’ the men present like to get together and talk about fishing. Here are one or two—true—fish stories of my own which I used to tell to such gatherings.*

### No. 1 POOR LUCK

I went out trout fishing the other day with my friend Colonel Morphy that some of you know, and we took a fellow along with us from a garage with a second car, because I had to get home separately, and it was a long way. But naturally we didn’t want him all day round with us on the streams, see?—so I gave him a rod and a packet of fishing tackle, and I said, ‘Now, Joe, you fish round here, not too far away, and about sundown we’ll come back and you can drive me home.’

He said, ‘All right.’

In the evening we came back and I said, ‘Well, Joe, how did you get on?’

‘Oh,’ he said, ‘I didn’t have much luck, Mr. Leacock.’

‘Too bad,’ I said, ‘weren’t they biting?’

‘No,’ Joe said, ‘it wasn’t that. I didn’t have no hook. You didn’t give me none.’

### No. 2 OPEN OPPORTUNITY

I was walking out on the road and I met Pete M’Gaw driving up from Beaverton. Pete knows I like bass fishing, so he stopped his horse and said:

‘Say, you’d ought to come down to Beaverton and come out after the bass. There’s the best fishing round Thorah Island that I haven’t seen not in twenty years.’

‘Is that so?’ I said.

‘Yes, sir. Johnny and I was out last night and we must have got a washtub

full—dandies!’

‘But,’ I said, ‘the season’s closed, isn’t it?’

‘Well,’ Pete answered, ‘only just—it ain’t only closed last week.’

‘But wouldn’t the inspectors over there be apt to make trouble?’

‘Oh, that’s all right! Johnny and I’s the inspectors.’

*No. 3*

LINES TO A FELLOW FISHERMAN

Note: All those who are familiar with the conditions of fishing in the rivers of the Canadian bush will understand how easily, under such circumstances, a dignified stock-broker reverts in appearance into a third-class thug. These lines were written on meeting again at a city dinner a friend whom I had last seen on a trout stream:

I see you, neat and debonair,  
With Collar tall and plastered Hair,  
    And ask, Is this the Man  
Who cleaned a Trout upon his Pants,  
And never, never looked askance  
    At Fishworms in a Can?  
Away this Luxury! I beg,  
Give to our Charles a hard-boiled Egg  
    Or something he can use.  
Away the Wine! Go, someone, seek  
Some dirty Water from a Creek  
    And mix it in his Booze.  
Oh, Charles, the Time is coming when  
Far distant from the Haunts of Men  
    Together we shall roam,  
And somewhere near the Gatineau  
The early Flowers of Spring shall blow  
    And Trout leap in the Foam,  
And you and I, Charles, Hand in Hand,  
Will journey back unto the Land  
    Back to the Woods, back Home.

## VIII THE TWO MILORDS

### *Prologue: A Little Causerie on the Foolishness of Foreign Languages*

Every language always sounds foolish to those who speak another one. Have you ever listened to two Frenchmen, talking French? I mean really *good* French, the kind of French they talk in Paris, for example, as between two French gentlemen seated side by side in a hotel foyer or rotunda? Listen to them. Isn't it liquid? You'd think they were gargling! Or listen to a Spaniard, whose language is much more guttural; you'd imagine he was going to be sick. Did you ever hear the mournful die-away tones of an Ojibway Indian? What's he saying, 'Aneen! Andosh pwagun?' You'd suppose he'd lost his last friend. No, what he means is, 'Say, where's my pipe?'

As to English, the very best English, I imagine it sounds to foreigners just, 'Wah, wah, wah, oh, weally?' Gaelic is like a hiccough in the nose, and for all I know there may be something wrong even with the sound of English-Canadian as used at the University of Toronto.

But still more odd, to me, is the effect when foreigners try to use one another's languages, in phrases and quotations, and always twist their own ideas into it.

Take the case of English and French. English people always imagine that they are talking excellent French when they speak of '*the bon ton*,' or say that they are '*si, si, fatigués*,' or when they call a cabman a *cochon*.

Similarly, French people think themselves terrifically English when they talk of '*le high-life*,' and '*le five-o'clock*,' and when they offer one another '*un shake hands*.' They really have the idea that an Englishman drapes himself in a 'smoking'—the last word in aristocratic ease. When they want 'bacon and eggs' they call for '*un baking*,' supposed to be the English idiom for the combination. In the same way an Englishman in Paris tries in vain to get a glass of 'sherry,' calling '*chérie*' in a mincing voice—and doesn't get it. At best the waiter brings him cherry brandy. The French for 'sherry' is '*Herreth*,' but only the forty members of the French Academy know this. It is the French pronunciation of Spanish '*Xeres*' and if you remember that the Spanish X is as aspirate guttural as the French H only a breathing, you realize that you had better drink something else.

But French people are at their best when they tackle English titles and talk of '*Sir Smith*' and '*Sir Jones*' and '*Milord Neville*' and '*Milord Laird Macduff*,' and '*Mister the Earl*.'



This mixture of idiom is not altogether displeasing; and it was only natural that in the year of the Coronation and the Paris Exposition it should serve to cement the alliance of the two great nations.

It was with this in mind that I put together for the Paris stage the little play which follows. Need I say that it was an overwhelming success? No, I don't think I need to.

THE TWO MILORDS

or

THE BLOW OF THUNDER

*An Internationally Air-Conditioned Play, for the  
Coronation-Exposition Theatres of 1937*

*Piece in One Scene*

*Personages of the Piece, in the Order of Their  
Apparition*

MILORD SIR ROSS: Ancient Remnant of old High Scotch, sufficiently aged. He will never see again the quarantine, in effect, one would say well the sixantine. But he guards always the high and erect tail of the Scottish race. Sir Ross has adventured himself on the high Finance of the French Purse at Paris.

JEAN: Chamber valet, type known.

MILORD THE BARON ALPHONSE DE CITROUILLE: French financier, associated of Sir Ross. He is young and high, with the maintenance rather of a man of affairs than of a stump of the old French aristocracy.

MILADI MADAME LA COMTESSE FIFINE ROSS: The French wife of Sir Ross. She is young, very spiritual and very jolly, and very degaged in her allure.

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*The scene passes itself at Paris, in the apartment of SIR ROSS, apartment sufficiently chic, one would say even coquette. One divines in its decoration the hand of a Frenchwoman.*

*At the lift of the curtain, SIR ROSS discovers himself elongated on a long chair. He is carrying a smoking, with a black pants. He has a journal in his hand, his eyes plunged in the list of the actions of the Purse of the Morning.*

*He sounds. JEAN appears. 'Mister sounded?' 'Yes, make me mount the*

journal of this evening.' 'Mister, it is not yet arrived.' 'Very well; the moment it arrives make it mount the whole suite.' 'Perfect, mister.'

JEAN *makes a false start and then re-enters to announce*: 'Milord the Baron de Citrouille!'

*The* BARON DE CITROUILLE *advances himself in the chamber*; SIR ROSS, *to receive him, dresses himself on his sitting-part*.

*The* BARON, *in giving him a cordial shake-hands*: No, no, do not put yourself on end. I pray you, rest there.

*The* BARON *goes to place himself on end near the chimney. He is not in tenure of evening, but wears a complete of bureau, to know, a jacket, an open chemise, with a grey pants*.

*Both milords carry an air of anxiety, above all* SIR ROSS.

SIR ROSS (*Taking the word first*): You come from the city?

THE BARON: From the Purse itself.

SIR ROSS: And our affairs, our actions?

THE BARON: One cannot more bad—all our actions sink!

SIR ROSS (*With an effort*): An instant! I forget my duties: you must be fatigued. You will drink something. Let me make you mount a bottle of whiskey-scotch. (*He sounds.*)

THE BARON: My faith, you are very amiable. But let it be a half bottle: I am very little drinker.

SIR ROSS (*To* JEAN, *who appears*): Make seek a half bottle of whiskey-scotch, and mount it here.

JEAN: Yes, mister.

SIR ROSS: Mount it yourself and with it mount the evening journal.

JEAN (*Hoisting his shoulders*): Still always not here, mister. (*He sorts.*)

SIR ROSS (*Essaying a calm*): And if the actions always fall?

THE BARON (*Passing to a gridiron and taking on it a cigarette, which he lights. He speaks of a tone measured, calculated.*): Then there is nothing more to do, we are at dry of money.

SIR ROSS: Then it is the ruin!

THE BARON (*Coldly*): For you!

SIR ROSS (*Lifting himself from his sitting-part and erecting himself to the height of his high tail*): For me! How for you? For you, too, Citrouille!

*The* BARON *is about to take the word when* JEAN *re-enters, carrying a plateau with a glass and a half bottle of whiskey-scotch. He reverses it and places it before the* BARON.

SIR ROSS: The journal, the journal of this evening?

JEAN (*A little impatiented*): Mister, still not here. But Madame la Comtesse has re-entered from her walk in her automobile, and is mounted at her boudoir.

SIR ROSS: Pray her to descend; that she does not wait; make her know that

it is important.

JEAN: Yes, mister. (*He inclines himself and sorts.*)

SIR ROSS (*Remitting himself on his sitting-part and resuming the entertainment*): But you! Ruin for you also, Mister the Baron. For both of us—as associates—is it not?

THE BARON (*Raising the glass and coldly drinking the half bottle of whiskey-scotch*): For you alone!

SIR ROSS: But you?

THE BARON: I did not sign!

SIR ROSS: But your honour! Mister the Baron, your honour as a Citrouille!

THE BARON (*Hoisting*): I mock myself not badly of it! In the affairs, there is not of it! Listen, Sir Ross—

*He goes to plant himself direct in face of SIR ROSS, who holds himself seated always on his sitting-part. Listen.*

*At that moment JEAN announces: Madame la Comtesse!*

FIFINE *precipitates herself into the room—then arrests herself—in appearance surprised, confused, almost ball-turned, to find both the two men there.*

*The BARON DE CITROUILLE remains on end; he gives no sign; he does not look at FIFINE, nor FIFINE at him.*

SIR ROSS *speaks*: Ah, you have come at once. It is very amiable on your part. I have to talk—but first let me present Mister the Baron of Citrouille. You know him well of name, is it not? La Comtesse Fifine Ross, my wife.

*The two incline themselves.*

MADAME LA COMTESSE (*Finding her voice*): How do you carry yourself, Mister de Citrouille?

DE CITROUILLE: How go you, madame?

*One sees that they seem to avoid themselves of their eyes. One divines something of intrigue, of hidden. But SIR ROSS does not see nothing. He lifts himself suddenly from his sitting-part and cries himself: Rest, rest with my wife. I myself will descend: this scoundrel of a John is hiding something. (He elongates himself in a hurry.)*

FIFINE (*Pushing a profound breath of relief*): Ah. I expected to find you alone—only you—(*She precipitates herself towards him.*) Ah, Alphonse! My cherished!

*They rush towards one another. The BARON passes his arm to her around the tail and poses his lips on to hers. They murmur words of love: Ah, my cherished! My cabbage! My cauliflower! My toad!*

FIFINE (*At last enforcing herself to quit his extrain*): That marches?

THE BARON: That marches! That marches marvellously! I have not told him yet. I was just going to. Everything has succeeded for us to a marvel. It was all

over to-day. And what he does not know, not suspect even, for him not dishonour alone—it is the prison. Ah! (*He lights a cigarette with cold blood.*) He will not trouble us no more!

FIFINE: Explain to me, a little, my cabbage. I have not yet even clearly understood. We other women, it is not for us, the Purse. How did you combine it, my petty toad? (*She passes to him the fingers in the hairs.*) Tell me how.

THE BARON: Of the simplest fashion! As our actions lowered I made him sign hypothèques of margin, you comprehend, to sustain them—hypothèques which he had not the right to allocate, let it be then even for amortization—

FIFINE (*Closing to him the mouth with her jolly palm*): Oh, la, la, la! leave all that. I do not comprehend a word. But I know what it means to us. Oh, my God! What happiness! (*She throws herself in his arms.*)

*One hears voices below—a tumult—a blow of revolver.*

JEAN (*Entering, all exsuffled*): Madame! Monsieur!

BOTH: What is it what it is?

JEAN: Madame! Monsieur! It is the Police!

THE BARON: The Police!

JEAN: Yes, the Police! She is here! She came to take Milord Sir Ross.

THE BARON (*With a calm*): And then what?

JEAN: Sir Ross asked for a moment—to seek papers—and then, there below—in the dining-room—he made his brain jump!

DE CITROUILLE: He made his brain jump! He burnt his brain!

JEAN: With a blow of revolver.

DE CITROUILLE: He is dead?

JEAN: Oui, monsieur, he is dead. (*JEAN melts into tears and sorts.*)

LADY FIFINE: Ah, mon chou! Viens, donc! Viens, mon crapaud!

CURTAIN

## IX MY NEWSPAPER AND HOW I READ IT

### *A Press Club Talk with Apologies*

I get my newspaper in the dark of early morning, just before daylight. I rise, like a farm hand, before the sun (the sun's too slow for me), and at that hour I am working, over a dish of tea, in my study. So just before it's light I hear the click of the letter-box downstairs, or, if it's really cold, the crunch of the newspaper man's feet in the snow.

I go down in my dressing-gown and flick on the hall light and pick up the paper, and that is the way all the world's news has come to me, now these more than thirty years.

I take a first look at the paper, standing there, just to make sure that nothing *big* has happened, nothing that I'd have to read right away. No, it's all right, nothing happened. Two hundred thousand Chinese drowned in the floods of the Hoo-poo river—that's all right—I don't even know the river. And the President of Paraguay shot—I hadn't even known his name, Senor Something. But nothing big has happened, like the King of England abdicating or the Duke of Kent having another baby.

So with that I take the paper upstairs to have a real look at it, over a fresh cup of tea in the arm-chair beside my study table, before I go on with my work.

The first thing I look for is to see what the United States Supreme Court has thrown out now. In our Canadian newspaper, the United States Supreme Court always throws things out from the top left-hand corner. It's quickest. Yes, there it is sure enough—'QQA Thrown out by Supreme Court.' . . . 'By a vote of . . . ' Exactly. . . . 'Judges A and B dissenting . . . ' That's it, they always do. '. . . declares Constitution endangered.' Fine! It always is. . . . 'President tells the newspapers'—of course he does.

Now that's going to make good reading. But I never like to spoil a thing by a hurried first reading. That needs thought, a thing like the QQA. There will be some really nice constitutional points involved; for all I know, that act may be *ultra vires* or even vicious. So I always keep the QQA stuff to read carefully and properly later on—and I never do; that's why I still don't know why they threw out the APA and YMCA and the OGPU, and all those acts that the Supreme Court has chucked out in the last three years.

Never mind, let's have a glance, just a running glance, at the foreign news—I mean as we get it in our Canadian papers. Let me see: 'Stanley Baldwin

defies Mussolini’—that’s the stuff! ‘Stanley Baldwin warns Germany’—that’s right. They need it. ‘Stanley Baldwin rebukes France.’ Yes, be a little gentle with them, Stanley. ‘Soviet must change its tone,’ says Baldwin. That’s fine! Good stuff!

Now let’s see what follows. ‘Mussolini defies Baldwin.’ He does, does he? The Italian pup! How can he expect a great, peaceful people like the English to stand for that sort of thing? Ha! and here’s the answer in the same column. ‘Chancellor of Exchequer says Britain will spend Ten Billion Sterling on Peaceful Preparation.’ You realize, Mussolini, the crushing power of our national wealth! ‘Will Borrow Money in United States.’ Precisely; we don’t even need to spend our own; they’ll give it to us.

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And then, I admit, I turn the pages over quite suddenly to see what price the Jellaboo Mine is quoted at. I’d been wanting to all the time, but I didn’t like to. What is the Jellaboo Mine? It’s the one I have shares in just now. I bought at 20 cents. Where is it? It is on the last page of the financial section, under the heading *Over the Counter Mines*. Oh! you mean, where is the Mine? I’ve no idea. Near Flin Flon? It may be. Or close to the Hollinger? Very likely. I shouldn’t be surprised if it’s right in between the two of them. All I care about is that I bought it at 20 cents.

Listen. I don’t want to teach anybody to speculate. For young people, especially, speculation spells ruin. Even people with absolutely nothing may lose everything they have. But I will say this, let the moral consequences be what they may. I know nothing that can brighten up a dull life quicker than to take *what you can afford to lose*, afford to throw away, and put it in a ‘penny’ mine. That’s the only way to play poker, the only way to do many things in life. On that basis nations could raise huge sums in lotteries and give the people at large nothing but fun. If only we were wise enough! Life for all but the fortunate few, under modern conditions, has become so cheerless in its prospect, all seen before it happens, a march down a long avenue of daily work, the hours foreseen, the little break of leisure far ahead, on either side the hedge-line of limited means, and down all the long line no golden fairy, no sudden oncoming of adventure or fortune, no opening of an Aladdin’s Cave in the hedgerow.—That’s why nations go to war, why men quit their wives, and bandits hold up bankers! All that the Jellaboo Mine can banish; it may be the Door of the Cave. Think of it, 20 cents! A lot of our Canadian mines began at 20 cents and went from that to God knows what! Think of it.

I bought the Jellaboo at 20 cents and yesterday it had got up to 25—at least the paper said *25 asked*; no one seemed to dare to bid. . . .

After the Jellaboo Mine, I always leave the rest of the news to read much later on, at breakfast, with the paper propped up against the coffee-pot. That’s

how I read all the fragmentary stuff, the really *human* items. Most of this *human* stuff seems to come to us from the United States. There's more of it there. You know what I mean: 'Bandits carry away safe from National Bank.'—'Chicago professor claims Man is an Ape.'—'Iowa boy weighs 600 pounds.'—

You can take that stuff in by the column with your marmalade; there is no strain in it. The only thing that worries me about the human news is that there's so much of it that never seems to get finished. You never know what happened about it in the end. Either the paper doesn't say, or else you forget to look, I don't know which. For example, that man, Three-Fingered Jack, who was to have been extradited from Florida for killing the girl in Montana by hitting her with a saxophone—did that all die out? Or, most typical of all, that Great Australian Cricket Match—how did it end? Our papers have a way of suddenly boosting a Great Australian Cricket Match—not a real one, apparently, but what they call a *test* one—and then letting it drop. The Australians go to bat and make 720 runs: then the English, all England, go to bat, and they bat and bat all day—and make ever so many runs, but some of them get out—and they bat and bat—mind you, all England, it says. The thing fills half a column with stuff about how they kept on batting leg-breaks, and slow googlies, batted and batted, and then the paper forgets to go on with it—or I do—and I never know how it ended. In thirty years I have never heard the end of a cricket match.

I must now stop, and go downstairs, and, yes, this time, I *will*—I'll take a look right away at the Jellaboo Mine. Perhaps she's away up, eh?

X  
WHY I AM LEAVING MY FARM  
I CAN'T LIVE UP TO IT

*(A Lunch Club Talk that was designed to stop the Back to the Land Movement. It killed it dead.)*

My! But these farmers are wonderful fellows—I mean the words they use and the education they must have! I never realized it till just recently when I retired from being a professor and came to settle down on my little place that I call a farm.

I hadn't had anything to do with a farm since I lived on one as a little boy, more than fifty years ago. I am amazed at the change! I'm not sufficiently educated for it. I'll have to go back to the city.

I mean like this—a few days ago I bought a bottle of poison to use against garden bugs, and it had on the label, 'The antidote to this poison is any alkali emetic followed by an emollient febrifuge'! Just think of it! Imagine a farmer's wife calling downstairs: 'William! Baby has been eating shoeblackening! Throw me up an alkali emetic and follow it with an emollient febrifuge!' And the farmer would probably call back: 'All right! And you'd better handle baby very carefully. Lift him up with callipers!'

That's another word on farmers' labels, 'callipers'; directions for all seeds and things say, 'Handle very carefully and pick up with a pair of callipers.' Up till now I always thought that callipers were French things that women wear. But it seems not. . . .

Anyway you have to have them on a farm. I'm going to get measured for a pair right away.

This high standard of education—I mean this need of knowledge of special terms—makes it hard for any outsider to start in and do anything around the house and garden. You see, on a farm, everything is done from printed directions, either out of little manuals or from papers that come with the packet or round the bottle or under the wrapper.

When I took over my place, as it was meant to be my home for good, I thought I would begin by planting trees round it for shelter. From what I remember of farming when I was young, I naturally thought of spruce trees, and balsam and pine—any kind of fir trees. But it seems they don't have them. The book said, 'The snuggest effect about the dwelling-house is to be got by having a warm belt of *conifers* about it.' I don't want them. All I remember



about conifers, if I have the word right, is that if they once get into the frame of a bed or bedroom chest of drawers all you can do is to burn it. You can, of course, try poison, any good unguent or emollient, but it seldom works. The conifers could be lifted out one by one by callipers, but it would take a lot of time. The book says, 'If set out when quite young they will increase rapidly.' I don't doubt it, but, thank you, not for me.

The same manual suggested that if a belt of conifers was not available an equally snug effect can be made by covering the loggia with eucalyptus. 'Loggia' is a new word for me, though I suppose I can guess what it refers to. Personally, I would just give it a coat of whitewash.

I have found already that gardening has to go the same way as planting trees. I don't understand the words. Try this:

'Nitrates may be freely used with leguminous plants' . . . 'at the time of calyx closing watch closely for curculio' . . . 'remember that the ranunculus is the gardener's friend' . . . 'among the birds all the caprimulgidae are well worth having, while the flickers wage war on larvae' . . . etc. It seems that farmers eat up this kind of language by the paragraph.

There was an old man working in the next lot to my place on the first day of gardening, and I asked him what he thought of the weather. In the days when I was young such an old man would have said:

'Well, sir, if them clouds would clear away off the sun for a bit I think it might set in for a pretty fair spell.'

But this old man didn't.

He said:

'I had a look at my aneroid barometer first thing this morning and there is certainly an area of pretty low barometric pressure. I had been thinking of setting some antirrhinum this morning, but I guess I won't.'

'Why not?' I asked.

'It's too aquaceous. You've got to keep a pretty good eye on your humidity gauge before you do much with antirrhinum. I'll put in something a little more gelatinous.'

Think of it. That old man getting out of bed and having a look at his aneroid before he even put on his pants.

I was going to ask him what he would do instead of setting out antirrhinum, but then I didn't. I didn't need to. I knew what he would do.

He would go out and start to do all those things that are in the Farm and Home Manuals and on the seed packets, and that I can't understand. For instance, he might go and make himself 'a compost bed.' Don't ask me what it is; I've no idea, except that it is said to be a grand thing to make with an eye to the future. 'Soapsuds, dirty water, and all kinds of kitchen slops thrown on the compost bed will help to keep it in good heart.' It sounds like a dirty enough

mess.

Or if the old man didn't make a compost bed, then he might spend his time 'treating his soil' with nitrate, phosphorus, or basic slag. 'What are they?' I don't know. 'Where do you get basic slag?' I have no idea.

Then, if the old man had done that, he could go and plant his garden—with what, do you think—lettuce, radishes, and that sort of stuff that I had expected to grow?—not at all. They don't have them any more. He could plant it with antirrhinum, as I have just said, and scabies, and cuspis, and a border of asbestos and scrofula. Those are the words on the packets, as nearly as I recall them.

So, as for gardening, I'm out of it. I don't understand the terms.

'When the garden is complete,' suggests the manual, 'a final touch may be given by laying down a flagstone path, with saxifrage in the interstices, and then having a pergola all down the pathway.' Thank you, not for me.

Another thing I had looked forward to in coming back to farm life, after fifty years away from it, was the reading of the good old farm newspapers. They've been parodied, I know, a thousand times by smart city people; but the charm was there all the same. There was personal news that said, 'Ed Callaghar was in town last night from the Fourth Concession and reports his fall wheat nicely in hand. Well done! Ed'; and the social news, 'Miss Posie Cowslip of Price's Corners is home after a three-days' visit in the city.'

In the place of that you now read:

'Among the daintiest of the season's weddings was that of Miss Poinsettia Primrose, celebrated at the family Farmstead, The Bagnolias, the happy bridegroom being Mr. Earl DeBenture of Wall Street. The ceremony, at which the Rev. Mr. Bray officiated, was held out of doors under a pergola, the assembled guests being gathered in the loggia, beautified with floral decorations of bubiscus, rabies, and flowering avunculus. Miss Primrose wore a beautiful écrin of soft tulle shot with dainty écrus. Her father, who gave her away, wore a plain vignolette of haricot, while Mrs. Primrose (mère) looked riante in a dark purple chassis de nacre. The happy couple left immediately after the ceremony for a wedding tour through the Panama Canal to Japan, returning via Soviet Russia.'

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I find I don't talk much to the neighbours. I can't. One of them, a young farmer from nearby, dropped in the other day to ask if I could lend him a pair of callipers to reset his seismograph, and we had a little talk. He talked a little while on surrealism, which he said had been interesting him lately; he spoke also of metempsychosis, and then drifted on to foreign politics and the 'open door' in Manchuria. I think it was in Manchuria; it may have been Missouri.

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No, no. I'll have to go back and study a whole lot more and learn all about alkalis and barometers and callipers: or else perhaps not come to the country, but retire into a beer garden. It's easier.

XI  
WHILE YOU'RE AT IT  
EXPERT ADVICE ON KNOCKING YOUR HOUSE INTO SHAPE

This house improvement stuff certainly appeals to me. You know what I mean—having your house all fixed up with new plumbing and heat and painting and everything. As soon as the Government started the idea of improvement loans, it opened people's eyes. Lots of people, like myself, had gone on living in a house without realizing that there was anything wrong with it; and then there suddenly came to us all this idea of making a new home of it—that's the word, a *home*.

I got the first incentive to it one day when I noticed the pipes in the furnace room. They looked worn out. So I sent for a plumber and showed him the pipes, and he said right away, 'These pipes are *gone*—clean *gone*.' I hadn't realized that. I thought they were still there. 'Look,' he said, and took a hammer and started a big hole in one of them. 'See that,' he said. 'That pipe's all corroded, it's oxidized—see! So's the other!'

He knocked the other to pieces.

'Can't you put in new ones?' I asked.

'Yes,' he said, 'I *could*, but if it was *me*, I wouldn't. You see, that furnace is too old; it's gone.' He took his hammer and smashed in one side of the furnace. 'See it break! You look at the metal, it's *acidulated!*'

'Well,' I said, 'you could fix it, couldn't you?'

'Yes,' the plumber answered, 'I *could*, but if it was me, I'd throw that furnace right out and put in the new self-acting thermostatic heat; it's fireless and without fuel, and cuts your cost per thermal unit by over a hundred per cent.'

'Would you allow me anything on the old furnace?'

'I wouldn't bother with it if I were you; just throw it out. Of course it means changing the water-pipes to your kitchen range. Do you know if they run through the range, or are they geocentric?'

'I don't know,' I said.

'Well, anyhow if it was me I'd throw all the pipes away and reset new ones.'

---

So I got a kitchen range man to come and have a look. And he said right away that, while I was at it, I'd better throw the range out—just not bother with it. He explained that the whole range was *fused*—just think of it, *fused*—

and probably had been for years, and I'd never known it.

So I said: 'All right; throw it out and put in the new hypogastric kind that you say doesn't use heat at all, but cooks with rheostats. It certainly seems wonderful.'

So I put the range out, and, on the man's advice, I didn't ask for any allowance on it. He told me it just wasn't worth bothering with.

But he said that I'd have to have the wall moved a couple of feet sideways. He said any building firm could do that in a day.

I sent for a builder and he came over with his foreman and they looked at the wall and said it was perfectly easy to move it—just a little brick and mortar and a few feet of scantling—no job at all, and wouldn't cost much. At the same time they advised me not to do it; they wouldn't do it if it was them, neither of them, if it was either of them.

What they suggested—and they both thought of it—was not to shift the party wall itself only, but to carry it right up through the house; sink it below the basement, and lift it right up through the roof. They reached up their hands above their heads to show how. Doing it that way, they said, I could put in the new hollow brick, the Delphic brick, that is practically airtight.

I told them to go ahead, but they said that they'd need a contractor, because of the building permit, but that it was a simple matter to arrange.

They came back presently with the contractor. He took a look round and shook his head. He said he *could* carry the wall up. But much better knock down the house. The house, he showed me, was badly *hipped*. He said it must have *fluted*; probably had started with a small flute that had gone on fluting. He showed me a place in the dining-room where, just with a little builder's axe that he carried, he knocked out bucketfuls of plaster. It seems there was a *cyst* in the wall.

He strongly advised knocking the house down.

I asked about allowing anything for the material, but he said there was nothing in it either way. He said if you start picking over your brick (my brick) and trying to get the studding and joints out—well, you have your labour—I mean, his labour—or my labour, I didn't quite catch on *whose* labour, but anyway *your* labour, and your *time*, and what had you got? Nothing. He said if it was him he wouldn't bother with it.

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They are knocking my house down now. I go and have a look at it every day, all disappearing in a cloud of white dust with bricks and plaster and rubbish going down a chute. I saw the books in my library going down yesterday. The contractor said there was no sense in picking them over; there'd be the labour and the time. He said if it was him, he'd read new ones.

So the house is disappearing. Just in time apparently! The further down

they get with it, the more they realize the awful condition it was in! Just think of it! the roof had *hogged*—either had already hogged or was just going to hog any time! There was a five-inch *sag* in the upper floor. He said it was on account of the *thrust*. Where the roof had *hogged*, a joist had *thrust*; that's what had made the *sag*, and it was the *sag* that had caused the *cyst* in the basement.

However, he'll get it down all right. He's a nice fellow and knows his job. He was telling me that he has knocked down a hundred houses already this year, and is knocking down a big hotel right now, and a church. He sent in a tender to go and knock down Westminster Abbey for the Coronation, but he was late.

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Meantime I'm living in a room in a hotel. That will give me time, they say, to 'turn round.' I never felt till now that I needed time to turn round. But the builder and the contractor and everybody said I'd better take time to turn round.

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Anyway, that's all the time the hotel could give me. They didn't want me. They said that they would rather throw me into the river and get a new guest. But they'll keep me till I turn round.

After that they want the room. It seems there's a big hotel men's convention, and they want the whole hotel for the hotel men. That's only fair when you think of it.

## XII

### THE SIT-DOWN STRIKE IN MY PARLOUR THEY CAME AND THEY WOULDN'T GO

The sit-down strikers—who sat down the other night in my living-room—had timed their arrival with characteristic cunning. They came just after dark, between eight and nine in the evening. All six arrived in one motor-car so as to effect a quick and immediate entry before anyone could stop them. With proper warning I could easily have prevented an entry. My plant is a large country house with a lodge and driveway, and protected in the rear by a lake. A heavy chain stretched across the drive could have brought the car to a stop. As it was, nothing was done. No chain was placed and there was no tear-gas in the house.

The result was that they were in, had slipped past the maid at the door, thrown off all their wraps, and had occupied the living-room before any organized attempt could be made to eject them.

It was there that I was summoned for a conference. They appeared to be, as I said, six—two men and two women, evidently husbands and wives, and two younger criminals, a grown-up girl and boy, quite old enough to be held legally responsible.

Now here began the difficulty. People who only know of sit-down strikes from hearsay, as I am afraid is the case with even some of our judges, cannot estimate the practical difficulty of dealing with the strikers. But any plant manager will understand my case. An outsider would ask, 'Why not throw them all out? Your plant,' he would say, 'is your property. These sit-down people are just trespassers.' True, but you see I *knew* them; they were people that I knew, just as the plant manager knows and has worked for years with the leaders of his strike. Apart from their presence in my plant, I had nothing against them. One of our judges asked the other day, 'Why not throw them out by the neck?' Well, these two senior women were in evening dress and were of the solid kind that has no neck.

They opened the discussion, cleverly enough, by drawing attention to the fine spring weather; I admitted that it was fine, but claimed that it still turned bitter cold later at night. They denied this flat out. Then I made my first, tentative, offer, viz., that they must have a whiskey and soda, or ginger ale with ice, a choice, before they left. They agreed, but without clause two. For the time being I was beaten, but it occurred to me that in getting ice for the drinks I might make some use of the telephone to get them home. The younger

criminal frustrated this by coming to help me. While getting the ice he put in an ingenious claim that he had been a student of mine in Economics when I was a professor. There was no way to challenge this. He may have been. A lot of my students went to the bad.

When I got back to the living-room the sit-downers had settled in to their task and were well ensconced round the fire, which they stirred to a blaze. They came out boldly with their first demand, and suggested a game of bridge. I urged that I had no cards. But their preliminary organization had provided this. It seemed that one of the women strikers had cards in her bag.

By ten o'clock the sit-down strike was in full operation. The strikers were playing bridge, four at a time, with two as pickets to keep their eye on me. The system I believe is called 'cutting-in,' and is largely used in cases like this where a sit-down strike is carried on in a private dwelling.

Of bridge I know nothing, but it was clear that we had reached a rough-and-ready understanding, namely, that they would play without further annoyance to the property provided that I kept up the fire and supplied whiskey and soda after each rubber. For those not conversant with bridge I may say that a 'rubber' is the name given to the period between drinks.

The sit-down strikers were thus getting about fifty cents an hour, which they raised to sixty cents an hour after eleven o'clock by working shorter rubbers. I had to give in. One man made a distinct threat that, if I didn't, they'd stay all night. What he said was, 'I just feel as if I could play all night!' but I knew what he *meant*. And when one woman went over to the piano and hit a couple of notes, and sang, 'We won't go home till morning!' I knew that they might start violence at any time.

I repeat again that people who only think in terms of theory fail to realize how difficult it is in practice to fight against sit-down strikers. They would say, 'Why didn't you get one and use force, attack him, kill him!' I tried to. I got one of the men strikers, while he was picketing, and took him down to the cellar under pretence of fixing the furnace, but he artfully kept out of reach of the shovel. Then I took him on the lawn to look at the lake, but I couldn't get him near enough.

So when we came in I made a flat-out offer of seventy-five cents' worth of whiskey and a plate of sandwiches if they'd go—that is, before they went. But it only led to a lot of back and forward discussion. One woman said: 'Oh, yes, sandwiches would be lovely! *Do* let's stop a minute!' But the other said: 'No, Mary, we don't need to stop. We can eat the sandwiches right here.'

After that, it was nearly one in the morning, I gave right in. I knew there was a cold turkey in the ice-box, the real thing—plump and cool and lying all dressed up with green parsley. Show that to a woman of the make and build that these were, and you've got her.



I beat them with that. Within ten minutes I had them round the dining-room table with the turkey; they had found half a cold ham and a few other things and claimed the lot. We were acting on a fair and square 'gentleman's agreement' that they'd eat all they could and then go. There was a little murmuring; indeed, someone suggested a round of cold hands at poker or something, and one woman said that when she got going she could go on all night. But there was a general feeling that my offer was a fair compromise, and they took it.

They made *one* stipulation however. They are all coming back next Tuesday, and they are going to bring two others with them, visitors who are coming up from Cincinnati. They say that these are 'lovely people.' I don't doubt it. And they say that they are just dying to meet me. All right. Let them die.

Next Tuesday I'll be ready. The chain will be across the drive. John Kelly, my lodge-keeper, a determined man who has seen something of Sinn Fein Ireland, is a handy man with bird-shot. And I ordered ten gallons of tear-gas.

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And yet—oh, I don't know—somehow you just can't! That's the bother with the sit-down strikes in social life. They'll come and I'll let them in, and they'll say, 'Well! here we are again!' and one of the women will get off that old thing about the bad penny, and then say, 'I want you to meet Mr. and Mrs. Potzenjammer of Cincinnati,' and I'll say, 'What about a little Scotch?'

All right. Life is just repetition.

### XIII

## THE ADVANCEMENT OF LEARNING

### A TALK TO GRADUATE STUDENTS

*(Note. This mournful and prophetic address was delivered to an audience of McGill Graduate Students to reconcile them to leaving college. But as it was afterwards widely printed in newspapers, there may have been something in it.)*

The British Universities, of which the American are the offspring, grew up on a religious basis. Great flocks of students gathered round the Friars to learn from tattered manuscripts the sacred art of reading. Incidental to this was much argument, brawling, and drinking—what we now call ‘student activities.’

There were no athletics. In those rough days each man carried his athletics at the hilt of his sword or the butt of his quarterstaff. After a game one side didn’t play any more.

Centuries passed. Printing came. The colleges grew. Pious benefactors sought to balance their sins against their munificence. Thus in the name of Christ arose tall towers in Oxford to cleanse the soul of Henry VIII. This was the first college deficit.

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Beside these holy studies grew up others in the dark. Wicked men revived from pagan books the lost art of medicine. This involved the desecration of the body, God’s image. It never flourished till it got to Scotland, a hard place, where they thought nothing of the body and sold it from its grave. Scott called the place ‘Caledonia stern and wild.’ He might have added Burke and Hare.

Still darker was the evil inquiry into God’s universe. Roger Bacon tempted God by making gunpowder, for which the Friars gave him ten years in prison. It turned out to be not enough.

Thus grew up that distinction between light and darkness, between God and the Devil, still seen in the separation of the Faculty of Arts from those of Medicine and Science.

For centuries before and after the Reformation, the colleges were pre-eminently the hostels of the church devoted to God. His glory rose in sculptured stone, His majesty in shadowing elms, His peace in the hush of the quadrangle. Here kneeled in prayer beneath a stained-glass window a little Milton, storing his mind with that dim religious light that was to illumine his written page. Here a sturdy little Isaac Newton left his slate of calculated

figures to join, pious and devout, in the bidding prayer—that there may be a succession of men to serve God in church and state. Such was the aim and invocation of the colleges. And such they kept it.

And all this time there was no thought of business; of money, no inkling. In the Middle Ages the business man was held to be a crook. To fit a student for business would have meant to fit him for hell. In other words, there was no commerce course.

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Time rolled its years, its lustrums, and its centuries over the unchanging college. The elms nodded within the quadrangle, the doves coo'd in the oriel window, and inside the halls students and masters droned and dreamed of Greece and Rome. All studies sprang from that. For every age the past is better than the present. The evening light of retrospect is better than the glare of day. In letters, at least, each generation learns more from the revered thoughts of the remembered dead than from the idle chatter of the living. But with the classical culture went the new inquisitiveness of calculation and the spacious measurement of the sky for the greater glory of Him who put it there. Thus grew college science, without afterthought, untainted as yet with the mean aim of business, not yet enslaved to utility.

But change gradually came, in infinite degrees. As theology sank, culture rose. Religious toleration rose and spread in a world grown intolerant of religion, and tired of texts. As the great age of Victoria expanded to its full growth, the universities became, as they never had been before, never will be again, the centres of intellectual life, of learning, for its own sake, of culture and letters. There was as yet no tyranny of the lower class to dictate—with the sheer colossal power of its accumulated coppers—our journals, our drama, and our written words. There were no raucous voices in the air, no antics on the screen. The pyramid of society still rested with its top side up, its apex in the clouds. The age carried heavy drawbacks and paid heavy penalties for its eminence. At the base of the pyramid was the vast stratum of the poor, crushed almost flat. Nor was learning unalloyed. It ran easily to enthroned pedantry. It hated novelty. It had lost its inquiring mind. The Newtons and the Halleys had grown up in and by the colleges. But the Darwins and the Huxleys must grow in spite of them. And what the students and the masters sang in the colleges of the middle century was, if they had known it, only a song of swans. Other times were coming, needing other people to serve not God but machines.

Then there came and settled among the doves of learning in the oriel window a new and ungainly bird, huge and squattering, and its name was Business. With the middle and closing nineteenth century the Business Man came at last into his own as the Supreme Word in civilization. Now that day is past—gone these four years—we may stand beside him like Brutus beside the

body of Caesar. But yesterday the word of the Business Man might have stood (with proper collateral) against the world; now lies he there and none so poor as do him reverence.

But at least he had his day. The Business Man, to the ancient Greeks and Romans, was a crook. To the Middle Ages he was a sinner. In the polite world of Queen Anne and the Georges he had turned into a Merchant, but even then gentlemen did not eat with him—except at his expense. But as commerce expanded, business wealth grew. There were first the great fortunes of the returned East Indian merchants, nabobs, dripping with jewels. After that came the great industrial fortunes of the Peels and the Gladstones and the cotton-spinners and the ironmasters. The discovery was made that, even if a man is not a gentleman, you can make him a Lord. Thus slowly and gently England began to turn upside down, till it is now bottom up—or nearly. A final effort will do it.

But meantime America had shown to England what a real fortune could be, how money could be made to flow in oil pipes and pour out of blast furnaces. Thus arose the Carnegies and the Rockefellers and the Strathconas. And these became, as someone soon called them, inspired millionaires. They poured their magnificent munificence out in gifts to the world, hospitals and libraries and colleges. Which of us is there here who has not in one form or another tasted of their bounty?

So it came about that success and the generosity of the Business Man led to a glorification that amounted to Apotheosis. For every social purpose it seemed that what was needed was a committee of Business Men. Was there a city to be saved? Get a committee of Business Men! A maternity hospital to be developed? Leave it to the Business Men. A couple of religions to be amalgamated? Let a committee of Business Men do it; they're used to it.

In return the Business Man asked nothing from the colleges, and the colleges gave him nothing—apart from the letters of a degree, by accepting which he kindly uplifted all those beneath him. There was nothing they could give him. Masses for his soul? What an idea! As if a man as smart as that would be caught with a soul.

So it came about that the business man, without meaning it, without malice, and with nothing but decency in his mind, transformed the colleges. For those of us who can look back over fifty years, the change is visible, obvious and in some aspects appalling. A new wealth flowed into the colleges; brick and stone rose to the sky; apparatus moved in car-load lots; the colleges expanded in all directions.

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This area of expansion seemed at first wonderful. Vast institutions such as Cornell and Chicago arose, as it were, out of nothing. Older colleges increased

to five times their size. Colleges that had numbered their students in hundreds now counted them in thousands. Even the little colleges sleeping among the elm trees woke up and distended themselves like Æsop's toad in the attempt to be an ox.

Expansion brought with it a flood of money, a rush of expenditure, an annual deficit, wiped out annually by renewed benefactions. 'Praise John from whom oil blessings flow,' sang the glad students of Chicago. For the first time the colleges no longer lived on their own. For the first time benefactors were no longer dead but living. At first the significance of this was lost; only in time did the college world come to see that—as with an Indian—the only good benefactor is a dead benefactor. To my mind the most beautifully solemn thing about James McGill is that he is dead.

For the living benefactor, though he didn't mean it and didn't know it, asked a price and expected a return. He expected the colleges to 'show results,' a thing no college had ever shown since the days of William of Wykeham and Johannis Caius. He expected the college to fit the young men for active life, whereas the older idea was to fit them to die. Hence came blowing in through the opening door a riot of new subjects, *practical* subjects so called. The colleges began teaching the unteachable. They forgot that in the long run—the only run worth thinking about—the unpractical subjects are the best. The 'practical' subject lowers the human intellect from the broad comprehensive compass of the Victorian mind to the narrow mechanical competence of 'Educator' of the day. The benefactor wanted *system*, and he got it. It is choking the wells of learning. He wanted *organization*, and he got it—a rigid frame in place of a living growth. Can you organize a soul?

More than that the benefactor wanted advertising, boosting, booming. He took his model from his industrial method—such triumphs of the human mind as *Uneeda Biscuit*, *Uwanta Ham*.

Here the benefactor—still infinitely well-meaning—enlisted the students. Undergraduates, musing in cap and gown upon the departed dead, changed into 'rooters,' 'hooters,' 'boosters,' broke out into white pantaloons and uniforms fit for the Zouaves of Pius the Ninth. Fostered by the benefactor, student 'activities' multiplied on the campus. The simple games played in the October dusk, with the few spectators running along the touch-lines, were exchanged for the vast spectacular performances, the huge stadiums, the paid organizers, like nothing seen since Rome went down under the weight of it. The student became a new person, quick, intelligent, capable, a young man of excellent address, a born salesman, a trained advertiser, competent to the last degree and ready to step smiling into his place behind a hotel desk. But somewhere in him was the deep seared mark of the scar where the college cut out his soul.

Compare, any who can, the typical undergraduate (if he will stand still long enough to let you compare him) with the little schoolboy that once he was. Whither now has gone the wistful dawning intelligence? The clouds of glory that he trailed are blown by all the winds of the stadium. The child that wrote the verses for verses' sake, that saw visions in the pages of his books and heard in his ears the trampling feet and the armoured horses of the past—whither has he vanished? That open magic door that seemed to lead into a wood nodding with green hazels and bright with carpeted flowers—has it turned off to this, this vast, wooden building, loud with shouts and glared with light—this idiot's dream?

On the more rigid and mechanical studies of medicine and science, the new influence brought chiefly good. But on the faculties of liberal arts it broke with its full devastating effect. These are intangible things; they are not physical; they depend on an idea. Learning for learning's sake cannot survive amid a tumult of students' clubs and students' activities, a fierce and continued excitement of contested games, enthusiastic politics, student elections and mimic journalism. Student activities are destroying the student.

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*(The sobs of the audience prevented the continuance of this talk.)*

## TUBES OUT OF ORDER

*In a book I wrote the other day about a lecture tour in Western Canada, called My Discovery of the West, I recorded a queer incident in connection with a loud-speaker apparatus. The thing was so funny and so literally true that I cannot resist the temptation to repeat it here.*

*I always told it as if it had happened a night or two before in a rival town. People like that best. Local jokes beat all others. In Orillia, where I live, we like a joke on Barrie; and in ancient Rome they enjoyed a crack at Carthage.*

*But as a matter of fact this incident happened in the Ladies' Club of a great American city, a beautiful new building, with all the equipment brand new, and a lovely auditorium with a brand new loud-speaker.*

*Before the meeting the lady-President said to me, 'I must apologize for our loud-speaker. Don't mind if it starts to make queer noises. There's something wrong with it, but we don't know just what it is.'*

*No, she didn't know, and I didn't know, and they didn't know what was wrong with it, but a little later we all knew. The trouble was that there were two plumbers in the basement under the platform trying to connect up a furnace.*

*So the lady-President in beginning the meeting said:*

*'Ladies, before I introduce the speaker of to-day I want to say a few words of warning. Our loud-speaker was just installed and I'm afraid'—and here she assumed a manner of charming apology—'I'm afraid it isn't behaving itself very well. . . .'*

*At that moment the loud-speaker broke in with a giant voice:*

*'Get something under her and lift her up—she's not working right.'*

*There was a frozen silence, with ripples of giggles breaking the ice.*

*The lady-President said:*

*'Ladies, I'm afraid . . .'*

*And the loud-speaker shouted:*

*'Stick a crowbar under her and get a purchase on her. . . .'*

*'Ladies, I must ask someone . . .'*

*'She's full of ashes, heave her up and shake the ashes out of her. . . .'*

*'Ladies, will someone please . . .'*

*It's her tubes—they're not connected. . . .'*

*Then there was a click! Someone with emergency brains had cut off something. And in the dead silence that followed, I was able to begin my lecture on 'Recent Advances in Human Knowledge.'*

## XIV LOOKING BACK FROM RETIREMENT

I was retired—or rather I was fired on the grounds of senility—last year from the college where I had been a professor for thirty-five years. Before that I had been a schoolmaster for ten years, making in all forty-five years of teaching. On this mere pretext, I was invited to go.

In other words I am what is called a *professor emeritus*—from the Latin *e*, ‘out,’ and *meritus*, ‘so he ought to be.’ These old professors go drifting out of the colleges, so many every year, as when the harness is slipped off old horses, and they go wandering down into the pasture. The world is always very kindly about it. When they leave there is always a gentle pretence that now in retirement they will do greater things. ‘Professor Rameses, we understand, will now at last have time to complete his monumental work on the Assyrian epoch.’ Oh, no, he won’t; not all eternity would be enough for that. But he’ll sit there in front of a blotter in his study and his wife will put the inkpot beside him, and through the open door will come the scent of the laburnum, and the late summer flies will buzz around his head! No, no, he’ll never finish. Look, he’s asleep already!

Or of another professor, it is said, ‘We understand that Professor Dream intends, now that he is free, to devote himself to journalism!’ Will he? That only means that he’ll sit and read the newspaper all morning in a barber shop. But notice that kindly little touch ‘now that he is free!’ The idea is that the old fellow has been held back from all kinds of accomplishment, and, once set him loose, and he’s supposed to dash off at a tremendous pace! It reminds me of the old days when we used to hire a horse and buggy at a livery stable, and the livery man would drag the horse out, shouting, ‘Whoa! Whoa! there!’ and stand at his head while we got in, as if it were a close call for life to drive behind that horse. When he let go with the final ‘Whoa! Back! Get up there!’ the old horse hadn’t the strength to shake the fly-net. So with the professors. Complete their study of Horace! Bring their work on ichthyology up to date! Don’t believe it—autumn flowers and buzz flies for them—‘Whoa! Back! Get up!’

I recall long ago the resignation of one of my own old professors, and how we got up a dinner for him. I sat next to him and said, ‘I suppose now you’ll be able to complete your translation of *Faust*?’ and he said, ‘Eh?’ I said, ‘You’ll be able to complete your translation of *Faust*?’ ‘What?’ he shouted. ‘*Faust*!’ I yelled. ‘No, thank you,’ he called back. ‘I’ve had plenty.’ An idea struck me,



and so I took the dinner card in front of me and wrote '*Faust*' on it and put it in front of him. 'I can't read it,' he shouted.

So in my own case I've taken warning. When people say to me, 'You'll be able now to finish your book on the *History of Political Theory*,' I answer, 'To hell with it.'

They're a queer lot, the old professors. I suppose that forty or fifty years in the little empire of the classroom is bound to affect a man's character and make-up. In business there are certain standards, certain normal ways of talking and dressing and acting that all men have to fall into as part of business life. Not so with the professors. Take their dress; they've never thought about it. As young men they had no money to dress, and by the time they had they'd lost any sustained interest in it, and so they buy their things spasmodically as the whim seizes them. I recall, from my days as a Chicago student forty years ago, the case, or rather the appearance, of a very distinguished old professor who came over from England to teach some kind of dead language. It was in the summer quarter. He wore a round straw hat—the kind that kids wear—a black morning coat with tails—that was a little bit of London—a pair of duck pants—that stood for the sea—and a pair of ox-blood tanned boots that were meant to represent the eager life of a newer continent. You see, if you analyse that costume, there is life in every bit of it. . . . The white pants were for the foam of the sea; he got them, no doubt, the day Sir Thomas Lipton invited him on his yacht. The London morning coat meant Piccadilly and the fashion of England; it was all there. Add to it, as the last touch, a string tie, to recall the Confederate campaign in Missouri, and there you have the man! I remember that he evidently looked on himself as pretty nattily dressed, quite an up-to-date piece of chocolate. The case is actual; anybody of the Chicago of the late nineties could give you the professor's name—or, no, they couldn't; they'd have forgotten it. The flies are buzzing round them too.

In other words, professors, if they go on long enough, turn into 'characters.'

Much of what has been said about professors is naturally true not only of them but of all old men. More nonsense and guff has been talked about old age than of any time of life. Cicero, when his hair began to fall out, wrote a whole book *On Old Age*. Rabbi Ben Ezra—in Browning, isn't it?—said, 'Grow old along with me, the best is yet to be!' and the same note has been struck a thousand times, but will never blend into a chord. Cicero and the rest talk of the 'serenity' of old age—in fact, a 'serene' old age has been a phrase in all languages! Serene old men! Have you ever seen one of them in a sudden temper, because he couldn't find his fishing-line, or had lost his ever-sharp pencil? Old age is supposed to be quiet, restful, at peace with all the world. Don't believe it! Old men live in a world of horrors. At a sniff, they are sure

the kitchen stove has set fire to the house! The world is closing in on them. They feel that they are going to be overwhelmed at any minute by terrible changes—Bolsheviks, labour agitations, Mussolini—anything!

I remember a year or two ago, one such stopped me in the street, an old man, just old enough to be getting a nice shake on him even when he stood upright; in fact he had himself buttoned up pretty high in his collar and neckerchief. ‘These Bolsheviks!’ he said. ‘These Bolsheviks, they’ll overrun the whole world, mark my words: we’ll live to see it!’ Well, he didn’t, anyway; he blew up the next week.

And if it’s not public dangers it’s private ones—the dangers to themselves and to their poor old body that walks with a shadowed figure beside it. Do you realize, my dear young friends in the early twenties who read these lines, that for old people the world is full of death? Those notices that you hardly look at, those obituaries, of what seem to you old people dropping off—and why shouldn’t they?—that, to them, is their world going out one by one, people waiting to be called across a gangway, so many names called every day. Youth is careless of death. It is the price at which humanity lives. Wordsworth, you remember, said, ‘A simple child that lightly draws its breath and feels its life in every limb, what can it know of death?’

And Captain Harry Graham, the English humorist of yesterday (a tear to his memory), said it with even greater point in the little verse, ‘Grandpapa fell down the sewer; that’s one grandpapa the fewer!’ For people of insight and philosophy, Harry Graham’s stanza reaches further than Wordsworth’s sentimentality. Wordsworth is putting his own ideas into the child—you recall, no doubt, how the *We-are-seven* poem runs along in its cheerful discussion in a churchyard—‘and often after sunset when all is bright and fair, I take my little porringer and eat my supper there!’ Nonsense! Wordsworth as an old man might take a little porringer, provided he took it regularly and not too near bedtime, but the child wouldn’t.

A little porringer! That strikes again the note of the terrors of old men; they’re wearing out, they’re running down, and so they get the ‘death bug’ that ticks and ticks beside their consciousness, so that they feel the flight of time as it goes by, carry a scale of hours and days such as younger people can’t imagine. It is as if one looks down an avenue, all lined with evergreen trees—a little mist, indeed, at the end, but the end can’t be so far away after all.

So the old men are preoccupied. ‘Have you ever,’ they whisper, ‘had any trouble with your oesophagus?’ The answer to this is ‘Never!’ Don’t humour or encourage them. Let them take it on the oesophagus! They seem to know of parts of the body younger people have never heard of. ‘The membraneous coating of my diaphragm,’ bleats the old fellow, ‘is pretty well worn out. I’ve had to cut out all proteins altogether.’

Cutting them out! They start cutting things out like a captain lightening a ship. 'I cut out whiskey,' says the old fellow, 'and I don't feel any worse for it at all.' No, certainly not; you couldn't feel worse if you tried. 'I've cut tobacco right out.' Certainly, you haven't got suction enough left in you to keep a cigar alight. Then they cut out meat, and cut out coffee, and cut out all the things they know of, and then begin to cut out things that are just names. Ask them; just let them start and they'll tell you they cut out all nitrogen and glycerine, and gun-cotton, and tabloids—the things they cut out would supply a Spanish army.

This, I suppose, is a pessimistic discussion. I can't help it. To my mind, the quotation given above, 'that's one grandpapa the fewer,' goes to the root of the matter. In fact even this business of looking back on life and writing memoirs should be begun earlier, and by younger people. In fact I am glad to observe that it is. A generation ago people never wrote reminiscences till they could cover a long lapse of time. Reminiscences had some such title as: *My Hundred Years in the U.S. Cavalry*, or *Pink and Punk: My Eighty Years of Fox Hunting*. Then, thank goodness, someone began *Looking Back from Forty!* and then someone else realized that you could turn round quicker than that, and a crop of memoirs began to appear on *Looking Back from Thirty*; and then *Looking Back on College*, and *Looking Back from High School*, and finally *Looking Back on Kindergarten, or Where Are Those Girls Now?*

Youth will have its way; soon the old men won't even write the old-age stuff.

FINIS

## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.  
[The end of *Here are My Lectures* by Stephen Leacock]