In Search of Myself

By

Frederick Philip Grove

Title: In Search of Myself
Date of first publication: 1946
Author: Frederick Philip Grove (1879-1948)
Date first posted: May 26, 2018
Date last updated: May 26, 2018
Faded Page eBook #20180528

This ebook was produced by: Al Haines, Jen Haines & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at http://www.pgdpcanada.net

By the same author:

OVER PRAIRIE TRAILS

THE TURN OF THE YEAR

SETTLERS OF THE MARSH

A SEARCH FOR AMERICA

OUR DAILY BREAD

IT NEEDS TO BE SAID

THE YOKE OF LIFE

FRUITS OF THE EARTH

TWO GENERATIONS

THE MASTER OF THE MILL

FREDERICK PHILIP GROVE

IN SEARCH OF MYSELF

By

FREDERICK PHILIP GROVE

Ça vous amuse, la vie?

TORONTO
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
OF CANADA LIMITED
1946

Printed in Canada by
Le Soleil Limitée, Quebec.

To

MY FRIEND

CARLETON STANLEY

CONTENTS

IN SEARCH OF MYSELF

PROLOGUE

IN SEARCH OF MYSELF[1]

[1] Reprinted from *University of Toronto Quarterly, Oct., 1940.*

IT was a dismal November day, with a raw wind blowing from the north-west and cold, iron-grey clouds flying low—one of those Ontario days which, on the lake-shores or in a country of rock and swamp, seem to bring visions of an ageless time after the emergence of the earth from chaos, or a foreboding of the end of a world about to die from entropy.

It was into such a country of rock and swamp, a few miles north of Lake Erie, that my business took me that day. I was driving my old and battered car and, having come a not inconsiderable distance, I felt chilled and cheerless. At last I entered upon a straight, rutted marl road which led for miles over a clay-coloured dam thrown through a morass dotted here and there with the dead stumps of huge trees of a departed generation: swamp-oak, white ash, and pine, now blackened by carbonization.

At last there appeared, on the far side of the marsh to my right, in the very border-seam of higher, wooded ground, a farm with house, barn, and other buildings which, at this distance, seemed to be sketchily washed into their background of leafless bush, for they were unpainted and in a state of not merely incipient decay, resembling so many others in that Ontario which had once been made prosperous by its timber. It was from this place that I was to fetch a girl for the Sisyphus tasks of a household drudge.

The closer I came the worse the road grew, for it became more deeply rutted; and the ruts and their supporting sides were so wet, so almost greasy, that every now and then the rear wheels of my car skidded sideways, with a sickening effect at the pit of my stomach. The more deeply I penetrated into the district which, a few days ago, had been visited by a cloud-burst, the slower did my progress become till I could proceed only with extreme caution. I was wondering what I should do if I found it impossible to reach my destination. The dam had become narrow; and there was no longer even the ghost of a possibility of turning. “Well,” I said to myself, “I suppose I must get through and turn in the yard of that homestead.”

When I was within perhaps half a mile of the farm-gate, I was crawling

along at the rate of two or three miles an hour, in low gear; and then what I had dreaded happened; across the dam, joining swamp to swamp, extended a wash-out which put an imperative stop to my progress. I saw that I could never pull through that watery mud-hole in which the bluish hardpan foundation of the landscape lay exposed, churned up by cows and horses that had dashed through in a panic, sinking in to their hocks.

As I sat there, looking the situation over and canvassing, with a shiver running down my spine, the two or three possibilities of action, a sudden vision of the evening before blotted out what lay in front of me. My profound feeling of misery no longer seemed to proceed from my momentary quandary, but from something I had lived through the previous night.

In my own ramshackle house, which was yet capable of being made warm and comfortable, I had had a caller from afar; and we had sat up late into the night, by lamplight, talking of books and of my early life in Europe, especially in Paris.

This topic of my youth had been suggested by one of the books which had been discussed. My caller was the librarian of a great city; and for years he had dropped in on me once or twice a twelve-month, bringing me some six or ten volumes of the best that had come to hand within the time elapsed since his last visit, and taking away such as he had left behind on the last occasion. Among those he had brought this time was the biography of a Frenchman, still living, who in my early days had been one of my intimates.

At the time, this young Frenchman and myself had been aflame with a great enthusiasm for life and art. For years we had been inseparable, so much so that old-fashioned and benevolent people—generals of the French army, aristocrats of the old school, venerable professors of the Sorbonne—had teasingly called us Castor and Pollux.

In the dim light of my study, where the librarian and I had been sitting surrounded by the few books which I own, memories of my European youth had crowded back upon me; and I had risen to pace the floor of the room in a state of intense excitement. As they came back to me, I had told anecdotes of our ardent association; and I had given expression to my unbounded youthful admiration for the young Frenchman who, a year or two older than myself, had been one of the determining influences in overcoming my own immaturities. Stranger than anything else, there had come back to me the memory of the attitude which this young Frenchman had observed towards myself: the attitude of a mentor coaching one of whom great things were expected, things greater than those within his own reach.

Suddenly a silence had fallen between the librarian and myself; for, with

the effect of a sharp blow, it had come home to me that more than four and a half decades separated me from those days, four decades in which that Frenchman and I had drifted apart to the point of complete alienation: each had gone his own way—he in the crowded capitals of Europe, I on the lonely prairies of western Canada. Like a flash of lightning it had struck me that, to earn the distinction of seeing his biography published within his lifetime, he must have achieved things which had focused on him the eyes of a world, a living world as full of fire and enthusiasm as any world that had ever been—whereas I, only slightly his junior, in spite of often titanic endeavour, had lived and worked in obscurity, giving expression, at the best, to a few, a very few mirrorings of life in the raw such as it had been my lot to witness.

In that dead silence which my friend, the librarian, had had the charity to respect, I had turned dumbly back to my desk; and, shaking with a new, still deeper excitement, I had let myself sink into the chair by the shaded reading lamp. With trembling fingers I had reached for the book and drawn it into the circle of light, opening it at the last pages where I expected to find a bibliography. The bibliography was there; and it was put together with obvious care and completeness, filling eighteen pages. Translations of the works of this Frenchman had appeared in no less than sixteen countries, Turkey and Japan among them. If it is true, I said to myself, that all the stars are moved when a child drops a ball from its cradle, what effect had the life of this Frenchman had on the reeling universes of human thought and human sentiment?

Whereas I. . . .

And another memory had arisen. On one of my four or five trips back to Europe, undertaken during the years when, on this continent of America, I had lived as a farm-hand, I had, on one single occasion, once more met that young Frenchman, no longer quite so young, by previous appointment. We had had dinner together in one of the great, famous restaurants of Paris; and, tragically, we had found that we had nothing any longer to say to each other. . . .

However, here it was my present task to bring back with me that household drudge from the farm in the margin of the higher land to my right, and ahead. Since I was mired on the road, what was I to do?

There were three possibilities. I might abandon my task and try to retrace my way by backing out. I might alight and, leaving the car where it was, leap the wash-out, to cover the remaining distance afoot. I might try to attract the attention of the people on the farm or in the house—they were expecting me—by blowing my horn.

In my present mood the last of these three possibilities seemed the one to choose. As for backing out, with my errand undone, it was not in my nature to

do so; and yet I was reluctant to exert myself just then and to proceed afoot, through mud ankle-deep, with a piercing November wind in my face while a chronic cough racked my chest. Irrationally, the car seemed a last link with the brighter world of my youth. . . .

Half a century ago, that Frenchman had considered *me* as the most lavishly endowed among the young men then living within his orbit; he had often said so; on certain things he had, in spite of his seniority in years, deferred to me; on occasion I had corrected his judgment and even pruned his too flowery style; he had prophesied for me the most brilliant of futures. . . .

For ten minutes or so, at intervals of perhaps fifteen seconds, I made the horn of my machine ring dismally out over the fens whose very existence seemed a calamity of defeat. . . .

What, so I asked myself, had been the reason of my thus grievously disappointing my friend, the Frenchman? There were several superficial reasons, of course. But the chief reason no doubt was that I had never had an audience; for no matter what one may say, he says it to somebody; and if there is nobody to hear, it remains as though it had never been said; the tree falling in a forest where there is none to hear, produces no sound. A book arises as much in the mind of the reader as in that of the writer; and the writer's art consists above all in creating response; the effect of a book is the result of a collaboration between writer and audience. That collaboration I had failed to enforce. . . .

From behind my protecting wind-shield, I saw something stirring in the yard of the farm on which my eyes were focused.

I had been heard. There was a brief coming and going about the house; and at last a figure detached itself and made for the road.

Yes, that figure was turning east, in my direction; and gradually, in the course of another few minutes, it defined itself as an old man carrying a suitcase. I was not expecting an old man; I was expecting a girl; but there was nothing that I could do. I had to wait for developments. . . .

My struggle had been such as to make defeat a foregone conclusion. Did it matter? To whom should it matter? To me? But who was I? And suddenly it seemed to me that the only thing that really mattered was the explanation of that defeat. To whom explain it? . . .

As the old man came nearer, I made out that he was clad in mud-bespattered black overalls and a smock of the same colour worn over a home-knitted, torn and frayed sweater. The legs of the overalls were tightly rolled around his bony shanks and tucked into high rubber boot-packs, smeared with mud to above his ankles. His face was grooved and weathered into

innumerable folds; his chin, hidden by a grey, almost white beard blowing in the wind. His gait was uncertain; his progress, slow; for he staggered under the load of the suitcase, which I yet divined weighed no more than ten or fifteen pounds at the most.

At last he reached the gap in the road which had forced me to halt; and he stopped at its far edge. Then, carefully picking a point on the near side which was somewhat drier, he shied the suitcase across with a lanky motion. I thought he would now turn back; and in spite of my reluctance to move I made ready to alight and pick the girl's baggage up. But with an unexpected, clownish nimbleness he cleared the gap by means of a staggering leap. I reached across the vacant seat to my right and opened the door. He picked the suitcase up and, lifting it into the car, said breathlessly, "The chit'll be down in a minute."

I half expected him to climb into the vacant seat in order to get out of the dismal wind. Instead, he slammed the door shut with a wide, loose swing of his arm.

Since even yet he did not turn back to leave, I presumed that he had something to say; and so I reached once more across the seat to lower the window into which he promptly inserted his right elbow, so as to rest part of his weight. Thus made comfortable, and quite unaffected by the rawness of the air and the edge of the wind, he opened his toothless mouth and began one of those incongruously cheerful and inconsequential conversations so typical of the Ontario countryman, who—or so it has seemed to me—is always eager for news of no possible relevance and for a confirmation of his congenital prejudices.

He stood for fifteen, twenty minutes, imbibing my monosyllabic replies with a profoundly critical air, while he elicited from me such information as he desired—as to the exact location of my house, the names and ages of my rural neighbours, and my antecedents in the far West where, rumour had told him, I had lived for close to forty years.

He looked at me, probingly. "Forty years?" he said. "You must have been a baby when you went there."

"No," I replied, "I was a young man."

"Well," he went on, with a stir of surprise, "I'd be curious to know y'r present age, lad."

"My age?" I repeated. "I'm sixty-eight."

He laughed a cackling senile laugh, strangely in accord with landscape and weather, worrying meanwhile, with his free hand, his scanty, scraggy beard. "What do ye think about that?" he exclaimed incredulously. "Ye don't look it.

Now I'm seventy-four, only six years older."

"A lot of water flows down the creek in six years," I replied; and a dead silence fell.

Suddenly he emitted that laugh again. "Ye were wise to stop here," he said. "There's no bottim to that hole." And once more he laughed. "Y'know," he went on, "day before yistidday, may have been around ten o'clock, a smart-aleck salesman from Tilsonburg came through here, from the west, stopping at the place." A jerky thumb pointed over his shoulder, back to the farm. "Trying to collect a bit on that separator my son-in-law bought of him three years ago come next month. Blasted fool to come driving that far to collect after a drought like what we've had last summer. Got mad, too, and used bad languige. But when he got it into his head at last that there was nothin' doin', he went on, along this here road, goin' like hell, never askin' or anything; or we'd have told him about this here wash-out. Wall-l-l, he struck it square, I tell yer. Must have been goin' fifty. I saw him; I'd gone out on the road; I expected something to happen. And as he struck it, his car turned a somersault in the ditch and then shied off into the swamp, upside down, and sideways." The old man paused as though focusing his mind's eye on the picture of the scene in his memory. Then he turned. "There ye can still see the hole where they pulled him out, with two towing trucks. Him, I say; but I mean his car." And once more he focused his mind's eye in that absent way of his; and then he burst out laughing again in his senile, cackling hilarity. "Do ye know what he did?" he asked at last, as if choking with his mirth. He took his elbow out of the window of the car and raised one foot to the running-board. Then, as if to smooth out a kink in his spine, he pressed his left hand into his side, just below the ribs. And once more, under that dismal sky, he surrendered himself body and soul to the impulse of his overpowering merriment, slapping his raised knee with his right hand between guffaws. It was an incomprehensible, obscene, drenching torrent of mirth before which one could only stand gasping. "Yeah," he ejaculated at last between his bursts of gaiety, "the blasted fool broke . . . broke his . . . broke his neck!" And six, seven slaps of his open palm resounded in succession on his knee while his head, swinging from side to side as if severed on its pedicel, hinted at the entire inadequacy of mere laughter and slaps to express to the full just how funny this trifling mishap had been. . . .

As, ten or fifteen minutes later, I backed out, the girl by my side, over the several miles of this swamp road, and, having turned at last, within sight of the leaden lake, headed for the highway to go home, I was in the very depths of involuntary musings.

France, Paris, Rome, Egypt, the Sahara; my whole youth with its aims,

high achievement, knowledge most profound, aspirations infinite!

My early friends were famous men, known throughout the civilized world, having left, by this time, the impress of their minds upon their age. For of that little group of which, fifty years ago, I had formed part—a group gathered together from half a dozen nations—standing for something very definite, for a new freedom of life, a new approach to art, a new European outlook in international relations—of that group there was not one, except myself, who, that day, was not known beyond the confines of his country.

Like a traitor to my youth, this cynical thought tried to raise its head: What, in the light of later European developments, had all their thought, all their driving power, all their earnest endeavour amounted to? Like a defender of the faith, this other thought rose to combat it: Nothing that has ever been is ever lost.

The lack of an audience? But even the lack of an audience is not the important thing. The important thing is that *you* have such an audience *in mind* when you speak. Whether it is really there does not matter. In case of need you can imagine it. But was there any need for me to imagine it? If I could explain, to someone, why I had failed, the explanation might more than compensate for the failure to have made myself heard so far. Could I explain it? I did not know. I saw the reasons clearly enough. I must try. And "to someone"? To whom? To whom but my friend the young Frenchman who was now a man of seventy or more? Whether he ever read the explanation, what did it matter? There would be others, if not today, then ten decades from now. And if there were none, at no time, did it matter? The only thing that did matter, as far as I was concerned, was the fact that the attempt had been made. The rest I must leave to the gods. . . .

At that moment, I was standing within six years of such a decay of the mental and emotional qualities as I had witnessed just now in the case of the old man, the grandfather of the "chit" by my side. . . . Was that what I was coming to? If so, then it was surely time to be up and doing.

That night I sat down to begin, with an avowedly autobiographic purpose, the story of MY LIFE AS A WRITER IN CANADA.

PART ONE

CHILDHOOD

I

IF, in a state of prenatal existence, human beings-to-be could deliberately choose those to whom they wished to be born, taking into account, of course, what they intended to do with their earthly lives, then a future writer like myself could hardly, according to outward appearance, have chosen better than the determining destiny did choose for me in the matter of parents. To what extent reality bore out this appearance is the subject of the first part of this book.

As a matter of fact, however, the first few hours of my life on this planet seemed to mark me for a life of adventure rather than for a life of discipline. I was born prematurely, in a Russian manor-house, while my parents were trying to reach their Swedish home before that event which, at least to me, was to prove of considerable importance. In that effort to reach home my parents failed for no other reason than that I insisted on arriving too soon; even then I already showed my constitutional disinclination to conform. Incredibly, within an hour or so of the event, the hospitable house, belonging to friends of my parents, was struck by lightning and burned to the ground. This was about 9 p.m. after I had seen the first flicker of candle-light, for electric bulbs had not yet been invented. I was later told that I promptly protested against having such an iniquity as life thrust upon me by bawling at the top of my voice. I do not actually remember, of course, the precipitate flight as my mother and I were borne out of the welter of flames; nor can I be positively sure that I remember anything that befell during the next few weeks or even months. Yet I was, later, so often and so graphically told about the dramatic occurrence that I find it hard to sift out what I actually saw and felt from what I merely heard in years to come.

The fact was that, during those years to come, I was in charge of a woman who, at the time, was my mother's maid and who had lived through it all; in contradistinction to my own future experience, the exciting circumstances of my entry into this world had formed the only extraordinary thing that had ever happened to her. She remained more or less closely associated with me for nearly seventeen years, up to the time of my mother's death. This young woman, of mixed Scotch and French descent, but more French than Scotch, became my nurse; and since, by reason of my mother's peculiar mode of life, she was doomed to remain single, she adopted me into her affections as if I had been her, not her mistress's, child. What she told me, vividly and in ever-repeated detail, dominated my inner life throughout my early years: it always

started with the words, “Once upon a time there was a little boy.” It dominated my life so completely that to this day I cannot distinguish my actual memories from the reflected ones.

Thus, whenever I think of those first weeks of my life, I seem to see myself suddenly inside a private railway carriage which, coupled to a train, is crossing a long, spider-web steel bridge thrown across a river; I seem to see the struts and girders gliding past the windows; and, what is more, when I close my eyes, I seem to feel the bridge swaying in a blizzard sweeping over the no-man’s-land which was once the border country between Russia and Germany, underlain by a shadowy Poland; for my birth took place east of the Vistula.

The next memory is that of a train on a huge ferry crossing the Baltic from Stralsund in Germany to Malmoe in Sweden; and there, too, I seem to see all sorts of things in great detail: the arrogant German train guards who prevented passengers from alighting to stretch their legs, and the scared faces of a few travellers who were not in the train, but stood huddled against the railing of the ferry.

I myself, on the lap of Annette, the young nurse, was dressed in a long, embroidered, belaced, and beribboned dress, such as was used, at the time, and in Europe, indiscriminately for boys and girls. As I grew up into boyhood, shorter dresses were carried along, for me, throughout Europe and over not inconsiderable portions of Northern Africa and Western Asia as well; even after I had outgrown them, my nurse took them out and showed them to me whenever we left one place or arrived at another. To me, they were a sort of pedigree. Nobody, it seemed, not even myself, ever thought of discarding so useless a burden; not even when the exhibition had become embarrassing to my masculinity because I did not want to be reminded of the humiliating fact that, not so long ago, as geologic ages went, I, too, had been a baby.

At this time I can hardly have been more than a month old; and within a few hours of our arrival on Swedish soil, I, being only inappreciably older, but having performed my first comparatively long journey, arrived, with all my appurtenances: father, mother, nurse, et al, for there were other servants as well, on my father’s place on the “Sound” between Sweden and Denmark. My geographical ideas of the place are somewhat hazy; but I do remember a few points: we were within about twenty miles of the ancient city of Lund; we were within a few hundred yards of the sea; and on very clear days we could make out the coast of Denmark and even the city of Copenhagen across the water.

But I have still to justify my first sentence.

My father, of English-Swedish descent—it was my grandfather on that side who had immigrated into Sweden and naturalized and married there—was a

land-owner on a fairly large scale, growing sand-pines for two or three Baltic governments desirous of anchoring their shorelines and sand-islands by afforestation. This business had been thoroughly established by my grandfather; and, as far as I could make out in after years, it ran itself in my father's time, requiring a minimum of exertion on his part; so that he was very largely a man of leisure, enjoying what for anyone else would have been a comfortable, even a large income from the labour of others. In addition to the land and the business, he had, at his father's death, come into a not inconsiderable fortune; and, at the end of his early manhood, at the age, I think, of forty or a little over, he had married a Scotswoman, daughter of a judge, my mother, who was not only an heiress but, her mother being dead, had brought him immediately a second fortune at least equal to his own.

It is, of course, a well-known fact that writers who do not write what the public wants, but what they think the public should be told, do not make an income of their own. To all appearances, then, there were here four fortunes—the land; the money inherited by my father; the money which my mother had; and the money which she expected on her father's death—all opportunely converging upon—myself? No, on myself and seven older sisters, the youngest of whom, at the time of my birth, was seven or eight years old.

My mother, on the other hand. . . But I do not, at present, need to say more about her; some of her characteristics will appear as I speak of my father; and others will have to be reserved for my next chapter. But she was twenty years my father's junior.

My sisters had all been born during the first pleasant years of their marriage; I, the unwanted one, came nine months before that marriage was to break up. It did not break up with any *éclat*; there was, so far, no quarrel; there was nothing of the kind. My mother simply told three of the servants to pack up for a round of travel and left, taking me along. Among the three servants, two were concerned with myself: the wet-nurse and Annette, the "bonne" as she was now called; the third was my mother's new maid. In all small things, Annette was destined to become a sort of *impresaria* to my mother as well; in fact, she "managed" or ruled the whole party. When, one day, in a grand scene, somewhere in France, my mother broke her own thraldom to Annette, everyone trembled. I was about eight at the time; and my mother's ultimatum, restricting Annette to the management of the boy, really resulted in my henceforth managing her.

However, it is time for me to give some idea of my parents as individuals.

My father was six feet seven inches tall, a personable man, the very devil with women. He rode hard, ate hard, and drank hard. *Me* he despised. Even at that early age I gave no promise of ever exceeding my present height which is

of a mere six feet two and a half inches; at best, when I stretch my old bones a little, six feet three; and I showed a regrettable lack of the power to resist infantile diseases: measles, scarlet fever, whooping cough, I caught them all; and I was thin, had a poor appetite, readily caught colds. I cannot give a portrait of my father as I came to know him without saying a word of myself. To be weak or ill was, in his eyes, the unpardonable sin. But I have, in recent years, tried to imagine to myself how my father would have lived and acted had the chance of birth thrown him into the Ontario of my time; that is, into a Canada where pioneer conditions are just yielding to the urbanization of the countryside: thus I created Ralph Patterson and gave him, among others, one son whom I attached to myself by giving him my middle name. I will admit that I, the dreamer, as his only son, must have been a sore disappointment to a man who, first of all, was a spender. Up to the time of my birth, he had had the land, a few thousand acres of it, and two fortunes to support him. By the time I began consciously to know him, he had run through those two fortunes; and when, after my mother's death, I became more closely and almost intimately acquainted with him, he was engaged in running through the third, namely, the land which he was mortgaging more and more heavily; the fourth, my mother's inheritance from her father, he considered himself as having been cheated out of; but, of course, I knew nothing of that till he, too, was near the end of his life. I have already said that the business of supplying the Baltic states with nursery stock, of which many millions were shipped every spring, whole shiploads of them, ran itself under the direction of a competent man called the "inspector". In addition to the nursery, there were some three hundred hectares of ordinary farm land on which pedigreed cattle and fine saddle horses were raised, as well as the ordinary farm-crops of wheat and vegetables for the market at Lund. On this branch of the rural economy enormous sums were spent, for my father was an innovator. Every sort of agricultural machinery invented in any part of the world promptly appeared on this farm and was, if not used, at least tried out. Often, after a few weeks, it was found that what was adequate for the North American prairies was ill adapted for Sweden. One or two large barns soon resembled a sort of international exhibition of farming implements. On the comparatively rare occasions when I was at home, I lived through a sort of *abrégé* of the history of agricultural invention. Thus, the large lawns which swept down from the house to the edge of the beach were, in my early years, cut by gangs of kneeling or squatting women wielding sickles which were kept razor-sharp. As I grew up into adolescence, huge horse-drawn lawn-mowers had taken their places, at a vastly increased expense, and to the dissatisfaction of the women who were thus deprived of a modicum of income. The horses, carefully selected for their light weight and their quiet step, had their feet encased in

enormous, padded shoes made of felt and sacking.

A few words about the house and the grounds.

To my memory, the house looks enormous; and it was pretentiously called “Castle Thurow”. If Annette can be trusted, there were twenty-nine rooms; I never counted them myself. Its front faced the sea; and a wide flight of steps, built of some basaltic rock, led up to an open sort of terrace, used as a driveway and a veranda, and paved with slabs of the same sort of stone, unhewn; in the middle, there was the main entrance. To the right, the cliff-like structure was flanked by a tower which reached to twice the height of the main building. The lower three stories of this tower were an integral part of the house; its upper three stories, above the main roof, had contained the children’s quarters. At the time which I remember clearly, my sisters were gone; and the fourth and fifth floors of the tower were reserved for myself and Annette and locked up when we were abroad. It is half a century ago that I saw it last; but my impression of it is, today, one of quiet dignity and straightlined power, most impressive when approached from the sea. The lawns in front must have comprised twenty-five or thirty acres; and they were dotted with fine old elms and oaks. What a place for a novelist to live in!

As for the inside, one entered, via the main entrance, a huge hall reaching up through two stories, with, at its far end, an enormous fireplace in which at almost all times, summer as well as winter, there burned a log fire, more or less bright, of sticks probably four feet long, though they seem closer to eight to me. This hall was the scene of the everyday life of the household which never consisted of less than twenty people, exclusive of servants. It was comfortably furnished with a number of chesterfields and an abundance of arm-chairs. There, more than when we were abroad, so it seems to me now, my own indoor life was lived at the knees of my mother. The moment we started on our travels, she receded into a brilliant world of uniforms and bestarred evening clothes; except at home, I hardly ever saw her in daytime. We shall hear more of that anon.

To the left of the hall lay the dining-room, oak-panelled, where it was nothing uncommon for thirty guests to sit down, in addition to the twenty members of the household. In front of it was the library; opposite, the two or three drawing-rooms, one of which was called the music room. There, my mother often stormed through the more emotional passages of great symphonic music, playing a fine grand piano, sola, or accompanied by violin or cello.

On the second floor, all rooms opened from the gallery surrounding the hall; the gallery as such was reached by a grand stairway on the right. The rooms were the two masters’ suites and a few others used for the more eminent guests. Less pretentious guest-rooms were on the third floor, the rest of which

was given over to the servants and other permanent members of the household. In the early years, of course, some of my sisters still lived in the house; but, since they were even then young ladies rather than girls, they form a dim memory only; before I grew into conscious boyhood they had disappeared into the outer world, one going to Cambridge in England, two to the United States, one to Vienna, and the remaining God only knows where. They were my father's daughters; I was my mother's son. Even the youngest never became really intimate with me; and it was only a mild shock to the boy of twelve or thirteen when she died in childbirth in distant Chicago.

Strange to say, what today remains most vivid in my memory picture of the interior of the house is the windows in wintertime. They were thickly curtained and, in their lower parts, hung with fur robes to keep the draughts out. Apart from the hall, every room had its stove: a large fayence structure which remained warm in the coldest winter from October until April.

Behind the house were the orchards and kitchen gardens, separated from it by a sort of flag-stone court which lay six or eight feet lower than the terrace in front. Behind the orchards and gardens stood a building which was called by a German name, the "Leutehaus"; it contained the dining-room and the bedrooms of the general run of the servants, indoor and out. This Leutehaus was perhaps the gayest place on the estate. Never a week went by without a dance taking place there, for which three or four musically-gifted men played accordions.

The whole place was a world in itself, with stores of linen, bedding, etc., sufficient for a good-sized hotel; and most of it was made by servants in their leisure hours. All servants wore homespun, men as well as women. The household as such was run by an elderly lady of aristocratic appearance and manners who treated "the family" as her guests. My father, of course, was often absent in Paris or London, less frequently in Berlin, though he made it a point to be at home when my mother and I came for a visit.

Altogether, there must have been a hundred men and women who looked after house and grounds; and several hundred, employed in nursery and farm, lived as tenants in the village belonging to the place.

Every morning, at about six o'clock, and earlier in summer, one of a bevy of maids entered every bedroom, whether occupied by man or woman, and deposited a tall, brilliantly-scoured pewter pitcher of hot water for shaving and sitz-bath. Of the latter, one was placed at night for every occupant in every room, some of which harboured as many as four young men. This water, having been used or not used, as the case might be—and there were occasions when I, for one, merely pretended having used it—had to be carried down again in buckets later on in the forenoon.

Most of the inmates of the house took the appearance of the maid as a signal to rise and descend for a frugal French breakfast—consisting traditionally of coffee, and fresh rolls baked every morning. Whoever had any business to attend to, did so after that.

Meanwhile men made the rounds looking, in winter, after the twenty-odd stoves and the huge fire in the fireplace of the hall.

A second breakfast followed at ten o'clock; and this was the first occasion at which a majority of the people in the house met in the dining-room. It was always a noisy gathering; for, in contrast to the later meals, everybody helped himself, and people ate and drank sitting or standing in groups. Huge sideboards were loaded with cold viands. Where carving was needed a girl or a lackey stood ready to do it. Roast beef was carved by a man; fowl, by a maid. It was an informal but extraordinarily plentiful meal at which my mother never appeared, though her maid did, to gather on a tray what her mistress had ordered.

Lunch, properly speaking, was taken at one-thirty; and this was the first formal meal at which my mother presided when she was at home; and it was the only one at which I, too, was present. The fact that my mother sat in her chair at the head of the table gave the affair a decorous air. Everybody was served individually by maids under the direction of the butler. My father, too, was always present, occupying the place opposite my mother. At this meal wine was served to all but myself; and the conversation was general and often animated. I—looked about. It was, of course, the time, in the seventies and early eighties, when children were still only seen, not heard. I remember one occasion when, having heard and probably understood a remark addressed by a smart young man, in very faulty English, to a very young lady, I burst out laughing. Almost immediately I felt my mother's eye resting on myself; having caught mine, it moved to the door. I rose and left the room.

Dinner was at eight; and everybody dressed for it. It was only once, towards the end, that I, having meanwhile been supplied with a formal suit, was permitted to sit in at this function; and even then, sitting as I did near my father, separated from him only by a magnificent woman, I did not dare to take part in the conversation.

Since I had never seen the place without them, I naturally did not show any surprise at the number of young men who lived there. Individually, they changed; as a group they exhibited a singular uniformity. They were the sons of large land-owners, mostly aristocrats, who were there in order to learn something of the management of an estate, paying handsomely for the privilege of doing such of the administrative work as would otherwise have required expensive clerical and executive help. They were, in fact, the only

people belonging to the household properly speaking who did any work.

In the afternoon, there were as a rule some twenty people or so gathered in the music room: they might be guests staying in the house or neighbours who had driven or ridden over. My mother was a drawing card, for she was a graduate of the conservatory of music at Vienna; and she had often been urged, even by virtuosi and composers, to go on the concert stage. Whenever she played, there was a peculiar, highly impressive atmosphere: as of the presence of something divine. I remember one occasion when a white-haired, extraordinarily handsome old man, as my mother left the piano, rose impulsively out of his arm-chair and kissed her hand with an air of veneration. I was tremendously touched and never stirred in my corner while she swept out of the room. On another, later occasion, she had repeatedly run through the opening of the first movement of the Eroica and shaken her head, smiling. Suddenly she broke off with a few vast chords; and, without transition, swept into the second movement of the Ninth Sonata, rendering the four variations with a virtuosity which brought all present to their feet, clapping and crying out: “Brava! Brava!” She rose, turned, and bowed. Then, sitting down again, she played the scherzo of the Eroica; and when she ceased, there was a dead silence more flattering than any applause could have been.

On that occasion, I sneaked out of the room, tears in my eyes, and, from the hall, saw my father sitting in a neighbouring drawing-room, playing chess with a full-bosomed, flashing-eyed lady whom he seemed to dominate by sheer physical presence. To him, music was nothing but noise.

It was summer, as it mostly was when we were at home; and at night I could not sleep. So I went downstairs in my tower and, from the landing two stories below my room, penetrated into the gallery in search of my mother. The whole house seemed to be asleep, so it must have been in the early hours of the morning. On the gallery, a few candles were burning, as they always did at night. My mother’s suite was at the far end of the gallery; and in order to reach it, I had to pass the doors of several of the guest-rooms and those of my father’s apartment. Just before I passed his bedroom, the door was opened from the inside; and the fine lady came out, in a gorgeous, open dressing-gown which showed her silk night-wear underneath. Behind her stood my father, in pyjamas, bowing her out. Neither saw me in that shadowy passage; and I let myself drop to the floor, eclipsing myself between two chairs. I did not fully understand; but, when the lady had swept out of sight into her own room, and my father had closed his door, I understood enough to have lost all taste for snuggling into my mother’s bed. I was only seven or eight; but I knew I must not mention this to her.

I will add a few other memories of home, if that can be called home which

remained essentially alien.

One day—I was a mere toddler—I had somehow escaped from Annette on whose hand I had descended into the great kitchen with its cook and its kitchen-maids. Thence I had gone out to the stone-paved court behind the house. I might say that this is a genuine memory; for my mother, who always lived under the premonition of an early death, never allowed Annette to tell me anything which might, in my imagination, work out to the disadvantage of my father on whom I might one day be dependent.

To the left or north of that court, there was my father's open-air gymnasium where he often exercised on parallel and so-called horizontal bars, or on a trapeze. He was extraordinarily proficient in such things and prided himself on the fact. He could readily perform what he called the "giants' turn"—no doubt the literal translation into English of a Swedish technical term. To do it, he jumped clear of the ground, firmly grasping the bar which was perhaps set at a height of eight feet. Swinging back and forth a few times, he suddenly gathered for a supreme effort and went over in a complete circle, four, five times, and gracefully at that—a not inconsiderable feat for a man weighing 225 pounds.

On this occasion, I saw him there and stopped, putting a finger in my mouth, for I was in deadly fear of him. When he saw me, he dropped to the ground and advanced. I turned to flee; but he caught me up in his arms and returned to the bar. There, he lifted me high overhead, and I, scared out of my wits, closed my little hands about it. He was still laughing as he let go; but, seeing my distorted face, he grunted with disgust, turned away, and strode off.

Now it so happened that Annette had almost immediately missed me and run up into the hall where my mother sat reading. I could not have gone out through the open front door without passing in sight of my mother, except through the dining-room. Both women ran to look. A glance sufficed to show that the dining-room was empty. So they ran to the back door, passing my father's "office", and out into the court. Annette kept straight on, into the garden; but my mother, fortunately, turned to her left; and a moment later she saw me hanging from the bar. It was none too soon; for, though I began to bawl lustily at sight of her, I was weakening and, in a moment, would have let go. She called to me to drop and caught me in her arms; and, naturally, I was made much of between the two women. Strangely, my memory of the scene—perhaps my earliest direct memory—is not an emotional but a visual one. Whenever I think of it, I see my mother sweeping forward, towards me, in the shape of the winged Victory of Samothrace.

In this connection I might add that it was the rarest thing for me to see my father and my mother engaged in a common activity. When it did happen, they

were invariably on horseback. My father kept two or three huge Danish saddle-horses for himself; they were the only breed capable of carrying his weight in a gallop; even these he used up; for he was never satisfied with the ponderous, cradling gallop natural to beasts of their build. My mother had an equal number of mares of English-Arabian blood; like her hackneys, they were coal-black and always showed the whites of their eyes. She, too, was a daring rider and often, when we were at home, crossed, at a stretched gallop, fields and meadows, taking hedges and brooks in her stride as if they were not there. For a woman, she was not light, either; I weighed her at one time, later; and she tipped the beam at over one hundred and seventy. Year after year, these horses awaited her; nobody else used them. No doubt they, too, were replaced in the course of the years; but I was never aware of the change. No doubt, too, there was less riding towards the end; for in her later years my mother suffered from cancer.

Perhaps the fact that the horses ran idle during most of the year—for we spent no more than from four to six weeks at home in the twelve-month—had something to do with a serious accident which might have been fatal. We had just arrived at Thurow in the morning; and right after luncheon my mother sent word around to the stables to have a mount brought to the door. I believe the first words exchanged between my parents had been angry ones; my mother had just discovered that funds on which she had counted were not available. Very likely the visit to Sweden was occasioned by that difficulty.

At any rate, when she appeared in front of the house, in her riding-habit, the horse would not stand. The groom who had brought it was too light to hold it; and repeatedly, as my mother approached, the long train of her habit over one arm, the mare shied away sideways, circling about the groom who had trouble in keeping his feet. My mother was grimly patient, as she tried to outmanœuvre the horse; and at last, the groom quickly holding out his hand to support her foot, she swung herself up into the side-saddle. The mare reared on her hind-feet and pivoted, throwing her head; but my mother was her match and, touching the animal's rump with her crop, forced it down on its knees. Suddenly, as my mother let her rise, the mare gave in; and horse and rider dashed away through the great avenue of trees which formed the approach to the house from the east. I had been standing on the step of the house, admiring my mother who looked superb as she matched her skill against the animal's temper. I must have been twelve years old at the time.

An hour or so later my mother was carried in on the door of one of the labourers' houses in the village. In taking a hedge, the horse had thrown her; and, what was worse, she had been unable to free her foot; so that she was dragged along over rough, heathery ground for several hundred feet before a

gang of men working in a nearby field could stop the animal. Worst of all, the vicious beast had lashed out, kicking up its heels, and had hit my mother's head above her left eye.

The whole house was in a turmoil; and my father who, luckily, had not yet gone out, dashed away on horseback to fetch the doctor from the city. As chance would have it, the family physician, having heard of our arrival, was already on his way to pay my mother his respects. My father met him within a few miles of Thurow; and the physician covered the remainder of the distance at a gallop.

It took my mother six or eight weeks to recover. There remained, under ordinary circumstances, no disfigurement; but anger or excitement made the resultant swelling over the frontal bone of her still smooth brow, conspicuous. I learned to watch for that sign. Nor was her nerve affected in any way. My father wanted to dispose of the mare; but my mother objected, saying to him, in my hearing, that her being thrown was his fault, not the animal's. She soon tamed the mare.

Our stay at home was, on this occasion, lengthened to three months; for, brought on by her fall, some internal trouble declared itself; and soon I was told that it had been found necessary for her to undergo an operation.

This was the occasion of my seeing my grandfather on my mother's side for the first and only time in my life. Why it should have been the only time I do not know for certain. My mother never told me; and her father died within a few years. From Annette, who had been with my mother even before her marriage, I heard that there had been an estrangement between the old judge and all three of his daughters and even his only son. That son had, in 1870, joined the Prussian army, against his father's will; and he had been killed in action at Mars-la-Tour. My mother's oldest sister had gone on the stage; her second sister, also older than she, had become a singer on the concert stage; my mother had married against his will.

For the operation, she was taken to Hamburg in Germany; and my grandfather, a stern, grenadier-like figure, had gone there to make the arrangements. He met the train at the station and was much surprised to find her sitting up in her compartment. In addition to his own carriage he had brought an ambulance for which there was no need. Without paying any attention to my father, he went up to his daughter, bent down to kiss her, and, seeing her wince with a sudden pain as she tried to rise, he picked her up bodily, to my amazement, and carried her through the station to his carriage. She was taken directly to the hospital.

On the third day, the operation was performed; and three weeks later my

mother was sitting up again.

Meanwhile my father, I, and such servants as had been taken along were staying at one great hotel overlooking the inner basin of the Alster, a noble sheet of water in the heart of the city; my grandfather, at another. From the moment on when my mother was convalescent I spent, very naturally, much of my time at the hospital; and there I saw a good deal of my grandfather who, as a rule, was sitting rigidly in her room, on a straight-backed chair, without ever leaning back, though he often rested his chin on the gold knob of his cane. As far as I could see, he was content just to be there. When he came in, he invariably put his hand on my head, by way of greeting, while I, of course, jumped up and asked him how he did, sir.

But once I arrived after him; and even before I entered the room, I became aware of an agitated conversation going on inside. For a moment I listened; and then, realizing that I was not meant to hear, I knocked to make my presence known. What little I had heard gave me a profound shock. Not only did I infer that my grandfather advised my mother to get a divorce; I also heard him use words of my father which no gentleman can use of another while he considers him as being within the pale. As soon as my mother became aware of me, she checked the next outburst. I do not remember how I came to know anything of what followed; but I did know that, shortly after, before my mother left the hospital, large sums of money were transferred to her; and that she, in return, had to sign certain papers before a lawyer.

I also know somehow that my father was furious over this transaction to which he, too, had to attach his signature. Much later I came to the conclusion that the money made over to my mother was in lieu of what would have come to her at my grandfather's death; and that the papers she had to sign were in the nature of a release waiving any further participation in her father's estate; the transfer was probably made in such a way as to make it impossible for my father to touch the money.

I tried later to extract an explanation from my mother, telling her what I knew; but she put me off, adding that I had much better not get any ideas in my head which might prejudice me against my father. As I have said, she foresaw that sooner or later I should be dependent on him.

Nevertheless, I suspected henceforth that the division between my parents was much deeper than appeared on the surface. During the last few years, when our visits at home became both shorter and less frequent, it happened that I overheard harsh words between them; and there was, before we left Hamburg, at least one towering scene between my grandfather and my father, at our hotel where my grandfather had called almost formally. There was a sitting-room between our two bedrooms; and the scene took place there; that I

was in the adjacent room neither of the two men knew, of course. I understood nothing; but I heard enough to know that the older man called the younger “sir”. While my father did nearly all the talking, my grandfather interrupted him a score of times with monosyllabic but explosive exclamations.

My grandfather left shortly after; and before he drove to the station, I was sent to call on him and to say good-bye. On this occasion he gave me a fine old watch which he recommended me not to carry just yet; but he wished me to have it as an heirloom. Within a decade I had to sell it in New York, to buy bread and butter for a few weeks.

Shortly, my mother and I went to one of the German island resorts in the North Sea, leaving it, however, very soon to go to a French resort, Trouville or Biarritz, which my francophile mother preferred. My father, I believe, went home.

I must have been about twelve years old at the time; for after that there was only one more visit home before the final one; and this last but one visit was made memorable to me in various ways. I will mention the pleasant way first. My mother was entirely her usual self; nobody would have thought that two or three years later she was to come home, mentally unbalanced and physically disfigured by disease, doomed to die, an old woman.

Her usual self she betrayed, among other things, by the superior way in which she at least tried to handle a serious scrape into which I got myself soon after our arrival.

Naturally, when at home, I spent a good deal of my time on the beach. My father was a landsman; he had never cared for the sea except as a feature of the landscape of Thurow. My mother, on the other hand, had the nostalgia for the elemental aspects of nature; she understood my passion for salt water. I was, by that time, an expert oarsman, a bold swimmer, and very self-reliant. Repeatedly I had gone out with the fishermen from a nearby fishing village; but there was no boat of our own.

One day, in unsettled weather, I went down to the beach very early in the morning, hoping to be able to go out with the fishermen; but they had left, utilizing the land-breeze which blew during the small hours of the night. I roamed about, scrutinizing the wreckage thrown ashore by the last west wind; and my random walk took me away from that part of the beach which lay in front of the house.

On a point of land far to the north, practically on the horizon, there stood a lighthouse; and for years it had been my ambition to go there and to examine it. The shore between the spot where I found myself at perhaps eight o’clock and the lighthouse curved around a deep bay; and I had already noticed that the

distance across was no more than a third of the distance around, when I saw a small boat drawn up on the shingle; for the smooth, fine sand which formed the beach in view of the house ceased about a mile north, becoming first shingle, and finally rock.

The fishermen, I said to myself, had gone long ago; none of the larger boats was visible in the bay; it was most unlikely that this little craft would be needed. The village lay another mile or so ahead, behind the beach-crest, in a hollow sheltered from the winds. I looked about for an isolated hut to which this boat might belong but found none. Had I seen one, I should have gone to ask for permission to use the boat; as it was, I must frankly admit that I trusted to the fact that nobody, within a radius of miles from my father's place, had ever objected to my using whatever I found that took my fancy; but, of course, I always returned things. I was the "young master", son of the man who, in England, would have been called the squire; and most people were, if not fawning, yet friendly. I made up my mind to use the boat. The oars were in it.

But even at that I was careful to mark the point where it lay and the manner in which it was secured. A large stone served as an anchor, the boat being fastened to it by perhaps fifty feet of rope. The position of the boat was clearly indicated by two enormous spruces standing out from the woods beyond the beach.

I dragged the stone down to the boat, and by a supreme effort, lifted it into the bows. Picking up one of the oars lying on the thwarts I pushed myself off, surprised at the ease with which I succeeded in doing so. Then, sitting down on the middle thwart, I began to row across the bay, turning frequently, to hold a straight course for the lighthouse. The day was overcast, with a grey sky and practically no wind.

I had gone no more than a few hundred yards when, to my complete reassurance, I saw the tower of Thurow appearing above the trees. Taking my bearings, I found that the lighthouse, the place whence I had taken the boat, and the tower were in a straight line. That fact would help me to put the boat back where it belonged. With a will I settled down to the task of crossing the bay.

At home, of course, nobody knew where I had gone; but that did not worry me. Annette was still, more or less, responsible for my safety; but more in the sense that it was assumed I should not do anything which would cause her anxiety or which might expose her to inconvenient questions. When she was worried, I was apt to laugh at her; and she would say, "Boys will be boys," shedding a tear, perhaps, over my recklessness, but always ready to condone anything I might do; it was never very wicked. Once, at Florence, when my mother held one of her musical afternoons, I had caused a serious disturbance

by letting a frantic cat to whose tail I had tied pewter cups and pitchers, escape from me in to the drawing-room of the villa where the animal, rearing and furiously clawing at the monster she imagined to be pursuing her, caused a commotion. But Annette had not been able to do anything but bend over with laughter when she was supposed to be scolding me; the ladies, mostly members of the Florentine aristocracy, had been “too funny for anything”. I was very fond of Annette.

It took me perhaps two or three hours to cross the bay; and only when I had done so did things begin to happen. No sooner was I in line with the two points of land, the one on which the lighthouse stood and the other south of Thurow, than I became aware of two or three disturbing factors at once.

The first to attract my attention was the extraordinary rate of speed with which I began to move: the water to both sides of the boat was streaked and ridged with the current. The other was that the whole point consisted of smooth, sleek granite which offered no place for landing; the third, that there was nobody about anywhere. It was true, for a second I had caught sight of the lighthouse-keeper’s cottage; but bold rocks had intervened at once; and I knew that I was out of sight of anyone who might have come to the rescue.

Besides, I found myself in a narrows. There were rocky islands to the west. The current was setting straight north; and in the immediate proximity of the land, to my left, it was running with terrifying force. A glance over my shoulder showed me that the current would at least sweep me clear of the rocky islands, which served to explain the speed of the current.

I was now thoroughly alarmed; but I kept my head cool. The presence of the rocky islands and of the current running between them explained why it should have been found necessary to place the lighthouse where it stood. Every now and then I had a vision of being swept out, through the Sound, into the Kattegat and, through the Skagerrak, into the North Sea or the Atlantic, whence the Gulf Stream might take me into the Arctic Ocean. But behind the islets there were seemingly quiet backwaters. I began to manœuvre to get into them; and suddenly I felt the boat being caught in the backwash and irresistibly carried south, straight towards the rocks. But just before I expected the impact, the current turned again, sweeping me sideways, and then north again. There was half a minute during which the boat was in a spin, pivoting about a point below my seat on the mid thwart.

And then came relief. If the boat fought the current, the current also fought the boat; and presently it cast it forth, spewed it out as it were, into comparatively quiet water between land and mid-channel. I saw two steamers, one standing in, one out; and that, too, reassured me: I was on one of the main traffic lanes of the Baltic; if worse came to worst, I should be picked up. The

lighthouse was still close at hand, too; I was not yet headed for the Kattegat.

Once more I settled down to a steady spell of rowing; and soon I convinced myself that here, outside of the islands, I was making progress southward. I could not see the tower of Thurow; and a strong current still held me back; but with every stroke of the oars the lighthouse seemed to move an inch or two north, a fact I could verify against the forest beyond. I pulled and pulled; and soon I found that, the farther I held to the west, outward, the better my progress; from which I inferred that the current was strongest inland, along the line which joined the two points of the bay.

I held southward for perhaps an hour before I turned east. By that time I was clear of the chaos of islets. Before I did turn, I rested for a few minutes. Though I was getting very tired, I was still far from the point of exhaustion.

And then, with a supreme effort, I pulled straight east, rowing as hard as I could. I was rewarded, for shortly, by signs which I could not have specified, I knew that the water in which I was, was that of the bay. At last I could rest without losing my southing.

I had no way to make sure of the time, for there was no sun. My watch I had left at home, as I always did when I went rambling. But the clock of my stomach told me that lunch-time was past. At that my conscience smote me; if Annette did not matter, my mother did.

I went at it again and pulled now for the line joining lighthouse and tower; for to my great joy the tower had come into sight again. Then I held to that line; and after hours of endeavour I recognized the two trees which were my landmark for the anchoring place of the boat. Before I reached it, a wind sprang up, and a squall hit me with drenching rain. But the wind helped; wind and waves now drove me shoreward; and to my infinite relief I at last touched bottom.

I pulled the boat up on the shingle beach as far as I could, utilizing the lift of every wave which came from behind. When the craft was at last clear of the water, I beached the anchor stone and dragged it up as far as the rope allowed.

Then I struck for home, now walking, now running. I approached the house via the lawns, but took care not to expose myself to the view from the windows. I need not have troubled; nobody was watching for me on this side.

I reached the terrace and made for the great door which was panelled with glass. Inside the door were the cloak-rooms and, beyond, another glass door. Through these two doors I commanded a view of the hall to the great fireplace where a huge fire was roaring up the chimney; and there, in a deep arm-chair, my mother was quietly sitting and reading a yellow, paper-bound, French book. She did not look worried.

I gave a caper of satisfaction; but I was wet through and did not care to show myself to her in that state. I made up my mind not to say a word to anyone about where I had been and what dangers I had lived through. Why scare the women, if only ex-post-facto?

I circled the house, entered by the back-door, ran up the service stairs, and made for the tower. Annette was just coming from my room.

At sight of me she stopped dead and burst into tears.

“Cry-baby!” I said and brushed past her.

I quickly changed clothes from head to foot, leaving my wet things strewn over the floor to serve Annette right.

Then, my watch-chain coquettishly draped over my chest, I jauntily descended into the hall, greeting my mother in the most casual way, and went and kissed her.

“Whence this demonstrativeness?” she asked, smiling at me.

“Oh!” I said airily, “just so”; threw myself down in a chair opposite hers, and added, “Tell me a story,” to disguise the fact that I might have told a story myself.

The sequel came the next day.

It was threshing-time; and there was a new steam-engine on the place, together with a threshing machine. So far, threshing had been done by horse-power, a team being hitched to a pole and driven in a circle.

Naturally, every male on the place, including myself, was in the field where the puffing monster was at work. My father was there, too, on horseback, and with him were a number of our neighbours, several of them being titled people. All the “volunteers”, as the young apprentices in management were called, were also there: it was quite an imposing cavalcade.

The threshing machine spewed the straw high up into the air whence it fell like rain, forming a shapeless stack, the finer chaff drifting away on the breeze.

It was a marvellous midsummer day following a fierce wind-storm that had blown overnight, pelting and washing the world with streams of rain. That was the reason why threshing had not started till after lunch. Around the ever-growing straw-stack scores of children from the village were playing wildly. I was sitting on the ground, profoundly impressed with the miracle of the puffing engine.

It must have been five o’clock when I saw Annette coming across the field. The humpbacked “inspector”, mounted on a pony, to whom she spoke, broke rank a moment later and came galloping across to where I sat. This inspector always amused me. He was very long-legged; but his upper body was short,

consisting as it did of two spheres, the larger his body, with the smaller, his head, balanced above it; for he exhibited the rare phenomenon of a man with two humps, one in front and one behind; he could rest his chin on his chest. Though he was by no means an old man, his globular head was without a trace of hair.

I saw he was heading for me; so I greeted him with a laugh. “Hello, Niels,” or whatever his name was.

“You’re wanted at the castle,” he said in Swedish; “your mother wants you.”

Though I never learned to speak Swedish well, for the language of the house, at least when my mother was at home, was English, I understood and jumped up to join Annette.

“What does Mother want?” I asked as we set out for the house.

“I don’t know,” she said. “There’s an ugly fellow with her, one of the fishermen from the village. He’s threatening her. That much I made out.”

My heart missed a beat; I knew at once that it must be something to do with the boat. “See you later,” I said to Annette and broke into a run.

When I reached the house, I made at once for the hall.

My mother was sitting in her favourite arm-chair; and opposite her stood a short, grim man with white hair—on which reposed a sou’wester without a neck-guard, which had been torn off—and a dirty-white fanbeard stained below the chin with tobacco. His attitude was anything but respectful; and as I entered, he was spitting into the fireplace.

From the dining-room a trim maid was wheeling the tea-wagon in, with all the paraphernalia of afternoon tea.

“Sit down, Mr. Sterner,” I heard my mother say. “You’ll have a cup of tea, won’t you?” Like myself, my mother spoke only a broken Swedish, though she understood it perfectly.

“Thank you kindly, madam,” said the stranger with the air of a lord. “I prefer to stand. It wouldn’t be fitting for the likes of me to sit down in a place like this. As for the tea, I didn’t come for anything of the kind. I came for cold cash.”

I could have knocked his head off for the sneering tone in which he spoke; but one did not fight before ladies. I glared at him instead, as much as to say, “Just come outside with me. I’ll blacken your eye for you.”

“That’s the young gentleman,” he said with a baleful look, putting a world of sarcasm into the last word. “You pay up, or I’ll have the law of him.”

“Of a child?” my mother asked mildly.

“Of the child’s father,” said the man.

“As I said, Mr. Sterner,” replied my mother, “I’d rather spare my husband the annoyance. And you, a lawsuit,” she added, smiling. “For I can assure you that, unless you can prove my son to have been at fault, my husband will refuse to compromise.”

“At fault!” the old man blustered. “He took the boat. He was seen. It wasn’t his boat, was it? We plain people call that stealing.”

It was the first time in my life that I ran up against this profound division in the social order; but I understood it at once. This man felt aggrieved; justly aggrieved, perhaps; and I had no doubt that my mother had already offered to do the fair thing by way of compensation. Nor had I any doubt that, had I been the son of a fellow fisherman, he would have been satisfied with anything that could be called fair. But here was the rub: I was the squire’s son; and he was itching for a fight with the squire. As he would have said, he had him where he wanted him. All this I saw even before I knew of the most damaging fact which came out in answer to the first thing I said.

“Well, I borrowed the boat; I thought no harm.”

“Borrowed the boat!” he repeated, with the emphasis this time on the first word. “Borrowing means returning. You stole it.”

“I did return it. I put it back exactly where I took it.”

“Where is it, then, young gentleman? Can you tell me that?”

“If it’s not where I found it, I can’t,” I said.

“Found it!” he repeated out of a vast scorn. “It was tied to a stone. That wasn’t finding.”

I was getting angry, more at his tone even than at his implications. “I never untied it; and when I put it back, I carried the stone up on the beach as far as the rope would let me.”

“That’s just what I say you didn’t. Or it would be there.”

My mother who had poured the tea held up a cup. “You are sure you won’t take anything, Mr. Sterner?”

“Quite sure, madam. Thank you kindly.”

“Now tell me, Mr. Sterner,” she went on evenly. “What does a boat like that cost new?”

“That isn’t the point,” the old man prevaricated. “I need the boat, and I haven’t got it. I’m losing money.”

“And you won’t take less than five hundred kroner?”

“Not an oere less.”

“As I said,” my mother proceeded. “I haven’t that much of my own in the house. Will you take an order on my bank at Lund?”

“I will not, madam.”

“In that case, I don’t see what I can do.”

“You can send for the master.”

But I knew that that was exactly what my mother wished to avoid; it frightened her. I was furious but impotent.

“I’ll tell you what I will do, Mr. Sterner,” my mother said. “I shall have the cash for you by tomorrow morning at ten.”

“How much now?”

“Nothing!” I cried before my mother could answer.

He glared at me; but, strangely, my mother confirmed what I had said, though she did not speak fiercely. “Listen, Mr. Sterner,” she said. “You come back tomorrow morning at ten. My husband will be at home then, too. If I don’t have the full sum, you can see him. I wouldn’t now know where to send for him.”

The old man considered for a moment, spitting again. I began to suspect that he thought it as well himself not to let it come to a meeting between him and my father. He was holding my father only as a threat over my mother; and I despised him for it. And then he showed an unexpected shrewdness.

“Very well, madam,” he said less grimly. “Where’ll I go and whom’ll I ask for?”

My mother smiled. “I may not be down myself yet,” she said. “Come to the back-door and ask for Annette.”

The old man nodded and actually tipped his sou’wester as he stalked away.

“The dirty beggar!” I cried as soon as the door had closed on his back. Then, turning to my mother, I spoke very quickly. “It was the wind, of course, overnight. I drew that boat up as far as it would go; higher up than it had been. It was quite out of the water. If the undertow was strong enough to break the rope, that rope can’t have been much good. By the way, I’m almost sure, Mother, the boat never cost even one hundred kroner.”

“Likely not,” she said. “But you see, he may be right in what he says, that he needs the boat for his work. He makes his living by the boat.”

“I never thought. . .”

“I know,” said my mother. “Run along. I’m not scolding you. But I’m afraid, if your father knew, he’d fly off.”

“He’d flog me,” I said. “Let him.”

“My dear boy, you’d live through it, I suppose. But I couldn’t bear it. You’ll understand one day. As I said, run along.”

I did. I should have liked to return to the scene of the threshing; but I went to the beach instead, running. I wanted to see the broken rope.

The beach showed all the signs of having been swept by waves to an unusual height; and it was covered with ridge after ridge of fresh kelp.

But there was no broken rope; nor was there the stone to which it had been tied. A drag-mark led from the point where it had lain to the water’s edge and beyond. Looking out over the bay, I almost at once saw the boat, between half a mile and a mile out, where it floated in a peculiar way, with its nose down. It struck me that this seemed to point to trickery.

I was on the point of returning home to fetch help; but, in view of the threshing there might be none but women at the house. Even Karl, my father’s valet, had been at the threshing machine. A steam-engine to thresh grain was still enough of a novelty to draw every male. The fat old butler, of course, could be of no use to me.

For a moment I pondered; then I stripped and ran out into the water. The bottom dropped rapidly here; this was not sand but shingle which rests at a steeper angle. Within a few yards from shore I was beyond my depth.

I held straight for the boat and reached it in half an hour’s strenuous swimming; there was still a swell; but it did not trouble me.

I had no difficulty in boarding the boat, though I had to climb over the stern which stood high out of the water. Carefully I crawled into the bows. Sure enough, the anchor-stone was hanging from its rope. After I had taken it around to the wider stern, it was easy to haul it in, hand over hand, till it came to the surface. It was not so easy to lift it clear, with a swaying bottom below me; but I managed.

I promptly rowed back to the shore, let the breeze partially dry me, and dressed. Meanwhile I was thinking. My first intention had been to go to the village and to fetch the man. On second thought, however, I saw that I needed a witness.

It took me a minute or so to make up my mind. The whistle which proclaimed a stop in the threshing operations helped me to come to a decision. I was going to get someone from the field to come along.

Chance favoured me. The field lay directly behind a fringe of wood. I had hardly run through the latter, at right angles to the beach, when I came out into a lane skirting that field; and in that lane the “inspector” was coming from the north at a slow gallop.

I held up my hand; and when the man drew to a stop, I explained, speaking very fast, what I was after.

"I'll go with you, young Herr," he said; and he helped me to mount behind him.

It was slow riding through the woods, for there was no path. But as soon as we were on the beach, we broke into a trot. I showed the inspector the boat, with the oars in it, and the stone as well.

We went north. Meanwhile I explained what had happened at the house, and Niels showed quick comprehension. He saw the implications of the old man's threats. "It's nothing short of blackmail," he said grimly.

We reached the village, a few hundred yards inland, hidden and sheltered by the crest of the beach. It lay just outside my father's domain; and I, having never been there, was appalled at the signs of poverty which I saw.

But the inspector said, in a tone which brooked no contradiction, "Better let me speak for you."

The first hut we came to was Sterner's; and an old woman came to the door as the inspector shouted, "Hello, there!" Seeing us, she promptly turned back; and a moment later her husband appeared.

"Well?" he asked, "Bringing the money?"

"Much money you're going to get!" Niels said scornfully. "Be glad if I don't put you behind iron bars. Come along. We've something to show you."

"I want my money," the old man replied. "I'm not going to go with you."

"You'd better. If you don't, I'll have to have the police in. It's your last chance to settle this peacefully."

The old man looked frightened. He scratched his ear; and then he fell into step. I should have felt sorry for him had I not by this time been convinced that the whole thing had been a trick. Strangely, without being very clear about it in my mind, I resented most that the relation between my father and my mother should have been so well known as to make it possible for the old man to take advantage of it.

Niels I half admired; and half I despised him for siding so absolutely with his employers.

We reached the boat.

"There's your pile of rubbish," Niels said. "If anyone offers you ten kroner for it, you'd better jump at the chance."

"The oars alone are worth ten kroner," said the old man sullenly.

Niels snorted. "Now listen, my man," he went on. "Let me hear that you've

bothered either the lady of the castle again or this young gentleman, and I'll tell you what I'll do to you. The old hag, your woman, won't gather faggots in the woods next fall."

The old man's face fell. It was the perquisite of the women in the fishing village to gather their firewood for the winter from the ground in the woods belonging to the manor. The families directly connected with the work in nursery and farm—they lived in a separate village owned by my father—were supplied with more solid fuel in lieu of payment for the work they did in felling it. There was a trained forester on the place who supervised that part of the economy of the estate. In rank, he stood on a par with the inspector, who was his son-in-law.

The old man's attitude changed abruptly to a cringing submission. "Thank you kindly," he said. "You won't have cause. But without a boat I'm without bread." He removed his sou'wester and bowed to me. "Thank you kindly, young master, for having returned the boat."

"That's nothing," I said. "I returned it once before; and then you pushed it back into the water yourself, dragging the stone. I borrowed the boat and I returned it; but I mean to pay you for its hire nevertheless." I tossed him a krone which I happened to have in my pocket.

He bowed after us as we rode away.

It was getting late; no doubt Annette was worried again at my absence; and everybody in the house was dressing for dinner.

When, at sundown, we came to the corner of the woods behind which lay the lawns, the inspector stopped his horse, saying, "Well, that's that. You'd better dismount here and slip in unobserved. No use creating talk."

"None whatever," I agreed, jumping to the ground. "And thank you kindly!" The last words I spoke in the old man's manner; and the inspector laughed.

When I reached my room, Annette was there, laying out my clothes; for, though I was not yet allowed to sit at the dinner table, at night, but took my meal by myself in a small room upstairs, I was required to change.

"I want to see Mamma," I said.

"You'll be late."

"Doesn't matter. I've something important to tell her."

And I ran down to the gallery whence, without further preliminaries, I burst into my mother's dressing-room which was not locked.

She had just been put into her corset—an operation of which I had heard the servants speak among themselves. She was a massive woman, no longer

slender; and it required the combined strength of two maids to lace her up. As I burst in, she was standing in the centre of the room, her arms raised, her breast heaving in the endeavour to restore circulation within her armour. Her maid stood ready to slip her gown over her head, for which purpose she had stepped on a chair; the girl who had been acting as reinforcement was on the point of leaving the room. Both gasped at this intrusion of a male; but my mother laughed.

"Mamma!" I cried, blushing at finding her in her state of undress. "Don't worry over the money for that old fellow. I found his boat. And I got the inspector to come with me as a witness. I even paid him for having used the thing."

"Did you?" she said. "Well, that was good. You must tell me all about it. But now run along so I can finish."

I did. Naturally, this was a major event in my young life. But it was shortly followed by another.

It was only a few days later; and threshing was not yet finished when my father, at noon, came in late for luncheon, in riding breeches and the cavalry gaiters which he used to wear.

"Well," he said as soon as he had sat down. "That fool Karline got himself fired. You know what he did?" This to my mother. "There the machine was just running at its best, when he pitched his fork into it, bundle and all. It went clean through the whole works before we could stop the engine."

From the far end of the table, my mother looked up. "Does that put an end to the work?"

"No. Niels thinks we can go on. But, of course, we should make repairs overnight. I should send to town for spare parts. Trouble is I can spare neither horses nor man."

"Well," said my mother, "there are my hackneys. You'd send a democrat, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, I'd send a democrat. It'd be all right for the hackneys . . ."

By this time I knew, from many signs, that my father had heard of the incident with the boat. He had made sly remarks which had convinced me of the fact. He had not spoken to me directly; but he had dragged occasions in by their hair to mention fishing boats and old, irate fishermen; he had even gone so far as to mention the old man's name, in some quite arbitrary connection, and to use the word "blackmail" immediately after; like this: "Oh yes, there's pretty good fishing right along the shore. Especially for old man Sterner. He's got a way of blackmailing the poor fish into his nets." And whenever he had done so, he had had a surreptitious eye on me or my mother. Yet I inferred

from his humour that the part I had played in the adventure had raised me in his estimation. My mother never gave a sign that she understood his allusions; and neither did I. But some of the "volunteers" invariably laughed.

This change in his attitude towards me encouraged me now to say what, without it, I should never have dared.

"I can drive the hackneys."

There was a dead silence around the table, as if I had committed blasphemy.

"I think he can, Charles," my mother said at last.

"Well-l-l. I'd thought of it. I'd like to see him drag a boat up on the beach, though, before I trust him. But perhaps you've done that, too, sir?"

"I wouldn't deny it," I said. "More than once. At least twice. And it was a fishing dory at that."

"Was it?" my father asked, looking directly at me, so that I had to blush. "Well, it doesn't take as much muscular power to hold the horses' lines. Do you know which way a horse goes when you pull on the right?"

"I do, sir. They go where I want them to go. I've driven the hackneys before. *And* other horses. But especially the hackneys, taking mother out. She always lets me drive when I'm along."

"Yes," he said, "but then she serves as a sort of stone-anchor, doesn't she?"

"Maybe. But even a stone-anchor doesn't seem to hold a boat when it wants to run away. And where you want to send me, there are hitching-posts."

"Right," said my father. "If there had been a hitching-post for the boat, as there should have been, and a chain and a lock, it wouldn't have gone gallivanting across the bay."

With that, he dropped the subject for the moment.

In rising from luncheon, however, my father touched my shoulder and led the way through the hall to the office at the rear of the house where his consultations with inspector, factor, or lawyer were held.

Niels was there, sitting at the desk and making out a list from notes in his note-book. He looked very ludicrous, for he had put two dictionaries under, as I called it, his "sit-upon".

I was given my instructions. I was to drive to town, rest the horses for half an hour while I attended to my business at the implement shop, and then to bring back what would be handed out to me, according to the inspector's list.

A groom with my father's horse was waiting at the back-door. He mounted and gave me and the inspector a sign to come along. We set off for the stables.

These stables formed, with the barns, a huge quadrangle a quarter of a mile behind the house. I felt very important, of course; it was the first time that I was going to drive the hackneys alone.

They were in a paddock; and my father sat by as a stable-hand caught them to lead them in and to put the harness on their backs. A few minutes later they were hooked to the democrat.

I climbed up on the seat and waited for the order to start.

"Now listen here, sonny," said my father on his prancing horse. "Don't walk them; but don't let them run, either. You know the road. It should take you two and a half hours each way. Half an hour's rest." And he looked at his watch. "So you should be back at half-past seven."

"All right, sir," I said and clicked my tongue.

The horses tossed their heads and were off. I knew that my father was critically looking after me.

As I said, I felt very important; I was not yet fourteen.

The road led southward, past the east line of the estate; and I turned into it through the huge gates which were open. I gave the horses the reins, and they fell into an easy trot. I knew these were pedigreed animals which were never allowed to run themselves into a lather; I meant to show that I could be trusted.

For nearly two hours I drove with the greatest care, mostly through woods, timing myself by such houses as I passed and whose approximate distance from home was known to me.

And then, just as the road emerged from the woods, running now between open fields, something disastrous happened. There, in the middle of the road, lay an unfolded newspaper; and at the very moment when the horses reached it, already made suspicious by the white patch, the breeze lifted the paper and blew it into a perpendicular position. Both horses reared on their hind-feet and ran away. There was no checking them; they gripped the road and tore along in tremendous bounds. Within a few minutes they were flinging the lather to right and left. To this day I do not believe that even a grown person of the tremendous strength of my father could have held them.

On the other hand, there was no great danger so long as the horses kept on the road; and the road was straight and remained straight right into the city. In the city, I should, of course, be in constant danger of running people down. Besides, the democrat, a light vehicle, was being thrown from side to side by every stone a wheel encountered; shortly I should have to pass through a gate in the ancient fortifications surrounding the city. There, the pavement would be of cobblestones which would multiply the side-thrusts.

I knew the approach to the city well. To either side of the road there was a lake or pond—remains, I believe, of ancient moats. I had, of course, never been in them; but I said to myself, excited as I was, that, if I saw a chance of driving the horses right into the water, that would effectively stop them. I was still hoping that I should get them under control without so extreme a measure when the gleam of water came in sight far ahead.

And then I saw my chance. The ditch to my right was shallow; and just as we were on the point of entering upon the dam between the two lakes, I pulled as hard as I could on the right line, standing up and bracing one foot against the dash-board. It worked. The horses dashed into the water, which splashed over my head, though it was quite shallow. A moment later the animals stood.

I gave them ten minutes to recover their breath; but their flanks were still heaving when I turned them back to the road. They were docile as lambs; but I knew, of course, that now there was great danger from a chill.

I went on into the city, found the address, asked a lounger to watch my horses for a moment, and ran into the office of the place. Having told the clerk who I was and handed him the slip with the list of numbered parts that were wanted, I ran out again to walk the horses to and fro, driving them slowly.

In a few minutes the repair parts were ready for me; and I drove up to the loading platform of the shop to receive them.

Then, instead of giving the horses the half hour's rest, I drove out of town, the way I had come, and, timing myself, kept them at a walk for an hour. It was shortly after five.

Slowly they dried. They seemed quite recovered. At last I judged it safe to trot them again; and, watching out for the point whence they had bolted, drove on somewhat faster. But when I saw the paper, which had simply flopped over, I stopped, alighted, and ran to pick it up. There was barely a breath of wind; and I wondered at the wickedness of chance which had made the sheets rise at the precise moment when it could do harm. I may have borrowed the expression, but I have come to call that "the malice of the object". I folded the paper up, as exhibit A, and put it in my pocket.

Then I went on again. The hair of the horses was now completely dry; but, of course, since the moisture consisted of sweat, it was patterned in wisps. They needed a good brushing-down which I should have given them, to return to the yard in full glory, but I had neither brush nor curry-comb.

It was slightly after seven when I turned in through the gates of Thurow. In the yard, there was a tremendous commotion. Work for the day had been stopped; for, after all, as I heard later, it had, around five o'clock, been found impossible to go on using the machine without first making repairs.

Wonder of wonders, the steam-engine was travelling and pulling the threshing machine. A cavalcade of riders and an army of children accompanied it. I felt sorry for myself at having missed the show.

A moment later I saw my father detaching himself from the cavalcade, sitting his huge Dane like a centaur, and coming to meet me at a ponderous gallop. I drew my horses in; and he, having come to a stop, a few yards from their heads, eyed them with a baleful flicker. I could see at a glance that he was in one of those black moods which made people tremble before him.

He asked no question; he did not give me a chance to explain; he simply manoeuvred his horse alongside the democrat, reached over with one powerful hand, gathered my collar into his grip, lifted me bodily from the seat and laid me across his horse's neck, where he began to belabour me with his riding-crop, within sight of two hundred people, grown-ups and children.

I gave no sound but gritted my teeth.

Having finished with me, he dropped me to the ground, hissed, "Now go to the house!" and turned away.

I did not go to the house but hid away in some disused shed to master the tears of rage which had come at last. I did not even feel any pain from the flogging I had received. But I was not going to show myself at the house in the state I was in.

That was the end of my acquaintance with the man my father had been. When, after my mother's death, I was, for a few years, thrown back upon him, he was vastly changed; but of that I must speak later.

When I did go to the house, late at night, I was fully composed and could act as if nothing had happened. I even admired my mother when, as was her custom, at home and abroad, she showed herself to me before going down for dinner. I kissed her and smiled. She looked unusually fine in a gown of gold-coloured brocade, with a great pearl necklace about her throat; for there were guests for dinner. My father had invited the cavalcade.

But after dinner I sought her out in the hall where the company was assembled for the *demi-tasse* and liqueurs. I plucked her wide sleeves.

"Mother," I whispered, "I've got to see you."

"All right," she said. "Where?"

"Upstairs. In the gallery or in your boudoir."

"I'll be up in fifteen minutes," she said; I could see she knew that this was a crisis.

I waited for her in the gallery; when she came, the train of her gown as usual over her left arm, she put her hand on my right shoulder, walking to the

left of me. Thus we went along the whole length of the gallery to her boudoir. Opening the door, she pushed me ahead of her; and when she had entered, she turned the key.

It was a strange fact that, whenever we were at home, my mother and I were very much closer to each other than when we were abroad; in spite of the fact that abroad we were alone, apart from servants. I felt that this was because we were facing a common enemy. Abroad, there were too many distractions.

Undoubtedly it was this mutual understanding, this common sympathy which inspired me to do what, under the circumstances, was the exactly right thing to do. Perhaps I should say that, during the last few hours, I had vastly matured.

I told her exactly what had happened, without comment or adornment; though I believe I let it be seen I was proud of the fact that I had proved myself equal to handling a difficult situation—difficult at least for a boy.

When, in my narration, I had reached the point where, on my way home, I stopped to pick up the paper and remove it from the ground before driving over the spot a second time, I drew the folded sheets out of my pocket. She nodded, muttering to herself. I could readily see that, for the moment, she was more excited than I. No doubt she divined that I should not be telling her all this with the air of detachment which characterized my recital unless something catastrophic were to follow; and no doubt my own rising tension as I approached the climax, clenching my fists in the effort to control my nerves, imparted itself to her; and she inferred that a proud child's innermost feelings, his very spiritual chastity, as it were, had been outraged. Throughout the tale I remained standing, only half facing her and speaking to the air.

When the climax came, I saw from the tail of my eye how she was stiffening herself to receive the shock. By that time I could not entirely suppress a sob; but I went on without a break, and my words were perfectly matter-of-fact. I did not characterize my father's action by any epithet. I merely let it be understood that he had not asked for a word of explanation.

I felt that, for the moment, my mother and I were a unity; we revolted against a portion of the outside world in one common impulse of passionate rebellion.

When I had finished, she sat speechless for a long while, pale and distraught. I knew my own crisis had become hers. I was desperately trying to keep a balance between her and me.

It was several minutes before she spoke. Meanwhile she was rising out of her arm-chair and stood like a statue, the train of her gown once more over her arm. The tension between us was enormous.

Then, sounding almost hostile, her words came; the tone, I knew, was due solely to the intense endeavour not to let her emotions run away with her.

"What do you intend to do?" she asked.

I shrugged my shoulders. "That's what I wanted to see you about. I cannot remain here."

"No," she said. Then, bending her head as if in thought, she went to the door and stood there, the fingers of her right hand playing about the key. It was with the effect of a sudden clearing of her mind in an irrevocable resolution that she turned the key and, putting her hand on the knob, faced me. "Remain in your room until I send Annette to call you. It may not be until tomorrow afternoon. I do not want you to meet your father. We shall leave together."

I was appalled. "But, mother . . ."

She shook her head. "It had to come to this. It doesn't matter."

And, opening the door, she left me alone.

I remained behind for a few minutes and then did as she had told me to do. On the way to my room I was, of course, able to look down into the hall where I saw her standing in the centre of a group of men, one of whom was talking to her: a neighbour of ours, an old nobleman. She was smiling as she listened to him; nothing betrayed that she had just gone through a crisis which was to determine the brief remainder of her life. I, though not yet fourteen, had become a man.

Yet I could have wished for nothing better than to meet my father and, in a very cool and distant manner, to settle accounts with him; which perhaps proved that I was still very much a boy . . .

But we did not leave next day.

That night I could not sleep. It must have been in the early morning hours, around two or three o'clock, when I felt, since I was not to go out in daytime, that I must take leave of park and woods and beach at night. I only partly dressed, pulling on a pair of trousers over my night-wear; and I descended into the hall. I did not go out at once. As usual, there were night-lights burning everywhere; and the front door, I knew, remained unlocked; since my own birth, with the ensuing thunderstorm and fire, my mother insisted, whenever she was at home, that the main door remain open.

All about, through the windows, the light of a bright moon shone in. Everything looked weird and unfamiliar as, with bare feet, I walked through the rooms. Throughout the house, there was not a sound.

Then, in one of the drawing-rooms, I came across a circular silver tray on a low table. On the tray stood two glasses and a bottle. Casually I picked the

latter up, drew the cork, and smelt at the contents. It was port wine, which I knew; for a year or two earlier, I had had a small glass twice a day, prescribed as a tonic. The bottle was almost full.

I touched the glasses and found they had not been used.

I felt myself very much a man. Yet I was sorely troubled. I knew that what had happened was by this very time drawing wider and wider circles. It had involved the only woman who counted in my life. That that woman was my mother, what did it matter? Metaphorically I had to draw my sword and to defend her. By this time I felt feverish; not for a moment did it occur to me that the fever might be physical.

I had to steady my nerves. And what did a man do when his nerves needed steadying?

I poured myself a glass of wine and tossed it off. Since it went to my head instantly, I followed it up by another; in the very way in which I had seen—of all people—my father do it. It made me feel adventurous and bold. In this very room I had seen my father play chess with resplendent women. I loathed my father; but at the same time I imitated him, sitting down in a chair and bending forward from my hip, over the white marble arm and the bare bosom of my imaginary *vis-à-vis*, throwing her flashing glances. Again I poured a glass; and I raised it and clinked its brim against that of my conquest. No. I was not imitating my father; I was parodying him and his pompous manner when he acted the conqueror; pompous, smooth, and confident at the same time.

At last, no doubt swaying by this time, I went out on the terrace, for the air inside was not wide and open enough to contain my vast and cynical contempt. I went on to the steps and sat down, drawing my feet up into my dressing-gown, for the stone was cold. But inside I was burning with a strange heat; I could have sung or shouted. I gesticulated grandiosely. And there I emptied the bottle which I had taken along; at least it was found empty next morning.

So was I found, lying on the bare flagstones, burning with fever. Before the day was out, scarlatina had declared itself.

I was isolated, of course; but not all alone. My mother and two nurses brought from the city were with me; and apart from them and Annette nobody was allowed near, Annette serving as liaison-officer between kitchen and tower. The doctor, of course, came daily; but his was the only strange face I saw for weeks. Through him, my mother had conveyed a message to my father, to say that life and death depended on his keeping away; for in my delirium, which was severe, I talked of nothing but the challenge I had sent him; I yelled that he must accept it in the manner of medieval barons.

Even as I recovered and finally was allowed out of bed, my mother and I

remained isolated with doctor and nurses. The fiction was kept up that I was not yet out of danger.

As a matter of fact, serious trouble developed with my ears—a trouble to which I owe my deafness today. But that very trouble made it desirable that we should move as soon as possible; for the doctor recommended that a specialist be consulted—an authority at Copenhagen, Hamburg, Paris, or London.

The manner in which our departure was handled may seem cruel or vindictive. Nobody knew of it beforehand. My mother had all her things brought over into the room above mine, Annette and the maid doing the work.

One morning, after my father had left the house, the baggage was taken down and loaded into a democrat which had been summoned. The landau had been ordered for the early afternoon, all those employed by Annette being told that secrecy was to be observed with regard to these preparations. My mother never, in my hearing, gave any direct indication that this was to be a flight; but Annette, for one, understood her to that effect.

Again it was not to be.

The baggage was on the way to the city; and so were the nurses and the maid; only my mother, myself, and Annette were still behind when my father appeared in the tower and demanded an interview with my mother, who peremptorily denied him access; I was aware of her bracing herself for a supreme effort.

But my father had the whip-hand; he threatened to countermand the order for the landau. He had seen the democrat leaving for the city and had ridden across the fields to ask for the meaning of this trip. Seeing my mother's maid, he had guessed what it meant and come straight home.

My mother, who had negotiated with him through the locked door, stood for a moment, tense and white.

At last she said, "I'll be out. I'll see you in my room."

It was within half an hour of luncheon. I, of course, remained behind; and shortly Annette brought me a tray. But I was far too excited to eat.

An hour went by; two hours. I heard the wheels of the landau rattling over the flagstones of the terrace.

I also heard the usual company of "volunteers" departing on their various errands.

By leaning out of my front window, I could see the carriage, with the coachman sitting bolt upright on his seat, and a groom standing in front of the impatient horses, the hackneys, which, every now and then, struck sparks from the stone of the pavement, pawing. Obviously, my father had missed his meal,

which testified to the seriousness of the situation; obviously, too, this was advertising the crisis rather than concealing it. Annette, pale and nervous, was pacing the floor of the room behind me. By order of my mother she had locked the door even when she went for my lunch. She herself had had nothing to eat.

A third hour went by; and still the horses were standing down there, with the groom at their heads; and the coachman was, now and then, humping over, only to straighten his back again with a jerk.

It was after four o'clock when doors were opened and shut from the gallery. A moment later there was a knock at my door.

"All right," said my mother's voice sharply.

Annette sprang to open.

My mother was followed by a lackey whom, by a motion of her hand, she directed to pick up the half-dozen pieces of hand-baggage strewing the floor. She was excessively pale.

"Come, Phil," she said as the lackey had passed through the door.

At this moment I heard the clatter of a heavy horse's iron-shod hoofs on the pavement of the terrace: such as only one of my father's Danes could produce. He was riding into the woods or the fields. Somewhere the threshing machine was humming once more in the distance.

Annette was hurriedly getting into her wraps which had been lying on my bed.

"Aren't you ready, Annette?" my mother asked impatiently.

"Yes, madam," she said.

And my mother led the way.

We emerged on the gallery; and an unexpected scene of striking significance burst upon us. The grand stairway was not central; it led down from the south wing of the gallery; and there, in the hall, the servants were gathering.

When my mother, in her travelling clothes, with a dark-blue veil floating out from her masculine Fedora hat, descended the steps, a lane formed among the servants. Many of them were tearful; half a dozen, males these, stood with stony faces. My mother nodded to them all, individually; and twice she stopped to hold out her hand, once to the old butler who bowed deeply, once to the ancient white-haired housekeeper who bent to kiss her ungloved hand.

It was a grand exit; and everybody felt it to be a final exit; my mother was leaving the place for good; what was more, she was definitely leaving her husband. This was understood; and the feeling of finality sent a lump into my throat.

A footman was holding the door as she stopped to draw on her glove.

Then we proceeded to the waiting carriage and took our seats, my mother and I side by side on the back seat; Annette facing us.

I left behind me one of my three lives, a life consisting of episodic snatches, repeated at first every year, then at lengthening intervals, but nevertheless beloved.

As I said, I had seen the last of the man my father had been, the proud, imperious and magnificent, if brutal man. When I was to see him again, he was broken in body and spirit, living, no longer in the present, but the past.

I had seen the last of the man; but I was shortly to have one more experience of his sardonic humour.

We missed our train and had to stay in the town overnight.

But next day we proceeded and in due time reached Hamburg where, this time, it was I who went to the hospital to undergo an operation. It was probably due to a still undeveloped technique that the operation cost me every trace of hearing in the left ear and seriously impaired the hearing in the other, though, up to my middle fifties, I remained able to carry on classes in teaching; and even after that the world did not, for another decade, become entirely silent to me.

The early months of the following year we spent at Paris. Of what we did when we were abroad I shall speak in the next chapter; here I must wind up the present phase in my relation to my father in which, I cannot deny, he had the last word.

But in order to explain, I must reach back once more.

One day, during the early part of our last stay at home, and before the catastrophic events recorded, we had been in the city, all three of us. What the occasion was I have long since forgotten. The stay lasted two or three days; and we had taken up quarters in the hotel which served the land-owners of the vicinity.

One afternoon, my mother had gone out in the carriage, to make calls; my father was conferring with some lawyer or factor, on business. I was free to do as I pleased; not even Annette was there to interfere with me.

Now I had recently become very anxious to grow a moustache. Considering that I was only thirteen, this was perhaps a premature ambition; but I have always been precocious.

So, in the early afternoon, I sought out, as I had done before, the best barber-shop and had myself shaved. The barber who attended to me knew me; and he also knew the size of my tips; so it was only natural that he should have

treated the occasion as quite a matter of course.

Unfortunately, my father, having finished his business, or perhaps not having begun it, felt in need of a hair-cut: like myself he was blessed with a superabundant growth of hair which remained ungreyed until he was seventy-six. At the time he was only seventy-two or three and looked forty-five.

He saw me the moment he entered; but he gave no sign of recognition. This was all right; when gentlemen meet in a compromising place, they act as if they did not see each other.

But as he sat down, he drew his bushy eyebrows up into an arch and looked at my reflection in the mirror. I frowned; I did not consider that good form. In my opinion, he might, with perfect propriety, have spoken to me, accepting the situation without comment. What he had done on entering was equally correct, of course. But his half-wink was decidedly out of place.

If he wanted to wink at me, then his very silence made the situation embarrassing; for he was known in the establishment as the squire of Thurow; and I was known as his son. My barber had skilfully elicited this information from me on the occasion of our first encounter.

As a consequence of that half-wink of my father's, there were now glances exchanged between the men of the shop; and, I fear, between the head-barber and my father.

When my barber had finished with me, he gave me the equivalent of an, "All right, sir."

Since my father had not formally recognized me, I did not choose to recognize him; though, when I rose, I fear I blushed.

However, I paid for the service I had received, added my tip, more than usually generous, and departed with a "Good afternoon," addressed to everybody or nobody in particular.

That was the preliminary for the joke he played on me when, at Paris, my birthday came around in mid-February.

We were staying at a hotel this time; and when, on the morning of my birthday, I went down into the dining-room to have my breakfast and to order my mother's, I found, by the side of my plate, a small parcel addressed to me in my father's bold script. What struck me right then and there was the fact that it had been mailed in Paris; it was the first time since the catastrophe that my father and my mother were in the same neighbourhood; but I hasten to add that there was no encounter and that I even concealed the fact from my mother. No doubt my father was there on one of his cryptic errands of pleasure; and I was too much of a gentleman to tell on him.

On opening the parcel, I found a slip of paper with some writing on it.

"A gentleman," it said, "does not go to a shop to be shaved; unless he has a valet who does it for him, he shaves himself. He also polishes his own shoes when he is not at home."

I was still wondering about the relevance of the last sentence as I opened the box contained in the parcel. It held a very complete and very good shaving outfit, knife, block-strop, brush, soap, and lotion.

I laughed; but I blushed.

My mother and I had agreed that we were going to go shopping together that afternoon, when I was to pick my own birthday present from her. When she rose, I showed her my father's present; and she, too, laughed. Apparently she knew about the incident at the barber-shop.

In the afternoon, we went to the Rue de Rivoli. I chose a simple comb and a pair of equally simple but very expensive military hairbrushes.

It might interest American readers that I use the comb and the block-strop today, fifty-six years after that birthday; and that the brushes were discarded, by myself, after fifty-one years of use, to be handed on to my son. The razor, straight blade, of course, for I have never used anything else, stood up for forty years, when it was worn thin and narrow by constant stropping.

That was the last birthday or Christmas present I was to receive from my father. A year or so later, while in Egypt, we heard of a terrible accident that had happened to him. The cable of the elevator in which he found himself had snapped; and the cage had fallen through five or six stories. This had resulted in multiple fractures of spine and arms. Incomprehensibly his legs were unhurt. He had to spend many months in a London hospital; when he came out, he resembled his inspector except inasmuch as he was bent, above the hips, to the right.

My mother shuddered but did not go home. She, too, was undergoing a profound and terrible change: cancer of the womb had been the diagnosis, and already there was a serious doubt whether the knife could remove it.

I have briefly dealt with the life at home as far as it affected and matured me. But I have left one factor out of account, and that the one which fitted it into the wider world of the age and of Europe. The years I have dealt with were those from 1872 to 1886. Most of the countries which came into the limelight during that period I knew; but I knew little of their relations to each other.

My father was no admirer of Prussia or Germany; he was profoundly English in his sympathies, though he had a good-natured foible for the pleasure-loving side of France. At the same time, he was living in Sweden; and

Sweden was then, as later, overshadowed by Germany. Bismarck was a popular hero there, at least in the upper strata of society. His policies were watched, analysed, discussed, applauded. The new Germany which was arising was admired, if with a tincture of fear. The industrial growth of the country, its commercial expansion were the marvel of foreign visitors; and most of those who sat down to the table at Thurow went to Berlin when they went abroad, not to Paris or London, as did my father. Yet he, too, took sides; and during the "Kulturkampf" and, later, during the anti-socialist legislation of Bismarck, he approved of the statesman who dominated Europe by sheer force of personality. What I heard of these discussions, over the table, at luncheon, opened my eyes to international problems.

My mother, strange to say, took a dynastic view. While she made fun of the old Emperor whom Bismarck dragged along in his wake, she had a profound attachment, which amounted to veneration, for the old emperor's son Frederick, the later emperor of the hundred days, son-in-law of Queen Victoria. She was to live beyond his death, which she viewed in the nature of an international tragedy. When the news of that death came, being very ill herself, she wept for hours, and she prophesied nothing but evil from the reign of William II. She never, of course, liked the Germans of the middle classes, though some German aristocrats and many officers of rank in the army were counted among her friends. But she was essentially supernational; all her attachments and enthusiasms were personal; whereas those of the males around the table at Thurow were political. My father always felt uncomfortable in that Germanophile atmosphere.

I, of course, had no opinions of my own, and, as I have said, at the table, where I was admitted only for luncheon, I was a silent listener to the last.

It goes without saying, too, that my everyday life, when we were at home, was very largely an outdoor life; much more so than when we were abroad. I had my pony; there were dogs aplenty; there were all the various animals of the farm; and there were few of the over a hundred people employed on the place who were not my friends. I rode, I walked, I drove, I swam. I am an outdoor man to this day, a good rider, an excellent swimmer.

The influence of one man of whom I shall have to speak, pursued me even home, though he never appeared there. This man I called "uncle" though he was a relative neither of my father nor my mother. He was a Dane living at Hamburg, his name Jacobsen; and, though in other respects he was very different from my father, he had this in common with him that he was an accomplished athlete. Perhaps it was precisely for the reason that, on the whole, I was a weakly child, subject to all the infantile diseases, that he made it his task, whenever he could, to look after my physical development; and he did

so with a unique devotion which made it appear as if nothing else counted in life but physical proficiency.

But “Uncle Jacobsen” belonged to my mother’s world; not to that of my father.

II

MY EARLIEST distinct and undoubted memory of my life as a wanderer over the face of Europe, in the wake of my mother, is of the afternoon of a late summer day when, arriving from England, we landed at Boulogne-sur-mer. I see myself reluctantly trailing along on Annette's hand. On account of my curiosity, which was everlastingly attracted by trifles, especially on board ship, I was a drag on her; but she dared not let go of me, for we were approaching the gang-planks leading to the quay; she feared I might get lost in the crowd or be pushed into the water by the crush.

I must have been about eight years old; for I had recently begun school. I did not yet show any sign of growing up into a tall young man, though I believe I was even then somewhat above the average height for my age. I was thin and looked a bit sickly; not that there was anything definitely wrong with me; but I was a poor eater and subject to terrific colds which more or less disabled me when they came.

At Boulogne we stayed for a week or so at a hotel; and meanwhile my mother, aided by two or three agents, searched for a suitable cottage or house. The season was over; but there were still a few hardy bathers left. Her suite at the hotel had been ordered by wire; and I remember how I was struck by the magnificent and superabundant display of flowers in the living-room. We were used to them, especially when we moved, and it never occurred to me to ask where they came from; they came from places which we had left; and they came from places for which we were bound; in this case they also came from Boulogne and the surrounding districts. To an outsider, my mother's travels always resembled a triumphal progress.

From this stay at Boulogne another memory emerges, a visual one. Endless interviews had taken place with crafty house-agents; and sometimes, when houses for rent had been inspected, I had been taken along. One morning a particularly cunning agent appeared at the hotel with a carriage, inviting my mother to accompany him into the country to look at a vacant chateau. I still see him standing in front of her, in the parlour of the hotel, speaking in a dulcet voice full of flattery—nobody, abroad, ever spoke to my mother in any tone but that of flattery—and praising what he had to offer. On this occasion the language was extravagant. I see him gathering the tips of his fingers and kissing them, spreading them airily as he exclaimed, "*Mais c'est un bijou, madame!*"

My mother, amused, consented to go, and took me along, without Annette

this time.

Of the chateau as such I remember nothing; but the location of the place was somewhat similar to that of Thurow, though everything was on a smaller scale. The last thing the agent showed was a beach which was narrow and flanked as well as dotted with granite boulders. What followed is etched on my memory as on a copper plate.

The agent, a small man with loosely-hung limbs, a moustache and a goatee, was standing on one of these boulders, holding forth on the surpassing merits of the place. Meanwhile, having a cold, he was frantically digging about in his pockets for a handkerchief. I, fascinated, standing by my mother's side and holding on to her left hand, followed his contortions with complete absorption and, no doubt, with an open mouth.

Suddenly, finding no handkerchief, he reached into his hip-pocket, without ceasing to pour out his sales talk, and thence drew the remains of a roll of toilet paper. To my childish horror, he peeled off a long strip, coolly folded it into a suitable size, and, gesticulating and rhapsodizing, used it to blow his nose. Then, reaching up with an unconsciously careless but graceful gesture, he set it afloat on the salt-breeze blowing in from the channel, as if that were the most natural way of disposing of his rheum.

As though convinced by that motion, my mother promptly rented the place, much to my delight, for I had already fallen in love with the beach and the woods above it.

This move involved a great many things. Among others, it involved the hiring of horses, carriage, and a number of servants. It also involved our moving again in a month or so.

As soon as we were definitely settled in town—in a house standing flush with the sidewalk of a dignified street—my mother, retaining the carriage, made a few calls, both within and without the city, received a few intimates—intimates, it seems to me today, she had in every city, large or small, of the then-known world—and settled down to her usual life of playing the piano and of reading, reading, reading.

Me, she sent to school. There, for the first time, I was faced with the task of acquiring a boy's version of the French language. So far, my French had been that of Annette who edited it, being careful not to let me be contaminated by anything resembling a living idiom; I verily believe she made sure that a phrase was to be found in Bossuet before she used it in speaking to me. At school, however, I was soon valiantly struggling along; and, I believe, I succeeded middling well.

Somehow my mother was less close to me abroad than at home. She

seemed always to have callers. In the morning, I was not at home; in the afternoon and evening she, so it seems at this distance of time, was never alone. She was more remote and magnificent, too; perhaps for no other reason than that her callers, female as well as male, though the latter outnumbered the former, treated her with a formal deference or at least politeness which I never seemed to observe in their social intercourse with other women. None of them ever entered into any sort of relationship with me, though, of course, I was often called in to show myself and to bow and shake or even kiss hands. Whenever this happened, Annette stood by the door where nobody took the slightest notice of her. I was spoken to by these great ladies and their charming men; but I had been, and was being, taught to answer briefly, in monosyllables, taking care not to forget to add “sir” or “madam” to every word. On such occasions I wore a black velvet suit with a wide lace collar, both of which I hated as being “sissy”.

On the whole, I think, my mother was less active abroad than at home. She rarely rode out alone, though on occasion she formed one of a cavalcade; and when she did, my old admiration for her returned; she looked so magnificent on horseback. When, at night, she dressed to go out, she was invariably more gorgeous than I ever saw her at Thurow; she was more *décolletée*; she wore more jewels; she was more carefully powdered and touched up.

As for Annette, she was entering upon, and, as the years went by, advancing in, middle age; her face became more and more like that of a bulldog; her temper, with everybody but myself, became soured. It was exceedingly rare that I saw her in male company; yet, whenever we left a place, she shed tears.

One word about school. Without ever exerting myself, I was and remained an excellent scholar. My memory never failed me; what I had once heard, I retained; and to this day I say certain things, smiling to myself, with the accents of my teachers. At Boulogne, I was much helped along by the fact that the French of my teachers was the same as Annette’s who, though she spoke English fluently, was under orders to use only French with me. No language ever presented me with difficulties; and, no matter in what country we were, I always learned two versions: that of the teachers and that of the boys.

Then, at Boulogne, one morning, at recess time, Annette appeared in the small, walled-in school-yard and summoned me home. I followed her, puzzled to find the house in confusion.

Two or three months had gone by; my life in this little city had assumed the appearance of being settled. But my mother, it proved, was tired of the place and, on a few hours’ notice, had arranged to vacate the house and to catch an early afternoon train to Paris. Already the furniture was being loaded

on drays which stood drawn up on the cobble-stone pavement of the street, to be returned to the dealer, for it had been rented. The maids were busy packing our trunks.

At Paris, where we arrived in the evening, there followed an hour or two of chaos. It appeared that, so far, we had not so much been going somewhere as escaping the place from which we came. The question was whether to remain where we were or to go on; I believe the answer finally given was solely determined by the weather. It happened to be a raw and blustery November day; and my mother wanted the sun.

Late at night we boarded the Riviera Express; and a day and a half later we alighted at Florence. Again we went to a hotel; and again we started on the search for a suitable place to live in. After many drives into the hills overlooking the Arno, and after much haggling with crafty house-agents, my mother rented a small villa in a fine residential quarter of the city, furnished it with rented furniture, made a few calls, and began to receive a few intimates. Thus she settled down to her usual life of playing the piano and of reading, reading, reading.

Of course I was sent to school.

I have sometimes wondered whether I was in her way. More and more, as the years went by, she left me and my upbringing to Annette; up to a certain point, that is; very likely it was the point which is marked by our last flight from home. From then on, I being a young man rather than a mere child, she began to like to take me along when she went out; and I accompanied her on all her shopping trips and, occasionally, to some afternoon social function. By that time she was fifty, or nearly so; and she had resigned herself to no longer being a young woman. She had had her first operation for cancer; and a second one, much more serious, had been advised. Again and again she put it off; but her face began to be invaded by traces of suffering; and she often looked as though she foresaw a terrible end. I, on the other hand, was adolescent and full of exuberant curiosity about life. Having weathered the first onslaughts of illness, I seemed slowly to grow up into immunity. As is only natural, at the very time when, in her life abroad, my mother was inclined to fall back on her motherhood, I was growing away from her, for I was exploring paths of my own.

We must return to Florence, however. At school, I struggled valiantly along, trying to fit myself into a new environment and to acquire a language, in two versions, for which Annette had not prepared me. It was not to be for long.

One morning, at recess-time, Annette appeared once more to summon me home; and, as I followed her, I found the villa again in complete confusion.

My mother, it appeared, was tired of the place and, on a few hours' notice, had arranged to vacate the house and to catch an afternoon train to the south.

I cannot go on in detail, giving a list; sequences are disturbed in my memory. Suffice it to say that, in the course of the next few years, we alighted successively at Palermo, Zuerich, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Bucharest, Odessa, Moscow, St. Petersburg—still so-called—Berlin, Munich, Copenhagen, home, Edinburgh, London, Paris, Rheims, Marseille. I am stringing the names together at random as they may conceivably have followed each other, though no geographical nearness was ever a determining factor. Thus my mother, who carried on a vast correspondence, might happen to be somewhere in the Danubian basin when word came to her that, on a given day, there would be a performance of the Ninth Symphonie at Cologne; incontinently she started for that distant city to hear it. Or the Bayreuth season might open. Seats were reserved by telegraph; and we would be there for the opening night. Every major musical event formed one occasion on which even I, even in those earlier years, was given a glimpse of the greater world. It was my mother's desire that I should grow up with a taste for great music and with a solid knowledge of the masterpieces of the past. The consequence is that, even today, there are few great operas or symphonies which I cannot hum or croak—I have no singing voice!—in spite of the fact that, after the great break in my life, forty years were to go by during which I was lucky if, once in five, six, seven years, I could listen to a performance; on one occasion, the interval was of almost exactly twenty years.

Invariably, I was also sent for when a great performer or composer was in her drawing-room; and they all came when invited: Joachim, Nikish, Mahler, Brahms, and scores of others whose names I have forgotten. And this is perhaps the moment to say a few words of the atmosphere of her drawing-room.

Before I do so, one word about my further education. When I was ten or eleven, a trained governess joined my mother's staff: an English-woman this time who, in addition to supervising my school work, was to teach me to play the piano and to instruct me in such modern languages as were not taught in the schools which I attended, especially Spanish. It never struck me at the time that my mother might have a definite aim in view when she urged me to pay much attention to Spanish. In Russia and, later, in Constantinople, Smyrna, Cairo, and Fez—for as I grew up, my mother extended her trips—I was sent to private institutions, French or English; in France, Italy, and Germany I attended schools conducted in the language of the country. So, to my present regret, I never learned Russian, though, of course, now as later, I picked up a good many words and phrases. As for my music, my governess is to blame for

the fact that I took a violent dislike to the piano; she tried to teach it with a ruler; and my knuckles were always sore. To my mother's great chagrin and my present poignant regret, I soon begged off; and shortly after the place of the governess was taken by a young German tutor who had no music himself. This I did not consider so serious a deficiency as that he had no Greek; for already I harboured the secret ambition to become a classical scholar. This desire, as we shall see, led to the only great conflict with my mother, who had conceived other plans with regard to my future.

Now, though when we were abroad, there was never anything which could be called a home atmosphere, there was a very distinct and striking intellectual atmosphere in the circles which gathered about my mother; and that atmosphere had a profound and persistent influence on me and my whole development to come. No matter where we were, even in Egypt and Turkey, the people who called on my mother or on whom she called; who crowded her drawing-room or sat down at her table when she gave one of her rare dinner parties, were the men and women—fewer then—who were more or less internationally known as "good Europeans", and whose names are quoted today, in the world of letters, of music, of art, of science. It is true that there were on occasion, especially in Germany and Austria, though also in France, crowds of brilliant uniforms; but these uniforms were worn by men who, though their vocation was a military one, had wider interests and in addition were students.

No matter where my mother went, she dropped automatically into milieus where it established a higher claim to attention and even distinction to have written a notable book, to have painted an enduring picture, to have carved a fascinating statue than to have amassed wealth or even to have ruled nations. The wealthy and the mighty were not always absent; but their credentials had to be other than wealth or power. Which does not mean that there was ever a Bohemian air about these gatherings; very much the reverse. It was only after my mother's death that I became acquainted with the borderlands of human societies. Thus, from an early age, I was taught to distinguish between the ephemerals and the essentials. Yet, strange to say, one of the four estates never figured in these circles; and that was the estate ecclesiastical.

Which lends itself to the recording of an external fact. Soon after the operation which I had undergone in Hamburg at the age of thirteen, we spent some six months in England; it was probably in the following fall and winter; and there I was confirmed in the Anglican Church in which I had been baptized. I call it an external fact, for such it was to my mother and, consequently, to me. I was told that this was a formality which it might be wise to go through, though it was not presumed to make any profound impression

on my inner life. Perhaps I might add right here that no church ever succeeded in making me other than I was, with the single exception perhaps of the Roman Catholic Church. I have always been able to discuss almost anything with Roman Catholic priests; whereas with any other ecclesiastics I invariably ran up, within a few minutes, against things which were, so I felt, racially incompatible with my mentality.

To all this I must add one other fact. From an early age I, being thus taken over the face of Europe, evinced a special, almost passionate interest in the remains of antiquity, mostly Roman, of course. I saw aqueducts, gateways, vast arenas; I saw the Forum in Rome; the ruins of the Parthenon in Athens. Pesto, Girgenti were shrines to me. And since all these places were linked to the present by the Renaissance, I soon understood that they represented mere meshes in the great web of European life. They, too, had been built by men like myself, by men like those that surrounded me—who had been children once, who had grown up, had lived their lives and had died: men who had once trembled with joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain, and who yet were gone beyond recall except in as much as, perhaps, some essence of them lived on in what they had left behind. Most of them were anonymous, as nameless as the writers of the *Book of Kings*. What they spoke of, to us, was rather the race out of which they had arisen—a race which, on balance, seemed after all to have been greater than the race of the living. Greater, too, seemed to me those who had written the *Book of Kings*, the *Iliad*, and the *Oresteia*. But at least some of the works of literature remained entire; whereas these remnants . . .

In the main, these remnants of ancient civilizations were crumbling. Though many of them had been, and a few of them continued to be, works of high art, expressive, unmistakably, of the spirit of man, so that I shivered when I realized their essence, and destined, therefore, to live forever in the echoes of the human mind. Yet *in so far as they had formed parts of great material civilizations*, they had fallen, or were falling, into the dust.

Occasionally, an American would find his way into this circle; and at least once one of them took me under his wing for a day or two, his chief object being to impress me with a sense of the new civilization which was growing up across the sea. But the fact was that I was not at all impressed with this visitor from a continent which was destined to furnish me with a home throughout the greater part of my life to come: a fact still hidden from me at the time. Yet he succeeded, by his descriptions of New York and Chicago, in creating a vision. I must have been fourteen or fifteen years old at the time; and we were at Venice. Characteristically, I, seeming to myself to stand at a point in history whence I was looking back over the last two or three millennia, or perhaps it was even five or six, for we had recently been in Egypt, at once saw

that vision of an American civilization from a point in history a few millennia hence, when it would lie in ruins and when those who were building it would be forgotten and gone. There seemed to be only one difference between the ruins of the past and those of the future derived from the present, namely, that those of the future would, very likely, be less enduring than those of the past had after all proved to be. It is natural, perhaps, to draw inferences from the quality of the work as to the stature of those who created it; and, conversely, having a race of giants in mind, as the creators of what were now the ruins of the past, I looked at my American whose chief objection to Italy was that she had no coal of her own and drew a conclusion, from him, as to the race of Americans from among whom he sprang; finding them wanting, I inferred that their work would one day be found wanting as well.

From the cut of his clothes, from the assurance of his bearing, and from his speech I soon learned to recognize his countrymen wherever I saw them; and they impressed me like hosts of invaders from some distant planet, the moon or Mars, pullulating about the remnants left by a race of supermen of the past.

On the ancient ruins, the Renaissance had built its world; and modern Italy was building a third world on the second. The whole globe was a palimpsest: no doubt even the Americas would one day reveal older worlds to the archeologist.

Out of that insight, I believe, arose my ambition to study archeology.

But it must not be imagined that I was a brooder; far from it; I enjoyed my day-to-day life as much as anyone. I was a dreamer, yes; and a dreamer with the devouring ambition to do things worthy of the past of mankind.

I began to pick up a little Greek by myself; having mastered the alphabet, I began to read, intoxicating myself with the sound of the language. In this, my mother gave me neither help nor encouragement. Even my tutor could not assist. I came to suspect that my mother had picked him for the sake of that disability. But here and there, now in Italy, now in France, and above all in Germany, I ran across a teacher who, thinking me a queer sort of child, mischievous though I was, took me humorously at first, and indulgently, but who, as time went by, became interested and finally helped me. I was not yet fifteen when I began to decipher and to memorize passages in *Homer*, *Aeschylus*, and *Euripides*—I seemed to have no organ for *Sophocles*—in *Sappho*, *Alcman*, *Alcaeus*, *Simonides*—all of them poets. I used cribs, a dictionary, and a grammar; but I took no interest in the acquisition of the language as such and used it only as a gateway to the literature. Thus I spent hours and hours on what, to my tutor, seemed a fruitless endeavour. Yet even he found his interest in it; for it left him free to do as he pleased: one day, when he had saved enough money, he, too, wanted to carve out a university

career for himself, in the law; and so he enjoyed sitting in an arm-chair, a long pipe in his mouth, to pursue his own reading while I worked away at my Greek. It saved him the task of keeping me amused or otherwise occupied.

Strange to say, and as if to make up for his deficiency in Greek, this tutor was a great skier and skater; and my mother, whom even this may have influenced in her selection, made it a point to spend that winter in the mountains of Bohemia, chiefly, if I remember aright, at a place called Schreiberhau—I find myself unable to locate it on any map at my disposal. I became a good figure-skater; I am teaching my son today; and more than once my tutor and I went off on a day's excursion, in a horse-drawn sleigh which took us up some mountain-slope, to descend on skis in a few minutes. All which I enjoyed with a sense of exhilaration which makes my flesh tingle today.

Life went much more smoothly than at home. In spite of our frequent change of scene, I have, for all these years between 1880 and 1888, nothing whatever to tell of exciting episodes, such as diversified the intervals at Thurow. I became supranational or cosmopolitan, that is all. Any attempt to distinguish the years, in a geographical sense, could result in only one of two things: either a record of slow but unbroken growth on the part of myself, and of slow but unbroken ageing on the part of my mother; or in a travelogue which would necessarily be built on conjecture only, for my memory refuses to tell me when we were where. We spent a few months at a Hungarian castle, with delightful but wholly irresponsible people of the upper aristocracy who talked of nothing but war and conquest in the Balkans; we spent another few months at Cairo, living at a hotel, in the company, chiefly, of English engineers who would come and go. We lived alternately at Paris or London, at Vienna or Berlin; but it is no longer possible to assign the trifles that linger in my memory to any particular time or locality.

Yet, slowly, slowly, the great conflict approached, between my mother and myself—a conflict to which she rallied all her dwindling powers and every ally she could find but in which she was necessarily defeated, if only by her death. The only fact that stands out is that, when at last it came to an open fight, she had already lost the battle; and a sort of truce was declared to give her the time to die in peace. This, to me, is a heart-breaking thing, much more so today than, in the egotism of my youth, it was at the time.

My earliest desire, with regard to my future life, had been to go to sea. That desire she had passionately and successfully fought. The last weapon she used, almost ex-post-facto, for I had already learned to laugh at my old ambition, was that she gave me the most magnificent birthday present which I have ever received in my life: a steel sailing yacht in the Baltic. I was sixteen

at the time; and I believe she saw her end coming. By that present she tied herself down; for what use could that yacht be to me unless we lived by the sea? Later, I shipped the boat about as I changed my abode; but at the time not even the possibility of such a thing occurred to either of us. It was, of course, after her break, our break, with my father; otherwise we could have gone home. As it was, we spent a long summer at Baltic sea-ports: St. Petersburg, Danzig, Luebeck, Copenhagen; and it was I who moved the baggage in my boat. My apprenticeship I served with Uncle Jacobsen who had already gained a considerable ascendancy over me.

This Dane was a ship-broker at Hamburg, with a business which he had built up himself and in which he had prospered amazingly. How he came to know my mother, and what their exact relation had been, I cannot tell for certain. I only know that he obeyed her slightest wish, especially with regard to myself. During the years in which I was mentally mature enough to judge, let me say, from my tenth year on, he had, whenever we were in northern Europe, except at home, joined us, taking me in hand. I do not think he was a highly cultivated man, or a man of particularly fine breeding; it is true, he wore expensive clothes; but he always somehow managed, in polite company, to look just a bit untidy. In spite of his conspicuous success in business he had never married. But like my father he was an athlete, a bold swimmer, a skilful rower and sailor, and an expert at all sorts of acrobatics: these were his hobbies; and he taught me much, not by giving me instruction, but by showing me how he did certain things. He could stand on his head, walk on his hands, turn a cartwheel, and walk the tight rope; above all, he swam and dived like a fish. And soon I had the desire to do likewise. I have not the slightest doubt that, if at the time of writing I am physically still alert and mentally nimble, I owe it to him.

He always treated me as an equal; and when he was with us, everything else, even my school work, remained in abeyance. We rode together; and we walked together, often staying away for a whole day or longer. Whenever we were near water, he had one of his fleet of boats shipped out from Hamburg: a double skiff, or a half-outrigger boat, and finally two single-seaters with full-outrigger row-locks and sliding seats. In these boats, some of them no more than sixteen inches wide, we travelled thousands of miles, on the Rhine, the Elbe, the Oder penetrating thence into the Mosel, the Main, the Neckar, the Havel. We went to England to attend the great regattas and thus saw much of the countryside. And finally he taught me to sail.

All this, I have no doubt today, he did at the request of my mother, and for a purpose; for he was the successful business man.

He spent weeks and months with me, always unexpectedly turning up

when we were within reasonable distance, no doubt kept informed of our movements by my mother. Invariably, when he appeared, looking inconspicuous and casual, but carrying himself with the assurance of the self-made man, I greeted him with delight; and my mother handed me over to him with the supreme confidence that, from any trip made in his company, I should come home physically improved and mentally invigorated. For years, I believe, he made himself a boy to please me or to please her. He never spoke of anything but of what was in hand. He seemed enormously and exclusively practical. Nobody could pick out the proper kind of wood for a given purpose more unfailingly than he; nobody could as simply and convincingly explain a puzzling fact; and nobody was ever quite as ready as he to undertake what must often have appeared as the irrational whim of a child. The cost of a thing was never even as much as mentioned.

He was about my mother's age, medium-sized, bearded, and intensely sober. But, as the years went by, he began to prefer sailing to rowing; I have no doubt that it was he who suggested the purchase of the yacht; I know that he closed the deal. During that last summer of my freedom, before my mother's final illness, we sailed from Luebeck to Haparanda and Helsingfors; and even down the Baltic, past Thurow into the Skagerrak, along Jutland, and down the North Sea to Hamburg.

The yacht had accommodation for four, with the galley in front of the cabin. It had three sails and was, therefore, not too large to be worked by a single man; but, of course, we were always two and took the tiller alternately. I distinctly remember our first all-night sail, into the teeth of a high wind and a rising sea, when our chief problem was to keep the water out of the cabin.

And all this, I was to discover, represented a move in my mother's game of chess against me. Yet, unwittingly, it had been she who had spurred on my desires in the very direction which she wished to block.

Slowly, as the conflict between us defined itself, many things came back to me which she had said to me in the past, ever since I had been her little boy; and gradually they took on their true and, to me, startling meaning.

I must say a word about my reading here. From the time when I had mastered the mechanics of the art, I had been an omnivorous reader; and she had taken me in hand herself and directed my selection of books. By the time I was fourteen I had a not inconsiderable library of my own; and it consisted very largely of complete sets. On every birthday I received, as a matter of course, at least one such set. The list was led by Scott; and Scott was followed by Byron. Then came Shakespeare—the latter, strange to say, at first in the German translation by Schlegel and Tieck, perhaps because we happened to be at Munich; but before the year was out I had an English Shakespeare as well.

Schiller, Goethe, Manzoni, Leopardi, Baudelaire, Flaubert, Dickens, Thackeray, Tennyson, Browning, Eliot, Macaulay, Carlyle followed; and with my pocket money I acquired classical authors in both Latin and Greek. I could not really read the latter so far, but, guided by my reading of critical utterances, I picked out certain passages, especially in Homer, concentrated on them and memorized them so thoroughly that to this day I can rattle them off by heart. Add to that, as I grew up, such divers fare as Montaigne, Pascal, Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth, Hoelderlin, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Verga, Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Calderon, Lesage, Corneille, Racine, Molière, and countless others of lighter weight—Stevenson, for instance, whose *Kidnapped* came out about that time, Mark Twain, Jules Verne—and you have a small idea of the extent of my reading. By acquiring standard histories of literature—a department of learning in which Germany excelled—I managed somehow even to organize my knowledge to a certain extent. I am, today, often amazed to find how much of my present reading is merely re-reading of what I read at the time.

It was the appearance of Greek books on my shelves which caused my mother the first serious alarm. For years she had talked to me chiefly of her one desire that I should become a “practical” man. Just what that implied, coming from her lips, did not become entirely clear till towards the end of this period when she began, tentatively at first, then more directly, to exemplify the “impractical” man.

Whenever she talked to me of my father, and the occasions became more and more frequent, she did so in a conciliatory spirit, as if she wished to win me back to him. His very serious short-comings she began to put down to temper rather than to innate defects. He was self-willed, headstrong, subject to sudden bursts of uncontrollable anger, true; he had never been checked in life; he lacked the imagination to place himself in the position of others; but at bottom, she said, he meant well. The worst about him was that he was “impractical”.

This sounded all the stranger to me since it was at about this time that, my mother’s reserves breaking down under the pressure of illness, I had the first hints of an early conflict in her own life. She became less reticent and, on occasion, spoke bitterly of her own father. I pieced the fragments together. It seemed that, in her girlhood, there had been three men: an Austrian who held a high rank in the army; my father; and a third man whom, incredibly, I seemed to recognize as my “Uncle Jacobsen”. So that, I said to myself, was the relation between “us” and “Uncle Jacobsen”. She never named him, though. To all three my grandfather had objected violently: to the Austrian because he was Austrian and, therefore, unstable and weak in character; to my father because

he considered him a spendthrift; to the third man because, at the time, he had been penniless, a mere employee in a great commercial firm at Hamburg; to all three because they had not been of his picking for her, besides being foreigners. My father, being of English descent himself, had been the least foreign; and so, after a violent struggle, he had carried the day. All of which was completely bewildering to me; I could not see the importance of it: what did the choice of a husband matter? But my worship of my mother was still sufficiently recent to me to make me vow, when, in a tearful exchange of confidences, she urged me, that I, for one, would never marry. Thus I replied to her warnings; for, strange to say, she kept warning me against women. In women she saw the great danger to men; in men, to women. And I, being still at the stage when boys have little but contempt for girls, readily fell in with her plans as she painted for me her ideal of a happy old age for herself: she would be living with me, directing my household, ceasing to do so only with death. I should be a middle-aged man, then, like Uncle Jacobsen, beyond the temptations of early manhood. Women, she said one day, make a man weak.

In discussing my father, she remained dispassionate and impartial; in some things she went so far as to blame herself. It was true, according to her, my father had no sense of property. Where the use of money was concerned, he had no inhibitions. Money, to him, had only one use: to secure, out of life, as much pleasure as he could, as much pleasure as a human life could hold. But even in that, she pronounced the, to me, shocking judgment that it was more the fault of the women who would not leave him alone than his own fault. Above all, she repeated over and over again, he was impractical. He could never hold what he had; much less could he make his money work for him. He was a spender. His father, she told me, had been a man who acquired; a man who built up; a man who made money. It was a new idea to me that money might have to be made, even by such as we. So far, the possession of acquired wealth, in contradistinction to wealth that had been inherited, had been something rather which, in the balance of character, had stood on the debit side. This new view, of the necessity of earning or making money, seemed to imply a complete reversal even in my mother's attitude. It was only later that I came to see the reason for this reversal: she, having, at the time of her first operation for cancer, made a new deal with her father, was now nearing the end of the resources secured by that deal: she, too, was impractical; she, too, had been living grotesquely beyond her means; for years, to keep up her mode of life, she had been living on capital, first taking a little, then, as interest and dividends dwindled, more; and then still more. Seeing the end of her financial independence coming, feeling herself unable to stave off ruin, hoping against hope, perhaps, that she was not going to live to see the end of her resources, and yet hanging on to life as the supreme and perhaps only good, she looked

about among her intimates and saw only one who, having had nothing, now had much, Uncle Jacobsen, who, so I inferred, had remained single on her account. Of the approaching ruin I knew nothing at the time, of course; though even then I overheard little snatches of conversation between her and Uncle Jacobsen from which I inferred that she was entrusting him with certain financial transactions; that she was, at last, handing over to him the management of her affairs; and I also inferred, without as yet fully grasping the significance of the fact, that these financial transactions consisted, on the whole, of the sale of securities.

At last she openly broached the question of a future career for me; and to my amazement and consternation she told me of her wish that, the moment I reached the full age of sixteen, I was to enter Uncle Jacobsen's business as a sort of apprentice. At the age of sixteen! Within a few months! That meant that I was to break off my education before I could even feel that I had really started upon it. So I was not to be a student, a scholar. All my dreams, my ambitions, my efforts were to go for nothing. I faced an abyss.

Much rather be a nurseryman, as my father's father had been; much rather be a farmer—a farmer with an education which enabled him to devote his leisure to the enjoyment of great literature, music, and art. I knew that my father, during the intervals between our visits at Thurow, had spent a considerable fraction of his time abroad, like ourselves. At least once he had been at Paris when we were there: at the time of my fourteenth birthday. I also knew that he did not go to Paris for the purpose of study; he went there to have sumptuous dinners at Paillard's, Voisin's, and at the Tour d'Argent. I at least suspected that he did not take these dinners alone but in gay company; he was well-known in Paris and London, and even in Berlin which he disliked; he was known as a fast liver and a furious spender. If he could do such things, why should not I be able to do the other thing? For already the desire had sprung up in me to be one day counted among the great poets or writers.

At last I spoke to my mother about this plan. Why not let me follow my father as the squire of Thurow?

She did not answer at once; she took several days to think it over; she had begun to see that there lay a struggle ahead. I was no longer her little boy; I was a young man with a will of my own; she would have to reason with me.

It was not an easy task; she had never been one to reason. She had been used to say, "Do this", and to see it done. It had not only been the power of money, though that had no doubt entered into it. Above all, she had, in the past, only had to appear to find everybody bowing. It had been her bearing, her beauty. I remember an occasion when, at Paris, a gown had been submitted to her in some great dress-making establishment of world-wide reputation. That

gown had been made for her: her dimensions had always made it impossible for her to wear “models”. It was laid out, on a sort of counter or large table, for her inspection. But it had not met with her approval. She frowned angrily, the bulge in her forehead, due to the horse’s kick, burning red; and then she had pushed the gown contemptuously from her, so that it slipped to the floor. The “madame” behind the counter, herself of formidable proportions, bowed with a green smile, looking at one of her assistants. “*Enlevez-le,*” she muttered and then proceeded, unruffled, to display other things. No doubt the price of what my mother ultimately bought had included the cost of the rejected gown.

On another occasion which I remember, we, five of us, were standing in the station at Milan, with piles of baggage at our feet, momentarily deserted by our porters, when the departure of the train which we were to take was announced. Only Herr Niemoeller, my tutor, was there to carry a small fraction of those hand-bags. In spite of the fact that two whole compartments were reserved for us, there was danger of our missing that train. My mother turned to two passers-by, tradesmen very likely, or possibly even professional men—they had the proud bearing of the Italian bourgeois—and said briefly, “Signori, I *have* to catch that train. Will you oblige me?” And she pointed to the pile of bags. The men gave her a peculiar look; I still see it; but they did as they were bidden; for my mother’s tone had not been that of a mere request. Between them they, Herr Niemoeller and I picked it all up and carried it over to our compartments. My mother thanked them, of course, but by no means effusively. The last moment the porters came running, protesting loudly and insolently, claiming their fees. “There is plenty of time, signora, plenty of time,” they said; but the train was moving already; and my mother gave them nothing but a withering look.

No, my mother had never reasoned; but with me, her darling boy, she could not assume the attitude of command.

Again and again she pursued an indirect course, telling me about my father. She told me that he had run through two fortunes, confidently expecting that he would be able to run through a third. How, at present, he was keeping things going, she did not know.

At last it was I who objected that these fortunes had had to be made; or he could not have run through them.

That, she had already admitted; but she repeated that it was not he who had made them; and for the first time she told me that, on the father’s side, I came of peasant stock. My great-grandfather had laid the foundations, in Kent, by dealing in hops, in addition to farming, and by beginning to grow nursery stock. My grandfather had been an exceedingly shrewd man; he had seen the opening for this nursery trade in the Baltic. Even he had already been inclined

to spend lavishly; or he would never have acquired Thurow which had cost hundreds of thousands. But chance had favoured him; he had secured the great government contracts from Sweden, Germany, and Russia. But at last the flow of money from that source was drying up; the demand had been supplied. No, to be a successful farmer, the first thing needed was money; more money; money all the time. Farming was well enough when one were either rich to begin with or went into it after one had made his pile at something else. She bade me look at Uncle Jacobsen who owned a business with ramifications at London, Le Havre, New York, Rio, Valparaiso. He would help me; would send me into the new world for a few years; that was the reason why she had insisted on my learning Spanish. If I entered his business, I could feel sure that I should be promoted as fast as possible, for her sake. Within ten years, he had said, I might be a junior partner in the firm; when the time came for him to retire, which would be in some twenty or twenty-five years, he would turn the whole concern over to me. When I exclaimed at the figure of twenty-five years, she smiled wanly: when I came to be her age, I should understand that twenty-five years were nothing to speak of: I should be only forty or forty-one, a young man still. Meanwhile I should see German trade expanding over the world; Germany was the country of the future; the opportunities for a young man with my knowledge of languages were unlimited; there was no telling how far I might not go. Uncle Jacobsen was the only true friend she had; the only one on whom she could rely; one day he would adopt me.

She had no idea how deeply she shocked me. Being adopted by someone else was tantamount to giving up my identity; and, so far, I was proud of being myself. But, like her, I did not answer at once.

We were in Berlin at the time; and I was attending a so-called Realgymnasium, which meant a secondary school in which Latin was taught only to the extent to which it was useful in the teaching of moderns. The chief stress was laid on mathematics, science, English and French. Mr. Niemoeller had at last been dismissed; I did not need to be supervised any longer. During the lessons in English and French I was free; my teachers did not speak either language with the fluency and idiomatic correctness which I commanded. Annette was resuming her function as my mother's maid, the only servant that was retained, though, once a week, there was still a gathering in the drawing-room—a gathering which, with some stretch of the term, could still be called brilliant though it had taken on a tinge of Bohemia. We occupied a furnished apartment of six or eight rooms, with a fine view on the Tiergarten, the chief park of the city—an expensive apartment. Yet even I could see that our social life was much reduced. On occasion, when I saw my mother nervous over some trifling expenditure to which formerly she would not have given a

thought, I began to feel the chill air of a coming disaster.

Nor could I shut my eyes to the fact that my mother was getting heavy, almost unwieldy; and that at a rate which could not be explained by the normal process of her ageing; her face was often lined and hollow; she was losing her beauty; she still had her moments of magnificence in which men went wild over her; but they were becoming rare. One day I came home and found her convulsed with laughter: a very young man, attaché at one of the legations, had proposed marriage to her; and it did sound funny; but there was a trace of hysteria in her mirth. I, of course, could not read the signs; I knew nothing of illness and death; but her physician did. I am afraid I found her passionate pleading with me simply importunate.

When, after several days, I did speak, I became at once aware of her profound disappointment at my not falling readily in with her arguments. She had assumed that her reasoning was irrefutable and final. I told her that my ultimate desire was to be a writer; the road to that, in my opinion, lay through a career as a scholar.

She bit her lips. “My dear boy,” she said at last, “I wish I could agree. But are you aware of what that implies?”

“Perhaps not altogether,” I replied. “At least I don’t know what you refer to, Mother.”

“If I am to put you through a university career,” she said with shattering emphasis, “I must either return to your father and live on him, using what little I have left for you; or I must get a divorce and marry again; that is, marry money, not a man. Your grandfather advised that course when I saw him last before his death.”

I was appalled. The word divorce still had a sinister sound at the time; and a new marriage would be as bad, for me, as an adoption by Uncle Jacobsen. “Marry again!” I exclaimed with something like terror and something like scorn in my voice.

This piqued her. She remained silent for a while. Then she smiled at me, with a ghastly attempt at coquetry which was more revealing than any amount of words could have been. “You don’t know, of course,” she said, “that, since I left your father, amicably, fifteen, sixteen years ago, I have had at least a score of offers?”

I was still more appalled.

“Mother,” I said, trying to lead away from that topic, “I know you want to do the best you can for me . . .”

“Of course,” she interrupted. “But you don’t realize. Let me tell you, then; I am ruined.”

This “of course” put an end to all my pleas, at least for the moment.

And now I came to another conclusion: somehow my mother seemed to assume that I could avert her ruin by adopting a commercial career; as if the pittance I might earn as a beginner were sufficient to support, not only me but her as well. I had some idea of what such beginners were paid; it was less than I had been used to spend as my pocket money. Frankly, I did not know what to do. In this dilemma I thought more and more of my Uncle Jacobsen, but in a sense different from that suggested by my mother.

Within a comparatively short time there followed the first of the three great nightmares of my life.

One day I made the suggestion. If things were as bad as my mother tried to make out, why not ask Uncle Jacobsen, who was wealthy, to step into the breach?

“Oh!” she cried in an agony so intense that it pierced even my egotism. “Don’t you see, child? I’ve sent him a wire this morning to come and to help me in doing what has to be done. But as for money . . . Don’t you understand that I can ask him to do almost anything for you; but that I can’t ask him to do a thing *for me*? That I couldn’t accept if he offered.”

I did not understand; I was obtuse, I grant; but I was only sixteen.

“How about Father?” I asked at last.

“Do you want me to go back to Thurow? It was on your account that I left it.”

I am afraid I was impatient; I was preoccupied with my own problems, “What do you intend to do, then, Mother?” I asked. My own problems would have to wait, I supposed; and anyway, this was not the moment to bother my mother.

“It isn’t a question of intention or wish any longer,” she cried. “It’s a question of necessity.” For the first time in her life she gave way completely. She burst into tears and exclaimed at the injustice which life had dealt her. “If only my father were alive!” she groaned at last.

I looked at her in consternation.

Her hysteria subsided; she was drying her tears. “I’ll tell you exactly,” she said. “Perhaps you’ll understand then. I am going to rent the apartment next to this and conduct a boarding-house.”

The bottom fell out of my world.

However, the struggle between me and my mother went on unabated, none the less bitter because it now became silent.

I was leading my classes at school. Since I had for years not had to take moderns, mathematics had always been my strong point; I was intensely interested in the sort of science which was taught, physics and chemistry. In my type of school, therefore, progress was a walkover. I did my written assignments, of course; and that took a modicum of my time—time, not exertion. I never really worked at my school tasks; my memory was phenomenal. So I had much leisure outside of school hours; but I concealed the fact: I worked at my Greek instead. By this time I had firmly made up my mind, if we remained in Germany, to transfer, for my final year at school, to a gymnasium where the classics stood in the centre of the curriculum. If I did that, I should be five or six years behind in Greek: not in reading but in grammar and so-called composition which was really translation into Greek. Now, I was not in the least interested in these aspects of the language: I wanted to be able to read Greek; and I was able to do so; I had taught myself, by reading. But there were teachers in my Realschule who knew better; and one or two of them gave me a little time, when a spare period of mine coincided with one of theirs, to drill me in declensions and conjugations. Just how much my mother knew or divined of this, I cannot tell at this distance of time.

At last Uncle Jacobsen came. When my mother had sent her wire, he had been at New York.

There were no excursions this time, no athletics. He remained closeted with my mother for many hours. When he took me aside, he did so only to impart to me final decisions arrived at.

Instead of renting the apartment adjoining the one which we occupied, my mother surrendered her lease, being lucky in having the chance to do so. She rented the whole, large ground floor of a nearby house and furnished it. A huge black and gold sign was fastened up along the balconies which jutted from its front. “Internationale Pension”, it read. A not inconsiderable staff of servants was hired; and within two weeks the establishment was opened.

Uncle Jacobsen was the first to rent a suite, if only for a few days; and while he remained at Berlin, he was indefatigably busy in bringing in others. For the moment my mother seemed to have completely recovered her buoyancy; she was continually in and out, with the bearing of one who had been a landlady all her life. She insisted that the rent must be paid a year in advance; and the moment that was done, she felt secure; much more so than even in my judgment was warranted.

But the boarders came: Russian, French, Italian, Spanish. Nearly all of them were connected with one or other of the legations. The thing seemed to rejuvenate my mother; she was used to marshalling about considerable numbers of servants and felt in her element. What was the difference between

twenty boarders and twenty volunteers at home?

Uncle Jacobsen departed. Even he did not read the signs.

For, as far as my mother was concerned, it was a last flicker. The final breakdown came within a few weeks. A doctor was called in, insisted on a consultation, advised an immediate operation, and carried her off to the hospital.

Nobody, suddenly, bothered about me. Here I was with a boarding-house and some twenty boarders on my hands. For the moment, it is true, the place seemed to run itself; it ran by its own momentum. At least, until pay-day came around for the servants' staff. It was the cook who spoke to me, though one of the parlour-maids who also acted as a waitress assumed command.

I went to see my mother; and she told me that, in a secret drawer of the secretary in her office I should find all that was needed. I must, of course, pay all wages due as well as the tradesmen's bills.

As a matter of fact, I found five banknotes of a hundred marks each; and that kept the ship from foundering for the time being; but within two weeks, I no longer knew where to turn. My mother refused to believe that there was no more money. She became very thoughtful and finally told me to bill the boarders. She seemed quite lucid and gave me minute directions which I followed to the letter. In that way I secured some funds; but the amount was only just sufficient to help me weather things for another week or so.

And then the appalling thing happened. My mother, who had a private room at the hospital, paid for in advance, tried to leave at night. She was seen before she got out of the building and taken back to her room; but she behaved like one insane and had to be forcibly restrained. I was notified and, when I saw her, tried to talk matters over with her in a quiet way. But she vetoed every suggestion of mine. It was with great reluctance that she at last consented to my sending Uncle Jacobsen a wire. I should have preferred to send it to my father; but she would not hear of it.

Uncle Jacobsen came and consulted with the physicians. He was told that, unless an operation was performed immediately—a thing which my mother would not agree to—she was doomed. Then he came to talk matters over with me. He told me that he had from the beginning been opposed to the venture of the boarding-house but had given in on that point because my mother seemed to dread nothing so much as going back to my father. If, he said, there were any chance of her recovering to the point where she could once more look after the business in person, there might be hope; for she was a very capable woman; but he added that, at best, the probability was one in ten.

What, he asked at last, in case he got her consent to sell the business, were

my ideas about myself? I said I did not know; but already I had an idea in the back of my head the possibilities of which I wanted to explore. Could he give me a day to think matters over? Very well, he said; but was he to take this as meaning that I did not wish to come in with him? I had to tell him, at that, what my own desires and ambitions were. In case of need, I said, I should like to try to put myself through school and university by my own efforts. He agreed that that would be a worthy attempt.

I went to see the teachers who had been helping with my Greek; and I told them what there was to tell. Both agreed that I could readily make my living as a "coach", by getting pupils who needed help to keep their standing in their classes. They added, however, that it was a dog's life, and that there would be no time left for study of my own.

When I saw my Uncle Jacobsen again, he had been talking to the parlour-maid who had so readily assumed all managerial functions. She was willing to take over the boarding-house as a going concern, agreeing to pay, in half-yearly instalments, half the new value of the furniture, provided that the current year's rent was thrown in. That rent amounted to about three thousand marks—a vast amount for me to lose. Uncle Jacobsen, however, seemed to think that her offer could be accepted as a basis for negotiation. I told him what I had found out; and he nodded.

He went to see my mother who, of course, did not know how hopeless her case was considered to be. He came away with a power-of-attorney. At the best, he told me, the physicians whom he had also seen again, gave her six months.

What could be done? I was obstinate in refusing Uncle Jacobsen's direct financial aid. Otherwise I agreed to whatever he might think best. He at once opened negotiations with the energetic parlour-maid.

She was willing to compromise. Above all, she agreed to let me have, for the remainder of the year, room and board, in lieu of the rent which had been paid in advance. It appeared that she had about a thousand marks in savings. For the moment, that would be sufficient to carry my mother at the hospital. The balance, some seven thousand marks or so, she agreed to pay in five annual instalments. On this basis the papers were signed next day.

I must add that, at that time of my life, I looked considerably older than I was. Nobody would have doubted my veracity had I given my age at twice the correct figure; few people would have guessed that I was not over twenty. I was tall and thin; but my bearing was that of a man, not a boy. My wandering life had done one thing for me: it had enabled me to approach anyone except my mother with assurance and self-confidence.

Uncle Jacobsen left. I saw the "Director" of my school; and he gave me a number of introductions. Within a few weeks I began to have pupils, mostly young boys attending the gymnasia of the city; and it was my task to see to it that their home-work was done in a satisfactory manner. In addition, I had a few night pupils in English, French, and Spanish, employees in commercial houses these, who wished to qualify for positions as correspondents.

At the end of the first month I was able to write to Uncle Jacobsen that, in addition to keeping myself at school, I was able to pay for my mother's stay at the hospital, keep myself in pocket money, and lay by a little towards the time when I should have to pay for my board. I did not add that I spent a goodly fraction of my income on books; of that he would have disapproved.

And then came the dreaded day of the operation to which my mother had at last agreed.

It was over in half an hour. I met the surgeon in the corridor as he came from the operating room—he was a European celebrity. Seeing me, he raised his hands and motioned me to follow him into the room at the end of the passage.

"You are the son of the patient, are you not?" he asked.

I answered in the affirmative.

"There was nothing I could do," he went on. "I explored and closed the incision; that is all. Her vital organs are so grown through with the tumour that the knife is powerless to help. You must be prepared for the worst."

I nodded; I could not speak.

But the incision healed; and now the physicians began to realize that it would be a long struggle: the tumour was pitched in battle against a tremendous constitution.

I was told I might take her home if I wished to. Home? Where? Uncle Jacobsen had dismissed even Annette.

However, I arranged at the boarding-house for a room; and one day she was brought there and put to bed. A nurse came with her.

Once more Uncle Jacobsen arrived to make the arrangements. Fortunately the business as such was flourishing, though with a clientele very different from that on which my mother had counted. The new management catered to pleasure-seekers from the provinces who came for the sake of the night-life of Berlin, that lurid night-life for which the city was just beginning to be famous. So the new owner of the place was quite willing to let room and board for my mother stand against her indebtedness; and I had to pay only for the nurse, a Roman sister, and for such incidentals as were needed. Actually, the patient's

coming “home” eased matters for me, at least financially. Since it was still winter, I began to do a little skating at night, mostly very late, after eleven o’clock. And then I went home to work; it was rare that I went to bed before two or three in the morning. Yet I realized even then that the whole thing was made bearable only by the expectation that it could not last.

Meanwhile my mother lay in more or less complete apathy, broken by occasional spells of lucidity in which she argued fiercely with me, in a broken voice, imploring me not to be blind to my own best interests by refusing to join Uncle Jacobsen; and at last I began to think that ultimately I should have to give in to her urgency. I felt very unhappy about it all, for to yield would have meant a surrender of all my desires.

It must have been at this stage that I first met another relative of mine, a great-uncle by the name of Rutherford. More precisely, he was a first cousin of my grandfather on the maternal side. He was well known as a traveller and explorer in the wilder districts of central Asia, Tibet and Sin-Kiang; and he had written several books, especially on the north-east border of India where he had spent a good many years in the Indian Civil Service. He was nearing his sixties; but physically he was more alert than many a man half his age. He had called on Uncle Jacobsen at Hamburg and thus secured our address. The circumstances in which he found us appalled him; but he did not stay; he was engaged in negotiations with the Russian government at St. Petersburg; for he was planning a winter trip through Northern Siberia. Two years later he was to play a sudden and decisive part in my life.

It so happened that my mother, during the whole of his visit, remained in a state of semi-coma; and so he left with me certain funds which he said he owed my mother who had financed his first trip into Tibet; I never found out whether that was a pretext or not. He went out with me, taking me to famous restaurants and to a show or two; so that, when he left for St. Petersburg, his departure left a sudden void in my life, but not before he had, in a long talk, more or less convinced me that it was my duty to notify, not Uncle Jacobsen, but my father of how matters stood; my mother, he said, could not be considered in this move since she was not of sound mind.

I did not do so immediately, for by this time I was convinced that, at least financially, I could handle the situation myself. My work as a tutor was highly successful and not unremunerative; throughout, I had the offer of more pupils than I could accept; and nearly all of them came from the wealthy homes of the capital. I raised my charges, and the fact seemed to result, not only in an increased income, but also in a greater demand for my services. “Of course,” people said, “he isn’t cheap.” And that seemed to be a recommendation to purse-proud bankers and manufacturers and their wives.

And then the final disaster came. One morning my mother was gone. A thorough search of the house was made, without result; and before the day was over, I had to notify the police. Remaining away from school, I at last wrote to my father, not because I wanted help, but because my great-uncle's argument that my father had a right to be told bore fruit; after all, that uncle had said, my mother was still his lawful wife; and the situation seemed now to have gone beyond my capacity of handling.

By the time my father arrived, however, my mother was back at the house. She came in a carriage, early one morning, driven by a liveried coachman from an estate in the neighbourhood of the city, and accompanied by an elderly woman who could give me no other information than that, around midnight, my mother had been found in the park of the estate, by some guests departing from the "Schloss". By order of Herr von ——, a man whom my mother had known in the past, she had been taken in but had at once given her address and asked to be sent home. She was out of her mind; but her address had been correct enough.

She was put to bed and remained semi-conscious. Perhaps I should say that, since her return from the hospital, she had been kept under the influence of morphia, administered by the "sister". The doctor seemed to think that her complete breakdown was due to the sudden withdrawal of the drug. It was only later that I found out a few details of her wanderings. She had gone to a village of that estate before going to the park; and there she had entered several cottages, labourers' dwellings, which were under quarantine for measles—a disease which she had never had.

My father arrived that night; and his appearance appalled me almost as much as that of my mother would have done had I not seen her for a few years. He no longer towered above me. He gave the impression that, in the lumbar region, his spine was shortened and bent at an angle; when he stood beside a table, it always looked as if he were bending over it, sideways. His enormously long legs, straight as ever, made it appear as if his body had been split from below, up to the region of the chest in a normal body. As I have said, he reminded me grotesquely of Niels, the "inspector". His head, however, long and narrow, remained very handsome, set off, now, by a long beard of ash-blond, wavy hair; it had aged amazingly little. He must have been seventy-four or five; but he looked fifty; there was not a grey hair on his head. In fact, his hair seemed rather to have darkened, so that at first I suspected that he dyed it; but the colour was natural. His clothes and his long, narrow hands seemed as well groomed as ever; but when he looked straight at me, which he rarely did now, I became aware of a droop in the left eye-lid; and there was something the matter with the eye, too. I found later that an opacity was invading the

pupil.

It so happened that there was a suite vacant in the house; and he took it for the night. During the following day he sat for a few hours with my mother who remained apathetic. Then, at noon, he told me to go to school and to see the Director, with a view to securing some sort of testimonial with regard to my progress and standing; and when he heard how I had earned my living and at least part of my mother's as well, he nodded approvingly, adding that I had better devote my afternoon to winding up my obligations. I had, for some time, not been used to taking anyone's orders; and it felt queer to have this man step in and tell me what to do. But I obeyed.

The principal or Director of the school was most kind. He called a meeting of my teachers at his office; and it was unanimously resolved, in my presence, to give me a statement testifying that I had satisfactorily covered the year's work. It was not, of course, expressly stated that I had remained to the end of the term; but I remember distinctly that it was more or less implied. In this, account was taken of the fact that I was to leave the country. One more year, then, would give me university-entrance.

Next, I did, with regard to my pupils, as my father had directed; and when I met him again at night, I could answer his question whether I was ready to leave in the affirmative. We were in his sitting-room; and apparently he wished to talk matters over. He spoke in a strangely gentle voice, as if he feared to touch on the past. Of my mother he said no more than that it would be best, taking things all around, if she died at home, adding that he had made all arrangements for the transfer.

Then he broached the subject of my future.

It was not without diffidence that I told him of my wish to finish my schooling and then to attend the university.

He merely nodded.

Encouraged, I told him of my mother's plans for me and of my disinclination for a commercial career.

"No," he said, "that would hardly do for you." And after an interval of thought he added, "Law. International Law. How would that suit you? It would pave the way for a career. I can pull some strings; there might be something in the diplomatic service."

I hesitated. Was there another conflict ahead? With my father this time? But with a certain amount of cunning, I said to myself that, once I got to the university, no matter how, no matter where, I could do pretty well as I pleased; he would not be there to supervise me. If he financed a university course for me, I could matriculate in law and attend as many lectures in classical

philology or archeology as I cared to. It was not standing I was after; it was knowledge. So I agreed.

"What university?" he asked next. "I'd say Paris to start with. In the diplomatic service you'd be dependent on Stockholm, of course. Paris, Berlin, Rome. That would give you the necessary prestige."

The addition of Rome settled the matter in my mind.

"Very well," he said in the tone of dismissal, without rising.

I was to find out that he did not like to be seen standing: it showed up the disproportion of his body too strikingly; and slowly, during the next few months, I was to come to a partial realization of the magnitude of the tragedy which had befallen him. He had taken to living the life of a hermit, showing himself to his neighbours on horseback only; he felt ashamed of his disfigurement; he never dismounted when he went from Thurow to an adjacent estate; and whenever ladies appeared he took his departure promptly.

I do not remember what it was that delayed us; but about two more weeks had gone by before my mother was one morning transferred from her bed to a stretcher, with two newly-engaged nurses in attendance; for my father dismissed the "sister" with a handsome present for her convent; she herself was not permitted to accept any remuneration.

The stretcher was lifted into an ambulance and, half an hour later, into the train in which my father, according to his custom, had reserved a carriage. Thus, once more, and for a last time, my mother made the trip to Thurow. We arrived two days later.

I, being now fully sixteen years old, went over all the familiar places, no longer on the pony which had been mine in the past; I used one of the Danes. My mother's saddle-horses, I found, had all been disposed of. For a week or two, it was like a melancholy and yet strangely burdenless holiday; the woods, the fields, the beach—all seemed unreal.

As for my mother, from the moment of our arrival at Thurow, we were all simply waiting for the end. A doctor from the city was, of course, in daily attendance; the nurses looked after her; my father often sat at her bedside for hours. I myself dropped in, of course; but she was a distressing sight, and there was absolutely nothing I could do for her. She was beyond human help except inasmuch as human care could spare her pain.

Yet she had still one surprise for us. She must have picked up the infection in the workmen's village where, during her last escapade, she had entered the quarantined cottages. The fact was that, when she died, she did not die of cancer but of a children's disease which had been incubating in her for some time. When it declared itself, it carried her off within a few days. Only towards

the very last did she become conscious once more; and when she did, she called for me. When I came to her bedside, she burst into tears and then, a last time, admonished me to enter Uncle Jacobsen's business, urging me to give her my promise. Somehow I evaded; I did not pledge my word. And, seeing that I refused, she muttered a few words which mean more to me now than they did at the time; I cannot bear to repeat them.

As for myself, I only remember that my prevailing feeling was of the awfulness of the change which had come over her—not nearly so much of a loss to myself. I was very young. The conflict between us had brought an element of estrangement. That conflict had already been decided in my favour. It is appalling to me today that the fact should have spared me sorrow; but so it was. I was no longer living with her; I was living in my own future. The mother I had adored as a child had been dying too long to leave any poignancy to the final event.

When, a few days later, I stood by her coffin, I shed tears, it is true; a lump rose in my throat; and when that coffin was carried out of the house, I sobbed. But, as we followed the hearse, I verily believe, my father, who had his early memories of her, was more profoundly shaken than I.

More than a hundred carriages followed her to the grave: all she had known in the neighbourhood, and many, like my Uncle Jacobsen, who had come from a distance. Among the latter there were two women, one from Vienna, the other I do not remember whence in the Danubian basin; her sisters. I see, today, only one of them with my mind's eye. Though older than my mother, she resembled her strikingly, in the carriage of her body as well as in her imperious ways. Both, on leaving, after a few days, carried away a few trifles that had belonged to the woman who had died.

With that ended my childhood, and my youth began—a youth which, four years later, or a little more, was to end no less catastrophically.

PART TWO

YOUTH

III

I SPENT the summer at home, riding, rowing, sailing, swimming. The yacht I had brought over to Malmoe where I went by train whenever I wanted to use it. Perhaps I became over-bold as a sailor. Repeatedly I crossed the Baltic at night; or ran up the Swedish coast, to Blekinge, Stockholm, Gefle, or Haparanda. Occasionally I had a companion or two; but I do not remember them. Mostly I was alone. It would have been a fine opportunity thoroughly to learn the language of the country whose diplomatic representative my father wanted me to be one day; but I did not grasp it. It was so much easier for me to speak French, German or English; and in that I was aided by the almost universal dispersion of these languages in those regions.

My father, I soon discovered, had become a reader. He now spent most of his time in the library of Thurow, though, on occasion, he would still go about on horseback. Once or twice he even went away on sudden trips to London or Paris. But, chiefly, I got used to finding him ensconced in one of the huge leather arm-chairs of the library, reading in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* or in Brockhaus' *Lexicon*. To my vast surprise he asked me one day to help him construe certain passages in the Roman elegiac poets. I gave him the help he required, and, the author he asked me about being Ovid, looked at the title page: it was a fine edition of the *Ars Amatoria*! I began to read Ovid myself; so far he had been to me only the author of the *Metamorphoses*. A world opened up before my eyes. It was my first contact with erotic literature; and while my interest, for the time being, remained entirely Platonic, it was a revelation.

Casually, one day, I mentioned to my father that my only conflict with my mother had been over the question of my changing over from the Realschule to the gymnasium.

"You would still like to do that?" he asked.

"I believe I should," I replied. "But I've never had any real grounding in Greek. It would seem to be too late now?"

"Why too late?"

"Well," I said, "I suppose they are too far ahead of me. I have only one year left, the Oberprima. I don't think they'd admit me in the gymnasium."

"Nonsense," he said. "Of course I want you to go to the gymnasium, not to any of these new-fangled schools of Bismarck's."

"How about the Greek?"

"Ah," he said airily, "you'd pick that up in no time."

It was amazing to me how far here, at Thurow, that whole question which, while my mother lived, had seemed so vital could have receded into the background. Scholarship, even scholarly ambitions, even the ambition to write seemed pale and far-away. What did it all matter so long as there were woods to ride through and seas to sail upon? What mattered was life, not knowledge. I was in love with Thurow; and I wondered to what extent my mother's Cassandra-warnings were founded on fact.

One night I broached that subject. Of my sisters only four were alive now, none of the younger: and these four were dispersed in distant parts of the world; they were strangers to me.

"I suppose," I said, "I shall one day own Thurow?"

My father who was reading looked up. "What was that?" he asked.

I repeated my question.

"Well, yes," he said, "such as it is."

"Whatever that may mean," I said flippantly, but with my heart pounding.

"It means that the place is mortgaged. Heavily, too." And for the first time he referred to my mother. "You see, your mother's going away as she did left me without money to carry on. The place has never paid. It's kept itself, in the past. But it isn't doing so any longer. If I were a younger man, I'd let the nurseries go to the devil; I'd seed them to grass and raise cattle for export. There's a great market for cattle in England and Germany. Across the water"—meaning in Denmark—"they're getting rich raising cattle. Why do you ask?"

"I was wondering. I sometimes think I'd like to farm."

He laughed. "No money in it," he said, "unless you have money to start with. Money breeds money. You go after your diplomatic career and keep the place as a retreat to go to from time to time. Leave Niels in charge. He's a good man. That is, provided you get it." And he laughed again, enigmatically.

At last he unfolded his plan to me. Since the last two years of my schooling had been spent in Germany, he thought it best for me to return there for my final year. There was, in the city of Hamburg, a gymnasium which enjoyed a European reputation. I have never returned there, and so I have forgotten its name. Graduation from that school would ensure me a high standing for the first year in any university. There, then, he would take me, placing me in a boarding-house. I could make use of my boat there, too.

Thus the summer came and went. I felt that, at least for the next few years, my life was settled. As the time for the opening of the term approached, I gradually worked myself back into my old enthusiasms, though they never

again reached the same high pitch of a year ago when they had been opposed. Partly at least, the reason for that lay in the fact that I was beginning to distinguish between life and knowledge about life. Of the former I had a taste in frequent calls at the places of our neighbours where, I found, I was eagerly welcomed. My father still had the reputation of being a wealthy man; I suppose I was being looked upon as a desirable son-in-law. I was a fair tennis-player, a good rider, and a swimmer of remarkable endurance; I had entirely overcome the sickliness of my childhood; my figure was dashing, especially on horseback; my only disability, partial deafness, did not yet give any serious trouble. Above all, I had travelled widely and could talk entertainingly of foreign parts. I was at the age where a boy begins to pay attention to the other sex; and there were bevies of charming girls available in the neighbourhood; most of our neighbours had more girls than boys. All the more prominent ones lived quiet, dignified lives such as result from the long-continued and unquestioned possession of fine estates and means sufficient to keep them up. I doubt whether many of them were making economic progress; but they lived in security and contentment. There was a good deal in that sort of existence to captivate me. I was, however, still too young to be sure of myself.

When the fall came, I paid a number of farewell calls; and one day my father and I took train for Hamburg. It was perhaps the first time that, for a railway journey, he did not order a private car.

For the duration of my father's stay we lived at a hotel, of course; but he enquired at once, from the porter of that institution, for a boarding-house. He found one, not too far from the school, yet in a residential district. It was a large, flashy place, conducted by a woman of the world who, by her lavish and tolerant ways, attracted an international clientele—commercial, not diplomatic.

Next, my father went to see the *Director* of the gymnasium who made for me an appointment with the senior master of Greek. Early one afternoon I called on this man at his house. In a brief examination, oral as well as written, I secured exactly what I had expected: a pass, and even a good pass, in reading, translation, and history of literature; but a miserable failure in grammar and composition: it was the only failure ever registered against me in any academic examination. However, after some hesitation and consultation, I was tentatively admitted to the final year.

"Well," said my father, "that's that. Now it's up to you, my boy."

And he promptly departed.

I might say right here that, by dint of reasonably hard work, I succeeded in justifying the confidence placed in me. Before the end of the fall term I was leading the class even in Greek; I had a natural gift for languages. In all other

subjects I was ahead of my class from the start, thanks to my travels and the excellent coaching received from Herr Niemoeller. At the end of the year I passed my final examinations with high honours and, thus, was ready for the university.

What needs to detain us here is another matter; and it came into prominence by reason of the choice my father had made of a boarding-house.

I soon found out that it was a highly fashionable place. There were some twenty or twenty-five more or less permanent boarders; and they were looked after by a competent staff of five or six servants. With one exception, they were males between the ages of twenty and forty.

The one exception consisted of a Colombian family: husband, wife, one son, and one daughter. They occupied the best suite in the house. The husband was a small, insignificant man of German extraction, a mining engineer on a year's leave, a great admirer of his native country. His wife was a magnificent Creole of pure, Spanish blood who made a profound impression on me. She was enormous in girth and excessively lazy; but in spite of that I considered her a great beauty. What impressed me most in her was the pure-white transparency of her skin, of a velvety texture, which incongruously admitted of an occasional deep-carmine blush. Her hands and feet were, in comparison with her body, of extraordinarily exiguous size; and she was always heavily jewelled. These people kept a man-servant of mixed negro and Indian blood and their own carriage. Both son and daughter partook of the father's physical insignificance. They were always late at table; which was of some importance to me inasmuch as, in spite of the woman's inability to speak or understand German, Swedish, or English, the conversation around the board always ceased or at least flowed in innocuous channels when they appeared in the door of the dining-room.

In addition, there were, on special occasions—for instance those of the great regattas or the horse-races,—many transients referred to the place by those magnates wrongly called "Porters" who looked after the outside interests of the guests at the great hotels surrounding the inner basin of the Alster. When those hotels were filled up, the overflow was directed to this boarding-house. As far as I have ever been able to verify, there was no language which these Porters were not able to speak as well as the travellers. I believe this influential office to be a specifically German institution.

The permanent male boarders, I soon found out, were all apparently wealthy and possessed of unlimited leisure. In addition, they were fast livers. It seemed that many houses of business in the city—ship-brokers' and export houses—had adopted the same system which, to the time of his accident, my father had followed at home, namely that of keeping young "volunteers" who,

without pay, looked after a considerable part of the foreign correspondence, in return for their being initiated into the mysteries of international trade. To judge by the samples whom I met at this boarding-house, such volunteers were not required to be at their places of business before ten or after three o'clock. All of these young men were foreigners, a majority, I believe, coming from South America, though there were at least one Swede and two or three Englishmen. A few looked outright exotic; but they were fashionable and fast for all that.

If I can trust my memory, there was not one who was not addicted to the copious use of alcohol in its less diluted forms; and, so it seemed, not one had any aim in life more serious than that of the unremitting chase after women of a certain type. That much I concluded from what I heard of their conversations; it is amazing to me how much I remember of them. The topic was new to me; and, naturally, I kept my ears open.

I have already said that I was at a highly impressionable age; I was in my puberty. Being by far the youngest, I observed a discreet silence; and they paid no attention to my presence. Today it is a miracle to me that I did not become entirely corrupted in mind or ruined in health. From what I heard in the dining- and living-rooms of that huge and pretentious place, I soon came to know the topography of what, in America, would have been called the red-light district of the city; and I considered these men who were so familiar with it as bold and buccaneering braves, much to be admired for their daring spirit. So far, however, I had no practical use for the knowledge which I nevertheless imbibed eagerly.

Fortunately, there was little leisure. The teachers of the school, of whom I still think with gratitude and even veneration, took a special interest in my welfare; two or three of them helped me by giving me an extra hour now and then. One, a well-known mathematician, with translations of whose works I have since met in second-hand book-shops in New York and San Francisco, knowing perhaps of the dangers to which I, alone in this great city, must be exposed, asked me to help him, in return for such coaching as he gave me in Greek, to read the proofs of certain nautical tables which he was publishing. Another put me through my paces in declensions and conjugations. A third read with me Aeschylus, Euripides, Aristophanes, Plato and Aristotle—far in advance of the curriculum of the school. All of which helped to rekindle ancient fires—ancient I say, for at that age a year is equivalent to decades of a later phase.

Yet there must still have been hours which remained unoccupied. I see myself roaming through the streets whose names figured in the conversations of my more sophisticated fellow-boarders. I learned later that the city, at the

time, was famous for the luxurious lavishness with which it catered to what is commonly called vice. It was not the crude night-life of Berlin; in some ways it rather resembled that of Paris. From what I learned, there were certain establishments of entertainment which were quite exclusive, and to which one had to have an introduction, as to one's tailor, if desirous of being admitted as a familiar.

From that moment on I broke off the only purely social connection I had—that with Uncle Jacobsen. I knew, of course, that my father, to whom, willy-nilly, I had handed myself over, glad to be rid at any price of the drudgery of tutoring, would have discouraged that connection in any case. Uncle Jacobsen had been mentioned between us only once, a day or two after my mother's funeral which he had attended without descending at Castle Thurow. He had merely followed the hearse to the cemetery. That single occasion had been sufficient to make me divine that there was no friendship lost between the two men. Yet, no sooner had my father left me alone at Hamburg, than I had called on Uncle Jacobsen.

He had a comparatively small but exquisitely furnished house in a very patrician district west of the Alster. There, he was looked after by two or three liveried men-servants and a middle-aged lady who acted as housekeeper. I soon found that he had more than one hobby, besides athletics. For the latter, his basement was fitted out as a "Turn-Stube"—a gymnasium in the English sense of the word. But he, too, was no longer a young man, though he was probably my father's junior by some ten years. One after the other he had had to give up his favourite exercises and sports; even sailing; he had recently acquired, instead, a steam-yacht manned by a crew of four or five. In that craft he took me, during the first week-ends, down the river Elbe, to Blankenese, Brunsbuettel, Heligoland, and Cuxhaven. Of his other hobbies, I remember distinctly only one, that of collecting "kris" and other native weapons from the East Indies where he had relatives in the Dutch settlements. This was to be of some slight importance to me a year or so later when I spent three months with a cousin of his on the island of Java. Uncle Jacobsen had his place of business at the waterfront where the big liners were anchored in the road-stead and the huge freighters moored to the quays. It was housed in a huge ramshackle building without the least pretension to magnificence or even modernity.

Uncle Jacobsen knew, of course, what my father's attitude to him was; and I believe he was reluctant, now that my mother was dead, to become too intimate with me. There was nothing between us of our old camaraderie. Physically, he was much changed; he had grown a beard; his hair was white; and the smoothness and transparency of the skin of his face was almost incredible; as was the gentleness of his manner. He was very kind to me; but

he was reserved. I believe he had formed a new attachment, for more than once I found a lady of perhaps forty at his house. She, too, was kind, but in an ironical, condescending way which served to keep me at a distance. Nevertheless, throughout the fall I continued to go there at least once a week, till, as I have said, I began to roam certain streets at night, under the influence of the table-talk at the boarding-house; henceforward an inexplicable feeling caused me to keep away.

In those districts of the city of which I am speaking, the windows of the houses were always shuttered; the doors were closed and even locked; at least so it seemed; and over all these streets lay an air of mystery and allurement which, to me, was at once thrilling and tormenting.

One evening, though, in the dusk of a short winter day, I saw, across the driveway of one of them, a door which stood open. I remember the occasion with unusual vividness. I was walking along, skirting a high wall which must have enclosed a park or a cemetery. For a moment, at the sight of the open door, I stood rooted to the spot; then, weak-kneed with excitement, I went over to the opposite side.

In line with the open door a wide stairway led to an upper storey, at right angles to the line of my vision; and this stairway was being ascended just then by an amply-proportioned young woman clad in nothing but her underwear, a silken dressing-gown hanging over her left arm. With the right she grasped the stair-rail.

As though she had divined my presence down there, in the street where the last grey light of the waning day was struggling against the yellow radiance of the street-lamps, she, herself flooded by gas-light from above—as, indeed, was the whole well of the staircase—espying me, bent over the railing, at the very moment when she was about to disappear above the ceiling of the hall, gave me a wonderful smile and threw me a kiss, laughing, no doubt at the realization that I was a mere boy inclined to see in her something between an angel and a fiend.

At that moment an unseen hand abruptly closed the outer door through which I was staring upward.

I had, of course, not the slightest idea of what had happened to me; I felt as if a tingling wave of life and experience had broken over me and, as it ebbed away, had left me changed. At the same time I felt weighed down by a crushing, leaden burden of guilt. To this day it seems to me to have been one of the most irrational things that could happen to a youth. For several minutes I must have stood there, staring at the door. When I turned away at last, I felt a rebel as well as the recipient of a revelation. For weeks thereafter I chose the

same hour for roaming the same street, passing up and down along the blank wall of the park or the cemetery, up and down; but never again did I see a door open. This was a relief as well as a disappointment; for the young man, still "unsullied", fears as much as he desires his initiation.

The initiation, however, was to come before my year at Hamburg was out. It happened as follows.

Most of my teachers were distinguished men who kept their distance from their pupils; and though, as I have said, some of them helped me, they carefully avoided anything like intimacy or even social contacts.

It was different with one of them, Dr. Broegler, the teacher of chemistry. In this school, science was a minor subject; and its teachers, I verily believe, were looked down upon by those who taught the classics. I am sure they, as well as the teachers of moderns, were less carefully selected; they changed more often. Dr. Broegler was also much younger than most of the others; he was probably still in his thirties. It was not long before he found out that I, coming as I did from a Realschule, knew a great deal more chemistry than was required in this school; but, in spite of the fact that the chemistry lessons, being laboratory lessons, came at the end of the school day, I could, according to the regulations, not be dismissed; the discipline of the school was cloistral. So he began to make use of me as a laboratory assistant. Since he found it difficult to keep his classes in order, this was of real help to him; he could remain on the podium and keep his eyes on the disturbers. Soon he and I were almost like equals. Though the custom was that the senior pupils be called by their family names and given the formal "Sie", he began to call me "Phil" and "Du"; and he told me to drop, except in the presence of the classes, the obligatory "Herr Doctor".

Often, when we were getting things ready for the experimental two hours —once a week—I sacrificing my recess to help him, he talked of a laboratory which he had at his house and which he must show me one day: in his spare time he was working on a then new process of extracting nitrogen from the air.

One Saturday, he asked me to come out with him after school and to stay with him, at his house, till Sunday. I must mention the incidental effect this association was to have later on my intellectual development: I became an assiduous reader of all things new in science; even today I try to keep up with developments. For the moment, however, other effects overshadowed this one.

Since he lived at Blankenese (the "White Nose" or cape), we had to go by train or boat; for that village of summer houses, situated on a hilly promontory jutting far into the great river, lay several miles down the Elbe, below Altona, the sister city of Hamburg, famous for its pleasure district, St. Pauli, among

sailors from all over the world.

To my immense surprise, I found at his house, which was a small villa, that the young wife of this somewhat untidy and careless man who was entirely absorbed in his research work was an extraordinarily pretty, almost fragile woman with at least an admixture of Jewish blood.

I also found that Dr. Broegler was addicted to the use of wine which he took outside the house; it is true, he never indulged to any extent except on Saturday nights when, at nine or ten in the evening, he invariably went to a nearby tavern whence he rarely returned before the small hours of the night. I divined that his wife, being much left alone—as a result of train schedules, her husband had to be away from half-past seven in the morning till six or six-thirty at night—and being, besides, socially isolated in this suburb of pretentious summer-homes, was, to say the least, not happy, in spite of her gay, light disposition. I liked Dr. Broegler, though I laughed at him; but I was quite mature enough to see that this fanatical worker was the last man to give this woman what she craved. He was dark-haired, with a low forehead which was always furrowed and a short, bristling moustache; and he was utterly indifferent to his appearance. She loved pretty clothes, frivolous music and, above all, well-dressed crowds. I could not understand how these two people came to be married.

My first visit to the house took place late in the year; and soon after it I went home for Christmas. When, after the New Year, I returned to school, I was asked again, this time in the name of Mrs. Broegler. We arrived at the house in a snow-storm; and, perhaps partly on that account, or on account of the contrast, I seemed at once to be aware of a change in the atmosphere of the place; everything looked festive and brilliant; Mrs. Broegler was dressed in an evening frock. The meal over, she went almost at once to the piano and began to play: the gay tunes of the day, Strauss and Offenbach. I had to go with her husband to the laboratory at the back of the house, on which he probably spent more money than on his wife. But at the usual hour he grew restless; the tavern was calling him; and this time, when he was ready to slip away without seeing his wife again, he said a revealing thing. “Amuse her, will you? You’ll help me immensely.”

It was not the only time in my life that almost the identical thing was to happen to me. Husbands who, in a certain kind of vitality, in the power of seizing the moment, were no match for their wives, have, throughout my single life, been apt to regard me in the light of a benevolent uncle who would take care of their wives for them, naïvely trusting that I was not the kind to indemnify myself for the time I gave them.

I returned to the drawing-room and told his wife that her husband had left.

She wore a very curious smile.

From that moment on, with fear in my heart, for I was utterly inexperienced, I knew that it depended solely on myself whether I was to become this married woman's lover or not. I should not have been young and vital if I had not wished such an issue to come about; but at the same time I was far too timid to take the first step. For weeks to come nothing whatever happened except that Mrs. Broegler and I became the best and most intimate friends. I knew that she was making advances to me; I watched them, fascinated; but I was not only too timid, I was also too ignorant to meet her half-way.

Before January was gone, my Saturday evening visits at the villa had become a regular and established feature in the lives of the three people concerned. When, on Sunday nights, or sometimes even on Monday mornings, I returned to the city, to boarding-house and school, we said to each other, "Till next week!" or, "We'll talk about that next Saturday." This was said as often by Dr. Broegler himself as by his wife. An invitation had become supererogatory. By this time we called each other, all three, by our first names, using the familiar "Du".

At school, however, I continued to call the chemist formally Dr. Broegler, a fact which he appreciated, I believe, though he never said a word about it.

My seventeenth birthday, in the middle of February, happened to fall on a Saturday; and Mrs. Broegler had arranged for a celebration, without, however, inviting other guests. Again I remember the atmosphere of the evening with great distinctness. Even Dr. Broegler delayed his departure for the tavern. It was one of the gayest nights I have had in my life; and about ten o'clock a bottle of champagne appeared. It was this wine, abhorred by him—he drank Spanish—which finally sent him away.

At once Mrs. Broegler left the drawing-room to which she did not return for perhaps ten minutes. When she did, she had changed her clothes; she knew that she looked extraordinarily seductive. I was in a state of excitement which made my voice unsteady; yet I still did not know how to act. What was a woman anyway? Certainly she was a superior being.

She played for me; and I remember my attempts at singing to her accompaniment at which she laughed and laughed, for I was a monotone.

Another hour went by; and then she disappeared a second time; I heard her tell the servants—there were two—to go to bed; and when she had locked the front door of the house, which she had never done before, she ran upstairs; to me it sounded as if I could hear her excitement in the quick fall of her feet. I was sitting in an arm-chair, pretending to look at the pictures in a magazine.

The whole house sank into an utter silence.

Then, perhaps shortly after eleven o'clock, I heard my name called from upstairs. I was in a state of extreme tension and jumped up. I felt that something was going to happen; but I did not know what. I stepped into the hall-door of the drawing-room and said, "Yes?"

"I am going to bed, dear," Mrs. Broegler said in a whisper. "You had better go, too."

I was dumbfounded. "Already?" I asked as though disappointed.

"Yes, come."

In spite of that sense of disappointment, I said in a husky voice, "Very well."

Now it had already struck me that the hall and the stairway were in utter darkness. It was before the days of electric light. I could not simply touch a switch.

I turned back into the drawing-room; I felt I must pull myself together. There I tossed off the remainder of a glass of champagne; and I blew out the lights before I groped my way to the stairs. I was quite familiar with the lay-out of the house, of course; yet I held a match ready to light in case I should miss the door to my room. But I had hardly reached the top of the stairs when I felt myself enveloped by her soft body, clothed in her night-gown. Simultaneously she placed her hand over my lips and drew me along to her bedroom.

One fever was stilled; another was kindled. My fear of the other sex was by no means dead; but the memory of one week-end and the anticipation of the next kept me glowing. For weeks I neglected my work, tormented by questions. Just what was a woman? She, who had become my mistress, remained in more than one sense alien. I do not know whether it was the consequence of the use of her utmost skill or merely the result of the situation as it had developed. She was childless; and she was utterly without anything that could be called shame. Yet I still felt that she was letting herself down to my level; though she seemed to meet me on a footing of parity, she must be concealing her absolute superiority. Woman as such remained a mystery to me. Even the prostitute whom I had seen through the open door of the brothel seemed a superior being to me, something almost divine because it was different from myself. Unconsciously my mistress confirmed me in this. She treated me like a child; she played with me; the moment her sensuality was appeased she became maternal; and it was precisely that, the mystery in her, which held me as with bands of steel. I wanted forever to remain with her; she laughed and sent me back to school. I wanted to tell her husband and to take

her away; again she laughed and called me an innocent. I could not understand that she could calmly contemplate the time when I should have to leave her; her as well as the city; to go on to the university and to a no doubt great career. “We shall meet again,” she said; “one day when we shall talk of all this as belonging to the past.” She was much less selfish than I.

Time flew; she urged me to work, work, work; and it was she who implanted in me a new ambition: that to come out first in the final examinations, in the “Abiturientenexamen”; and not only on the aggregate, but in every single subject, Greek included.

Outwardly, my relation to Dr. Broegler remained unchanged; but inwardly it was now I who felt superior. In fact, I felt superior to everybody with whom I came in contact, even to my fellow-boarders at the boarding-house.

But they, of course, went on treating me as though I did not exist. By that time, with my new knowledge, I saw many things which I had so far overlooked. At last I could read the signs; and soon I was convinced that one of the boarders, an Englishman employed in a ship-broker’s office competing with Uncle Jacobsen’s house, was the landlady’s lover; but, so I decided, in an entirely inferior, sordid way. Contemptuously I said to myself that, no doubt, he paid her. How vastly superior my liaison was to his in every way! I was still refraining from treating my mistress with anything like familiarity.

But, as the end of the term approached, there was a subtle change in our relations. My mistress became insatiable. It began by her retaining me to a later and later hour in her room; till, one night, Dr. Broegler came home before I had left her. The door was locked, of course; he rattled it angrily; I don’t know whether the fact aroused a suspicion. I slipped away; and she, throwing on night and dressing-gowns, ran down to open. I heard him stumbling up the stairs and, to my horror, concluded that he must be drunk. Next morning, she found a moment to whisper to me that she had explained the locked door by telling him there had been suspicious noises about the house which had frightened her. At any rate, next Saturday Dr. Broegler did not go out but sat around all night, going up with us to bed in a very ill humour and before eleven o’clock.

I walked my room for an hour or longer before I could compose myself; and next morning Dr. Broegler announced his intention of returning with me to town; he had forgotten certain class-papers at the school, he said; they had to be marked before Monday morning. My mistress and I did not even have the opportunity to exchange a kiss or a caress.

This led to the next and, as far as I was concerned, final phase of the liaison.

For on Monday, when I went home to the boarding-house after school, I found her installed in an arm-chair, in the hall of the place, beautifully dressed and looking at me with a bewitching smile. We had to meet before witnesses there; and she managed things skilfully. I forget what pretext she alleged; but it was sufficient to justify her even in accompanying me to my little suite of two rooms, one of which was my study. We spent a triumphant hour together before I had a cab called to take her to the station. A purchase which she had made prior to her coming to my rooms was to explain her trip to her husband who would travel by the same train.

Next week, on Saturday, all went the accustomed way; but nevertheless she came to town again on Wednesday, this time waiting for me near the school whence we walked home.

Among my fellow-boarders the adventure was at once discovered; and henceforth there was never a meal at which some sly allusion was not made to my being “a deep one”. By reason of my *bonne fortune*, I was henceforth treated much more like a grown-up; and, of course, I took the manners of one.

It became a regular thing for us to meet twice a week, once at the villa at Blankenese, once at my rooms. My mistress had found a perfectly plausible explanation for her mid-week trips to town. The curator of the city’s museum gave a lecture on Egyptology every Wednesday at three o’clock; and she acquired an absorbing interest in Egyptology. The lecture was delivered in the same building with the school; and at four or whatever the closing hour was, we met in a side street. In order not to run into her husband who might detain her, she left via a back-door. Then we had two hours to ourselves.

The adventure matured me tremendously; and I quite agreed with the French moralist philosopher who advises mothers of young men to hand their sons over to some experienced woman of the world who would give them that polish and self-confidence which only such a liaison could impart.

What surprises me today is that I actually managed, in spite of this tremendous distraction, to come out first in every subject, in the final examinations in spring, thus winning a scholarship payable in eight half-yearly instalments during the next four years, provided only I was properly enrolled in some recognized European university. Perhaps the amount of reading I did was still more surprising; for when I left Hamburg, I had a very fair survey in my mind of the literatures written in some five or six languages. Come to think of it, this love affair may even have been of assistance in furthering my academic aims; for it settled and canalized my whole emotional life. I was no longer inwardly burning. It is true, the vision of my mistress was never absent from my mind; but physically I was at rest. To this day, when I read of Helen or of any of the great female figures of literature, I see them in the guise of this

little woman.

And then, quite towards the end—which neither of us considered as final; but I probably less than she—she made an appalling revelation: she was pregnant. She made it almost casually; but I soon discovered that she was triumphant. She had always wished to have a child, she said; and, of late, she had wished to have it from me. She laughed at my consternation. Was she sure? Of course, she was. No, it could not possibly be from her husband. What did I think? Would she have continued relations with him after we had met? Not she. Would not her husband suspect who was the father of her child? Suspect? He would know. He was sterile. Years ago, when it had first seemed as though there would be no child from their marriage, they had consulted a specialist; and this physician had left no doubt about it with whom lay the fault.

But then, what would he say or do? She did not care. What if he left and divorced her? Let him! And she told me that, in a financial sense, she was not dependent on him. I, of course, knew nothing of such legal matters except inasmuch as my mother's relation to my father had given me some idea that a woman might have property apart from her husband. Strangely, this information seemed to rob our relation of some of its romanticism. I should have revelled in drama, challenging my father to give his consent to a marriage with the woman I loved. I was told that, as a rule, indeed, the husband disposed of his wife's fortune as if it were his own; but the father of my mistress, being a lawyer, had secured her property for her. My mistress laughed and laughed at the discomfiture I showed. It seemed as if she considered it an additional triumph that the father of her child should be a mere boy seventeen years old.

The day came when we must meet for a last time. I was going home to spend the summer there till lectures opened at whatever university I was to attend. My mistress advised me to make it Berlin or Bonn, so she could manage to see me sometimes. I had to tell her that I was absolutely dependent on my father and should have to do what he wanted me to do. I swore eternal love to her, of course, and asked her to marry me if her husband divorced her. Again she laughed at me, though tears were in her eyes.

The next day she was at the station; and as the train pulled out, and until it turned round a curve, she waved her hand to me.

IV

I WAS restless during that summer. My father announced at once that in the fall of the year I was to go to Paris. He was still talking of international law and of a diplomatic career for me. I was indifferent.

Again I sailed a good deal; and ultimately I sailed around Jutland to Hamburg, taking with me a sailor who held a second-mate's ticket.

I had written, of course; I had written to Mrs. Broegler under a name she had assumed for our correspondence, and addressed my letters *Poste Restante*. I had received answers, too; but I had felt that in everything she said there were vast reservations; there were things I was not being told about; and at last my disquietude had reached a climax.

From Hamburg I went at once to Blankenese. The villa was locked up; neighbours told me that Dr. Broegler had gone away for his holidays; nobody knew whether his wife was with him.

Again I wrote and waited a week for an answer which did not come. My companion had to get back to Malmoe by a given date; his leave was up; he was to sail for England. We went home.

An answer to the letter written from Hamburg was waiting for me at Thurow. I had been seen at Blankenese where Mrs. Broegler was staying with friends. She thought it best that, at least for the time being, we should not meet again. Her letter was full of love; but full, also, of worldly wisdom. I must not try to find her just yet; it would ruin my career. In fact, she advised me to go abroad as soon as possible; for her husband, whom she had told, had left her and was bringing a suit for a divorce, naming me as co-respondent. I was to go abroad and to ignore it.

Which was anything but reassuring to me; yet, what could I do? I could not go back to Blankenese to make a house-to-house canvass. I wrote stormily, begging her to let me come or to meet me somewhere. I received no answer. I wrote again; and this time my letter came back unopened and unread.

For weeks I was in a terrible state of emotional upheaval. Even my father noticed it; but he did not enquire into the reasons. Perhaps he guessed that there was some affair of the heart, especially since, in contrast to a year ago I refused to call on our neighbours and to play tennis with their girls. Instead, I rode wildly; and I trained for a boat-race in single skulls. I blamed "her" entirely; and it was years before I could think of her with gratitude and forgiveness. But outwardly I had quieted down long before the end of the

summer.

Perhaps one reason was that, during a horseback ride I fell in with a girl of my own age, perhaps even a year or so younger—a girl whom, in what follows, I will call Kirsten. She was the daughter of one of our neighbours—tall, very finely built, proud, and attractive—far too proud, so far, to let me see that I had made an impression on her, though, after our first meeting, we met, throughout the late summer, almost daily, by what amounted to appointment. Strangely, we were both disillusioned and told each other so; it was not the least factor in my attraction for her, and in hers for me, that we had both been disappointed in love.

Then the time came for me to leave.

The next phase of my life opened up with the arrival of a letter from my great-uncle Rutherford. He mentioned that he was on the point of going to Russia. The Russian government had engaged him to lead an overland expedition into the north country of Siberia, to get certain records, of temperatures, magnetic deviations, and similar things which I have forgotten, all of them connected with the "Asiatic Focus of the North Magnetic Pole". He did mention that he was going north of the Arctic Circle. His first stop, however, would be at St. Petersburg to get his equipment ready—horses, sleighs, Arctic clothing, and scientific instruments. He added the date on which he would leave London and his regret at lacking the time to run up to Thurow; otherwise he would have been glad to renew his acquaintance with his great-nephew whom he remembered and to whom he sent his kindest regards.

Now this great-uncle of mine was a well-to-do man, as well-to-do as his cousin, my grandfather, had been; and my father was anxious to see me make any sort of influential connection. So he promptly got into touch with him, over the wire, and arranged for a meeting between us at Brussels, a city through which I had to pass on my way to Paris. He little thought that, thereby, he was to postpone the beginning of my university career by a full twelve months.

This is what happened. When my great-uncle and I met, he, renewing his liking for me, asked me, instead of proceeding to Paris, to come along with him and see Northern Asia. I believe he spoke half in jest; he mostly did, no matter what he said; and I liked his way tremendously; as a rule his lips curled in a smile; but on occasion he could be sharp and even grim when he gave orders—he had been a military man, in England as well as in India, and had seen fighting; but as a rule he was as charming as a woman, especially to those he liked. He was a very superior person who had lived under all sorts of conditions and had taken them all as if they were in the day's work. He had had the most amazing adventures—one of them being that, when a P. and O.

steamer had been cut in two, in a beam-end collision in the Channel, at night, he had been the only survivor from among the passengers; for the ramming steamer had, as by a miracle, struck in such a manner as to open his cabin door, whereas all other doors had been jammed in their frames, the liner sinking within a few minutes. Even that he had saved nothing but the pyjamas which he was wearing added a touch to be admired.

I believe he was just a trifle taken aback by the readiness, yes, eagerness with which I accepted. The proposal was made over the dessert and a bottle of champagne, after a dinner such as few places in Europe afforded.

Two or three days later we were in St. Petersburg which I knew; but for the first time I was turned loose by myself; for my uncle was henceforth fully occupied with negotiations and examinations; every item of equipment and supplies had to be tested and approved or rejected; to be finally assembled and shipped. It must be remembered that the Trans-Siberian railway had not yet been built or at least completed. Since, most of the time, we were to be north of the line, whether completed or only projected, it would have helped us little in any case. The plan was roughly to strike as nearly as possible straight north from Omsk, along the river Ob; to survey a line along the Arctic Circle to the Yenissei and beyond, to the one hundredth meridian east of Greenwich, and thence to strike south for Irkutsk; to cross Lake Baikal; and to make as quickly as possible for the Amur River which we were to follow to its mouth near the city of Nicolayevsk. It was a most exciting plan.

By the middle of October we were at Omsk, on the Irtish, the chief tributary of the Ob. It is all over fifty years ago; and I kept no records of any kind. Even if it were within the scope of this book to give detailed descriptions of what I saw, I could not do so; like the face of Europe my memory is a palimpsest on which writing has overlaid writing. But a few things I recall even across this gulf of time, and one or two were of importance for my later development. Thus I recall my amazement at the impression received in every one of these Siberian cities as if they were mere detached pieces of a western civilization in plain contradiction to the environment: fragments broken off, as it were, from the margin of that civilization and scattered piecemeal over an untamed continent of enormous dimensions. Nowhere on earth, perhaps, not even in the early days of Western-Canadian cities, did the possession of an evening suit of clothes confer such an air of distinction on man; nowhere was, among women, *décolletage* so essential to social standing. I can imagine an English aristocrat taking his dinner in tweeds; I cannot imagine a Russian government official of the time taking it in anything but full evening dress. It was these things which made life possible to them in their isolation; they all “kept their form” as Galsworthy would have called it; and not only kept it but

watched over it jealously, punishing every infringement of social convention, on the part of others, by social ostracism. “He came in a sack suit; one really cannot invite a brute like that.” In the foreground of any mixed gathering people made the impression as if they were figures taken out of a toy box or a band-box, who moved as if an invisible player—romantic convention—were pulling the strings. Behind this foreground there seemed to be no sort of background, except when the men got drunk, which they did pretty regularly; but even then their moods of despair or boastfulness seemed to lack spontaneity; convention over-ruled every genuine impulse: the dress-suit ruled supreme, just as it does in certain small circles in almost every Canadian university. My uncle and I laughed about it. We, of course, being foreigners, distinguished foreigners, travelling under the auspices of St. Petersburg—which, at least nominally, meant the Czar of all the Russias by whom my uncle, by the way, had been received in audience before leaving the west—were treated like dukes and lords for whom receptions were held and who were bowed to almost like royalty. The forms observed in the face of an unbelievable isolation often verged on the ludicrous. But I must not forget to mention that most of the men were physically magnificent specimens, all bearded; and many of the women reminded me of the gorgeous Creole of the boarding-house at Hamburg.

But what impressed me most, and what remains with me today as one of the vital things in all the experience of my life, was not the city but the barren belts isolating it. Omsk lies in the northern margin of the vast Kirghiz steppe. The distance from Omsk to Semipalatinsk, the next city to the south, is around six hundred miles as the crow flies. That is as if there were nothing between Saskatoon, let me say, and the centre of North Dakota; or, in Ontario, between Ottawa and Port Arthur; or, in England, between London and Scapa Flow; nothing resembling a city, a town, or even a village. There were settlements of sorts; but in these settlements there was nothing which we should call a house; there were huts at best. To the west, the steppe stretched away to the Urals; to the east, for five hundred miles or more, to the great massif of the Altais. Think of the district between Medicine Hat in Alberta and the little town of Brooks, a district consisting of rolling hills of marl, covered by a sparse, short grass growing in tufts; and you have some sort of idea of the landscape; but in Alberta you cross that district in a two-hour drive by motor; in Siberia, at the time, you had to travel for weeks. The true Kirghiz steppes, of course, lie south-east, separated from the Omsk district by a belt, again six hundred miles wide, of high hills, partly wooded; and the moment you have crossed these, you are in the inland basin of the Aral Sea where all is semi-desert. We have the exact counterpart of that, too, in the alkaline lakes of Saskatchewan; we have the exact counterpart of almost every Siberian landscape in the west of

Canada; but it is invariably in miniature. Great as our distances are, compared with Siberia, Canada is crowded as, in a museum, show-landscapes are set close together.

The effect of that landscape on me was enormous and enduring; that is why I am enlarging upon it. The two or three months which I spent on or within the Arctic Circle, under the conditions of a Polar expedition, have paled in my memory: they were no more than a trip to me, interesting in their way, calling, on occasion, for the exertion of every physical and mental power; but they were no more than an episode—a personally-conducted overland journey. But the steppe changed my whole view of life; the steppe got under my skin and into my blood. Life as a student in Paris, life in the various parts of the world through which I was to hurry during the years that followed, paled in my eyes whenever I thought of the steppes; and only when I struck my roots into the west of Canada did I feel at home again. In the steppes only, so it seemed, life was lived as life pure and simple, as life *qua* life. For here was the staggering fact: these steppes were inhabited; they were peopled by man. Perhaps, in this experience, I must look for the reason why, when stranded in America, I remained in Canada and clung to it with my soul till it had replaced Siberia as the central fact in my adult mentality. Like Siberia, Canada needed to be fought for by the soul: but very few Canadians know it. They think of it as of a Europe enlarged. I have said that this is not a travelogue; but for once, in order to make things clear, I have to draw a picture.

Let it not be forgotten that I had come from the crowded life of great cities where I had plunged into experiences of a totally different nature—experiences of which I was to receive a last vivid reminder right there at Omsk; for a paper reached me, with a document attached which I was expected to sign before witnesses, after having followed me from Sweden to Brussels, from Brussels to St. Petersburg, from St. Petersburg to Omsk. It was a subpoena, or something of the sort, which summoned me to appear before the court in a suit for divorce brought at Hamburg by Dr. Broegler against his wife. For a few days I lived in great excitement over it; and then, under the impact of the steppe, it all dropped from me. In any case, there was nothing that I could do; neither I nor Mrs. Broegler could defend the suit.

Then came the day that has remained among the most vivid memories of over fifty years.

We were making a trip through the steppe on horseback, accompanied by an armed escort of Cossacks. My uncle was chiefly interested in the geologic aspects of the district. I—had not the landscape slowly taken hold of me and conquered my innermost being—should probably have felt bored. For day after day it was the same thing. Treeless country, flat or rolling, covered with

the short, sparse, wiry grass, vaulted over by a cloudless sky which seemed to hang low, except at night—lower than any I had ever seen. Here and there we saw camps or even more or less permanent settlements filled with women, children, and old men, all looking alike, both people and settlements, the latter, from a distance, resembling blisters thrown up by the very soil, for there never was the slightest trace of colour. When we approached, the men were always away; only the women and children were there: shy, silent creatures who ran and hid when they saw us, as if we were skirmishers or reconnoitring parties of a raiding army. The few we cornered spoke no language which we knew; they chattered, shrilly, as if angry or mortally afraid. Certainly it was not Russian which they spoke; my uncle spoke Russian fluently. When, as he invariably did, he scattered a handful of coins in the streets or in what passed for streets, they did not throw themselves down to scramble for them; they acted as if they did not see; but hardly had we departed far enough for them to think we were out of eye-and ear-shot, than they started screaming fights for these tokens which resembled, to them, drafts on the wealth of a different world. The few women and children we actually saw from close by looked as if they had never washed; and they smelt like that, too. Somehow it all seemed natural; it seemed the appropriate thing; one did not object to either sight or smell. Cleanliness seemed an irrelevancy.

And then, one evening, we saw the men. I do not remember whether it was near to, or far from, the flamboyant city where, no doubt, at that very hour men of a different race were changing into full-dress suits and women powdering their throats and bejewelled hands.

My uncle and I had been leisurely riding along, on our tough ponies, in silence, anxious to reach a camp-site before dark, and followed, at some distance, by our escort. For league after league we, that day, had crossed treeless country of an impressive and ceaseless monotony; and from time to time the horizon of this grass land had been dotted with the nomadic herds of some native patriarch, half Slav, half Mongol.

And then, in the dusk of the evening, we overtook a travelling clan of these Kirghiz herdsmen who, mounted on lean, half-starved, and shaggy ponies, were driving their stunted, long-haired, and short-horned cattle and sheep from one used-up pasture to another. We overtook and passed them; and they returned our greeting in a peculiarly haughty, distant, almost hostile manner. All these men were bearded, of course, sparsely bearded; and as we passed through the cavalcade, they strung out in a long line, as if making room for us on a trail crowded only with shadows.

But, when we had left them a quarter of a mile behind, suddenly, unexpectedly, almost startlingly, the whole column broke into a droning song,

with the effect of a ghostly unreality. It was a vast, melancholy utterance, cadenced within a few octaves of the bass register, as if the landscape as such had assumed a voice: full of an almost inarticulate realization of man's forlorn position in the face of a hostile barrenness of nature; and yet full, also, of a stubborn, if perhaps only inchoate assertion of man's dignity below his gods.

A revelation came to me. All these humans—for, incredibly, like myself, they were human—represented mere wavelets on the stream of a seminal, germinal life which flowed through them, which had propagated itself, for millennia, through them, almost without, perhaps even against, their will and desire. They had done what they must do; and from their doings life had sprung. No doubt each single one of them felt himself to be an individual; to me, lack of personal, distinguishing contact made them appear as mere representatives of their race. But their song was eternal because, out of the stream and succession of generations, somewhere, somewhen, a nameless individual had arisen to give them a voice. That voice was the important thing to me; for already I felt that one day I, too, was to be a voice; and I, too, was perfectly willing to remain nameless.

That is the picture which remains; clear and sharp, etched into my memory like a copper-plate. All else is mere thought which does not matter. More and more, after the side-trip into the Arctic—for such it was to me—as we returned to the main cross-continent route, the Mongol element prevailed in the population, an amiable, Chinese element, feminine almost, and utterly alien in spite of its smiling faces. From them, there came no revelation, so that, among the constituents of my inner life, Siberia remains to this day the steppe.

It was March or April when we reached Nikolayevsk. From Omsk I had written to my father; and here, at Nikolayevsk, which, at the time, was a half Arctic port, resembling settlements in Alaska or in the northernmost Norway of Europe, mail was waiting for me, among others a letter from my father. He was angry at my escapade; but he sent money; and that was what mattered. There was also a brief note from Uncle Jacobsen, with the enclosure of a letter of introduction to his cousin Van der Elst, a settler on the island of Java, not far from Batavia. The note merely stated that, having heard of my being in the far east, he, Uncle Jacobsen, advised me, on my way home, to stop over and to see something of the tropics.

The funds my father sent me were in the form of drafts on various banks, at Vladivostok, Yokohama, and Hong-Kong. Thus my route was defined for me. My great-uncle Rutherford was going to be with me till we reached Japan; but thence he was to cross over to America, to return to Europe via Canada and the Atlantic; he himself, however, advised me to take the route around Asia. He laughed a good deal over my father's indignation, adding that the Siberian trip

would, no doubt, in the long run, prove of greater value to me, even in a diplomatic career, than a year at Paris could have done.

There followed the long voyage home, via Java, the ports of the Malay Peninsula, two or three Indian cities, the Red Sea, and the familiar Mediterranean.

The actual voyage, including the various stops, was of no fundamental importance to me, of vastly less importance than I had expected. What influence it had came out many decades later when the greater part of my life was lived. Today I should be glad to take it over again. For the moment, of course, I was absorbed by the many novel sights I saw; memory has since sifted them; criticism has eliminated most of what was irrelevant. Finally, quite recently, a new context was built up ex-post-facto which canalized conclusions not arrived at, not even dreamt of, on the spot. If I had another fifty years of mental vigour ahead of me, that context might prove of ultimate and permanent importance.

What, throughout the half century which has elapsed since then, remained as a lasting memory was the lavishness of nature which, on occasion, became as destructive as its stinginess elsewhere. Here it was not barrenness which challenged life; on the contrary, life choked life; the very vitality of the scene implied its tragedies.

This is the story of a writer; and a writer's concern is everlastingly with his soul. Circumstance concerns him only in two ways: inasmuch as it gives him a viaticum on the way, such as is implied in his descent or in the heritage he has received; and inasmuch as it impedes or furthers the growth of what he has thus received. Experience is strangely selective: mostly it teaches only what we have already learned. In new scenes we seek only what we are looking for and for the reception of which we are prepared. Two people of opposite tendencies may draw opposite results from the same experience. But that applies only to experiences which, in one way or another, concern us vitally. In the case of the present writer far and away the greater part of his experience simply checked him by a process of distraction. There are three things which are essentially alien to him; the large city, the mountains, and the tropics. I might almost say they are racially alien to him; and of these three his attitudes to two of them are closely connected. The mountains and the tropics offer him at best a temporary, holiday hospitality; he can go there for recreation, not for development; only the sea and the plains are, in the deepest sense, his homes.

Every human being born can, in a way, be regarded as a seed; the seed, too, has its viaticum; once released from the parent plant, it has to seek, or rather to find, its soil, there to grow or to perish. Considering myself as a seed, then, it strikes me now, as it struck me then, that Siberia had come very near to giving

me the soil I needed. The wind picked me up and bore me aloft. It is significant that, not until I found a similar soil, did I strike root.

Ultimately I got to Paris; it was midsummer; and I took great care not to go home. It was not because I feared to face my father; he had, by this time, forgotten his anger which had undergone a metamorphosis into pride of my enterprise. In a long letter he expressed something which I should not have thought him capable of conceiving and which, much later, I found condensed into a single sentence written by Santayana. There are two ways of looking at life; one may view it as an adventure or as a discipline. Now my father lived under a very curious delusion, perhaps because he had never stirred into the remoter corners of this globe but had, instead, lived his life within the quadrangle defined by four points, Thurow, Berlin, Paris, London; namely, the delusion that his own life had necessarily to be defined as a discipline; and while I did not yet know with any degree of precision just how he stood with regard to many things, for instance in the mere matter of finance, I accepted that view for the moment. I knew of no basis of fact on which to refute it. Mine, he said, was perhaps to be an adventure; and if so, well and good. But this was his advice: whatever I might ultimately want to do with myself, I was to do it thoroughly and with gusto.

I was eighteen years old but precocious to a degree seldom met with; and had I known that there were to be only two more years during which I might have been said to have some remnant of free will or decision left, I should hardly have done what I did—a thing I was shortly to summarize in the Goethean line:

Ich bin nur durch die Welt gerannt.[2]

[2] I have merely rushed through the world.

It must not be forgotten that, no matter how deeply mortgaged Thurow might be, I still looked upon myself as its future master. It never occurred to me that there might be the slightest reason to retrench, so that I could live on left-overs. When, today, I calculate my expenditure of the next two years, I see that, had I asked for that sum of money in a lump sum, it would have secured me against want for the rest of my days. I do not mean to say that that would necessarily have been a good thing; I merely state the fact. For the moment, funds were so plentiful that I felt I could do very much as I pleased.

I went to the enormous expense of having my yacht run around to Cherbourg; and for the next few months I cruised in the French territorial waters of the Atlantic, occasionally extending my range into Spanish and

Portuguese valleys as well.

With the opening of the winter-term, however, I returned to Paris and promptly began to attend lectures, dividing my time between the law, medicine, and archeology; I was still exploring. Wisely, I abandoned medicine; I found that I was, as I am today, unable to look at other people's blood without fainting. In the law, I discovered a disability of another kind; I felt nothing but boredom and disgust; so I let it go by the board. Archeology, on the other hand, attracted me more than ever. I attended certain courses with great assiduity; and I conceived at least one personal admiration: for Solomon Reinach who already enjoyed a European reputation. But in the nature of things all courses were elementary; so far they gave only a survey; and shortly I decided that such a survey could be better arrived at by studying originals on the spot, at Rome or Athens, than by looking at plaster casts. I had, after all, been infected with Wanderlust.

A new interest helped me to make the old ones wane. I had, of course, all sorts of cards of introduction; and I met a few people who had known my mother. Soon I was in the social whirl; and incidentally I made my first contacts with younger writers, musicians, painters, sculptors, architects.

Towards Christmas I stopped to analyse my position.

What, so I asked, had school given me; and what, therefore, was the university likely to give me? My very adventure with Greek and its literature stared me in the face. What help I had received counted after all for little; essentially, in Greek, I was self-taught; and I had acquired in one year what it took others six to acquire. Did not that fact prove that schools were at bottom useless, at least for such as I? I said to myself that school had at bottom given me no more or less than "standing"; standing one has to have. In order to get it, I had read; and even today I feel that formal instruction can give little beyond the ability to read. It might have been different had my aim been the initiation into the arcana of formal philology. Nor did I consider, for one moment, the fact that, if my classical studies were to yield me a means of making my livelihood, I needed first of all to make myself familiar with the methods of minute research; I never expected to have to make my living.

Here is the central fact. More than anything else I lacked, at Paris as elsewhere, the definitely directed will to do the *practical* thing. I can, today, see the wisdom out of which my mother had kept reiterating that word "practical". At all times, the very last thing I had in mind was to carve a career for myself. I wanted to know all, to grasp all that man had ever found out, about his past as well as about his present. In that, I could further myself only by scattering my endeavour over many fields; I was the born "dilettante"; I toyed with everything and mastered nothing—in the practical field. That in the

long-run, and considering all that was to happen to me, this was beneficial, I should be the last to deny. It is the aim of most of our curricula, in colleges and universities. The student is given a "smattering" of everything and perhaps a little solid knowledge in one field. Later, I was to devote the leisure hours of a decade to the study of chemistry; and I do not consider it time thrown away. But what I did at Paris could not prepare me for what lay ahead.

Meanwhile, socially, I approached certain circles from the outside.

In times gone by the university had had one most important function; that is, in times when the imparting of knowledge was its sole function, not the certification of candidates for position or rank in the state. The moment the aim became the latter, the function I am speaking of ceased to operate. It consisted in bringing together the keenest minds from all strata of society; the university levelled, in the field of intellectual endeavour, poor and rich, peasant and lord; and, on the whole, it levelled up; all modern levelling is done downward. Peasant and lord had to meet and could meet because the universities were small. Since university "standing" has become the prerequisite for position in the hierarchy of the state, the institution has become too large and unwieldy; within the student body social distinctions define themselves as rigidly as they do elsewhere.

No matter what else they may give, school and university should, first of all, bring young people together on the same level. So long as those with whom the student comes in contact derive from the same social stratum as himself, the contact cannot give him anything essential.

That was my trouble. Within the university I did not find that enlargement of my horizons which I was looking for. Naturally, then, I soon sought it outside the university.

I had already found that I had a talent for forming the centre of certain groups. Those revolving about me were mostly younger even than I. I don't know what it was that gave me this power of forming a nucleus of crystallization; I only know I had it. But again I was to find that those who revolved about me were of no particular importance to me; but they served to bring me in touch with others who had that power of attraction and organization in certain directions themselves, whether by virtue of what they were or by virtue of what they had done. It has never been superordination for which I craved; it has been subordination rather.

I went through one strange experience. A young man, very slightly my senior in years, was, in certain small circles, already regarded as a coming light. While first avoiding and even discouraging my advances, he suddenly veered around and, incredibly, subordinated himself to me. It is true, in public

he acted more or less as my mentor; but in private he professed that he was nothing, I everything. It was only in the course of weeks or even months that I began to realize with dismay the nature of my attraction for him. When my eyes were opened, I saw clearly that a not inconsiderable fraction of these new, artistic friends of mine—many of whom have since left their mark on France and even on the world—suffered from the taint of homosexuality. The thing itself meant nothing to me; it means nothing to me today; but it explained many things: the fierce jealousies, for instance, the incessant quarrels by which I was surrounded. My own overpowering experience with Mrs. Broegler, at Hamburg, saved me from becoming involved in any sense whatever. If I had not always been so, I had become definitely, finally heterosexual. But, once I began to understand it, this whole world of lovers and ephebes exercised an extraordinary fascination, especially since it was composed of intellectually brilliant young men.

It was not long before the one who was undoubtedly the most promising among them proposed to me to accompany him on a trip through the Sahara, above all, to go with him to Biskra which he knew well. I went, spending the greater part of the remainder of the academic year in this way. The desert was a new experience to me, and one for which I longed. Like Siberia it was to tinge my whole further outlook: the utter blackness of the sky at night; the enormous contrast between day and night; the range of temperature, within twenty-four hours, from sharp frost to intense, next-to-unbearable heat: these things have stayed with me, have helped me to formulate certain things which, in my writings, undiscovered, so far, by the critics, have a cosmic significance.

Back at Paris, for the very end of the term, I became still more pronouncedly the centre of certain groups. I was the only one who, in a purely physical sense, had seen a great deal of the world. To Europe and Northern Asia I had now added the desert. I could talk and talk; and to my companions I seemed to be the one who was free, absolutely, finally free, for all European conventions had fallen away.

Did I receive nothing? Nay, something; but it was no more than a confirmation of things which I carried already in me, if dormant. Never again, after Paris, could I see my aim in life in anything but the ultimate working out of what was in me: a sort of reaction to the universe in which man was trapped, defending himself on all fronts against a cosmic attack. I had seen too many men for it to matter to me whether they were European, Asiatic, or African. Yet I talked even then of all I had seen as being only the old world; there was a new world still unexplored. I did not think of it as having any fundamental importance; yet I must glance at it, in order to be confirmed in my attitude: there were America, South Africa, Australia. When I spoke of them, it was

only natural that my utterance should be coloured by what was expected of me; I spoke of them with contempt. We spoke of ourselves as “good Europeans”, without distinction as to Anglo-Saxon, Scandinavian, Slav, or Latin. The centre of the terrestrial universe, as we saw it, lay somewhere near the southern tip of Sicily.

I made up my mind to go to Rome next year.

Before I leave Paris, I must, however, briefly outline the course of my days.

By that time I was more or less intimate with such people as Henri de Régnier, Jules Renard, Heredia, Mallarmé, and others. I was at least in touch with Verlaine and Rimbaud; and there was one group—I can no longer link it with definite names—over which, every now and then, fell the shadow of a figure already irradiated by the sterner possibilities of tragedy—that of Oscar Wilde. These contacts, casual as many of them were, proved decisive for my future life. Already I was writing, chiefly poetry, and in French. Even at Hamburg I had written and tried to break into print; without success, I am glad to say.

Besides, I had the *entrée* into the homes of a number of people belonging to the old aristocracy—royalists mostly; and after having spent my mornings in desultory study or work, I used to take my mid-day meal in some haunt of the literary or artistic world. My afternoons I spent in some sculptor’s or painter’s studio; or perhaps in a gallery; or with some writer of more or less standing or promise. Unless I visited a theatre, the opera house, or one of the international “Variétés”, I went at night into society where I met beautiful women and important men; men, at least, who seemed important to themselves if not to others. Often I stayed into the early hours of the next day; and, having the wonderful power of recuperation of youth, I invariably rounded off the night by dropping in at some cabaret or café, sometimes even at some criminal dive frequented by the lower Bohème which has always amused me. Already I saw that eccentricity or extravagance in the conduct of life invariably accompanied only the lesser talent; the greater talent soon cut itself loose: work meant more to it than dissipation; I, too, was, of course, going to cut myself loose pretty soon.

With these antecedents still very recent in my mind, I landed, late in summer, at Rome.

Traditionally Rome is the Eldorado of dreamers. It swarms with incompetent painters, sculptors and would-be writers of all nationalities among whom I, too, might have become submerged. Instead, in a change of mood, I secured lodgings on the Capitol and plunged into hard work. There was, above

all, right in my neighbourhood—if I remember correctly, in the Palazzo Caffarelli—the Imperial German Institute of Archeology where I spent six or seven hours daily in study, attending lectures, seminaries, and demonstrations. Besides, I was, of course, duly matriculated in the university. It is true, I made many excursions; but all of them had a professional tinge; I went to Baiae, Naples, Pesto, Palermo, Girgenti—wherever remains of Greek antiquity demanded study. For several months it was rare that I went out, even on week-ends, for no other purpose than that of enjoyment; but I saw, of course, the surrounding campagna, the Albani mountains, even the Abruzzi.

Suddenly, in midwinter, loaded with huge bundles of notes which needed digestion, I went off at a tangent. A friend from Paris was going to Madagascar; and in a trice, when I received his letter, I made up my mind to go along, meeting him at Naples. We travelled on a German boat; and my studies receded into the background. Had I gone alone, I might have carried out my plan of co-ordinating and systematizing what I had seen and learned; but never in the delightful company of my friend.

There is little to say about this extended trip except that it took up time; it had no influence on my life or thought, no bearing on the problems that were shortly to face me. When I left my friend, in the harbour of Tamatave, I went on to Capetown. I *was* alone now; but meanwhile I had taken, for this trip at least, the habits of the tourist. From Capetown I struck east, taking passage to Australia on a freighter. From Australia, I made the excursion to New Zealand; and finally I returned to Capetown whence I took passage, on a German liner, to Europe via the west coast. It was in the late summer that I landed once more at Cherbourg.

By this time I was much dissatisfied with myself. I was nineteen years old; and I felt that it was time for me to know what I wanted to do. I had a bad conscience. Not that, even now, I meant to choose a career. My father still held to his old plan for me; the fact that I had seen something of three of the five extra-European continents delighted him; he did not reproach me; but he urged me to get my matriculation at Rome certified, which I succeeded in doing, in spite of my long absence.

But somehow I felt that I could not go to Thurow for the rest of the holidays. Perhaps the fact was that I had become a citizen of the world. I did not look upon Thurow as my home any longer; my home was Europe; to my own surprise, I began to have a taste and a flair for international relations; perhaps my father was right after all in his plans for my future. But I did not want to expose myself to his direct influence just yet. Above all, I dreaded to confess to him that I had completely abandoned the law.

Rome, with its three superimposed civilizations, had changed my outlook,

in spite of myself. I felt divided. Apart from my underlying ambition to be a writer, I owed the world as it was a debt. As I knew it, Europe was chaos; I began to feel that it might explode any moment. Surely, it was my task, as a "good European" to have my say in its future. Could I stand apart as a mere archeologist? I had things to say; but I lacked the material in which to say them. Europe was engaged in a process of development which led away from the fundamentals. I wanted to help in leading it back. France and Germany must unite.

In this I was confirmed by my, at first, quite casual contact with the work of Nietzsche whom I first read in French. Perhaps it would be more correct to say, with the early work of Nietzsche, the *Unzeitgemaesse Betrachtungen*, *Morgenroete*, *Die Froeliche Wissenschaft*, books which even today I consider as of the greatest importance. For from the beginning I saw that there were two Nietzsches: the Nietzsche before and the Nietzsche after *Zarathustra*. I felt that the earlier Nietzsche was a European event; the later Nietzsche, the violent one, became more and more specifically German, precisely because of his anti-germanic violence. Not that he concerned Germany so much, but that he could not concern any other country, not even France.

It was Nietzsche who determined my next move: for the rest of the holidays I made up my mind to go to Berlin; for Germany stood at the heart of the problem of Europe.

But at Berlin I was almost immediately checked in all I went for. I had two chance encounters which clashed in the most violent way.

First of all, the moment I reached my hotel Unter den Linden, I saw, while registering, Kirsten, the daughter of our neighbour at Thurow. Though I still see her distinctly with my mind's eye, I have forgotten her family name. And at night, in the street, I ran into Mrs. Broegler whose first name has vanished from my memory.

Kirsten was with her mother, just beginning a grand tour of Europe. Mrs. Broegler was keeping house for her father. The former was a young girl of eighteen, just opening like a bud; the latter was a *divorcée* with an illegitimate child. Kirsten struck me like a revelation of dewy freshness and promise; Mrs. Broegler looked slightly faded—pretty enough, as far as that goes, but with a few sharp lines about her mouth, and a few grey hairs at her temples. The former, at first sight of me, had blushed and stiffened. The latter had looked almost frightened, though she promptly recovered herself and, within a few minutes, gave me to understand, taking my arm meanwhile, that she desired nothing better than to resume our old footing.

I was, emotionally and mentally, antipodally far from Mrs. Broegler; but I

owed her a debt of gratitude; and I promptly invited her to have dinner with me the next night. Memory plays strange tricks: I cannot remember Mrs. Broegler's first name; but I remember with perfect distinctness the name of the tavern at which we met: Ewest's; it was the year 1891 and, therefore, fifty years ago at this time of writing. Before we had got very far through the dinner to which I treated her—she having rejuvenated herself by a no doubt long and painstaking session at her dressing-table—she proposed to rent a *pied-à-terre* where we could meet. I agreed, of course; but my lack of enthusiasm cannot have failed to strike her. I am amazed, today, at the callousness of youth. As a matter of fact, Kirsten's image in my mind prevented Mrs. Broegler's sight from striking through to the emotional kernel of my being. Kirsten was the future; Mrs. Broegler was the past; and, if it must be said, she was by this time one of several who had played their part. However, I promised to do what I could; I took her address; as soon as I had found a suitable place, I should let her know.

The next day, I dined with Kirsten and her mother at our hotel. The atmosphere was very peculiar. Kirsten was reserved; her mother, almost icy. I wondered; I could not explain it. Kirsten and I had been playing tennis together a few years ago; and later we had had many a ride through the woods and along the beaches. In a still juvenile way we had been very intimate. I knew she had liked me; her blush at first sight, two, three days ago, had betrayed that, in the interval, she had thought of me, more, probably, than I had thought of her. Did she feel that? Did she begrudge the fact that, in this interval, I had roamed the world?

Then came a blow. At our first meeting, being alone with me for a moment, Kirsten had told me that they planned to spend several weeks at Berlin before going on to Dresden. Now her mother announced their immediate departure.

But I was not to be shaken off. Next day I accompanied them to the station, loaded with a huge bouquet of roses, and saw them into their train. I dropped a casual hint that I had planned myself to go on to Dresden.

When the train was gone, I seemed to be suspended in a void. Mechanically, because I had promised, I began to search for that *pied-à-terre*. I saw many which might have done; but every time I found a pretext for not taking the one I was inspecting.

In less than a week I left Berlin, sending Mrs. Broegler a telegram in which I alleged the usual, unforeseen circumstances which necessitated a change of plans.

At Dresden, I was careful not to arrive at the same hotel where Kirsten

stayed. Instead, I made a formal call next day. Again Kirsten blushed as she saw me. Her mother was even icier than she had been at Berlin. I tried to take Kirsten about, to show her the sights; the Sistine Madonna, the "*Saechsische Schweiz*". I did so; but her mother never left her side.

In less than a week they were gone; they had left without telling me of their departure. But once more I was not to be shaken off; I felt certain that Kirsten had nothing to do with this attempt to evade me. In recognition of a lavish tip I found out, from the porter of their hotel, that they had taken a night train for Munich.

I followed them; and this time I did not even call. I had to canvass half a dozen hotels before I found where they were staying; and then I watched the street. It was not long before I saw her; but she was never alone; her mother was always with her. I knew that she had seen me; her blush had told me. She was a very proud girl, tall, graceful, exceedingly fair; and I divined that she resented her blushes. But by this time I was too far in the meshes to spare her.

One morning, hidden in the entrance to a fashionable store opposite the hotel, I caught her glance; and it seemed to convey a message. A moment later I saw her throwing a small ball of paper into the gutter, casually, as if discarding a sales-slip or something. I waited until they were out of sight and then crossed the street to pick it up. It contained nothing but the words, "*Pinakothek*, Saal one, three o'clock."

I was in the famous picture gallery long before she entered. When she did, she came straight up to me, looking very pale.

"Phil," she said at once, without greeting, "don't you see you must not follow us any longer?"

"Why not?" I asked stubbornly. "What has happened?"

"Don't you know the rumours about your father?"

"I know of no rumours. What are they?"

"Everybody says he is bankrupt. He is going to lose Thurow. You know, of course, that he is living at Hamburg?"

"I don't," I said. "I haven't heard of him for some time. So it's a question of money!" I put all the scorn I was capable of into these last words.

"You *know*," she said, "it isn't; not with me. But, by following us, you make things worse for me."

I looked at her and was all contrition. "I am sorry," I said. "Of course, I shall disappear."

"Phil . . ." she said and stopped. Her tone held an avowal.

There was a long silence. We were not alone. All about us visitors to the

gallery moved about; some of them glanced at us. The museum-guards stood near the doors.

I pulled myself together. “Would a professor of archeology be an acceptable son-in-law?” I asked. “Or the secretary to a legation?”

“I think so,” she said, blushing more deeply than ever.

“In a few years . . .” I stammered.

She smiled at me. “I must go,” she said in a very low voice. “I came with friends and left them under a pretext. But they may come any moment.”

“I shall go back to Berlin at once.”

She gave me her hand; and, according to the south-German custom, I bent to kiss it.

And then she was gone. A few minutes later I saw her for the last time in my life, with her friends.

I kept my word and took the night train back to Berlin.

Thence I sent a wire to my father, addressing it to Thurow. I wanted to see him now. It was two or three days before I received an answer; the wire had been relayed after him; Kirsten had been right; he was at Hamburg. I promptly went and looked him up.

He was seventy-six and still looked fifty! There was no grey in his hair.

I told him what I had heard. He laughed. He said he had moved to Hamburg because his eyes needed constant treatment.

At last I asked him point-blank whether I could count on his financial support for another three years. I had at last been awakened to the practical aspect of the situation; too late, of course.

He shrugged his shoulders. “If I live,” he said.

This sounded cryptic. I pressed my question. “How about Thurow?”

“Well,” he said, “Thurow will likely be lost at my death. It is mortgaged.”

“Heavily?”

“Rather.”

“To the limit of its value?”

He laughed again. “Beyond that value, I should say.”

“But,” I insisted, “why don’t they foreclose?”

“Because,” he answered, “while I live, the interest is paid. The moment that ceases, there are others, besides myself, who will be bankrupt; and some of them are banks.”

I did not understand but acted as though I did.

"At any rate," I said, "you think I have three years?"

"I think so," he replied. "Apart from my eyes, I am hale and hearty."

And then, unexpectedly, still apparently under the delusion that I was preparing myself for a diplomatic career, he added the advice that I should go to America for an extended trip.

But by that time the fall of the year was at hand. I had made up my mind to spend at least the winter term at Munich, in solid work. Furtwaengler was sooner or later expected to teach there, a European celebrity in my field, especially, if I remember right, in numismatics. After all, in spite of my crazy trips, I had been matriculated for one year at Paris; for another, at Rome. I had great stock of academic knowledge; I was soaking it up at all times. I felt sure that, by dint of a little hard work, I could make my Ph.D. in another year or two; if I had three, there would be one to spare; it I should spend as an unpaid "Dozent" or lecturer; and my work, I persuaded myself, would be such as to secure me the appointment, at an unheard-of age, as an assistant professor somewhere. I was going to show them what stuff I was made of. Incidentally, I tried to persuade myself that my father probably presented things in a darker light than was warranted; if he could advise me to go to America for a trip . . . I should go, of course, spend three or four months there, and then return, preferably to Bonn or Berlin. Bonn boasted Usener and Loeschke; Berlin, Wilamowitz-Moellendorf—all three celebrities, though two of them were not exactly archeologists.

The two semesters which I put in at Munich were fruitful in more than one way; I did a vast amount of work, in several fields; I met many people to be noted, in numerous branches of human endeavour. While I concentrated my chief efforts on archeology, I took up Sanskrit under Traube, for instance, as a means of preparing myself for a study of comparative philology which began to attract me. In what was left of my mornings I attended lectures in the history of art during the Italian Renaissance. All of which helped me in widening my horizons and in consolidating such foundations as I had laid by my study in Italy.

Almost automatically I drifted, for my purely social life, into literary circles resembling those in which I had moved in Paris. At Munich there were groups of young writers and poets—especially poets—who fascinated me, not least by reason of the fact that, politically, they were one and all opposed to the trends which were sponsored by the emperor. In these groups there were one or two young men whose chief distinction consisted in the fact that they had served terms of imprisonment for *lèse-majesté*. No doubt my sympathy with them derived at least in part from the view my mother had taken of William II. Here, too, the atmosphere was not specifically German; it was European. The

feeling was that France and Germany were natural allies.

I saw many plays, of course, and I heard a great deal of music; but, above all, I worked like a slave.

When the spring term closed, I felt, for the first time since my mother's death, that I had nothing to reproach myself with, not even from the point of view of my father. It was true, I had made no progress towards a diplomatic career; but I felt that, after another year like the last, I should be ready to enter a "practical" course—some sort of apprenticeship other than commercial which would lead me to economic independence.

I had earned a holiday; and I wished for nothing better than to take it in compliance with my father's wishes. I would go to America.

When I arrived at Hamburg, I was forcibly struck by the change in my father's appearance; he had aged to an almost unbelievable extent. Hair and beard were snow-white. But he still looked handsome, sitting down. I remained with him for less than a week. He seemed anxious for me to be off; and the very day after my arrival he made reservations for me on the next boat of the Hamburg-American Line to leave for New York.

When I embarked, I did so in the most casual way. I had sailed the seven seas of the globe; I had been across Asia; had seen something of South Africa and Australia. What should there be in a mere crossing of the Atlantic to make a fuss about? The crack liner for which my reservation had been made would take me to New York in a week.

Yet I had one shock before I sailed. It was the last night before my embarkation when my father, in handing me some cash and a draft on a New York bank, told me that the draft represented the proceeds of the sale of my little yacht which had been laid up at Hamburg. He explained that he was momentarily embarrassed—oh, nothing to worry about; not in the least. Since I intended to return to Munich—which I didn't—the yacht would have been of no use to me for another year. He had talked it over with Uncle Jacobsen who had said that, unless the boat was being used, it would deteriorate. In fact, it was Uncle Jacobsen—whom he, however, called Herr Jacobsen—who had negotiated the sale. By the time, my father added, when the funds with which I started were exhausted, he would have made some other provision.

For two or three months after that I was a mere tourist in America; since there seemed to be nothing else to do, I went to see the sights. From New York I went to Pittsburg; and thence to Cincinnati where the last of my sisters lived, a widow of forty, with two children. Having spent a week or two with her, I went on to Yellowstone Park; and thence, via the Grand Canyon, to California where I saw the Yosemite. Turning north, roughly along the line which is now

the Pacific Highway, I visited Crater Lake and thence reached Vancouver. My intention was, after returning east, through the Rockies, to go to Toronto and thence, via Niagara, back to New York. So far, North America meant to me just that: Niagara, the Yellowstone Park, the Grand Canyon, and the Yosemite Valley. The rest was negligible; mere connecting tissue.

I reached Toronto, wishing to go on to the Saguenay Valley. My funds being at a low ebb, I made up my mind to wait till they were replenished. To that effect I sent a night-letter cablegram to my father and composed myself to stay for the answer. I even thought of utilizing my enforced leisure by writing a few articles on what I had seen. Above all, I wanted to write. I did not exactly look upon my frantic work at Munich as wasted; but distance seemed to put that sort of thing in its proper place. I had done much, after all, which, fundamentally, was not of the slightest importance. On the other hand, of course, it was true that, if my father was ruined—if I was never to own Thurow—I should need a career which would enable me to earn my daily bread. Outwardly, a professorship would furnish such a career. But my real work would remain, to be done in the course of the years, with my pen. Meanwhile I painted my future for myself, to be spent with Kirsten who would be my wife. It was not a vision to fill me with despair. But, of course, I was too young to despair in any case. All life lay ahead; I was only twenty. The blood coursed through my veins and filled me with that exuberance which we all have known.

It took several days for the answer to my cablegram to arrive. When it came, it was not from my father but from Uncle Jacobsen. It was a long document; but it noted the sudden death of my father very briefly. Apart from that notice, it expatiated upon the advice to decline my inheritance; unless I did, I should find myself in debt to the amount of close to a million Kroner, over and above the value of Thurow and other assets. One or two veiled expressions made me suspect that about half that indebtedness was to him, Uncle Jacobsen.

Within two weeks I was earning my living, not as a professor of archeology or comparative philology, but as a waiter in a cheap eating house on Yonge Street, Toronto.

Part Three

MANHOOD

V

IT MAY seem strange that, even before this turning-point in my life, I should have cherished the ambition to be a writer. As I see it today, my only qualifications consisted in the two facts that I had nothing to tell and that, had I had anything to tell, I should not have known how to tell it.

With the latter deficiency I am still struggling today; the other I remedied during the years that followed; in fact, I remedied it with a vengeance; and in 1893, at the end of the year, I settled down to write the story of what I had lived through since August, 1892. The result was a manuscript of, at a conservative estimate, between five and six hundred thousand words which I called *A Search for America*.

While it is not my intention, here, to retell the story, in spite of the fact that the book as it was published in 1927, is, to a certain extent, fiction, I must place the writing of it into its proper setting.

Between the two dates mentioned I had successively been a waiter, a book agent, a factory hand, a roust-about on board a lake steamer—an episode omitted from the printed book—and a hobo or itinerant farm-labourer in the West. The one thing which I might have done with some credit to myself and some profit to others, it never occurred to me even to try—and that was teaching. In Europe I had held no qualifications whatever; in America it was to be my lot to find out that, in no matter what occupation except that of an unskilled labourer, the single qualification needed was “experience”; and experience, in no matter what, was the one thing I lacked.

However, I had lived; and I had lived to some purpose.

Between the spring and the winter of 1893, now twenty-one years old, I had come up, from somewhere near St. Louis, Missouri, into Canada, doing whatever offered in a labour market where the demand exceeded the supply. I had worked in haying and in the harvest of wheat, earning my board and, in addition, anywhere between one and a half and four dollars a day. Reaching the Canadian border some time in October—it must have been somewhere in the south-western corner of what was then the Territory of Assiniboia and is today the Province of Saskatchewan—I had the great good luck of finding a job on a “company farm”, that is a farm owned by a syndicate and operated by a salaried superintendent for profit. As far as I remember, nothing was grown there but wheat, though no doubt the feed for the stock needed was grown as well. I had nothing whatever to do with the growing or even the harvesting of the crops; I was hired as a teamster, and I owed the job to one single fact,

namely, that of not being afraid of handling any kind of horse, not even the team I was offered which consisted of four aged stallions. It was not a “steady job”; it could not last beyond a few weeks; but it gave me the chance to add another fifty dollars to the slender store of money which I carried about with me, sewn into the lining of my breeches—breeches I had worn when riding at Thurow.

The work consisted in driving a grain-tank holding a hundred bushels of wheat to the nearest town, thirty miles north, unloading, and returning the next day to the farm; to start again for the town on the third day, and so on.

I shall have to come back to this episode in another connection. Let it suffice here to say that the work was done before the month was out. I drew my pay and was faced with the question what to do with my winter. The money I had amounted to between two and three hundred dollars. I still had the minimum of clothes which I needed—the greater part of my precious European wardrobe had been sold at New York to provide bread and butter. Above all, however, I felt I had a story to tell.

Everywhere the year’s work was done; I could not count on finding another job, at least in the country. I made up my mind to get to the city of Winnipeg, in Manitoba, and to dig myself in for the purpose of writing. I had meanwhile learned that one does not need twenty dollars a day to subsist. Any kind of a shack on the outskirts of the urban area would do; a hundred dollars would buy all the supplies I needed; and next spring I should go south again to start all over, but with a reserve of at least a hundred dollars.

During the year that had gone by, I had added a new accomplishment to my qualifications, that of riding any sort of train without paying toll to its owners. One day, leaving a suitcase behind, and taking nothing but a bundle strapped to my back, I started from Shaunavon to “beat it” to Winnipeg, travelling by means of a flat-car in a freight-train. Whenever the train stopped, I dropped off and hid in the ditch, behind a clump of bushes if they were available; or behind some building. When the train was about to resume its journey, I hopped onto my flat-car and proceeded with it. I became so confident of my ability to do so that I left my bundle behind when I alighted; it might have impeded me in the gymnastics required between the piles of lumber or whatever it was that constituted the load. Thus, in the course of a week or so, I reached the outskirts of Winnipeg, undiscovered by the crew of the train.

I felt positive that I had my story solidly planned. While its framework and the chronology were to be largely fictitious, there was not to be a single episode of the stay in America—and, in the nature of things, the book was to be episodic—which had not been lived through. But, for the first time in my

life I experienced that strange reluctance to convert a fine plan into a written record with which I was to become familiar later on. A book which one dreams of is very like a woman one loves, at least when one is young: one delights in seeing her and dreaming about her; one fears to touch the hem of her garments.

Now, that fall was a glorious season. There was perpetual sunshine; and the autumnal warmth of the Indian Summer lingered beyond its usual term. There was the Red River; and there were the woods. In such seasons I am to this day subject to violent attacks of Wanderlust. I postponed the decisive step of renting a shelter. I looked at some likely places in the north of the city, on the banks of the river; I even picked one which I thought would do. But I procrastinated. At night I slept anywhere, in an open freight-car on the track, in a straw-stack, in some deserted building; and finally I struck out along the river, towards its mouth. For provender I bought a loaf of bread, a piece of cheese, or whatever a cross-roads store might offer. Had it not been for the fact that I was running away from my task—which was clearly to write that book of mine—I should have been supremely happy. The landscape—the bush country of the wilds, which starts a few miles north of Winnipeg, even today—fascinated me by its very flatness and monotony. I was not, as I had so often been in the past, bent on seeing sights. I was bent on deeply, exhaustively tasting the flavour of the present. I did not even wish for company; the shock of the break in my life was still felt too violently not to fill me with the desire to be utterly alone. I carried a few thin books; and within sight of the great lake into which the river empties, I sat and read; and at other times I sat and stared out over the vast expanse of the sleeping waters. Here, there were neither abandoned buildings nor straw-stacks to spend my nights in; but there were fallen, and often half-rotted logs aplenty which I leaned together in the form of a teepee; and there was a superabundance of dry leaves which I gathered for my bed.

For no reason that I can remember, except perhaps the exposed character of the lake-shore, I struck inland, in a north-west direction, following logging-trails and occasional stretches of road. I allowed myself to be guided by the whims of the trail. What did it matter where I was? The woods were all about; and that was enough.

Unfortunately for my enjoyment of marvellous day after day, the nights were beginning to be cold. It was November now; and the moment the sun had set, the temperature fell below the freezing point. In the mornings the glade was white. Though I had money in my pocket, the whole hoarded earnings of a season, there were, in this sparsely-settled district, no towns or villages where I might have secured a night’s lodging. So, for the first time, I enquired instead for a winter’s job. I had gone too far from the city to return there before severe

weather set in. The few scattered homesteads which I found in the bush were pioneer affairs with but a few acres cleared where no help was wanted. The houses, built of logs for no more than the immediate needs of the settlers, were filled. Nobody was prepared to take even a paying boarder. In a spirit of recklessness, curious to see where I might land, I went on, still northward. Till, somewhere in the neighbourhood of what is today the Icelandic town of Gimli —whether it existed already or not I do not know—- I came upon a cluster of homesteads resembling an actual settlement. Even here farms were a mile or two apart; but people knew of their neighbours; and at the time the fact made the district seem almost crowded. While every settler I spoke to laughed when I asked about the “chances of a job”, all promptly mentioned one man, an old man who lived alone and who kept a herd of cattle; he was reported to have said that he needed help.

The moment I found him I knew that here was the chance I was looking for. He was a tall, lank, old man who looked me over critically, yet not without a humorous twinkle in his grey eyes. He made no secret of the fact that he liked me and liked the idea of having me with him for the winter. For once I made no secret, either, of my circumstances, nor of the serious handicap under which I laboured, namely, that of having “an education” and wishing to do some writing; as a rule I had already learned to conceal such disqualifications for the life I was leading. The trouble was that he wanted to engage me for the full year, at a hundred and twenty dollars, or ten dollars a month. In summer I could make vastly better wages elsewhere. But suddenly it struck me with tremendous force that, so far, I had only “run through the world”; and that, what I needed more than anything else, was a little leisure in a half-way settled existence. Here I should be out of that world of the mad chase after the dollar and the non-essentials which I could not make up my mind whether I loved or hated. I accepted.

I might just as well despatch the external result of that episode before I describe what made it memorable to me in my life as a writer.

When, in February, my twenty-second birthday came around, I was, more or less, in rebellion. I had worked on the place for nearly three months—we shall see in a moment, how—but I had not yet received a penny in wages. Did the old man mean me to wait till the end of my year? It was true, I counted myself lucky in not having to spend money on my living. But I had some small incidental expenses: I smoked; I had to have socks, overalls, underwear. There was an Armenian store within walking distance—about four miles away; and once a week its bearded and becaftaned owner went south, probably to Selkirk on the Red River, to replenish his stock and to fetch mail and papers for the settlers, driving when he did so an ancient, stiff-legged gelding hitched to a

little wagon or sleigh. I had ordered some books from a store in Winnipeg; my employer was a subscriber to one of the city dailies. Was it wise to go on defraying my current expenses out of savings? Already, having savings, I dreamt of returning to Europe, if only for a trip.

One morning I cornered the old man. How about some money, on account?

He hemmed and hawed; he stepped from one foot to the other.

Meanwhile, in my embarrassment, I kept on talking, expounding the necessity I was under of getting some money.

At last he put hand to pocket and pulled out a crumpled two-dollar bill. "That," he said, "is all I can give you just now. It's all I've got. I'll pay you the balance when I've threshed next fall."

As I said, it was February; and fall was far away; but, willy-nilly, I accepted the situation. He had flour stored away for the year; and we had eggs and milk.

I let him keep his money; for he, too, needed tobacco—which he chewed—if nothing else till summer came; and then, when he had a crop in the ground, some twenty-five acres which were cleared and broken, he would have credit with the Armenian who also took his cream to town whenever he went.

I will add right here that, ultimately, I got my wages for the time I had spent on the place, and for six more months in advance, plus thirty or forty dollars which, in the interval, the employer had borrowed from his hired man.

When I think about it today, the whole year's adventure which, in actual fact, lengthened out into a year and a half, seems to be telescoped together into twenty-four hours during which I wrote that whole book which, in its first version, was to comprise half a million words. What I see when I close my eyes is as follows.

The snow lies deep in the bush; and it is bitterly cold. The summer that intervened does not count; what counts to me is only the winter. So the time of the year is invariably February—the hardest month; and the time of day, at the opening of the vision, is the latter part of the night. The air is so utterly calm, with the temperature standing unchanged at its lowest level, that a thread of smoke from the roof of the two-storey log house seems to be suspended into the flue-pipe rather than to rise out of it. Behind the house, in the northern margin of the little clearing, stand two large stables, likewise of logs, their roofs, like that of the house, hooded with two, three feet of snow which overhangs at the eaves.

That is what I see from the outside.

Inside, the house is pitch-dark; it is tenanted by two men; one of them the

elderly Irishman, sixty-nine years old, a widower, deserted by his children who have gone to the city, a plasterer by trade. The other is I.

As the glittering stars revolve overhead in their orbits, the older man stirs in his bed, rolls over, and strikes a match. Seeing by the nickel watch which he lifts from the chair by his bedside that it is five o'clock, he raises his voice and sings out, "Phil!"

Instantly awake, for this is a nightly-repeated performance, I reply at once: "All right!"

In the bitter-cold darkness, working briskly, I don overalls, sheepskin, boot-packs, mitts, and ear-flapped cap—all of which, at the very moment of waking, I had thrust under the covers of the bed to warm them up; yet I shiver as garment after garment is pulled over some part of my body. As a last thing I grope blindly about on top of an upended box which serves as my dresser, closing my mittened hand about some small book to slip into the pocket on my hip. Then, still in the dark, I descend the creaking stairway and proceed to the kitchen in the rear of the house, under the Irishman's bedroom.

There, with stiffening fingers, I light a coal-oil lantern and, with it dangling from one hand, I shake down the fire, adding what fuel is needed. Then, taking a deep breath, I issue forth into the frosty, star-lit night where the first, forced breath hits my lungs like a blow. For a second I stand, shivering and stamping my feet.

Arrived in the horse stable which I always take first, as it is the nearer to the house, I hang my lantern to a wooden peg between stalls, reach for the manure fork, and begin to clean the floor, throwing manure and used-up litter through a trap which I open in the wall.

Every now and then, my back not being any too strong for such work, I stop to rest for a while, not without enjoying the pleasant, steaming warmth which coats everything with fringes of hoarfrost and the pungent, ammonia-laden air which I like to this day. And in this interval, leaning, under the lantern, against the stanchion between the stalls—in order to subdue the stab between my shoulder-blades—I pull out my book and read some short passage. My reading is apt to be curious matter for a farm-hand to carry. Just as likely as not it is Plato or Homer; though it may be Shakespeare or Pascal or Keats. Fortunately I have already acquired the habit of endlessly re-reading books which I know. Since even today I cannot afford to buy books, I have retained that habit. This reading is a desperate attempt to swim, not to sink. The sort of life I am leading is well enough so long as it can be looked upon as a lark—as I mostly do—as a completion of my education which, in some respects, has proved so strangely wanting. But I need the assurance that the

world of music, poetry, and art has not vanished while I am “wandering with the antipodes”.

And then I go on with my work; and at last, to the music of their nickers, I water the horses and feed them; and, having finished with this part of my task, I go on to the other stable and do the same for the cows.

Since all the stock has to be brushed down, too, this takes till about seven or even half-past. Time does not matter much on this farm, at least not in winter.

At the house, meanwhile, Mr. Irishman, having lazily risen at last and dressed in the kitchen where it is warm, is preparing breakfast—or flapjacks and tea; for breakfast, dinner, and supper are all alike, coming as they do out of tea-chest and flour-bag. And after breakfast there is an hour or so during which I go upstairs to shake up my bed and to sweep my floor though it does not need it; and on occasion even that of the Irishman which does need it—when I feel like it; and that task is invariably followed by the ceremony, performed in the kitchen, of shaving with the razor which, eight years ago, had been my father’s birthday present to me—at Paris. As for the Irishman, he has long since given up making his bed or shaving his chin. His bed he throws together, after a fashion, when he is ready to get into it at night; and his beard he trims once a week, on Sunday, with a pair of dull scissors, accompanying the operation with a series of mumbled curses, and sometimes dancing about on one foot.

If, after shaving, there is still time left, we sit about and read the papers if they have recently arrived at the Armenian store; or, we sit and talk, provided always there is something to talk about; if not, we just sit.

And then something strange happens. A dozen children arrive on the farm.

For neighbours, Mr. Irishman has, here a Ukrainian, there a Pole; in the third place a Russo-German from Volhynia or the Bug Valley; in a fourth, perhaps, a Swede. All are prolific; but, were it not for my employer, the children would grow up illiterate. Being a man of vision and an empire-builder to boot, the Irishman, realizing that these children will one day be handicapped unless they are able to read and write and to do their sums, has made the rounds and told the settlers to send their tots—in wintertime when the work is slack so they can be spared—to his place where he will teach them of the three R’s what he himself knows. In summertime, of course, everyone above the age of six is busy in field and woods in this district where seneca root and other treasures grow wild.

But, now he has caught this strange bird as a hired man, he strikes a bargain with him. After breakfast, and at his own leisure, he attends to the rest of the morning chores himself, to the milking, the felling of trees for the

purpose of clearing land, and the hauling of fuel from the bush, and other things, while the hired man does the teaching, in the bare parlour of the house where the children sit on the floor. That was the entirely casual and fortuitous beginning of my later work, no less casual, as a teacher.

In this unorthodox pedagogical work, I am variously engaged from nine or half-past until about three in the afternoon, with an undefined break for a meal towards noon or whenever Mr. Irishman has it ready. Since the nearest neighbour lives a mile away, and the farthest four miles; and since the dark comes around five, it is necessary to dismiss school early. Occasionally, on blizzardy days, I dismiss at noon; and half a dozen times during the winter the weather is such that not one of the little ones appears in the morning—my good luck.

For, before the evening chores have to be done, the eternally repeated tasks of the farm, there is an interval of perhaps two hours after school; and that interval, no matter when it starts, even though it start in the morning, has, by prescription, become my own.

Hardly is the last of the children out of sight when I run upstairs, three steps at a time, to enter my frozen room—frozen, for the flue-pipe goes only through the Irishman's quarters.

And there, sheepskin on my back, lined gloves on stiffening fingers, I sit on my bed and write by the light of candle or lantern . . .

Thus that book came into being which, with all its faults, and in spite of its juvenile, cock-sure tone, seems to me to have captured a not inconsiderable part of what I had lived through, in an external sense, during the year and a half preceding its writing.

When it was finished in this, its first form, I left the place in the bush; I could not afford to remain there; for I knew that I could make better wages elsewhere. The book, I sent to a publisher, by express, insuring the manuscript for one hundred thousand dollars . . .

It promptly came back, of course, so promptly that it took my breath away; and it came by express, charges collect. I know today, of course, that the publisher had not even had it read. Perhaps he had had the number of words counted; but that was certainly all. In the course of the next two or three years I reduced it to about two-thirds of its bulk, that is, to somewhere between three and four hundred thousand words. And next I wrote out, by hand, six clean copies, using both sides of the paper, no two copies agreeing verbatim; and when they were finished, one after the other, I launched them on their rounds, for I secured long lists of publishers in Canada, the United States, and Great Britain; and I kept the copies circulating for years, thereby violating a rule

unknown to me which brands it as “unethical” on the part of an author to offer his work to more than one publisher at a time. I might add that, as success failed to come, I translated the book into French and German and offered it in other parts of Europe as well—in vain.

Meanwhile, under identical and similar conditions, other books came into being; and for years, for decades, they made the rounds, meeting with nothing but the most absolute indifference on the part of the publishing trade. But nothing discouraged me; nothing convinced me that I was on the wrong tack. Every now and then I rewrote the *Search for America* in its entirety, making it shorter every time—till, in 1920, I rewrote it a last time; but of that later on. I also rewrote my other books from time to time. Over a thousand publishers have seen my manuscripts; and not one, in returning them, insured a shipment for one cent. Yet I never, for one moment, so far, drew the conclusion that these books were not worth printing.

What did I do when I left the farm in the bush?

It was now that I established a regular routine, broken only by five trips to Europe made within twenty years. That routine remained essentially the same for the eighteen years to follow, so that, at this distance of time, the two decades present to my memory a record of monotonous sameness.

Always, in early summer, I seemed to awake; it was rarely later than the end of May or the beginning of June that I went south, to Kansas or Colorado where, for the time being, I found work in haying. Seasons vary, of course; and when I set out I could never tell at what stage of the work I should come in. Nor did it matter. I was soon well enough known among farmers to command a job when I needed it. While I was neither as strong nor as fast as some or even most of the others, I was more reliable and persevering; and wherever I worked, I kept my horses shining. No matter at what stage of the work I appeared, I could be relied upon to go through with it. I always accepted the slackening—with the consequent drop in wages—that intervened between haying and harvesting and remained until threshing was done. From that moment on I moved north in such a way as to arrive at certain predetermined places at as nearly as possible the precise time when threshing started. Since men were always scarcest in threshing, and wages, therefore, highest, this gave me the advantage that, for two or three months, I kept the remuneration I received at its peak. There were, of course, breaks occasioned by the weather; and it took me a few years to establish my routine; but, once established, that routine served well enough. It was rare that the season between June and October yielded me a surplus of less than two hundred and fifty dollars. The years 1893 and 1894 had given me a reserve which I tried to keep at the level of two hundred dollars and which I never touched; it was deposited in a

Winnipeg bank. Slowly, in this manner, I made my way back to Canada.

The sort of thing I did, and the environment in which I did it, are well enough and faithfully enough depicted in the Fourth Book of *A Search for America* where the methods of my moving about are also described. Here, it remains only to be said that, what in that novel seems to fill a single season, in reality filled twenty years. The book was written when that phase of my life was only just opening; but, in order to round it off, as a novel, I intentionally let it appear, in my later recastings, as if that sort of life had been a fleeting episode instead of filling a third of my life.

I might also say, in this connection, that certain aspects of my life were necessarily neglected in that work. Thus, since only one visit is recorded to what, in the book, is called the Mackenzie farm, nothing is said of the fact that I returned to it year after year, and became well-enough known to both superintendent and owner, to be expected in the fall. The same thing held good for numbers of other places.

As for my winters, I did one of three things. When I was very anxious to do a considerable amount of writing and studying, I rented a shack somewhere, at Moose Jaw, Brandon, Winnipeg, and dug myself in, as it were; when there was no such desire and, instead, perhaps, a shortage of funds—it happened two or three times in the period under discussion—I tried, always successfully, to get a job for the winter, feeding stock perhaps. I did not receive any wages for that sort of work; but I had board and lodging and a modicum of leisure for anything I might, after all, wish to do. When I chose the first of these two alternatives, I succeeded, as a rule, in keeping the cost of my living, that is, of food, tobacco, light, heat, and rent, below ten dollars a month; when I chose the second, I kept my expenses, to be defrayed out of savings, down to perhaps one-fifth of that sum. In either case I am not counting the books I bought. At all times I saw to it that I had replenished my working wardrobe during the summer. Whenever I was settled for the winter, I sent for my suitcase which, the previous spring, I had left with some friendly farmer.

The third thing I did was to go to Europe. Between 1894 and 1910 I did this five times, or, on an average, once every three years. Within the interval I invariably managed to lay by, over and above my reserve which I never touched, between three and five hundred dollars. When it was nearer the former figure, I went on a cattle boat where, at the time, one could still secure passage without paying for it. The thing had not yet become the standard mode of travel for impecunious trippers which, I understand, it is now, when you pay for the privilege of working your way. When my savings were nearer the upper limit, I travelled as a third-class passenger. Invariably I reached the port of embarkation—Montreal or New York—by “beating my way” on a train, a

mode of progress in which I had become extraordinarily expert.

With my travels in Europe I could readily fill a book if that sort of writing appealed to me. Here I will restrict myself to one or two examples of what I did there. My suitcase still contained two complete outfits: a lounge suit and a full-dress suit, with all the appropriate linen, neck-ties, shoes, and so on. Mostly I went to Italy; it was the last result of my archeological studies and my explorations in the history of Italian painting. The route I chose depended on the state of my purse; I have always been able, since the great break, to travel, in France, on a dollar a day; in Germany, on half that much; both sums exclusive of transportation. Sometimes I reduced the latter expense to nothing, by walking; thus, on one occasion, having arrived rather earlier than usual, I footed it from Cologne to Venice; on another, I bought a cheap fourteenth-hand bicycle which, before the end of my trip, I sold at a profit, for I had improved it beyond recognition, at a cost of a few cents for paint and polish.

Once, having gone through France and northern Italy at a leisurely pace, I arrived at Rome in December. It was the year 1899; I remember it by the fact that I was present, in St. Peter's, at the great millennial midnight celebration of January 1, 1900. In this case one thing worried me; I had spent rather more than I had counted on, and I saw myself faced with the possibility, yes, the probability, if I remained in Rome as long as I had planned, of having to draw on my reserves in the bank at Winnipeg in order to get home again. I had my ticket from Liverpool to Montreal. But how get to Liverpool without "beating" or begging my way? I doubted whether "beating it" was possible in Europe.

But, as in the case of 1893, in the bush country north of Winnipeg, I went forward, not backward. I have never been one to retreat.

I knew Rome better than most of the professional guides. I had all sorts of ways of opening doors which remained closed to the average traveller. I had one faculty which was unimpaired: that of winning the services, very much *de haut en bas*, of underlings whom I never even attempted to tip; I shook hands with them instead; it always worked.

Within an hour of my arrival in the station at Rome, where I thought matters over, I had made up my mind to gamble on my appearance. Instead of modestly walking to some inconspicuous hostelry, carrying my suitcase, I took a cab to convey me to the Hotel de Rome, or whatever its name was, on the Piazza del Popolo. I engaged two rooms, changed from my lounge suit into evening clothes and, since it was near dinner time, descended into the crowded lobby.

The very first person I saw was a titled lady whom I had met twice before; once as a young girl when my mother was still alive, once on board a liner, on

one of my voyages in my heyday of Europe. She, being alone, greeted me at once; she had, of course, no slightest idea of what, in the interval, had happened to me. She exclaimed at my not having changed a bit; and I, of course, though untruthfully, returned the compliment. I asked her to have dinner with me.

The first revelation I had of time not having dealt smoothly with her, either, came when, by the slightest of nods, she indicated a bejewelled fine lady who entered on the arm of an elderly, distinguished-looking man.

"*Voilà ma remplaçante,*" she said.

I drew my eyebrows up. "*Et l'homme?*"

"*Mon mari d'antan.*"

"*Vous êtes . . .*"

She nodded. "*Je le suis.*"

I laughed, supplying the missing word: *divorcée*, in my mind.

I remember every word of that brief, poignant conversation over the table; and to this day I am puzzled to explain why we should have been speaking French in that crowded, polyglot dining-room when she was as English as anyone could well be.

The lady was not, of course, in her very first youth; but, unless my memory deceives me, she was not yet forty, either; and the arts of the dressing-table made her appear at least ten years younger than she was. I was twenty-eight; and I set myself the task of charming her and succeeded. I spoke of the mid-west of the American continent; she must have had the impression that I had been "a planter" there. I have said that she was alone; but I was nevertheless struck with the fact that she nodded to scores of people as they entered to take their seats; and most of them were men; all of them, English.

Dinner over, she asked me whether I played chess; and on my answering in the affirmative, she invited me to come to her sitting-room for a game.

In the course of the next few hours—for I did not leave her till the small hours of the night—she told me her recent story; of her disastrous marriage and her divorce; and, after a brief debate with myself, I told her mine—which wakened all her feminine and maternal instincts. I confided to her that I meant to act as a cicerone to wealthy people; and she promptly offered to take me under her wing.

The result was that, the very next day, I conducted a small party of three, Lady X being one of them, through the museum of the Vatican which, a dozen years ago, had been the scene of my most arduous studies. Incidentally, during the forenoon, I met an official of the Vatican whom I had known in the past;

and I had an opportunity of exchanging a few words with him. As a result, I could announce, when we returned to the hotel for lunch, that, next morning, I was going to conduct a party through such wings of the Vatican, and through its famous gardens, as were inaccessible to all but specially accredited people. At once I was asked how many I was prepared to take. I thought for a moment and then declared that, apart from myself and—with a bow to the lady whose acknowledged cavalier I was rapidly becoming—I should take twelve. I was requested not to accept anyone but the party which my present clients would collect for me. The hour of our departure from the hotel was fixed then and there.

I had hardly returned to my room when there was a knock at my door. A maid handed in an envelope addressed to me; it contained a five-pound note. But the next day brought me five times as much.

I do not know whether official guides had at the time to be licensed; I do know that, within a few days, I was politely summoned to the office of the *gérant* of the hotel. Most apologetically he asked a few questions regarding my qualifications. I hesitated how to deal with him. I decided to take the high horse. Incidentally, not at all acknowledging his right to question me, I slipped in a few words regarding my antecedents at Rome, naming the scholar in charge of the archeological institute subsidized by the German government. He bowed and changed his tone. Shortly he asked me whether I cared to be placed on the list of the guides recommended by the hotel. I knew that I had him where I wanted him and declined, saying that I cared to take only friends. I knew that this was playing it high; but I wanted to make sure that there would be no further interference. It meant, of course, that I could, henceforth, never strike a bargain beforehand. But I felt confident—and I soon found I was right—that there was no need. My clients either felt instinctively that they must do the right thing; or Lady X tipped them off. I never asked her; it was a delicate point. I do know that, when I took her to theatre or opera, she invariably allowed me to pay for our seats.

Towards the end of January she left Rome for South America; and my earnings had dwindled, too. Most of the guests of the hotel were there for the winter; and there were comparatively few new-comers. Characteristically I did not change my place of residence. Rooms and meals at this hotel cost me over ten dollars a day; but life was extraordinarily pleasant. The fact that I had been the recognized *cavaliere* of Lady X had established me on a footing of equality with this international crowd. There were excursions, balls, and picnics. I let myself drift.

February came; and I fell ill. I was in bed only for a few days; but the break gave me time to think. I was not yet suffering from the sort of life I had

led in America; I saw that I could leave it any time I wanted to. I felt confident that, henceforth, I could even undertake to lead "personally-conducted tours" to Europe—such as, in America, were organized by railway and steamship companies. I might add right here that I tried it later on; but invariably some university professor who knew nothing of Europe got the job while I went without. Just as, at the time when I felt the need of being classified as a graduate of a Canadian university, I had to be examined by men whose knowledge in some cases was inferior to mine. When I recovered from my brief illness, I felt it was my destiny to return to America.

But I was unexpectedly in funds. I went on to Naples, Capri, Ischia, Sorento, Amalfi; and thence on a brief trip to Sicily where I visited Palermo, Messina, Taormina, Girgenti. But I lived with the peasants, shunning the great hotels. And when my money was spent, I began my trek "home"—for such it seemed by now.

Once more, however, during that trip north, I ran out of funds; and again I was in luck. Somewhere in the train between Florence and Milan I fell in with a young man from Pittsburg, the son of a coal-magnate who, by a "cultured" mother, had been sent to Europe to acquire some knowledge of, and taste for, Italian painting, sculpture, and architecture. The only thing he had so far acquired was the typical American contempt for Italy because it had no coal; but he had the equally typical admiration for Germany which had had a tremendous industrial development. He feared the moment when, a few months later, he would have to face his mother.

I laughed at him; and the outcome of it was that he invited me to stay with him for a month, at his expense. As for my loss of time, he would "make it right with me" before we parted.

For a week or two, I lugged him from church to church at Milan, and from gallery to gallery; and then we went on to Venice where I repeated the process. I verily believe that, when he went home, he was able to satisfy his mother. I know that he had actually enjoyed it all.

What, however, I remember best of this episode was our parting.

He was scheduled to catch a certain boat at Cherbourg; and on the morning when he had to leave for Paris, he settled the bill at the hotel where we were staying, somewhere along the Grand Canal. Since I was standing by when he did so, I was acutely conscious of the fact that he settled his bill, but not mine. At Milan, he had, as a matter of course, settled both. Having done so, he turned to me and said that he must start half an hour early, for he must drop in at his bank, he, too, being out of funds. "I'll fix you up at the station," he added.

His baggage was put into a gondola; and I gave the directions to the

gondoliere. Within a few minutes that worthy stopped at the steps leading up to the bank; and the young man from Pittsburg ran in. It took him an unconscionable time to attend to his business; and when he came running down to the gondola, there was only the narrowest margin for catching the train. I called to the *gondoliere* to hurry and promised him an extra lira if he got us to the station in time.

As a matter of fact, the baggage master refused to check the trunks; but the young man shed money right and left; and at last, accompanied by a porter who carried his hand-bag, we were running to catch the train which was already in motion. As I said, the young man had left a trail of money behind; and by some sign-language the porter conveyed that information to the train-crew. He made it.

But none of his money had found its way into my pocket.

Inside the *wagon-lit*, I saw my late companion frantically running to find his compartment and, having found it, wrestling with the window which refused to open. However, he succeeded at last; and out came his hand. Meanwhile I had been running alongside the train; but at that very moment I came to the end of the platform.

"Good luck, old man!" he called out; "and thanks most awfully!"

But I missed his hand, for I had to stop if I did not want to fall; as it was, I had trouble not to lose my balance. But from his hand fluttered a folded paper, promptly caught up in the draught sucked along by the train which was rapidly accelerating its pace. But my eye remained glued on it; and I marked the spot where it fell; so that, when the train was gone, I could climb down to the side of the embankment and pick it up. It was a thousand-lire bill, the equivalent, at the time, of between one and two hundred dollars . . .

In 1903 I spent the greater part of the winter in northern Europe, going on as far as the North Cape, and travelling at least part of my way back through the country of the Laps. In 1906 I went to Italy again; and once more in 1909 when I made my return trip north, travelling fourth-class down the Rhine, stopping every night. I made the whole trip, from Venice to London, on twelve dollars; and it was the first and only time that I came into close contact with German peasants.

Why, it may be asked, did I invariably return to America? Only he will understand who knows the nostalgia of the novelist for his settings.

As an off-set to the preceding episodes it seems indispensable that I should give some happening, some incident from my American travels—an incident which will clearly define the milieu in which I moved in the new world; if for no other reason than to point the moral. I choose at random from among many

things which either did not find their place in *A Search for America* or which happened at a later time.

What I am going to relate took place during one of the years shortly after the turn of the century.

As usual, I had started work in Kansas; and I had attached myself, as I mostly did, to a “pardner”. Most hoboes did that; quite apart from the fact that a partner afforded company when one was travelling, he also facilitated many operations. Thus one man could get a camp ready while the other “rustled” food; or one of a pair could stand guard while the other scouted about for a chance of finding accommodation on a freight-train; if members of the train-crew happened to come along, a signal from the watcher told the scout to hide, for detection meant the loss of the opportunity of using the train. Finally, since most hoboes came to the farms in pairs, it was safer for everyone to have a helper.

During the very first week of the summer I am talking of I had joined forces with a Pole of ordinarily disreputable appearance. Like myself, who, perhaps, looked no less disreputable, he spoke half a dozen European languages and was, unsuspected by the Americans among whom we moved, capable of shaving and even of dressing like a dandy. Whenever he did so, which was, of course, on rare occasions, he assumed, with an inexpressibly comic effect, the irreproachable manners of a man of society. Unlike myself—at least if I could believe the stories he told—he made, on occasion, use of his accomplishments to “put one over” on gullible middle-class people by passing himself off as a *blasé* globe-trotter momentarily embarrassed, alleging that he had outrun his base of supplies. Sometimes I suspected, again from the stories he told, that his harvest tramps were undertaken chiefly as a cloak for scouting purposes. What linked us together was that, as hoboes, we were both professionals, not, like so many others, mere amateurs who had been thrown on the road by adversity. If I judge by the amount of laughing we did, we must have been very good company, at least for each other.

Commonly we worked on large farms; which had the advantage that they offered a variety of buildings in which to find shelter for the night; while haylofts exposed one’s clothing to the attack of crickets, they harboured neither fleas nor lice; an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

It was, of course, my, as well as his, invariable rule never to betray to the ordinary run of our fellow-workers that by birth, breeding, or education we were anything but common labourers. In speech and manner we made it a point to appear as nearly as we could their equals; for the average lower-class American hates the very suspicion of an education. Any other plan would have made our lives insupportable.

My newly-adopted friend, however, must have seen through my disguise at an early stage; and sometimes he allowed his own particular humour to run away with him. We were still in Kansas and engaged in haying when, standing on top of a load, in the blistering sunshine of a late-June or early-July noon, while I and another "pitcher" were tossing the hay up to him, he, in a sudden reckless mood, engaged me in a discussion of modern French poetry, with a ludicrous effect. It was done ostentatiously, with the pointed intention of making the other hoboes open their mouths. He even dropped his perfect American speech and changed to French; and in doing so, he adopted what, in these raw surroundings, might have passed for aristocratic society manners, handling his pitch-fork with the fastidious nonchalance of a fop, parodying that nonchalance by its very exaggeration. Every now and then he stopped, looked at me, and laughed and laughed. I, laughing with him, though well aware of the probable consequences, entered into the fun.

At night, we found ourselves isolated. If there had not been two of us, both looking "tough", we should undoubtedly have been beaten up.

While we remained together, such things happened repeatedly, with the invariable consequence that we had to leave the place where we were working; and, towards the end of the season, when we were working on a "bonanza" farm, one last thing happened which I want to give in detail.

On the Saturday of our first week at the place it rained; and we had already discovered that we were not wanted at any of the diversions going on in the bunk-house: poker, horse-shoe quoits, and so on. I had a few books in my bundle but dared not take them out, even in the presence of my "pardner". Newspapers or even cheap magazines might have passed; but books! I proposed to walk to town, along the track, and to see the sights. My friend was willing. I do not remember the name of the town; nor does it matter; but it was pleasantly situated and extended over both banks of the Red River, its two halves being joined by a long, narrow, wooden bridge.

"Seeing the sights" meant to us very largely making fun of the false-front architecture and the ludicrous grandiloquence in the names of buildings —"Mandeville Opera House"—so commonly met with in the American small town. We laughed a good deal and generally, I am afraid, made ourselves conspicuous while presenting a none-too-respectable exterior to the eyes of indignant burghers. We were in tattered overalls and carried a week's stubble on our chins; in a sort of defiance we had disdained shaving for the trip. While work was in full swing, Sunday was shaving-day, of course.

Having explored the west end of the town, with its pretentious residential quarter and its hectic business section, we came to the bridge and crossed to the east bank of the river.

By that time it had struck us that we were being followed by a tall, cavernous man in a buttoned-up blue serge suit and a quasi-official blue peaked cap. More than once, when casually turning back, we had seen him at some distance behind us. As we arrived at the far end of the bridge, I saw the tall, lank figure disconsolately halted at its west end. I called Stravinski's attention to it; and we both laughed.

I did not know it at the time, but the point was that the two halves of the town were separately administered; in fact, they were situated in different states, North Dakota and Minnesota. Never having been a consumer of alcohol in its undiluted state, I did not know either that North Dakota was "dry", while Minnesota was "wet"; had I known it, I should not have given the matter a further thought.

Suffice it to say that, when my friend and I returned from a half-hour's stroll on the far bank and recrossed the bridge, the tall man in blue was still standing at its west end. It turned out that he was waiting for us; as we approached, he bared a badge on the lapel of his vest, proclaimed himself, in a funereal voice, the Chief of Police, and informed us that we were under arrest. Leading the way, he enjoined us to follow him quietly, without making any attempt to escape.

In our exploration of the town we had seen the police station on Main Street, next to a little white frame building with an imposing false front which, in large, black letters, bore the legend "Town Hall and Municipal Office". I was surprised, therefore, when the chief, instead of continuing on Main Street, which was in line with the bridge, turned north along the bank of the river. However, scenting adventure, we followed obediently enough. Nothing could happen to us; we had done nothing to deserve arrest or punishment.

Meanwhile I tried to elicit some information as to the charge we were presumably facing. The chief received my overtures with a stony and reproving silence. I barely thought of the possibility that some major crime might have been committed in the vicinity and that we were suspected of being involved.

We went to the very end of the town, northward, before we turned west; from there on, the street was a mere trail skirting the endless fields of prairie wheat. After perhaps ten minutes we turned once more, this time south, and passed through a very poor street resembling the worst of the slums of a city. But when we reached the next side street, again running away from the river, the aspect changed into that of a cramped, middle-class respectability with diminutive but very smooth lawns in front of diminutive but up-to-date houses built of parti-coloured brick.

For a last time our guide turned, crossing one of the little lawns and pulling out a latch-key when he reached the front steps of the dwelling. He opened the door and motioned us to precede him into the narrow hall. Entering in our rear, he closed the outer door and threw open that into a small living-room which was neatly furnished in maroon mohair. My friend and I filed in, catching sight, as we did so, of a stout and forbidding woman in the kitchen at the back of the house. Our host or jailer closed and locked the door on us.

Left alone, we dropped into arm-chairs, laughed, and exchanged a few words, puzzled by the mystery.

Within five minutes, the chief returned; and, summoning me by an imperative gesture to stand up and to raise my hands over my head, he went through my pockets, laying everything he found on a little table the top of which was daintily carved in the form of an over-nourished clover-leaf. There were some papers, a few letters addressed to me, the manuscripts of half a dozen poems, some cigarettes, and, in a side pocket of my overalls, some money which he counted. Let us say that it amounted to $24.35.

Having finished, he motioned me to stand back and summoned my companion for examination. In his pockets, he found a pocket knife, some more papers, some more cigarettes, and some more money; all of which he arranged in a neat little pile on the clover-leaf table. Let us say that this money amounted to $13.32.

Then, to our surprise, our captor returned our possessions.

Having done so, he spoke for the first time since we had arrived. “You wait here till I get back.”

With that he left us and again turned the key in the lock of the door.

We made ourselves comfortable, smoked, laughed, and wondered. Thus half an hour went by.

When our host returned, there was a marked change in his manner. He was curt, abrupt, almost grim. With a disapproving look at the stubs of our cigarettes in the diminutive fireplace, he told us not to try any “monkey-business” and to come quietly along. As we filed out, he held the door.

Again he took us a round-about way, but in a generally southward direction; and suddenly we emerged from a littered alley on Main Street, opposite the Town Hall. Having crossed the street and opened the door, he motioned us into an office so large that it seemed the whole building could hold nothing else.

His motions were quick and alert now; his manner, that of a non-commissioned officer in front of the colonel. He ordered us about in a sharp voice. “Stand there; both of you; hats off!”

The room, a sort of board-room, was almost filled by a long table covered with black oil-cloth and surrounded by bare, clumsy, wooden arm-chairs. We had been told to stand at the lower end of that table.

At its upper end sat a massive elderly man with a huge face framed by abundant iron-grey hair, tousled and not very clean. Over his eyes, the arched brows were so bushy and large that, his head being lowered over some papers, I at first mistook them for a moustache. When he looked up, I saw that his face consisted of several overhanging folds of heavy, greyish flesh. His eyes were extraordinarily mobile as he took us in and then focused his glance on the chief, without a word.

The chief, fingering his cap, stood at attention. “Your Honour,” he began precipitously, “I’ve placed these men under arrest on a double charge, vagrancy and drunkenness. They have no regular domicile; I have had them under observation since Monday; at night they sleep somewhere along the river. This afternoon they crossed to the other side and came back dead-drunk. Whereupon I brought them here.”

There was a pause of several seconds. Stravinski and I were dumbfounded and looked it. At last His Honour flashed us a look and grumbled, “What have you got to say for yourselves?”

I assumed the part of spokesman and, not disguising my indignation, replied that we had not been in town since Monday; that we were duly employed at the so-and-so farm, a fact easily verified; that we had tasted no liquor for weeks on end; that, if we had been dead-drunk an hour ago, we must surely still show signs of it which I defied anyone to detect. My companion stood with a contemptuous smile on his lips.

His Honour made an indeterminate noise. Then, as if on second thought, he hammered the button of a desk-bell with the palm of a pudgy hand.

Two burly men entered from the rear, looking more like thugs than like policemen, but jumping to attention at sight of His Honour.

The latter pointed a thick, inarticulate finger at them. “I want you to remain within call, do you hear? Dismissed.”

They saluted after a fashion and withdrew.

His Honour turned back to us, saying curtly, “I fine you thirty dollars and costs. Total thirty-seven dollars and sixty-seven cents. Or a week in jail for each.”

Thirty-seven dollars and sixty-seven cents—to a penny what we had between us!

My companion gave a contemptuous laugh. I smiled knowingly. Previous

experience had taught me that any protest would be utterly useless. We threw our money on the table and filed out, free men once more.

But, though I accepted the thing, I did not mean to let it go without giving it a modicum of publicity. In the street I spoke to a grocer who was arranging a display of vegetables in front of his store and asked him for the name of a good lawyer in town.

He turned and, happening to glance along the street, said, “There he is now, talking to someone. Mr. McDonnell. The man standing with one foot on the curb.”

I waited till the lawyer was disengaged and then approached him. While I was telling him the story, he nodded sympathetically more than once; but when I had finished, he seemed to change his mind and spoke with a sudden edge to his voice. “You’d better beat it,” he said. “You can’t tell such a cock-and-bull story about Judge O’Leary. Not in this town you can’t.” He veered on his heels and walked off, turning the nearest corner with accelerated step.

What he thought of us when our ringing laughter followed him, I cannot tell, of course.

When I say that such a thing was, by all of us hoboes, considered as being in the day’s work, it will give a rough hint as to the foreground through which I was moving up to the fall of 1912; and, by readers of *A Search for America*, it will be observed that, in all essentials, the milieu was identical with the one through which I had been moving ten years earlier. There was fundamentally no change; in spite of the fact that I had already written such books as the one just mentioned, or *Our Daily Bread*, to speak only of such as have since been published, if in a considerably altered and abbreviated form. Manuscripts of these two books and of several others were circulating through the outer offices of many publishers.

Now the fall of 1912 was to prove a landmark in my life; and to explain how that came about, I must at some length speak of the agricultural distress prevailing over the whole west of the American continent—a distress due to meteorological conditions. For the first time in my many years of life as an itinerant harvest-hand, the result was, for me, that I experienced a serious difficulty in earning the usual surplus for the ensuing winter. I had planned to take a trip to Europe that year; even before I had become fully aware of my predicament, however, I had realized that I could not do so, at the best, without drawing on my reserves; in striking contrast to previous years I had begun that season without cash in hand—a fact due to an extraordinary outlay made, in 1911, on books. These books were, of course, never available in summer; at least with the exception of perhaps two or three slender volumes which I

carried in my bundle; most of them were stored with some friendly farmer in Manitoba. At the very start, therefore, having found it impossible to secure work, I had had to draw fifty dollars to go on with—a loan I considered it which had to be repaid to my reserves.

I don't know whether that fact is in itself sufficient to explain the mood in which the trip north was made and which, frankly, was one of despondency. The sort of life I was leading suddenly seemed repugnant.

Throughout the late summer and the early fall there were heavy rains in the west, so heavy that there was no hay harvest worth speaking of; one cannot cut grass when there is water standing on the meadows. I might have waited in Kansas. I did wait for a short time; but at last I began to move north. In some way I had heard that Nebraska and South Dakota had had a dry summer and that, there, the grain harvest would be early, though the crop was light.

From force of habit, I suppose, I travelled in my usual way, "bumming rides" on freight cars, sleeping at night in stooks or stacks or under culverts, buying bread and cheese for food. But for the first time I failed to look at this sort of thing as an adventure. Nor had I found a "pardner" for my companion.

When I reached the drought district, I found that the harvest was finished. There was nothing to do but to go on.

Following roughly the state line between Minnesota and the Dakotas, I came into more northerly latitudes; and it seemed for the moment as if my reasoning had been correct; stocks of wheat, oats, and barley dotted the fields in close formation; so far, the crop was excellent. It seemed as if all I needed to do was to strike for some really large farm—in those bonanza days we considered no farm as large which did not comprise between thirty and fifty square miles—in order to find, shortly, a steady run of work. Those farms I knew; and I was known to the people who operated them.

But I had hardly reached this favoured district when rain started here as well: the famous rains of the fall of 1912 which I later described, with their consequences, in *Fruits of the Earth*. It rained and it rained. Every town and village was crowded with its contingent of itinerant harvesters waiting for work, unable to find it. The fringes of every permanent settlement were occupied by the improvised, rain-bedraggled temporary settlements of the hoboes. Soon I found out—and this was a shock to me—that I could not continue my usual life when on the road. Painful twinges and sudden knife-thrusts in the muscles of my body warned me: I could not stand the wetness. In the past, I had often slept in the open in clothes that were soaked with rain; and in stooks or hay-stacks that were improperly cured. Even then I had, on occasion, suffered for it. I had caught colds which had disabled me for weeks

at a time. With everything depending on it that, when work opened up, I should be fit, I felt I could not afford to do it again. I stopped long enough, at some town where I took up quarters at a boarding-house, to draw an additional fifty dollars from my reserves in Winnipeg which were thereby reduced to slightly over a hundred dollars; my dream of a winter in Paris or Rome received its death-blow. On the other hand, what were reserves for if they were not to be used in an emergency?

And then, having received the money, I again followed established habit and went on, sometimes even paying my fare for brief runs on local way-trains. Arriving in a new town, now in North Dakota, I promptly did what I had never done before; I shunned the hobo-camps and sought out some modest hostelry. Instead of laying steadily up treasure against the winter to come, I was rapidly consuming savings of happier times.

It worried me. No doubt there were, among the hoboes crowding the outskirts of the towns, many who were less fortunate even than I; men who, from one day to the next, never could thoroughly dry their clothes, even though they lit huge fires and erected make-shift shelters out of tin cans or box lumber; men who ultimately had to subsist on garbage to keep alive. Slowly, but definitely, I succumbed to a sense of the utter insecurity of all life.

Yet I was still so much an animal obeying an initial impulse, that I kept pushing on towards the Canadian border. I might have stopped anywhere; what did it matter? As for my books, Canada had shown itself no less indifferent than the United States. Yet, somehow, I had come to look upon Canada as "my" country. There was a subtle difference of atmosphere north and south of the border; one felt it the moment one crossed the line. Canada had never, so far, entirely severed the umbilical cord which bound it to England. To the European I still was, it somehow seemed less alien. Further, my own final interests had come to define themselves as bound up with pioneering conditions which, in Canada, existed in a purer culture, as it were, than in the country to its south.

In Canada, I had spent the last weeks of autumn and the whole winter in districts where something like a peasant mentality still prevailed; and that mentality had attracted me. I had come across old men and women there, in my endless tramps, who were bending over dog-eared and frayed copies of the Bible and other cherished books, painstakingly spelling out, with muttering lip, and the finger following the line, words and sentences which expressed what they felt. They had not exclusively thought of the dollar. In so far, then, as the connotations of their reading had been those of all great literature—without being, that is, exclusively religious in the narrower sense—they had been very near to my own understanding; they had even seemed less remote to me than

those Kirghiz herdsmen of the Siberian steppes who were still with me as the most vital experience of my earlier days; they had seemed less . . . feral, shall I say? Yet, in a sense, these west-Canadian pioneers and the Siberians were alike; and they were one with myself, though as incomprehensible to me as is the growth of the nail on my toe.

For weeks, then, I went on drifting north, in a most peculiar mood: it often seemed to me as though I were on the verge of a revelation. All the time I was depressed by the dreary weather and the cheerless prospect as I looked out through streaming windows into miry streets.

In ordinary years, there had been, even within the state, a steady progression of work from south to north: threshing at Wahpeton, Lisbon, Oakes, or Ellendale had been a week or ten days earlier than, let me say, at Devil's Lake, Grand Forks, Grafton, or Pembina. But this year, provided the weather ever became propitious, it would start all over the state, and in Canada as well, at the same time, with wages likely to range extraordinarily high. So it did not matter where I might be.

Besides, there were, in the northern reaches of these plains, more of those huge bonanza farms than in the south. There, threshing, once started, would continue for weeks on end. I was best known, there, too, from former years, to foremen and superintendents.

Furthermore, I reflected, while small farmers—those operating less than ten square miles, let me say, were always holding off, engaging help only when it was immediately needed, and then often only by the day—the huge farms of fifty square miles or so needed, when threshing started, hundreds and, in cases like the present, thousands of men who must be instantly available. So, while paying no wages when the work was at a stand-still, they fed and lodged about half the required complement of hands, to have them ready when the weather cleared.

Having thus analysed the situation, I bethought myself of what, in *A Search for America*, I had called the Mackenzie farm, just south of the centre of the state, from south to north, and in its eastern margin; a farm where, for many years, I had always found work and where, besides, I had never been asked to share the common bunk-house with hundreds of vermin-infested men. I had enjoyed the privilege of sleeping in the loft of what had once been the drive-house which now sheltered the owner's fleet of motor cars, though, of course, he still kept a few driving and saddle horses.

I speeded up my progress; but, out of consideration for the smallness of my reserves, of which a by-no-means-negligible part had now been expended, I "beat it" again, waiting at some siding where old experience had taught me

freight-trains were likely to stop and surreptitiously boarding an open box-car; flat-cars, the easiest to board, were, except on some sunny day, ruled out by the prevailing weather.

When I reached Fargo, I at once struck west, footing it by the railway track.

I was in luck. I had covered no more than ten miles when, on the sodden road running parallel with the right-of-way, I saw a horse-drawn vehicle, a sort of victoria, hung up in the gumbo mire. I struck slantways down from the track to offer assistance; and, to my surprise, I ran into the owner of the very farm for which I was bound. Still more fortunately, he recognized me at once and called me by my given name. He was a man of some education, besides being a millionaire, though his father had been a "section-boss" working on the track, who, however, had had the foresight to invest his scanty savings in cheap land at less than a dollar an acre—land which had become worth a hundred dollars an acre. So, contrary to my custom, I had always used the King's English with him as I had spoken it in Europe.

When I had helped him and his hackneys to somewhat more solid ground, heaving at the back of the vehicle, I casually mentioned where I was bound, and he offered me a ride. It was not out of consideration for me that he did so; for, before we reached the headquarters of the farm, we had, more than once, to get out again and to push.

"By the way," he said after a while, "if I remember right, you are good at figures. Nelson, the superintendent, has just caught Bramley at some odd tricks, juggling cheques; and he's fired him. Do you think you could take his place?"

"I certainly could," I replied.

Bramley had been the time-keeper whose chief duty it was to look after the accounts of a thousand men and to make out their pay-cheques when they left. He had not, of course, received threshing wages; but he had worked on a monthly salary. In the present circumstances, a monthly salary, no matter how small, was something, whereas threshing wages were nowhere in sight, no matter how high they might run should a time for threshing come at last. Besides, the time-keeper, while taking his meals with the men in the cook-house, slept on a cot in a small room behind the office, with clean sheets and blankets which, very likely, were free of lice.

Thus, that day, I entered upon a period of perhaps two months during which I enjoyed comparative comfort and almost undisturbed leisure; for, while I remained, threshing never started. All I had to do was to keep track of those perhaps one hundred men who looked after the perhaps one thousand

horses, the three or four hundred cows, and perhaps five thousand sheep—plus, of course, the commissariat of the whole army of idlers. Every day some men left; every day others took their places; and these had to be entered in, or struck off, the lists. Hoboes never feel settled; a strange and tragic restlessness drives them on.

For me, it was an extraordinary piece of good luck which should have made me happy. I had with me the half-finished manuscript of a new book; and under normal circumstances it would now have made rapid progress. Perhaps it was partly the idleness, or the anxiety of the last two months which had unfitted me for that sort of work. Even at the time I was pondering two books which have not yet been written.[3] I had so far always postponed starting work on them; I wished to start on them now. But I suddenly felt that, in order to tackle them, I should have to be able to look forward, not to weeks or months, but to years of carefree leisure. I shall have to speak of those unwritten books again; for this whole record may be considered as an explanation why, at least to the time of writing, I have never had those years of leisure; so that I have come to look upon my life as essentially wasted, as essentially a failure.

[3] 1946. They have now.

Up to 1912, I had, as a writer, been utterly unsuccessful; I had not even managed to secure the publication of a single volume. The only thing in which I had had a signal success was my work as a farm-hand. I had never minded that; I had even taken a certain amount of pride in the fact. From Kansas to Saskatchewan I was known as a most reliable harvest-hand. That was the sum and substance of my achievement.

But, so far, I had always looked upon my life as lying ahead of me: my real life lay in the future.

Yet, as I settled down in my new and temporary quarters—for even this job could not last beyond the freeze-up which was approaching and after which the superintendent himself would attend to the work I was doing—and as I tried to compose myself for making use of the ease and leisure which had so unexpectedly fallen to my share, I came, during one of the very first days, as if by chance, upon a tremendous realization.

I was over forty years old.

More than half of the ordinary span of life lay behind me.

With a sudden, violent revulsion I told myself a few home truths.

No. This was not what I had been born for; this was not what I had dreamt

of in my youth; it was not what justified the effort nature had made in producing me, as the result of a century of biological antecedents.

My foreground was all about me; suddenly I felt disgusted with it; very naturally I pondered my backgrounds.

That day marked a second dividing line in my life, the first having been the day in Toronto when I had realized that I was penniless.

VI

CAREFULLY, step for step, in that little room behind the office of the farm, I went over my life—pretty much as I have recorded it in the preceding pages, adding only one thing here barely touched on; and that was my relation to women. All over the west of the American continent there were some of them, just as there had been in Europe, who had “been good to me”, in the sense in which that word is commonly used. They were women, not girls. But, while, in Europe, the women had invariably been the givers, here in America it was I who relieved the utter monotony of their lives, the hopeless vacuity. I have been told that, in my books, woman plays a subordinate part; that, in fact, woman is represented as the obstructress in the debate of life.

Probably that is true; it is true because, for the most part, it is the fact in pioneer countries. There, woman is the slave; just as she is the slave in the uncivilized steppes of Siberia. A pioneering world, like the nomadic world of the steppes, is a man’s world. Man stands at the centre of things; man bears the brunt of the battle; woman is relegated to the tasks of a helper. It is an unfortunate arrangement of nature that the burden of slavery, for such it is in all but name, should be biologically aggravated. As it is, it cannot be helped; and any artistic presentation has to take it into account. But it is not to be imagined that my sympathies were with the men. Quite the contrary. My sympathies were always with the women. Yet I was no sentimentalist; in my books I gave the facts and let them speak for themselves; I paid my readers the compliment of crediting them with the ability to interpret them correctly. For the purposes of the pioneer conquest of nature certain qualities are needed, in man, which are incompatible with that tender devotion which alone can turn the relation of the sexes into a thing of beauty. Untamed land is a hard taskmaster; but, as a rule, the task is tackled only by men who are fit for it and, therefore, more or less unfit for that other task of sublimating physical needs into the iridescent play of desire and satisfaction which characterizes the sexual relation in more “advanced”, more “sophisticated” civilizations. When, in the man, the gift for idealization and sublimation is not more or less absent under pioneer conditions, the fact usually leads to disaster of some kind; and I believe that in my books, grim as they may seem, I have made room for that tragedy, too. The recurrence of certain types; dominant types, rigid types, of a single-minded preoccupation with the specifically-pioneering task, is, in my books, certainly not due to any liking on my part for that type. I had had to suffer too much from its short-comings to like it. But I had to be fair; I had to

give it its due; without that type much of the world's work would of necessity remain undone. And it is itself a tragic type. Its whole endeavour is bent upon reshaping and doing away with the very condition in its environment which gives it its economic and historic justification; and when it has been done away with; when the environment is tamed, the task is done; and the pioneer has used up, in doing it, the span of life allotted to him. He suddenly realizes that he has been working for a purpose which has defeated its end. He cannot, now, settle down to enjoy the fruit of his labour.

Fortunately for woman it mostly so happens that she is attracted by that type only if she herself is predestined for the life of a fighter. Mostly she is capable of defending herself against the invasion of her inner life by the raw necessities of an undisguised struggle for a bare existence. For such a struggle is the unalterable lot of all who go forth into the unknown and untried.

As, in this review of my past on which I was engaged, I came to my own relations with women in the pioneer districts of the west, I realized that there had been such relations only with what would commonly and unsentimentally be called misfits; women who, temperamentally, emotionally, and, in some cases, intellectually, were fitted for the life in towns or cities rather than for the life on the open prairies. When I met with them, they almost invariably guessed at first sight that my conformity with the common run of harvest-hands was neither more nor less than a disguise. Any such relation was usually inaugurated by my casual picking up of some book or even some magazine, often many years old, which I found in the rarely-used parlours of such houses as I entered for the purpose of applying for work to the husband. The presence of that book or magazine betrayed at a glance that someone in this family-group had his eyes bent on something other than the soil underfoot; and usually it was the woman.

In such a house I might remain for an hour, for a day, a week, or a month; but the inevitable outcome of my stay was that, when I left, I was enriched by a regret and disquieted by the knowledge that, for the woman concerned, a process of adaptation, of absorption in the environment into which fate had placed her, was broken—whether to her ultimate advantage or her disadvantage, who could tell? It was almost a foregone conclusion that, for the moment, her difficulties were multiplied.

I might add that my scruples on this point made me prefer the "company farm" to the farm operated by its owner with his family; there were no emotional entanglements. They were also the reason why, in that fall of 1912, I resolved to make a supreme effort to change my whole mode of life; why I contemplated, in doing so, the life of a hermit rather than that of a townsman.

Meanwhile there was, in this casting-up of accounts, one thing which stood

on the asset side, against much which I must necessarily put down in the list of liabilities. The one asset consisted in this: that I could truthfully call my knowledge of the pioneering section of the west of the North American continent unique. At a glance I could survey the prairie country from Kansas to Saskatchewan or Alberta; and at a thought I could evaluate, in my own way, of course, the implications of pioneer life. I, the cosmopolitan, had fitted myself to be the spokesman of a race—not necessarily a race in the ethnographic sense; in fact, not at all in that sense; rather in the sense of a stratum of society which cross-sectioned all races, consisting of those who, in no matter what climate, at no matter what time, feel the impulse of starting anew, from the ground up, to fashion a new world which might serve as the breeding-place of a civilization to come. These people, the pioneers, reaffirmed me in my conception of what often takes the form of a tragic experience; the age-old conflict between human desire and the stubborn resistance of nature. Order must arise out of chaos; the wilderness must be tamed. No matter where I looked, then as today, I failed to see that the task of recording that struggle of man with nature had ever adequately been done, not even by Hamsun who, for the sake of a pleasant ending, gave, to Isaak, Geissler. To record that struggle seemed to be my task. Perhaps, very likely even, I was foredoomed to failure in my endeavour; in fact, I seemed to see even then that I was bound to fail; but the attempt had to be made.

The trouble was that I was no more than human. My roots were in my past; and that past was not one of pioneerdom. In Siberia I had, after all, looked at things from the outside only. The Kirghiz herdsmen had been a spectacle to me—a moving spectacle, it is true; one that had made my every faculty of response vibrate in a diapason of sympathetic resonance. But I had stood outside. So had I stood outside during my first years on American soil; had I not, I could not then have lived. I clung to Europe as my true country. But gradually, so it seemed, I was being sucked under; the desire to conform is as fundamental to human nature as the desire to differ.

In the last analysis it all came down to an economic problem. In order to see things once more from the outside, I must regain my distance; in order to regain my distance, I must, economically and otherwise, get away from my present milieu. How could I? If I was ever to do so, I must do so now; I was over forty years old.

It was an economic question. It was a question of the daily bread.

I examined the whole economic basis of my life, with surprising results. I was desperately poor; and, worse, the present fall showed me that my life lacked even the element of security: a series of rains could undermine it. Even a salaried man, liable to dismissal, builds on some sort of security. I knew

none. What about my poverty?

According to Shaw, poverty is the original sin; according to Thoreau,—a man, as a man, of a vastly more imposing stature—it is the supreme virtue. In my own evaluation, it was relative and irrelevant. It was my personal misfortune that I had been born and raised with expensive tastes. I could suppress them, it was true; but only so long as I focused my eyes on other things. I came to the conclusion that, even with my eyes focused on comprehension and achievement, there was one thing which I could not permanently bear; and that was ugliness. But where look for beauty in that dingy little back-room of the office, in which I lived?

I have heard it said that, to men like myself—men, that is, who see their life-work, not in living, but in mirroring and interpreting life, the life of others—poverty is essential. Millionaires have told me so. It is nonsense. In any case, what is poverty? On no matter what economic level one may have to live, poverty is insecurity. Poverty, therefore, is the lot of all who strive to improve their economic status. If you have no matter what income, be it ever so small, and have no desire to increase it, you are not poor.

I have not for nothing opened the discussion of this section with a mention of women. Once more I was to make a grievous mistake in the new ordering of my life which was the outcome of my present meditations, plus a chance encounter. In spite of my determination to keep women out of my new scheme of life, I was at bottom certain that, sooner or later, they would re-enter it. I was not, by the chemistry of my mind, a constitutional celibate; I was not even exempt from the desire for a home, for a family, for a lasting appeasement of urges which, at times, ravaged my mind as well as my body.

But I kept that thought forcibly out of all my calculations. What I thought I wanted, yes, what I did want, was security in a bearable environment; that is, in one which, no matter how unpretentious, would not offend my aesthetic sensibilities. Naturally, I asked myself whether, at any time in the past, such a security might have been within my reach. For security was the indispensable prerequisite for that other thing, the leisure which I required for tackling my task.

Mine was no random work. But I had no illusions with regard to such attempts as I had so far made to do it. Very likely the publishers, hundreds of them, to whom I had offered books were quite right in declining to publish them; very likely these books were mere preliminaries, mere class-room exercises, so to speak, done in preparation for my final work. But, unless I was willing, when I came to die, to accept the fact that I had wasted what gifts I had received—the viaticum as I have called it; plus all that had been added to it by my life and by what experience had brought me—I must continue on my

path; I must go on striving after my aim.

What was that aim? Briefly, it was to set down, in one comprehensive picture, all that had crystallized out, in my mind, in reaction to all I had seen, heard, and felt. That picture I must at least aim at fashioning in a form *which would stand forever*.

Such an issue, of course, lies on the knees of the gods. A mere human being can do no more than his best. But, as far as the aim is concerned, it is my aim today when, in all likelihood, I have entered upon the declining decade of my life. I would rather live and work with that aim in view than lower the mark and reach a lesser goal.

One may ask—I have asked—why strive after the unattainable?

The answer is simply because we are we. Human beings are so constituted, like children, that they reach for the stars; and does not that fact argue something about the stars as well as the atoms? I do not, never did, believe in a personal god, in some absentee landlord who, by some fiat, orders my life. But I believe in the unity of all life; in the unity of the urge which compels the atoms of quartz to array themselves in the form of a crystal; with the urge which holds the stars in their courses or which made me sit down to write this last will and testament of my life. I had looked into history; and again and again I had seen that desire for perfection which had made Homer compose his lines, which had made Michelangelo fashion his Moses, which had made Goethe scan the finest lyrics in the modern world. Wherever I had met that desire, that urge to create order out of chaos, I had responded to it. They all had striven after the unattainable; only the striving after the unattainable was in any sense worth while and worthy of human endeavour. That desire, that urge was mine. That desire, that urge I saw in everything, even in the crystal or the snow-flake; and I also saw its frustration; a frustration often due to the very superabundance of the impulses making for some kind of order, exactly because there was no plan which teleologically directed that striving.

It was my duty, then, somehow to order my own life.

⁂

Had I done anything, so far, to bring about that order? For the staggering fact was that half my life had been lived; and *I had done nothing*.

As that realization came home to me, in that bare little room, I was profoundly unhappy. I had been young; all life had lain ahead; I had been getting ready—for what? I was no longer young; and where did I stand? Nowhere. I was a failure, utter and absolute.

I saw no way out. As for my books, past and future, I became sceptical; not with regard to my ability ultimately to do what was worth doing; but with regard to their ever finding enough of a public to secure my outer life, to give me an economic status which I myself could accept.

I reviewed the past two decades critically, in a purely economic sense; and at last I asked the question what would be the minimum requisite for a life of security which would give me the leisure needed.

The answer was that, if I had a definite, secure income of twenty-five dollars a month, I could laugh at the world; for I had no economic ambitions. With me it was simply a question of aesthetics. I am no aesthete. But I cannot bear the sight of ugliness day after day. The conclusion I arrived at, strangely, was that a satisfactory existence was possible for me on any economic level provided that level was definitely established.

How could I secure a definite and certain income of twenty-five dollars a month? There was only one way I could find; I must have a capital of five thousand dollars invested at six per cent; or one of six thousand at five per cent.

Could I secure it? If so, by doing what? Could I secure it by going on doing what I had been doing? If so, how long would it take?

The question involved an examination into the economic basis of my existence during the last twenty years. I found that my income, at least for the last fifteen or seventeen years, had averaged around three hundred dollars a year plus my living for the five summer months. Most of that cash income had been spent on my trips to Europe. Suppose I had eliminated that expense? Suppose further that I had never spent any money on my life during the winters. On an average I had had winter work, feeding stock, once in three years. How much could I lay by if, from now on, I eliminated trips to Europe and found work every winter? The answer was that, with the most rigorous economy, I could lay by two hundred and fifty dollars.

Suppose, then, I invested my annual savings instead of merely depositing them in a bank. Suppose I could get five per cent while saving. Suppose, suppose, suppose . . .

The result of all my calculations was that it would take thirteen years to lay by five thousand dollars.

Thirteen years!

Yet the striking thing about it all was that, had I been a saver, instead of being, like my father, if on a different scale and in a different way, a spender, I might before this have reached the goal I now proposed for myself. From that I drew an encouraging thought, instead of a discouraging one; which was a

mistake; for I failed to reckon with my own nature which, for better or worse, was that of a spender.

There was one other point. If I restricted my expenditure to the absolutely indispensable things, I could perhaps raise my savings to two hundred and seventy-five dollars a year, thereby cutting the time needed by another year . . .

Yet, even twelve years! In twelve years I should be fifty-two; and, being only forty, that seemed like a ripe old age to me. Would not my usefulness on the farm reach its limit before that time? Even men of forty were often left out when an employment agent picked those whom he wanted from a waiting crowd. However, for the moment this did not need to worry me; if in my later teens I had made the impression of being older than I was, I now looked much younger. Physically, I was changing very little; I was of the enduring type. No doubt, when I was fifty, I should be able to pass myself off as thirty-five or six. Nobody, at the time, would have taken me for older than twenty-eight or thirty.

My attempt to reduce my annual cash expenditure to less than fifty dollars brought me up against another hopeful fact. A not inconsiderable fraction, if not the larger part, of such expenditure as I had, so far, considered indispensable consisted of postage paid for my manuscripts; and another, if smaller, fraction, was spent on writing material, such as paper and pencils.

I had a complete list of the publishers in the United States, Canada, England, and continental Europe to whom I had offered one book or another, ever since I had first finished the initial, long version of *A Search for America*. This book had, in the list of my manuscript works, been joined by ten or twelve others, all copied out in six copies of fine, copper-plate handwriting. Let me say that there were twelve volumes in all; then there were seventy-two manuscripts; and each of them had been sent out and received back at least three times, more likely five times a year. So that I had made, on an average, three hundred and sixty shipments a year, or one a day. I had, of course, long since given up insuring my parcels; I did not even register them any longer; I sent them by mail, as second-class matter. Some of them had been lost that way, but even at that the mere shipping had cost me an average of close to a hundred dollars a year. In sixteen years that had amounted to over fifteen hundred dollars. And on writing materials I had spent at least another hundred, though I had no record.

If I had saved all that money and deposited it in some bank, at a bare two or three per cent, there would have been easily two thousand dollars. I had never received the slightest encouragement, to say nothing of an offer. That money had been a sheer waste. If I had saved it and, in addition, laid by ten dollars a month, the resultant capital would have amounted to what, by this time, seemed to me wealth incarnate.

If only I had not suffered from that curse of the desire to write!

I burned the incomplete manuscript I had in my bundle. What was to come of it all?

I felt suspended in an utter void. What in the world was I to do with myself?

I had burned my manuscript. But others would come back to me. What was I to do with them? Like bundles of out-dated newspapers they were, no doubt, following me about at that very moment. I almost dreaded their arrival. I felt tempted to keep moving, so that they could not reach me; then the express office would have the responsibility of keeping them for me.

But the moment I had burned that manuscript, I felt that the whole basis of my existence had collapsed under my feet. Manuscripts ground out under no matter what conditions formed the only justification for the sort of life I was leading. Without that justification everything seemed simply disgusting, as it seemed to so many others. Was I, to the end of my days, or at least of my working days, to go on being a hobo or a tramp, a member of what, by-and-large, is the lowest social, economic, intellectual order? Foregoing all those comforts which any kind of a settled existence offered to every clerk, every labourer? Could I fall so low as to sell carpet-tacks over the counter?

I surrendered, for a few days, to a desperate longing for some sort of home, some place of my own, even for that which was farthest out of my reach—mere human contacts.

I felt an exile. I was an exile. I did not live among people of my own kind; among people who, metaphorically, spoke my language; among people who respected my fierce sensibilities; among people who shared a single one of my interests. The only sort of what, with a stretch of the imagination, could be called literary art with which I ever came into living contact, consisted of the "tall" tales of the west; and they stood in flagrant contradiction to the squalid reality I saw all about.

I wanted to be in touch with the finest and highest thought of the age. Instead, I was being rubbed the wrong way, day in, day out, by those who, for the moment, were my social equals—whom others would have called the scum of the earth; the people who, like myself, were crowded over the edge and into the abyss. An economic absurdity had banished me to a new Siberia. I wanted to take decent clothes for granted; I wanted to have a daily bath in something larger than a saucepan; I wanted economic continuity and security, so that I should never again have to look upon a steadily-decreasing store of savings as my only defence against actual want in a hostile winter climate.

Above all, I wanted to write. I had things to say. I have since said a few of

them.

In Europe, I knew at last, I could no longer live for any length of time. I did *not* feel an exile from any definite country. I was no longer a "good European"; let Europe take care of her own troubles; I was rapidly becoming extra-European, partly perhaps on account of my failure to take a sixth trip to Europe. Europe, to me, had suddenly ceased to exist.

But I felt an exile from my youth and its promise; from a life in which the necessities and perhaps even a few of the luxuries of civilized life were taken, could be taken, for granted. Yet there were even then memories, geographical memories; of Italian coves in the Gulf of Amalfi; of woodlands in Sweden; of cared-for countrysides in France and England; of the dune country of the Pas de Calais, on the English Channel; of the cliff country of Brittany; of sea-ports like Marseille, Capetown, even Vladivostok. Visions arose of the Thuringian Forest in Germany, of the Erz and Riesengebirge on the Bohemian border, of the Dolomites in the Austrian Alps, of the Dalmatian coast on the Adriatic. I wondered whether all that was still in existence. But beauty in landscape was not absent from America, either; and though perhaps I might never succeed, should I ever again hear the third, slow movement of the Ninth Symphony, in substituting American landscape for the Austrian one in poignant visualizations, yet Tchekhov and Tolstoi could be interpreted by America as well as by Russia.

A new nostalgia arose; for a place of refuge where I might live if I ever realized that minimum income. A vision arose quite spontaneously, the moment the idea had taken shape. I would build a shack on some hillside overlooking a stream and the woods. I seemed to see the shack and the whole of its setting. I wondered where it might be. It was days before I recognized the elements out of which that vision was compounded; and with a sort of surprise I came to the conclusion that I was within a few hundred miles of the very place; it was in the Pembina Mountains, on the Canadian side, not very far from the little town of Manitou in Manitoba.

That was encouraging. There was a spot in America which had taken hold of me and of which I thought, not as a holiday resort, but as the scene of a life of work.

If only . . .

I wondered whether there might not be a way to shorten that interval of from twelve to thirteen years during which I must unremittingly slave in order to realize a dream. I should have taken warning at once. In life, there is never a short-cut. If you have mapped out a path for yourself, follow that path, no matter how long it may be; let nothing distract you. If a short-cut seems to

offer, it is bound to lead through new valleys and over new hills where you want to linger. You will lose sight of your goal. In life, as often as not, a short-cut is a side-track on which you will go astray.

Yet, when, out of the blue, such a short-cut offered, I took it.

It so happened that, at the beginning of the season, I had ordered, from a New York bookseller, a copy of Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal*. I had paid for it in advance and given instructions to send it to me, at Fargo, on October 15. Since my arrival on the Mackenzie farm it had rained, rained, rained. I had heard Mr. Nelson, the superintendent, say, "I don't suppose we'll thresh now till the stooks *freeze* dry." I was not writing. I was doing nothing. I wanted that book. I might have written to the postmaster and asked him to forward it to Casselton whence the mail for the farm was fetched daily. But somehow I had postponed doing so. One day, when Mr. Mackenzie dropped in at the office, I asked him, instead, for a day off. "Sure," he said, "take any amount of time you want; you're entitled to it. But, what I was going to say: better make out a cheque for Pat Parker. He's leaving." Pat Parker was one of the engineers who operated a "Twin-City" tractor. There was no work for him; and, like myself, he drew a salary. Now I knew that Pat Parker had come in a Ford car; no doubt he was going to return to St. Paul whence he hailed in that car. So, when I asked him about the route he was going to take, his reply was that he was going via Fargo; sure, he would give me the ride; glad to; for even with chains on he would have to push the bus a good many times.

We were lucky, for there was a lull in the rain. In places, it was true, our progress could hardly be called driving; it was navigation, rather; but we made Fargo, twenty miles away, in three hours. For the return trip, I should walk, of course, using the cindered track.

As soon as I was alone, I went to the post office and found the book waiting for me. I had the day off; I did not intend to start on my way back to the farm till late in the afternoon. What do meanwhile? I bought a few sandwiches and repaired to the station, to sit there in the waiting-room and to read.

I had been there for perhaps an hour when a Roman Catholic priest entered and sat down by my side. Meanwhile I was slowly munching my sandwiches and intoxicating myself with the verse which I had not read for two decades.

Suddenly the priest by my side spoke to me in French. My book had caught his eye; and since he did not know it, he based his desire to speak to me on nothing but the fact that it was French. Had he been familiar with its contents, he might, instead, have moved away.

As often happens in such chance acquaintances, we were soon speaking of

all sorts of things. He told me that he came from St. Boniface, near Winnipeg, and was on the way to St. Paul where he was going to stay with friends. I, on my part, gave him a few data with regard to myself; and, still laughing at something I had said, he suddenly turned serious and began to question me.

Within half an hour we were on a strange footing of intimacy.

He was an immigrant himself; he was French, not, as I had supposed, French-Canadian. He came from the neighbourhood of Etaples which I knew well and where I could still name people whom he knew.

Naturally this led to my telling him of the circumstances under which I had known France, not on my recent trips, but in my earlier days. He became very pensive; and he asked another question.

"Why don't you teach?"

I hardly knew what to say. "I'd need certificates," I said at last.

"They can be secured."

I told him of the trifling amount of teaching I had done.

"I don't mean that sort of thing," he said. "I mean teaching in a university; at a college; at the very least in a high school."

Such a thing, of course, had never occurred to me.

He went on telling me of the Deputy Minister of Education in the province of Manitoba whom he knew, advising me to call on him and to tell him what I had just revealed of my academic antecedents. He mentioned the salaries which he thought high-school teachers received.

Soon after, the train for which he was waiting pulled into the station; and we were forced to part. As a last thing he gave me his name and address, in a monastery at St. Boniface, and asked me to let him know how I fared if I followed his advice. Strange to say, I never saw him again, for before long I read in a newspaper that he had been killed in a railway accident.

Naturally, when I was back at the farm, I plunged once more into calculations. For almost anyone in my position, the priest's suggestion would have held the solution for all his troubles. The salary he had mentioned as, "if he remembered right", being received by high-school teachers was around sixteen hundred dollars. Could it solve *my* troubles?

Could I, for instance, at that salary, lay by a thousand dollars a year? I did not know. If I could, it would clearly be to my advantage to do so, even if I had to give up any attempt at writing. It was not so much the economic aspect that troubled me. During the five years needed, at that figure, to lay by five thousand dollars, I should very likely be boarding; which meant living in any environment which might offer. In a way, it would prolong the very thing I

objected to in my present status, but . . . for only five years.

There was another point to be considered. In the past twenty years I had spent what I had earned for a purpose. That purpose was to defend *myself* against my environment. I could have saved my earnings only at the cost of adapting myself to, of submerging myself in, that environment to which it had been essential to me to remain in an at least artistic opposition. In the life of any artist, this opposition is the decisive factor; the artist cannot proceed in predetermined grooves. Without such an opposition, he cannot keep the distance from his experience which is necessary for an objective view; without it, he cannot laugh at his own experience; and for any sort of artistic formulation that laughter, a divine laughter—such as speaks out of Beethoven's Eighth Symphony, is indispensable. In other words, he cannot preserve his bird's-eye view. If I took up this new career which seemed to offer, would I not have to fear that it would engulf me; that I should become absorbed; that my whole inner life would be side-tracked?

Any adaptation to the environment in which I had now spent two decades would have involved a submission to what, to most eyes, and possibly to my own, would have appeared as adversity. From such a submission, in which I should of necessity have become "the man who has seen better days" I should have suffered intensely; I have always abhorred the type. When, in northern Siberia, I had submitted to privation and hardship, I had been seeing the best days I had ever had. One does such a thing and one leaves it behind: that had always been my attitude to the sort of life I had led in the American west. If I had come through without a sense of profound humiliation, I owed the fact to that very opposition which took life experimentally, as it were. Insolence on the part of my employers and others, even insult, I had more often encouraged than resented, taking my revenge by nothing more than a careful observation and study of their expression—not in a photographic or phonographic, but in a psychologic sense. Anything that came to my mill was grist.

Now I said to myself that the task of teaching might hold a very much greater danger of "getting under my skin" than what I had been doing. Against that I argued that the average teacher is very much an average man; that, after all, my antecedents would protect me. Even among university men, even in Europe, it was not easy to find men who had seen something of every continent on the globe, who had gone through such fundamental upheavals as I had gone through in Siberia; above all, who had lived through what I had lived through during the last twenty years and come out alive; and not only alive, but strengthened instead of weakened. No, I decided, if anyone could afford to enter "that common but most perfidious refuge of men of letters . . . the profession of teaching"—to borrow a phrase from Matthew Arnold, without

danger to his soul, it was surely I. And with that decision the matter was settled.

I at once began to plan my cottage: single-roomed if need be; in fact, preferably single-roomed; to be built on the hill-slopes of the Pembina Mountains, above the ravine of the turbulent Pembina River.

I could not have existed, in the long run, without the sight of living water. There, five or six years hence, I should live as a hermit and a bachelor, writing my books. For, in spite of my recent despondency, I felt more than ever convinced that I had it in me to say what I wanted to say, and in a manner which would stand with the best a tortured and unbalanced age could produce. Whether I found my public within my lifetime or not, did not matter. The *practical* aim did not matter. Happily, indeed, this renewed dream of literary production, literary creation, was at last entirely dissociated from economic necessities; even unwritten books did not need any longer to be expected to sell.

I did not see it at the time; but, as a matter of fact, I was falling back upon the classic device which had been in my mind in 1892 when I became a waiter, of first "making my pile" and then doing my work. I had merely reduced the capital needed from forty to five thousand dollars, thereby reducing the time that would be needed for its accumulation. For the moment I felt entirely happy; what a boon that one can never see the future ahead . . .

Having arrived at this point, I wrote to the Manitoba farmer with whom I had left my suitcase, asking him to forward it to Winnipeg, by express, charges collect; and my earnings, plus the small balance of my savings which I had drawn—some seventy-five dollars in all—I deposited in the bank of the nearby town of Casselton, with instructions to have them transferred to the bank at Winnipeg where I kept my reserves.

Next, I amicably resigned my job; and, with less than five dollars in the pockets of my jeans, I started out on the last three hundred-mile tramp of my life as far as it has been lived to date.

It was with a feeling of immense relief that I turned my back on manual labour; for what the priest had said left no doubt in my mind with regard to my coming success. I was going to be a state-sanctioned pedagogue—a thing which filled me with vast amusement. I, who had looked below, who had, for so long, lived below the surface was to enter a profession which concerns itself with nothing but what lies on that surface. I had no illusions; pedagogy, state-sanctioned, had never yet, in the last two thousand years, concerned itself with education; what it had concerned itself with would, more properly, be called inducation; for it had tried to induce young unformed, unspoiled minds to

accept all the errors of the past, including those of method, instead of projecting them into a future in which the part of error might be reduced. I, who had seen, and fought with, error, was now to inculcate it. While it rained and rained, I laughed and laughed. That matter of English spelling, for instance! Or that of the British weights and measures! To mention only trifles. Slavery, slavery to the sluggishness of tradition.

I did not see, of course, that my whole attitude to any state-sanctioned system of "education" bore in it the germ of revolt which would of necessity end my career in the profession. Had I seen it, it would not have mattered. It was a question of only five or six years.

I might have to pass examinations; it never occurred to me to write for the documents which would have testified to my academic standing in Europe. I might have to attend a teachers' college. I should find means to attend it, though that might delay the achievement of my goal, but, surely, not for more than a year at most. Once the idea had been planted in me, I felt certain that I could carry it out. So far, the priest had said, my problem consisted in convincing "the authorities" that I possessed certain qualifications for the work I proposed to do. If I had not attempted this thing long ago, the reason was simply that it had never occurred to me. Had it occurred to me, I should probably have considered "the authorities" as quite unapproachable. In that sort of thing, I should have thought, one must, within the country, have gone through the proper channels.

Another argument in favour of my venture occurred to me ex-post-facto: In America the teaching week had only five days; the teaching year, at the worst, ten months. I was floated along on a tide of optimism.

The personal belongings which I carried consisted largely in what I wore; underwear, overalls, sweater, and an old, worn-out rain-coat, a remnant of the wardrobe I had brought from Europe. A bundle contained, besides, a heavy blanket, a change of linen, towel, soap, and my now twenty-six-year-old razor with its accessories. This bundle, covered with water-proofed canvas, I carried on my back.

In other words, after twenty years of toil in America, I was, for the moment, back at the exact point where I had been when I had spurned American "business" which, at the time, I had considered the most iniquitous thing on this globe.[4]

[4] See *A Search for America*, 4th edition, Ryerson Press, pp. 107-222.

In starting out, I had, of course, hoped that on my way north—"home" as I called it—I should pick up an occasional day's work here and there; but I was

disappointed.

It was the wettest fall I had ever lived through in the middle west, calculated to shake one's belief in its semi-aridity. Everywhere the fields were swamps; the stooks of ripe wheat stood with their feet in water or, when it had frozen overnight, in ice; the roads were bottomless mires; and on account of the sticky nature of the gumbo soil prevailing throughout the district which I had to traverse, it was impossible to make any progress except by picking one's way along the grassy margin. I had no idea, of course, that there might be any hurry; or I should have "beaten" my way. I never did; I was enjoying a new sense of freedom; once more I was bound on adventure. Hardships undergone, not from necessity, but from choice, had always appealed to me; and at last I had a definite goal. Day after day I pushed on.

Within a week I was penniless; and henceforth I had to sleep wetly in stooks of wheat or ricks of prairie hay. Under the pretext of enquiring for work, I took pot-luck with such farmers as I knew, provided they were not too depressed by the outlook to offer their hospitality. On the average, I believe, I had one meal a day. Whenever, towards nightfall, I sighted a haystack, I counted myself lucky; for, by burrowing into it, at a height of five or six feet from the ground, I could reach a dry core.

The last sixty miles, on Canadian soil, had to be made over snow. When I arrived in the city of Winnipeg, I took up my quarters at a hoboes' hostelry on Main Street North. It happened to be a Saturday; and since I had no money left, I was faced with a week-end of fasting; in the city, one does not go to backdoors to ask for "a hand-out", at least not when one is what I was. It did not matter, of course; but the fact contributed to a recrudescence of that mental depression in which I had lived before my meeting with the priest. The moment I was in the city, the whole trip seemed to have been made on a wild-goose chase; to this day the city has that effect on me and my spirits.

There followed a few days in which everything seemed to go wrong. My suitcase had not arrived; my money had not reached the bank at the corner of Main Street and City Hall Square. I suspected all the world of an intention to cheat me out of what was mine. I did not dare to draw on even a small fraction of what was left of my reserves. That little might have to see me through the winter; the most stringent economy was imperatively needed.

What was I to do with myself? In outward appearance I was a tramp. I was tired and hungry. In the open country, no destitution would have caused me undue alarm. But, unless I was willing to avow myself beaten before the battle, I must remain where I was.

I walked out to Deer Lodge Park in the north of the city—a distance of four

or five miles from Main Street. There, leafless trees, clean snow, and the sun shining gave me at least some reassurance that the world remained what it had always been. I asked myself whether the fact that I was in overalls and had no money to buy food with changed anything in my fundamental composition. The point just now was that I felt myself qualified to do anything that might be expected of me. The priest had been emphatic about it that teachers were scarce in Manitoba.

It is a strange fact that, in a hopeful mood, no matter how induced, we are apt to discount all former experience. Experience seemed to prove it the part of wisdom always to expect the worst to happen. But, when we feel encouraged, the present is always going to be the exception to the rule; the luck is at last on the point of turning. It counted for nothing that, in the past, and on this continent, I had invariably wasted my time when I had tried to earn my living by anything but manual labour. It was true, I had not tried it for eighteen years . . .

At the time of writing it gives me a peculiar, almost uncanny feeling when I reflect that, even then, there must have been men living in Winnipeg who were to be the most enthusiastic heralds of what little work I was to publish beginning with 1922—work which had already been written and which I might have given them to read at the time.

By noon of that day of the tramp to the park I had so far recovered my mental and emotional balance that, when I started on the tramp back to the city, I could do so with a definite plan in my mind. Mentally I had drafted a letter to the Deputy Minister of Education in the provincial government. In this letter which referred casually to my educational antecedents, and in which I dropped a remark to the effect that untoward circumstances had momentarily deprived me of my baggage, so that I had none but working-man's clothes with me, I asked for a personal interview, slipping in the name of the Roman Catholic priest. When I got back to the hotel, I wrote it on stationery reluctantly supplied by the clerk; and, having, in the directory, looked up the private address of the official in question, I went, at night, to drop it into the letter-box of his house, for I had not the money to buy a postage stamp.

I spent a sleepless night and another hungry and worried day. On the second morning, however, having once more made enquiry at the express office, once more in vain, the day clerk of the hotel, seeing me enter the lobby, raised a finger to detain me. I went over to where he was sorting the mail.

With a questioning inflection he gave my name.

When I nodded, he handed me a letter.

It was a brief note from the Deputy Minister of Education, asking me to

call at his office on Bannatyne Avenue—for the new Parliament Buildings were not yet completed—at nine-thirty, on any day of the week. “The writer,” it added, “has in years gone by done manual labour himself; and overalls hold no terror for him.”

I went at once. I entered the office of the Deputy Minister, who was destined to become one of my friends, at nine-thirty, clad in overalls, a farm-hand temporarily unemployed. At eleven-thirty I left his office, still in overalls, but the prospective principal of a high school.

For the moment, it being too late to secure a position for that year, for it was December, I had been referred to an inspector of public schools in a bilingual district in Southern Manitoba where the scarcity of even elementary teachers was especially great. I had been told to hold myself ready, next spring, to pass certain examinations and, in the following summer, to attend an eleven-weeks short course at the local Normal School. After that, provided I made a sufficiently good showing, both in the examinations and at the Normal School, I had been promised a provisional certificate for high-school work which would be made permanent if I either passed a set of further examinations or made an outstanding success at teaching, as testified to by the proper inspectors. A tentative question, however, as to what salary I could expect to receive, had been answered to the effect that, for the moment, it would not be wise to ask for more than fifty dollars a month; high-school work, for which I should be qualified next fall, would be paid for at not less than a hundred dollars. Even that, of course, fell far short of the Roman Catholic priest’s estimate. At best, the period of my preparation for economic independence and security lengthened out to ten years.

Yet I was in a state of elation as I issued forth into a driving snow-storm. So it was as easy as all that! At any rate, there would be no further need for manual labour too hard for my physique.

My first trip was to the bank where I intended to draw on my reserves. Since, for the second time that fall, good luck had come my way, I should not have minded drawing out my whole deposit.

To my immense relief, however, the accountant to whom I spoke, told me that the transfer from Casselton had come through in the morning’s mail. I left my emergency account untouched and drew only my summer’s earnings.

With this money in my pocket, I repaired once more to the express office; and even my suitcase had arrived!

The rest of the day I spent in making various purchases: at the book store, where I picked up a number of pedagogical works used as text-books in Manitoba Normal Schools; and at the haberdasher’s where I laid in a stock of

shirts, collars, and neck-ties.

Next morning, at eight o'clock, I boarded the south-bound train. It was a glorious, cold winter day, the temperature ranging in the twenties below zero; but I wore no overcoat, for the simple reason that I had none. The rain-coat which, twenty years ago, I had brought from Europe and which had accompanied me on all my tramps, often serving as a ground-cloth to sleep on, was neither warm nor any longer waterproof; for the moment it seemed worse to wear it than to go without. In thinking of it today, I cannot help laughing at all the explanations I offered, to the school inspector whom I saw at Morden and, later in the day, to the trustees of the school district to which he had referred me, for the fact that, being of a sanguine and full-blooded nature—I was anything but that—I never wore an overcoat.

Suffice it to say that, by nightfall, I was duly engaged as a teacher in the rural school of Haskett and installed in a lean-to room built on to the south wall of the schoolhouse which stands a few hundred yards due north of the little hamlet of perhaps fifty souls. The world was snow-white here and flat as a table top; but, to the west, the horizon was broken by the low line of hills which go under the name of the Pembina Mountains. Chance had brought me very near my dreamt-of goal.

Everything—landscape, buildings, and even the inhabitants, who, by the way, came from the German districts of Russia,—reminded me in the most vivid way of the steppes.

VII

FOR over a year and a half my life, as far as outward happenings were concerned, remained utterly uninteresting and commonplace.

The first half year, spent in that hamlet on the flat plains, twenty minutes walk from the international border, I tried to justify to myself as the usual interlude between seasons. Though I soon had a small evening class of high-school pupils who, so far, had been attending neighbouring town schools, the greater part of my work consisted in elementary teaching.

Needless to say, I did that work conscientiously and with success. It was, however, my night work which attracted attention throughout the district, quite unjustly, for the elementary work cost me by far the greater effort; it was method in which I needed to school myself.

I had been at work for only a few weeks when I was offered the principalship of the nearby Intermediate School of Winkler for the following year. This was a graded school where one department was devoted to high-school work which, of course, fell to the principal's share. Although I was not yet officially qualified to take the position, which called for a first-class teacher's certificate, I accepted, confident that, by August, I should be granted such a certificate.

As a matter of fact, when the time came, it had been granted. In spring, I wrote on the examinations in mathematics, the only subject in which I felt rusty; and in the following summer I attended the short course of the Normal School, with the result that, after a very short attendance, I was dismissed with a recommendation to the department that I be granted full standing—a recommendation on which the department acted. Within a year, then, of the time when the Roman Catholic priest had directed my thought in this new direction, I had achieved what he had said I could do. The salary which I was to get, however, fell far below the figure he had quoted. It was eight hundred and fifty dollars for the year.

Meanwhile I was installed in the open country, roaming, in my spare time, the plains with which I had for so long been familiar. On these rambles, made at temperatures hardly ever ranging above zero and often falling to forty below, I wore my old rain-coat and, under it, the one good lounge suit which I still possessed. It was not till I was established as principal of the Intermediate School at Winkler that I dared to have new clothes made.

The district, south of the town of Morden, was flat as a table top. But most

of the farmsteads were surrounded by windbreaks of tall cottonwoods, now bare of their brittle, triangular foliage and sticking out of the snow like huge, inverted, primitive brooms. The hamlet itself—if, consisting as it did of two stores and perhaps three or four houses, it could be called by so pretentious a name—was treeless. I had seen such places, indistinguishable in every feature, in the Russian province of Volhynia and on the steppes of Siberia. It lay in the western margin of the flood district which I have described in *Fruits of the Earth*.

On school days my only leisure time fell between four and six o'clock in the afternoon; and I soon got into the habit of dawdling the interval away. When the weather was cold and settled, I either called on my only Anglo-Saxon neighbour, the station agent, a pleasant young man who used to bring his little boy to school on his shoulders; or I had a vigorous walk.

Abe Spalding, central figure of *Fruits of the Earth*, a book still unwritten at the time, was very much with me; and I was beginning my studies on the behaviour of snow, later to be utilized in *Over Prairie Trails*. Nothing of this seemed to be work; it was rather a pleasant distraction in which I indulged. As far as my literary activity went, it seemed to me I was lying fallow.

As for my week-ends, they, too, seemed to be wasted; and I was willing to waste them. I lived cradled, for the first time in my life on this continent, in a sense of security, with economic difficulties banished from consciousness. For the moment it was a sort of crepuscular contentment. I had escaped from the last two decades; and only now did I feel it as an escape. I did not care to think, much less to worry.

When I had a class on Saturday, I remained at home, of course; and it happened often. Very early on Sunday morning, I invariably started out for a long tramp into the Pembina Mountains which were perhaps ten miles away. These hills were to be my final retreat. There was a central valley, densely wooded, and I picked the exact shelving terrace on which I meant to build my shack. Whenever I had it, so I said to myself, I should settle down to do my real work. Meanwhile . . .

On one such ramble, I ran, in a clearing, across a schoolhouse very similar to the one in which I was teaching, except that it was surrounded by the woods instead of the plains. I happened to meet a farmer who was at work repairing a break in the fence enclosing the yard; and casually, almost absent-mindedly, just to say something, I asked who was the teacher there. I was told that it was a young girl. It being Sunday, I did not see her; nor was I interested. I was not inclined to run after young girls; and, of course, I could not know at the time that within two years this young girl of less than half my age was destined to be my wife.

Sometimes, when I was not teaching on Saturday, I made use of one of the standing invitations I had to drop in at the house of one of the ratepayers, chiefly, I am afraid, because, by so doing, I escaped the task of preparing my own meals.

Early in spring the flood came down from the mountains; and for a fortnight or so I was a prisoner at the school. From the steps at the door, planks were laid across to a platform built for the purpose by the side of the gate to the yard. From all sides the fathers now drove the children to school, through water which everywhere covered the ground to a depth of from one to three feet; and the scholars alighted, from the wagon-boxes, on to the platform. I stood ready to lend them a hand as they tripped along the planks.

Then, slowly, the flood ran out, spreading eastward, following the imperceptible slope to the Red River. Below the water, the ground remained frozen, of course.

Next came mud, mud, mud; till, finally, roads and fields dried under the fierce winds of late April and early May.

I became restless.

As a teacher I had now been working for five or six months. During that time I had lived most frugally, many of my meals consisting simply of bread and butter, with coffee. But as a rule I had, on Friday night or Saturday morning, cooked a kettle of food to last me well through the coming week, a bean soup or something of the kind. When this became distasteful, I fell back on tinned goods and always on bread and butter, which was the most expensive item on my list.

I could not secure my bread locally, or at least only rarely. The families of all the settlers, exclusively Mennonites, were large; and housewives could not be bothered baking for the teacher. “If the teacher needs anything,” they said to their husbands who were the only people I saw during the week, apart from the children, “take him a leg of beef or the shoulder of a pig.” Consequently, I always had far too much meat. In the dead of winter I sometimes went west, after dark, to a point where the coyotes came down from the wooded hills, and threw them my surplus. I have always had a foible for coyotes. When the warm weather came, I asked the generous donors to discontinue their gifts; I could not keep them.

But always I needed bread; and bread I had to ship in from Morden. I do not remember the exact rates; but I know that the cost of transportation exceeded the purchase price for which I had arranged to settle quarterly by about two hundred per cent.

Another expensive item was water. There were only two wells within

walking distance; and the fluid yielded by them was strongly alkaline, of abominable taste and of potent effect on the bowels. The half-dozen families that lived in the hamlet used it; perhaps they had adjusted their internal chemistry through years of habituation. On the farms, people used cisterns, huge, open waterholes with clay bottoms in which they caught the scanty rainfall and which, in spring, they filled with the slushy snow. As spring and summer came, these pools swarmed with the larvae of mosquitoes and other insects; frogs, toads, and newts bred in them by the thousand; cattle drank in their margins. The farmers, of course, boiled the water for their own use.

During the winter I, too, had melted snow for my needs; but as the snow first became dirty and then disappeared, I had to ship in ice from Grand Forks in North Dakota, a distance of over a hundred miles. When the weather grew warm, I could often take some in a dipper, what was left after the rumbling trip.

All of which added fearfully to the cost of living; and when I pondered my finances, I was dismayed. It is true, I still had some money in the bank at Winnipeg; and my salary had, voluntarily, been raised to seventy-five dollars a month, chiefly in recognition of the night work I was doing with my high-school class. But the long summer holidays were coming when there would be no earnings; and by this time I could see that my savings, out of salary, would not exceed a hundred dollars. If, in spite of what some people in the district called “my enormous salary”, I could barely lay by enough to see me through the summer, what had become of my dreams of a future independence? However, let that go . . .

Meanwhile, what of my literary activities? I did no actual writing; yet in its way this was to be the last period in years which was to prove fruitful. I did not even do any actual planning. “Planning” would not be the right word to use. A concrete example may serve to explain what was going on. I had, by the way, withdrawn all my manuscripts from circulation among the publishers; or rather I had discontinued sending them out again when they were returned. I felt that a new chapter had opened in my life. I should want to work all my older books over again—to refashion them, to bring them into accord with my widening outlook.

A concrete example!

Since, at a later stage, I shall have to speak of a final development in the genesis of *Fruits of the Earth*, it may be best to take that book for the present elucidation as well. In that way all the essential steps in the working out of at least one book will be recorded.

Very nearly twenty years before the time with which we are dealing, in the

fall immediately preceding my writing *A Search for America*, I had been employed in hauling wheat from a so-called company farm to the railway, somewhere in the south-west of what had become the province of Saskatchewan. To make things clear, it is necessary to go back, for a moment, to that fall when I had been only twenty-two years old.

The haul was of thirty miles, over a mere trail worn into the prairie sod, for roads were not yet being thought of. The way led through wild, rolling hills as yet unsettled. During such drives my mind has, throughout my life, always been extraordinarily active. Without ever putting pen to paper, I wrote, or rather dreamt, story after story. Some of them were actually written down later on, and they lie in the drawers of my desk today; I composed many volumes of verse. I have always had a remarkable memory for poetry; and some of the verse, never written down, still ticks through my mind as I sit at my desk trying to resuscitate the past.

But back on my thirty-mile hauls the four horses needed no guiding; and as a rule there was absolutely nothing to distract my thought. I knew every contour of every hill, every shading of colour in fore-and back-ground, so often grey in colour, though there were also the distant purples. One needs to have lived intimately with such a landscape in order to appreciate its shy, often desolate beauty; there is about it something of eternity and everlasting rest. The only living things were birds, amazingly numerous species of them, but individually few in number; and nearly all of them, with the exception of the meadowlark which is silent in the fall, had melancholy, screeching calls.

Day after day, as I made these drives, coming or going, the sun shone as it is apt to do in that arid country.

Then, one day, I had an adventure. Somewhere towards the end of my outward drive, to town, I saw a man; and what is more, he was ploughing straight over the crest of a hill to the west, coming, when I caught sight of him, towards my trail. The town which I was approaching lay on the railway, in the dry belt of the country; the general verdict was that the surrounding district was unfit for farming. The mere fact, therefore, that this man was ploughing as he came over the crest of the hill was sufficiently arresting and even startling. Besides, outlined as he was against a tilted and spoked sunset in the western sky, he looked like a giant. Never before had I seen, between farm and town, a human being in all my drives.

In my surprise, I drew my horses in and stopped, waiting; and as, following his hand-plough down to the trail, he, too, stopped, there were a few minutes of desultory conversation. I learned that he had, that afternoon, arrived from Ontario; that, finding the land-titles office open in town, he had promptly filed on a homestead claim of a hundred and sixty acres; that he had unloaded his

horses and chattels from the waiting freight-car; and that he had come out to look at, and perhaps to camp on, the land which was prospectively his. Having arrived an hour ago, after a two-thousand-mile train-ride, he was now ploughing his first field!

"You aren't losing much time about it," I said.

"Nothing else to do," he replied.

And then I went on to town.

The next day, and the next—in fact, while I remained in the employ of that company farm, reading and writing in my scant leisure hours, I went, when taking wheat to town or returning thence, with my grain-tank empty, over a different trail. It seemed imperative that I should never see, never hear that man again.

Already, while he was standing by the side of the trail, with me reclining on top of my load of a hundred bushels of wheat; and more especially when he had uttered the last few words, he had not seemed to me to be quite the sort of giant I had imagined when he had first topped the crest of the hill. Yet, somehow he had bodied forth for me the essence of the pioneering spirit which has settled the vast western plains and with which I had, through scores of concrete manifestations, become familiar during the preceding year.

The important thing was this. His first appearance, on top of the hill, had tripped a trigger in my imagination; he had become one with many others whom I had known; and an explosion had followed in the nerve-centres of my brain because I had been ready for it. I had, for some time, been ready for the pains of birth. A, to me, momentous thing had happened: the figure of Abe Spalding, central to the book which, forty years later, was published under the title *Fruits of the Earth*, had been born in my mind, fully armed as it were, and focalizing in itself a hundred features which I had noted elsewhere. This man, a giant in body, if not in mind and spirit, had furnished the physical features for a vision which had, so far, been incomplete because it had been abstract.

If I had seen the entirely casual occasion—that is all I can call him; he was not the prototype—of this figure again, if I had heard him speak as no doubt he had been used to speak, without relevance to my creation, that mental vision of mine would have been profoundly disturbed. A perfectly irrelevant actuality would have been superimposed upon my conception of a man who, as I saw him, had perhaps never lived; for he lacked that infusion of myself which makes him what he has become. From a type and a symbol, he would have become an individual; he would have been drained of the truth that lived in him; he would have become a mere fact.

This birth of a figure has remained typical for all my work.

From that day on, then, a new character had been present to my consciousness. At first, there had been neither a story nor a life lived by that figure; and consciously I had never made any attempt to construct such a story or such a life.

But as, in the fall of 1912, I had, after my interview with the Roman Catholic priest, come up through the northern prairies, skirting rain-drenched fields, threading miry roads which smacked their lips at every step I took, Abe Spalding, living in some province of my mind, had saved his wheat in the manner later recorded in Chapter X of the book as, eleven or twelve years later, it came to be written. Similarly, during that spring on the prairie, while I was teaching in the little rural school at Haskett, Abe Spalding saved his district which, by this time, had become localized some forty miles east of where I was, during the Great Flood described in Chapter VI.

I lived my life, he his. As *I* grew older, *he* did, slowly maturing, slowly changing, slowly shaping his life as best he could. We were never one; though I felt with him, we remained two; I had suffered too intensely from his nature to identify myself with him at any time.

And Abe Spalding was not the only figure that lived with me in this way; Len Sterner went through his struggles for an education, in the northern bush-land of Manitoba; Niels Lindstedt was taking up his homestead there and fighting the devils in his blood; Felix Powell had started on his career in an eastern city; the Clarks, of *The Master of the Mill*, were accumulating their millions; John Elliot, the old man of the Sedgeby district in Saskatchewan, was quarrelling with all his children; and snow and sleet, fog and rain had become living things to me. Even when dealing with human beings, I have always been somewhat of a naturalist.

What inner vitality I had was spread out over a province, yes, over an empire. I could switch my attention from one point of it to another, as though, from the summit of a mountain, I were looking down over hundreds of miles, piercing the distance with telescopic vision which enabled me to see the minutest details no matter how far away they might be. And wherever I looked, in this whole region of the Canadian West, there were figures moving about which were the creations of my brain, at the same time that they were the mirrorings of actual conditions. These figures did not all of them command my own sympathies; with some of them I lived in an everlasting conflict; but they shared my blood and my vital strength. I could not have fashioned them had I not seen their side; and, I believe, I have been just to them.

That, then, while I taught day and night school, and while I roamed the country around Haskett, was the extent of my literary work. It was not I who was working; *it* was working; no matter what it might be . . .

When, next fall, I opened the term as principal of the Intermediate School of Winkler, that happened which I had been afraid of when I first made up my mind to follow the advice of the Roman Catholic priest. I became absorbed in the work which yielded my living; not so much, perhaps, in the actual work of teaching; at least I could have overcome that absorption; but in the sociological dilemma which was defining itself in the district. Consciously I was still determined to strike straight for my financial goal; and, had I known in advance what I was letting myself in for, I believe, I should have declined to take the school.

The first trifling set-back to my expectations was purely economic. I found that I had to live at the hotel; which meant that, out of my precious eighty-five dollars a month, I had to pay twenty-five for board and lodging. It is true, that was less than my living had cost me at Haskett; but it seemed high nevertheless.

Slowly, however, all economic considerations receded before a, to me, appalling situation which defined itself. I must speak of it here for two reasons: first, because it entirely defeated all my plans; and second, because it throws light on conditions prevailing in Manitoba at the time.

Thus, two teachers of my staff, excellent teachers though both of them were, were working, as I had done, on “Permit” only; which means that they held no certificates; and in their cases they had never had enough schooling to obtain them. Both, therefore, would at some future time, when there might be no scarcity of candidates, be struck off the list of permit-holders; and that very likely at the precise moment when the experience they had gained would more than have compensated for their lack of academic “standing”, making it most desirable that they should continue in the profession.

Further, in the district surrounding the town, there were numbers of other teachers, most of them, strange to say, men, who held nothing but similar permits; the reason being perhaps that the schools they served were so-called bilingual schools where German was lawfully taught by the side of English; for the whole, huge settlement was Mennonite; and bilingual teachers were hard to find. This situation unfolded itself at once because nearly all these men, realizing the precariousness of their tenure, were trying hard to cover, by themselves, the high-school work which they had never had the chance to take at school. They came to me with the difficulties which proved stumbling-blocks to them. All they expected, so far, was a little occasional help. Sometimes I was amazed at the elementary nature of their questions; these teachers were, in scholarship, barely ahead of their scholars. To top it all, some were married men and had children to support; one or two had even acquired or built houses for themselves, near their schools; for in the open country, there

were no dwellings for rent. Among them was one who had so impressed his very exceptional native teaching ability upon the school-inspector that, on the latter's recommendation, his permit had been renewed for many years beyond the time authorized by law. Yet, for the lack of a little guidance and explanation, he was hopelessly floundering about and wasting his time though, by now, middle age had crept upon him. More than one of these men harboured a real ambition, yes, a high aspiration. It was a pitiful situation; and I soon saw that something radical had to be done to remedy it.

I talked matters over with the inspector; and he, himself distressed, assumed as a matter of course that in me he had at last found a ready helper and ally; as, indeed, he had. I had been in town for less than a month when I announced my intention of holding a night-school for teachers. It was a plain duty, not to be shirked.

By that time, the reason for the condition prevailing had also become clear to me. As I have said, this was an Intermediate School; that is, one in which a single department was devoted to high-school work; in that department, only the first two grades of high-school work were supposed to be taught; and, so far, this restriction had been observed. In other words, those who wished to continue their schooling, either in order to get matriculation standing, or a standing which, after eleven weeks of attendance at a short course of the Normal School, would entitle them to take positions as qualified elementary teachers, had necessarily to go elsewhere. At some other centre they had to board themselves for at least a year; and that made the question of this "free" education one of the financial ability of their parents. In some cases, the first two years in high school had been just sufficient to whet the appetite of the pupils for more; in others, they had their hearts set on a career which, without a higher standing, remained closed to them. All of which was the cause of much mental and emotional distress in the district.

A brief exploration convinced me that I had to do with a very exceptional community. Even in town, such of the population as was not Jewish was Mennonite; and parents as well as pupils held high educational ideals. "An education"—in the static sense; you have it or don't have it; and when you have it, you cease to acquire further slices of it—was to them the most precious, the most sought-after thing on earth, far above wealth. It was the open-sesame, not only to so-and-so many careers, but to religious wisdom as well. And in this district all but the most elementary foundation was denied them.

Again I talked matters over with the inspector who locally represented the department of education; and again he entered enthusiastically into the views I unfolded to him.

I approached the school-board with the plan of a complete reorganization of the school which, I assured them, would not impose further burdens on the ratepayers; they were already taxed to capacity by the existing facilities. On the other hand, the plan would impose considerable additional work on all the teachers. Under pressure from the inspector, the board gave me a free hand.

I called the teachers together and submitted to them that there was a social injustice involved in the situation. They knew it, of course; but they had never thought about ways and means to remedy it; it had seemed that it could not be helped. I outlined my plan. So far, the high-school department, mine, had also comprised the entrance-to-high-school class. To make room at the top, for the third high-school year, which conferred matriculation standing, I proposed to move the last public-school grade down into the next lower room; thence one into the second room; and one from the second room into the first. The greatest difficulty arose in connection with the primary department, for the change proposed would bring its enrolment up to sixty-three pupils. Not one of the teachers, however, refused to shoulder the additional burden. The primary teacher, by the way—a pedagogical genius—was that young girl whose school I had seen in a clearing of the Pembina Mountains.

The announcement of the change was, therefore, made public; and the scholars poured in. Within a week I had the third high-school class organized.

Simultaneously I taught, in night-school, the second, third, and fourth high-school grades, the fourth conferring senior matriculation and, for teachers, so-called First-Class, Grade-B, standing—the same which, for the moment, I had been provisionally granted. Only the principalship of a full high-school, with at least two high-school teachers, demanded, at the time, a university degree. In day-school, the ages of my pupils ranged from twelve to thirty-four years; in night-school, from twenty-one to nearly forty.

Before I proceed to the point which in all this vitally affected me and my further fortunes, I might add that the scheme proved an unqualified success. Not only did all my pupils pass their examinations next summer, with an unusual number taking high honours, but, when, after two years, I left the district for financial reasons, my own place was taken by one of my night-pupils who, in two years, had raised his standing from that of a permit-teacher threatened with being struck off the list to that of a First-Class, Grade-B teacher with a provisional certificate like my own.

So much for the success; and now for the failure which was personal to me.

When I persuaded the school-board to accept my plan, which they readily acknowledged to be in the interests of the district, they stipulated that it must not involve any additional burden for the ratepayers.

But among the subjects taught in the third and fourth high-school grades were chemistry and physics. There was no laboratory; there was no equipment of any kind.

To cut a long story short, I pressed a small teachers' office into service as a laboratory and provided the apparatus needed at my own expense, assuming the purchase price, by arrangement with the supply house, as a personal debt. Out of my monthly salary I retained henceforth just enough to pay for my board at the hotel and to leave me a modicum for pocket money; the balance went to the supply house, in payment, on account, for the equipment.

One more point needs to be mentioned. Apart from the Mennonites, nearly all of whom were academically gifted, there were, among my scholars, a few Jews; and these, strangely, were manually inclined. There were also, throughout the eight public-school grades, numbers of boys who used their spare time, after four and on Saturdays, to get themselves into various kinds of mischief; some even, to prepare themselves for careers of crime. I decided that we must have a manual-training class which would take up the slack of misused leisure. For such a purpose the basement of the school was well adapted; and the second public-school teacher, who attended my night class, was gifted in wood-work. Once more I approached the school-board, with the same result as in the case of the laboratory. I installed the manual-training equipment at my own expense. I believe that, by doing so, I saved at least two or three boys from moral degeneracy.

My finances, however, were now in a state of complete disarray; it took me two years to extricate myself from the debt which I assumed.

Besides, my whole day was filled with work.

It must not be assumed that, after having been out of school myself for twenty-five years, every detail of the work was at my finger-tips. The things which, academically, I excelled in, classics and moderns, counted for little or nothing. Thus I had to teach history—a smattering only, it is true—from the days of Babylon to the present day; and I was rusty on dates. Mathematics had to be taught from advanced arithmetic to elementary trigonometry and analytical geometry—a task which involved my working every problem over beforehand. In physics and chemistry, the experimental work had to be carefully planned and often tried out; for I lacked laboratory technique; and much of the apparatus I had to invent and construct before I could use it. This latter task I performed on Saturday mornings, preparing for the coming week in advance. When you teach the fifty-odd subjects of four high-school grades, you cannot afford the luxury of repetition after false or unplanned moves. In the class, you have to switch over, every fifteen minutes, from one subject to another often unrelated to the first. The loss of even a few minutes is a serious

matter.

I, therefore, rose at six in the morning and was at work before I was dressed. Often, when planning a lesson, I consulted three or four manuals on method. Incidentally, this was the time when I assembled the books which I had bought during my two decades as a farm-hand; and my bed-sitting-room at the hotel soon resembled a small library. As for the pedagogical works which I needed, I tried to make some arrangement with the Winnipeg Public Library; but the librarian intimated to me that city libraries could not undertake to cater to needy rural teachers.

From nine to four, of course, I was kept busy in day-school. After four, I took a short time off for the indispensable exercise. From four-thirty to six-thirty I prepared the evening lessons which on Saturdays—for Saturday work soon proved to be necessary—I gave in the afternoon. At six-thirty I had supper in the dining-room of the hotel, mostly with a book propped against the salt cellar; and from seven to ten and often eleven I taught night-school. Sunday was almost invariably spent in preparation; or else I drugged myself with reading.

During the first year I received no remuneration for the night work; but during the second year my pupils proposed of their own accord to pay me a small fee. Besides, my conspicuous success, both in day and night-school, had by that time drawn the attention of the provincial Department of Education; and, early in the second year, my salary having incidentally been raised to a thousand dollars, I was unexpectedly honoured by the visit, during school hours, of the two superintendents of education, the one for the city of Winnipeg, the other for the province; the outcome was that I was given a night-school grant, out of provincial funds, of one hundred dollars. Characteristically, when this grant was paid, it was made out to the district; and I had some difficulty in securing it for myself, in spite of the fact that the district had made no contribution towards operating this night-school apart from keeping the class-rooms needed at a temperature which often was no more than just bearable. In being re-engaged for the second year, at the higher figure, I had had formally to surrender my property rights in the laboratory and manual-training equipment, neither of them being yet fully paid for; the school-board took the goods but left the settlement of the debt to me. If I had not been intensely interested in solving the educational problems of the district, I should have left then and there; for the Department of Education intimated to me that I might accept any position in the province which I cared to apply for.

I might have left then and there, I said; but there were other reasons for my remaining another year—reasons which will shortly appear. One thing, strangely, seemed to urge departure; my position in the town was not a

pleasant one. There were numbers of people to whom my salary again seemed "monstrous"—*ungeheuer*; and others asserted that I was doing what I was doing for purely selfish reasons. The point was that I was doing too much. If I had done a little only, I might have earned recognition and even gratitude—not that I asked for either; but these innocent people, one of my colleagues among them, could not understand my desire to make a complete job of it; and so there arose a certain amount of agitation against me. On mature deliberation, I did not allow myself to be deterred by that fact.

Once more I have had, in this section, to revert to matters financial. My trouble was that I could not do things by halves. What, so I asked myself over and over again, did my money worries matter when compared with the educational distress of a whole district?

Meanwhile I was, of course, mentally doing certain things for my literary work. Especially did the figure of little Len Sterner receive certain essential accretions; but for over four years I did no actual writing beyond the taking of occasional hurried notes which, later, were never consulted; I am not the note-book kind.

Of financial pressure a good deal more will have to be said later on; for, if this was the first time that the imperative need for money entered into my scheme of things, it was not the last. One cannot live in civilization without externalizing one's aims.

A few concrete details are needed to define my position.

As for books, I had even as a farm-hand rarely spent less than fifty, and on occasion I had spent as much as a hundred dollars within a year. As for clothes, I had at last an overcoat and a second suit, in addition to the most indispensable underwear; but, *horribile dictu*, I had no sort of night-wear; I simply could not afford it. My scanty allowance of pocket money went largely for tobacco and oranges. I smoked only in my hotel room, by an open window; or in the fields surrounding the town, out of its sight. My oranges I ate while teaching night-school, often sharing them with my pupils; but, while they consumed a modest one or two each, I ate half a dozen or more; my internal chemistry seemed to demand them; and when, towards the end of the month, it happened that my pocket money gave out, it was a severe deprivation to be without them.

My life was not an easy one; and at times it seemed futile.

I felt poignantly that circumstance had once more defeated me; circumstance and my own nature. Yet I did not regret the step I had taken. If I was going at an inexorable pace, I had a task which demanded to be done. It had simply fallen to my share to do it.

And now for the decisive event which was to close the phase of my life with which I have been dealing in this section and to open the final struggle.

It is, of course, one of the duties of a principal of schools to visit the various rooms of his school and to report to the school-board on their progress. It was this duty which made me formally acquainted with Miss Wiens, the primary teacher.

For fully eight or nine months our relation remained official and quite as impersonal as it could well be. I heard a few things about her; her parents had recently moved to Saskatchewan, to the short-grass district near Moose Jaw with which I was amply familiar; gossip had it that she was engaged to be married—a fact I regretted for no other reason, so far, than that teachers of the first rank are exceedingly rare; and marriage usually ends their teaching careers. That was the extent of my information.

Personally, I was grateful to her because, by assuming a burden of overcrowding in her room which she might well have declined, she had made it possible for me to carry my reorganization of the school to completion. The manner in which she fulfilled her duties earned her my admiration; her ability as a teacher was very exceptional. Her success with children seemed unique to me; and I might say that this judgment was more amply confirmed as my own experience widened. It is today shared by many hundreds of parents.

Beyond that, there was no opportunity for us to become intimate; and perhaps neither of us had any desire for such an opportunity. She, being musically inclined, spent her leisure time at the piano. My own hands were more than full. We never met except officially.

Meanwhile, at odd moments, mostly when going to or coming from school, I was subject to certain odd revulsions of feeling. The hotel was to me what his lair is to the beast of the field. Was that what I must now look forward to for the rest of my life? Financially I was going backward, not forward. The extreme pressure of work would relax, of course. Even in the year to come I could look forward to being familiar with every detail of the courses I taught. But any sort of social life simply did not exist for me. Even as a farm-hand, I had, at least in winter time, had more human contacts; for in the west the hired man was socially the equal of his employer, except when that employer was a company or a millionnaire.

Once or twice, during the early months of my first year at Winkler it so happened that, on my way to or from school, I found myself walking behind the young lady; and at least once it had struck me that she was good to look at.

She had an extraordinarily striking figure, tall and slender like my own, yet well modelled. Her appearance, I said to myself, was aesthetically satisfying; she dressed simply but in excellent taste. I remember the occasion so well that I can still tell what she wore.

A number of trifling incidents brought the beginning of a friendship.

At school, reviews were starting, for examination time was at hand. All courses had been faithfully covered; and I was at last relieved of the work of preparing my lessons. For that year, at any rate, the pressure had eased.

Consequently, still unconscious of what was preparing in Europe, for it was the spring of 1914, I began to take walks on Saturday and Sunday mornings; and since Miss Wiens had long done the same, it was inevitable that, sooner or later, we should meet. Mostly it was a mile or two from town. There was no great choice of routes; one went south; or one went north. When we did meet, we found that our powers of pedestrian performance were evenly matched. We laughed about it as we swung along.

Neither was there ever a great deal to talk about. But it was spring; the prairie was greening up; in the trees of the windbreaks planted around the farms, the leaves were burgeoning forth; the birds were singing. In the landscape there was nothing to distract us, except perhaps an occasional mirage. All about lay the featureless prairie, stretching away to the distant horizon, utterly flat. The fact threw us back on the immediate then-and-there and ourselves or each other. Of my former life I said little; but I discussed an occasional problem presented by the school. What may have lent that sort of talk a certain freshness and interest was perhaps precisely the fact that every problem arising was new to me and had to be grappled with, not on the basis of tradition or precedent—both, I found later, were largely evasive—but by arguing from first principles. Miss Wiens, on the other hand, told me a few things from her own uneventful life, and chiefly of the two or three schools in which she had taught since her seventeenth year. I gathered that she came from a large family, and that her parents were not exactly wealthy. She had been born in town and had grown up there, prior to her parents' removal to Saskatchewan.

Then came the time when the school-board had to make provision for the coming year; and this provision presented some anxious and even awkward problems. I knew that hardly another primary teacher would have assumed the burden which Miss Wiens had been carrying; and, quite justly, she insisted on some slight recognition of her services in the form of an increase in salary. Through weeks I fought the school-board every inch of the way, a fact which was to lend itself to ample misinterpretation later on. Nearly all the negotiations were made through myself; and I had more than one occasion to

consult with her on some new proposal or concession made. When the battle was won, I believe we both felt that we knew a little more of each other.

Examinations began; my school work proper was over; the night work ceased.

In the long summer evenings I began to frequent a tennis court laid out by doctor, banker, and station-agent. Soon it was being discussed that I indulged in a thing so frivolous as a game of tennis! While it did not argue against the solidity of my knowledge of mathematics, it did seem to indicate that I did not take my religion seriously. This indulgence was to determine the direction of the rest of my life. No other meeting but the one about to be described might have had just the shade of meaning needed.

The closing day had arrived for the rest of the school. In the morning of that day, and throughout the early afternoon, I attended to the clerical work connected with the end of the term: reports and records.

Two of the other teachers lived in the district; only Miss Wiens was going to go away for her holidays in Saskatchewan. I myself had to report in Winnipeg to help in marking examination papers as a so-called sub-examiner, a task which, I hoped, would bring me the extra sixty dollars needed to see me through a presumably idle summer. I had no plans; in fact, I was very much at a loose end.

Naturally, when I had finished my afternoon task, I remained sitting at my desk, taking stock of my situation. How did my finances stand? Compared with a year ago, I had lost ground. My old reserves, earned in my first years as a farm-hand, had been spent on the minimum of a wardrobe with which I thought I could get along. My salary, beyond the necessary living expenses, had gone into payments for the school equipment. Even of my next year's earnings a not inconsiderable fraction was mortgaged to the supply house. Chemicals and a few pieces of apparatus which had been broken would have to be replaced.

My new relation to Miss Wiens was disturbing. The very slight degree of intimacy which had been established made me wish for more. Yet there was this limiting factor that she was engaged to be married. Once or twice I had ventured distantly to allude to the fact which was so far known to me only by hearsay. She had not contradicted the rumour. This limitation, it seemed, was removed in the evening of that last day of the school year.

I was at the tennis court, playing a very bad game, for it was a quarter of a century since I had last played well. The court was surrounded by four rows of tall, rustling cottonwoods which stood darkly, almost blackly against the amber evening sky. And there, just as I missed my ball, I suddenly caught sight

of Miss Wiens looking on. She was standing among the trees, dressed in white and wrapped in shadows. As soon as the game was finished, I went over to speak to her.

Knowing that this was where, in the evening, I could most readily, perhaps also most casually, be found these days, she had come to say good-bye. From that fact alone nothing could be inferred. Had I not seen her that night, I should, as a matter of course, have been at the station next day when she boarded her train. That much I should have done for any colleague, male or female, with whom I had had none but the most pleasant relations.

When she had said what the occasion seemed to demand, she hesitated. And then she asked what my own plans were for the holidays after my work at Winnipeg was done. I had no plans; but, tentatively, I said that I might go west to revisit certain districts in Saskatchewan or Alberta.

“If you go west,” she said, “and care to spend a few days on a farm, I am sure my parents would be glad to have you.”

I looked at her. Did this mean anything? Or did it not? I could not decide on the spur of the moment. It left the question open at least.

If I did go west, I replied, I should write her.

During the two weeks or so which I spent at Winnipeg, I was a prey to painful uncertainties. If I went west, I felt it would be tantamount to offering myself; and unless something had gone wrong with Miss Wiens’ engagement, I was, of course, bound to meet with a rejection. In fact, matters standing as they did, did not my going west imply that I presumed her engagement to have been dissolved? That it had existed I could not doubt; she had not contradicted me when I referred to it.

Yet, all the time, it was a foregone conclusion that I was going to go west. If I met with the rejection which I had to anticipate, I should have to take that as a sign that the ordinary, happy relations of a domestic life were not for me. Perhaps such as I had necessarily to go through life alone. I knew I should not die of a broken heart; perhaps I should grow a little harder, a bit, perhaps, more brittle. On the other hand, I should refocus my whole mind on my former aims. Having garnered more than my share of the experience of life, I should strike all the more determinedly for my chance to digest it.

But suppose I was not rejected?

Such a contingency presented a problem even more serious than the other.

So far, Miss Wiens did not even know that I was a writer. If her invitation meant, as it seemed to me to mean, that she was waiting for me to declare myself; and if I, accepting it in that sense, offered myself, was it fair to her to leave her in ignorance of my real nature, which was that of an artist? Even if I told her, would she, with her utter inexperience of life, be able to grasp what was implied in the fact? That, for instance, an utter indifference was implied to the economic conditions under which my life was going to be lived, at least so long as I followed my own inclination? That, in the long run, I could be happy only if I did my work, whether there was bread in the cupboard or not? That I would rather starve than not do my work? That, if deprived of the possibility of doing my work, death by the roadside, as a tramp, would seem preferable to me to an existence of ease in a palace?

There were other things. It was then, as it is today, part of my whole philosophy of life that, beyond a certain minimum necessary to sustain life, money was no more and no less than an irrelevancy. I was, of course, aware of the fact that, for most people, money, and more money, comprised the meaning of life. One built a house; and, having built it, one equipped it with all the gadgets of a mechanical age. Henceforth, one's whole or chief endeavour was, either to pay for what one had acquired, or to lay by enough to acquire more. Everything else was a side issue. If one could manage to squeeze in a little enjoyment of life, one did so, of course. But, fundamentally, the mechanical trend of the age had reduced life to the phase of the primitive hunter whose whole time, whose every energy was consumed in the hunt for the necessities, with only a very little to spare. The average man never thought of living first and having afterwards. Having was a prerequisite to living. It was an axiom that, the more you have, the more abundantly you live.

But I was constitutionally unable to hunt for the sake of having. In that I was the son of my father; and of my mother as well. It seemed ridiculous to me to spend time and endeavour on the acquisition of things while life slipped by unlived. In a sense, that is the burden of more than one of my books. If, at the present moment, I wished to marry, it was because I wished to feel that I was living—no matter on which rung of the social or financial ladder. What did Miss Wiens think about it? Did she think about it at all?

But, had such as I the right to want life?

What she knew of me was limited to my very striking success as a teacher; that success, I knew, would shortly be confirmed by the results of the examinations. I knew those results before they were published; I was one of the examiners myself.

What she did not know of me was that teaching could never be anything but a make-shift for me; nor that, as a writer, I had been an abject failure in

more than one sense.

The fact that, for the moment, I had very little money did not concern me to any extent. From such contacts as I had had with the higher officials of the Department of Education—and it had been they who had sought me out, not I them—I felt convinced that my success in the teaching profession, not necessarily as a teacher, would be precisely what I cared to make it. Within a few years, so I felt, I might be among the leaders of educational reform in the province. In that I was right; many of the changes I advocated and which seemed revolutionary at the time are being adopted today. Already a few people were looking towards me for leadership; I had many offers of better positions. The Deputy Minister hinted to me that there was a place for me in the city; I remember his words, for they carried weight with me: "I shall always be glad to do the city of Winnipeg a favour by recommending you." If my plans, so far, called for my return to Winkler, the reason was solely that I had left a task behind which was only half done.

Of course, there was still the question of a university degree to be settled; but what difficulty could there possibly be about that?

To me, then, the question was entirely whether I was willing to pursue this career which had so unexpectedly been thrust upon me; and I persuaded myself that I was.

I must make clear at this point that my emotional involvement was already such that it prejudiced any impartial weighing of issues. I was simply searching for points which might justify a step I was determined to take. The matter was no longer under debate at all: I *was* going to Saskatchewan; I *was* going to offer myself; and, even of this I was firmly convinced, I was going to be accepted. Before I took the next step, I was as good as married.

Many a man might have hesitated over the difference in age. I was forty-two; she, twenty-two. All the better, I said to myself. If I was no longer in my first youth, I had, in return, attained to, or at least approached, the age of reason; I had acquired a vast measure of toleration; "she" would keep me young. I might say she has done so.

As for my literary work, I would have to leave things to time. No doubt the day would come when I should try once more to get a book published. Since at least one book written in the past had now waited for twenty years, they could all wait a little longer. What did the years matter? For the moment I must seize opportunity by the forelock and concentrate on the career that had opened; for, if I did get married, I meant, at least for the moment, to give my wife a comfortable existence; and surely, I should have as much leisure as I had had as a farm-hand?

To make certain that I did not read the signs wrongly, I wrote at last to Miss Wiens, not to accept her invitation, but to ask whether that invitation was still open. If she felt that her parents would welcome my visit, I should be glad to drop in for a day or two. As for the exact date and hour of my arrival I should wire in care of the post office.

In her brief answer she simply confirmed the invitation, adding that her parents joined her in giving it.

That settled the matter. Only now did I admit to myself that, for the last two or three weeks, I had lived in a state of painful suspense. For one thing, I had had no intention of going west except for the purpose which had defined itself; in fact, had the invitation not been confirmed, I should have been at a sad loss how to spend the remainder of the holidays. Perhaps I should have gone into the wilderness and written a book.

I sent the wire; and the following day, at ten at night, I boarded the Imperial Limited. I burned my bridges.

About noon of the next day the “flyer” set me down at Moose Jaw, the last city east of Rush Lake. There was an hour’s wait for the way train which stopped at all smaller stations. This hour I used to hunt for a florist’s shop where I bought a bouquet of carnations.

At Rush Lake I was received by Miss Wiens herself who introduced me to two of her sisters and an older brother. A democrat drawn by two horses was waiting behind the station; and after a drive of a few miles, uphill and downhill, we reached the house of the parents which nestled in a hollow of the bare, treeless hills, with two farmsteads facing each other on opposite sides of the trail: those of the father and of his oldest son. Introductions followed; to the parents themselves, an older sister and her husband, another younger sister, three boys, and a little girl; the family was large indeed. Since none of them enters to any extent into the life I am depicting, and since certainly none of them had any bearing on the problems to be faced in that life, it is unnecessary to insist on details.

Suffice it to say that I was the object of the closest scrutiny, especially on the part of the boys. Their ironical curiosity betrayed that my visit had been abundantly discussed before my arrival and that it had been correctly interpreted. Since this discussion had, in all likelihood, preceded the writing of the letter in which the invitation had been repeated, the fact seemed encouraging. By the following morning my presence was, to all appearances,

taken for granted; and perhaps it would have continued to be taken for granted had I stayed on indefinitely without clarifying the situation. Knowing my own purpose in coming, I felt, however, sufficiently a foreign body in this environment of curious girls and mischievous boys to be aware of the need for a prompt decision.

The opportunity offered in the afternoon of the second day when Catherine and I found ourselves alone in a small music room which was somewhat removed from the more crowded quarters of the house.

I came straight to the point. “There was a rumour,” I said, perhaps a trifle tensely, “that you were engaged to be married.”

“I was,” she said. “I have broken off the engagement.”

Two minutes later the thing was settled; and within a few hours the parents had been told, and the date of the marriage had been fixed for August 2, a fortnight away; at my suggestion it was to take place at the Anglican church in Swift Current, the nearest larger centre to the west of Rush Lake.

Personally, I need hardly say, I should have preferred a civil marriage; but my indifference to church matters was so absolute that, in view of the atmosphere of this household, I never breathed word of my preference. To the parents, a marriage performed without a religious ceremony would not have appeared a marriage at all.

Within a day or two I made the trip to the little city to secure the marriage licence and to make arrangements with the rector.

On August 1 the news that there was war in Europe reached this outpost of civilization; but it did not in any way interfere with the arrangements made. The war was far away; and though I was probably the only one in this family to view its possible implications with misgivings, even I failed to see why it should interfere.

On the following morning the parents, Catherine, the older brother, one of the sisters, and myself met at Swift Current. The simple ceremony was soon performed, followed by a wedding breakfast at a hotel. By two o’clock Catherine and I were alone, for better or worse; the intention was to spend a few days, by way of honeymoon, at Winnipeg.

During the first night in that city we were awakened, in the old Empire Hotel, by a tremendous uproar sweeping the streets; we knew that Britain had entered the European war. By inference, Canada was at war.

It was not an auspicious beginning; this war was bound to cast its shadow over our lives; and it created one immediate problem which had to be solved before we returned to Winkler.

Even before its outbreak there had been a considerable scarcity of teachers. Everywhere opportunity beckoned in other fields. Americans have always been prone to ruin their heritage by a premature and wasteful exploitation which they call development. Perhaps it was only natural that education should be held in low esteem where men without it could make conspicuous money successes by native shrewdness and a willingness to work with the strong arm.

We realized at once that this scarcity was bound to be increased by enlistments. For the moment, men of my age would be coming into their own in the educational field; so far, secondary teaching had been largely reserved for men. But how about women?

Before we had gone into our holidays, yes, before the faintest thought had strayed in the direction of a possible marriage, we had both re-engaged at our school. Was it fair, on her part, under the circumstances, to withdraw on necessarily short notice? We made up our minds that she must at least offer to fulfil her contract.

A few days later we returned to southern Manitoba; and in some mysterious way the news of our marriage had preceded us. We were received by a noisy crowd throwing rice and confetti.

For the moment we went to the hotel and meanwhile looked about for a house. But no house was vacant; and we were forced to rent an apartment over a store in the Main Street of the village. We furnished it with the most necessary furniture, engaged a maid to do the house-work, and were soon installed with a minimum of comfort.

The school-board was only too glad to retain my wife's services; and thus the first year of our marriage began with both of us working. Willy-nilly I continued my night work, though I restricted the hours which I had been giving to it and made it a point to get home soon after ten.

The problem of literary work never presented itself. No matter how much I might have wished to write again, there would have been no time to do so.

Domestically, we were happy enough. There was no social life; but to that we were accustomed; we did not feel the need of it. Even my wife was far too busy to miss it.

By Christmas it became clear that there was going to be a child.

To me, this news was more of a shock than I have ever let my wife know. Not that the child was unwelcome; on the contrary; but even unborn it asserted its rights. From that moment on I renounced my old aspirations: I must concentrate my whole endeavour on a worldly career.

VIII

I RACKED my brain for the best means of furthering my material prospects. I might have secured an appointment in the city; but I hesitated. Life in the city involves an enormous amount of lost motion. Let him who thinks that half an hour's street-car ride may enable him to relax try that expedient; unless he has been used to it all his life, he will find it impossible. Further, I wanted to feel surer of myself than I did before I struck for what most of my colleagues would have considered the grand prize of the teaching career in Manitoba. For the moment I rather wanted the principalship of a high school or a specialist's position in a collegiate institute, preferably that of a language master. Fortunately, the provincial Superintendent of Education had become my friend; and he made it his business to find for me what I wanted.

My wife resigned her position early in spring; and about the same time I had the offer of the position as master of mathematics—of all things!—in the Collegiate Institute at Virden, in the western part of the province, at a salary of fourteen hundred dollars a year. The principal of that school, I was told confidentially, was nearing his retirement; if I made a success of my work, I should be in line as his successor. That success, I had not the slightest doubt, I could make in any department whatever.

I should, of course, have to regularize my standing by taking a degree; but that, I felt, was a mere matter of arrangement between the university and myself. I never thought that, hide-bound as the university naturally is, I should be required to start at the bottom.

When the holidays came, we had mapped out the following year. My wife went home for a brief visit; and I went to Winnipeg to read examination papers. Her confinement was expected late in July or early in August.

About the middle of July I went to Virden where, for the moment, I could find only a single vacant house; and it could not be considered as anything but a make-shift. It stood at the outskirts of the town, along its northern limit; but it was opposite the hospital where my wife would have to await her confinement. I furnished it in the scantiest manner, knowing that we should shortly have to move again; the mere distance from the school made that imperative. Fortunately, before leaving town, I came across another house which would be vacant before long and which would do us admirably.

I went to fetch my wife; and by the last week of the month we were provisionally installed. On August 5 a little girl was born, in the hospital, and received the name May.

Within a month we moved into a good house near the school where I had meanwhile begun my work. As it turned out, there were once more tasks which I had not bargained for; once more I had to teach extra hours. As at Winkler no third-grade class had been taught before I took over the school, so, here, no provision had so far been made for teaching the senior-matriculation grade for which there had been no call. That call now developed; and I had to volunteer, in addition to all the mathematics, for a class in senior English.

But fate resolved to play me another little trick.

In spite of the fact that, for seven or eight months, my wife and I had both been earning money, there were no reserves to speak of; my payments to the school supply house had kept me poor. But I had made a success of this profession new to me; and, for the sake of a human contact, I had resigned myself to a life μετ ἀμουβιας to borrow a phrase from Euripides. If I cared to follow it up, there was undoubtedly a career ahead of me; everybody said so; why should I doubt it? For the moment, only one thing seemed indicated: I must externalize my aims. In that mood, I became a convert to the great American philosophy of sales-felicity. I believe I have mentioned that I have expensive tastes. I might have been satisfied with very little; but that little had to be "good" in Arnold Bennett's sense of the word. I furnished the new house on the time-payment plan.

By Christmas it had become clear that the University of Manitoba had no intention of admitting that anyone not trained in its august halls might have the modicum of knowledge required for a degree. I had to write on the childish examinations of the first year of an arts course. The result brought the one concession that was made to me; I was informed that, in spring, instead of proceeding with the first year, I might write on the second year. After that, I having elected to proceed with two "majors"—French and German—two more examinations would see me through.

So far, then, all had gone well. It is true, I was now paying the greater part of my salary to the furniture dealers instead of the supply house; but, when the furniture was paid for, it would at least be unquestionably ours.

Then, early in January, I came down with pneumonia.

This being my second attack of this insidious disease, I made heavy weather of it. I was delirious from the start; but I stubbornly refused to go to the hospital. At first, my wife had a nurse to assist her; then, I having taken so violent a dislike to that nurse that it seemed to endanger my life, she engaged an inexperienced girl to help her at least with the house-work. Shortly, however, even that girl had to be dismissed under financial pressure.

Henceforth, during that long illness of mine, my wife looked after a rather

large house, cared for a baby, and nursed a man sick even unto death. Before the girl was dismissed, there had been one occasion on which my wife's fatigue was so great that, having lain down on her bed for a moment's rest, in the afternoon, she did not wake till the evening of the next day; she slept while a neighbour looked after the most necessary things.

Of all which, happily, I lay unconscious in that delirium which was to last for week after week. More than once, during that time, the doctor thought it his duty to prepare my wife for the worst by telling her that he did not expect me to live till morning.

Had I died at that time, the manuscripts of a few books, mostly novels, would have been found among my papers; and most probably they would have been destroyed. I am not sure, today, but that such a course of events would, all round, have been for the best!

But the fact was that I did not die. The moment the delirium subsided, after having sometimes frightened the young woman taking care of me almost out of her wits, I began to put up a stubborn fight for life. Pneumonia was followed by pleurisy; and once more I was in danger. Strange to say, while lying, day after day, fighting off death, I planned and planned—literary work; a preoccupation which I shed as soon as I was on my feet again.

It was late in spring before I returned to school. I realized at once that, in this town, my fair prospects were blasted. The position to which I aspired demanded good health as the prime requisite. I made it easy for the school-board and resigned. Shortly I applied for, and obtained, the principalship of the high school at Gladstone, in the north-central part of the province.

When I was earning my salary again, my wife and I cast up accounts. What with the remainder of our debt on the furniture, the doctor's bills, and the credits my wife had been in need of for food and fuel, we found that, at the end of the term, we should owe nine hundred and sixty-one dollars!

I called a meeting of my creditors and put the case before them. All were most reasonable and agreed without difficulty to my proposals. I asked them to give me a year's time, with current interest added to the accounts. It seemed impossible to keep my word, but I gave it; and I might say right here that it was not broken. Out of a salary of fourteen hundred I cleared off my Virden debt, plus interest, over a thousand dollars in all; though, at the cost of assuming a new debt, at Gladstone, of over two hundred dollars.

All of which may seem trifling and unimportant; but it helped to shape matters in such a way as to make the final, grand conflict of my life inevitable; and in that conflict, and its understanding, resides the justification of this record.

From the start, the atmosphere at Gladstone was unpleasant; and many things contributed to make it so.

Socially, we lived, apart from the Anglican minister's family, in as complete an isolation as at Winkler. The war psychosis was taking hold of the country; it was 1916; and I had, of course, never made a secret of the fact that I had not been born in Canada. To many, there was no difference between a Canadian of foreign extraction and an "enemy alien". For decades I had felt myself to be a Canadian in a sense that went far beyond a mere civic adherence or dynastic allegiance; compared with my feeling of identification with the interests of the west, even formal naturalization was a mere irrelevancy; I had struck spiritual root in the pioneer districts of Canada. The fact of Canada's still colonial status was of no importance to me; what bound me was precisely what was new in the country; what was unique. On the other hand, what could the people of Gladstone know about that? Could I even try to explain it to them? I should have had to speak an English to them as foreign as, let me say, Czech. I had not even published any one of my books.

From the beginning, I was periodically tempted to throw up my work; but we lived in a state of economic bondage. As we shall see, I have, with brief interruptions, lived in a state of economic bondage ever since.

Besides, I had found out by that time that some church affiliation was obligatory for any teacher in a small town in Canada; and I did not mean to hurt people's feelings. Very naturally, then, not knowing the conditions in this town, we had made the connection with the Anglican church to which I, at least, had nominally belonged from early childhood. Innocently, we were made to share in the extreme and quite unreasonable unpopularity of the then incumbent and his wife. I am not sure but that this unpopularity was, to a certain extent, understandable; but at least the man's worst offence was no more than an error of judgment. He was an exceptionally good preacher and personally unimpeachable; but he had come from England and had tried to run his church in the manner of the old-fashioned, patriarchal rector who is not so much the servant as the spiritual director of his congregation. Having made the connection, I felt it my duty to stand by him in the extraordinary entanglement into which his autocratic ways had led him. Unfortunately, his congregation comprised a good deal of what many called the "riff-raff" of the place; and that riff-raff is peculiarly offensive in a small town. A shameful attempt was made —discountenanced, but not defeated, by the better elements—not only to oust him from his incumbency, but to do so without paying him his stipend which was many months overdue. After prolonged consultations with the better class of Anglicans who were holding back and not coming to church, I induced him to place his case entirely in my hands. I told him that he would have to go; but,

at parishioners' meeting after meeting, I fought the irresponsible part of the congregation back step by step; often standing before them under a shower of outright abuse until he received, not indeed justice, but at least the arrears of his stipend and what time he needed to secure another call. Whereupon he could save his face by withdrawing of his own accord.

When he left, I fell heir to his unpopularity, at least among a majority of the numerous Anglican contingent of the town.

Add to that what, a few years later, I said of the situation in the Introduction to *Over Prairie Trails*; and think further of our desperate poverty, and you will admit that there was justification for my desire to leave as soon as I could. But, of course, I did not for a moment consider the possibility of leaving before I had secured another position financially at least as good. However, we were by that time in the middle of the first term.

It so happened that, during that first fall at Gladstone, it fell to my share to preside over a teachers' convention held in the town. At my suggestion, the Deputy Minister for the province was invited to be our "guest-speaker"; and a day or so after the convention had opened, he confided to me that, at least partly, he had accepted the invitation because he had wished for some time to have a talk with me.

This talk we had the next day during a walk out of town.

He knew, of course, that I was at last regularizing my standing by taking a degree; we laughed over the difficulties which the university had put in my way. "You'll overcome that," he said.

This, then, was what the Deputy Minister had to say to me. There was a career ahead in the Civil Service of the province for men of my scholarship and ability. Had it not been for the war, he hinted, and the economies made necessary by that war, such a position might have been offered before this. "But," he concluded, "once this war is over . . ." And he left the sentence unfinished.

To explain, I should perhaps say that I had begun to be in demand, at various educational meetings, as a public speaker. Most of my addresses were of an inspirational character; but occasionally I had come into the open as an advocate of certain reforms which would break through the hide-bound traditions of the educational system then in force. Much of what I advocated at the time has since been incorporated in the curricula of various provinces. I do not mean to say that my activities had any influence on this development; though, here and there, they may have contributed towards clarifying ideas which, as the saying goes, were in the air.

Since I have touched on the question of the degree, I might say that, in

writing off the third-year examinations, with majors in French and German, I ranked first on the aggregate in both subjects and was, therefore, nominally awarded two scholarships of a hundred and fifty dollars each; nominally—for payment of the amounts being conditional upon attendance at the university, I forfeited both to the next-in-line. It has been my fate throughout life, in all material things. It was always the next-in-line who got the prizes.

Meanwhile the war was far from won; and as it dragged on, bitterness increased on both sides.

Meanwhile, also, the less congenial my surroundings became, the more insistently did my old aims and aspirations try to raise their buried heads; for the first time in my married life I felt out-of-sorts. I did not let my wife know of this; for I felt emphatically that, while marriage had a great deal to do with it, my wife certainly had not.

The little girl, now in her second year, was a sheer delight. Unfortunately we were, for economy's sake, once more living in an apartment above a store where she could not have the outdoor life which she should have had. I had no night work at Gladstone; in fact, no extra work of any kind; and the modicum of leisure which I enjoyed was, therefore, divided between reading and devoting myself to my wife and child.

If, in spite of that, the happiness I enjoyed was not entirely unclouded, the very fact that there was leisure bore its share of responsibility. Old preoccupations which had lain dormant for four years were bound to haunt me the moment I was not rushed from morning to night. At last I spoke of them to my wife.

Her reaction was characteristic. I remember with particular distinctness one evening when, having talked of something on which a paragraph I had written years ago had some bearing, I read her the score of lines composing it.

"A man," she said with decision, "who can write like that should not waste his time teaching."

On another occasion we were talking about town life. I mentioned that all town surroundings, with what they implied, namely, the preoccupation with what appeared to me to be irrelevant trifles, were profoundly repellent to me; that I was an outdoor man, with rural sympathies and tastes.

I had no ulterior motive in doing so; I was simply stating a fact. My success as a teacher had remained most exceptional; I had, so far, no desire to jeopardize it by any incautious move; even the prospects held out to me had not yet lost their attraction. I had married; I meant to carve a career for myself which, in my wife's eyes, would justify that marriage.

But my wife was clear-sighted enough to see that I was holding certain

things back. I did. I did so unconsciously and, of course, without the slightest intention of deceiving her with regard to the state of my mind. In the long days while I was at school, she pondered the problem; and she unravelled or divined enough to see that there *was* a problem. Was there a way for her to solve it for me?

One day, tentatively, she broached a plan which she put forward as one of her desires. She was a born teacher, she said; she could not reconcile herself to the idea that her teaching days were over. Besides, she wished for nothing better than to help in solving our economic problems. Suppose she went back to teaching for a year, just to see how things might work out. The teaching week, she argued, consisted of only five days; if she took a school near enough to Gladstone, she could come home every week-end; or, alternatively, I could come to her.

The idea was planted.

The chief difficulty, of course, was the little girl; to her, any apparent break-up of the family life might spell tragedy.

Spring was on its way; spring came at last; and nothing had been done. Examinations began and ended. The public-school grades were still at work; but I was free.

Meanwhile I had been searching for a different solution of the economic problem. We had succeeded in reducing, within a single year, our total indebtedness from a thousand dollars to less than a quarter of that amount. In other words, more than half my salary had been applied on the debt; less than one-fifth of another year's earnings would clear us completely, always provided that my health held out. But the holidays which were coming remained unprovided for.

In the northern reaches of the province, or of that part of the province which was more or less settled, there were certain schools which, on account of the lack of roads, were operated only in summer. They opened in May or June and continued open until late in the fall; until, in fact, it became impossible for children to travel afoot over distances of two, three, four miles. My holidays lasted for two months only; but some of these schools had remained without teachers for years. Might I not find one which would be glad enough to have me for even those two months?

I discussed the question with the local inspector of public schools whose territory extended for some fifty miles north where it adjoined the inspectorate of the town of Dauphin. He welcomed the idea; and before long he brought me word that he could secure for me, at a monthly salary of sixty-five dollars, a school in a mixed Icelandic and Scotch district skirting the shores of Lake

Manitoba. In later writings of mine the district figures under the Icelandic name of Hnafur; its real name was Leifur.

Occasionally I accompanied this inspector on short trips through his territory; and so I became sufficiently acquainted with him to mention our economic difficulties and the way in which my wife proposed to deal with them.

He promptly explained to me an institution new in the province; that of the office of the "official trustee". This trustee, a Civil Servant under the provincial government, was then building a number of schools in pioneer, non-Canadian districts, to be opened shortly, and to be administered from Winnipeg. All these schools, such was the scheme, were to be provided with so-called teacherages, small cottages, that is, which were to serve as teachers' residences. If I cared to come along with him on an extended day's trip, he would be glad to show me one or two of them; and if my wife really wished to teach again, what with the ever-growing scarcity of teachers, especially qualified teachers, he would be glad to pass the word on to the official trustee; so far, she could have her pick of such schools as would open in midsummer.

Now, though I tentatively accepted my wife's plan which she defended as a wish of her own, I was, of course, bound to find the nearest of these schools—one which would be within easy reach from Gladstone; for the financial success of the scheme depended on my retaining the principalship. My wife agreed that I should go; and the moment examinations were over, I went.

Partly, of course, I went because I did not know what would happen to me and what it would imply for us in the future.

For up there, in that bush-country which we entered within an hour of what was then fast driving from Gladstone, we were in precisely the sort of country with which not a few of my novels dealt, whether they were written or only planned; we were on the frontier of civilization; for years I had been homesick for it.

Much of the forest which we traversed, travelling over sandy roads or over mere trails, was still untouched by the hand of man; the poplar prevailed, both aspen and balsam; but there were occasional moss-cupped oaks and frequent colonies of spruces and larches, especially the latter. Though the homesteads which were scattered throughout this forest land were of the regular size, a hundred and sixty acres, most of them had only a few acres of cleared land to show; they were still, very largely, as they should have been left. Large areas, it was true, were ravaged by forest fires; and of these the great willow-herb had taken undisputed possession.

Once more something clicked in my mind; this was the landscape in which

Niels Lindstedt had lived: Len Sterner; Mrs. Lund; and many other creatures of my brain. As the car proceeded over the outrageous roads, I slipped into a state of profound excitement.

Suddenly, coming from the west, we emerged in a desolate landscape of burnt-over forest and low-lying swamp; and on a gravel ridge—an ancient lateral moraine of the retreating ice-age—a brand-new building stood before my eyes: it was the "Plymouth School" of *Over Prairie Trails*.

The nearest farm was a mile away. The desolation of it all touched the innermost chords of my soul and made them vibrate.

It was nothing short of a revelation. I was at home here. I had not known what the last few years had done to me by removing me from my true environment. I had not known that I was so scarred with suffering, by that career which had opened before me. I had not known—or had I?—that, for me, nothing whatever counted, neither honour nor wealth, neither security nor even domestic happiness, when it interfered with my work. If I were living here, I should resume that work.

The conflict between this revelation which I had received and the obligation under which my marriage had placed me defined itself with a clearness that was cruel.

We alighted to look the premises over; for the inspector had to give a report on the progress made. He knew the whole district, of course; and he detailed to me its articulation, through roads and trails, to the civilized world which held it clasped on three sides.

We were thirty-four miles straight north of Gladstone, separated from it, first by a fringe of forest a few miles wide, and then due south, by what was called the Big Marsh. This distance we had covered in a round-about way travelling fifty miles or so. Seven miles east lay the town of Amaranth; twenty-two miles west, the town of Glenella, not far from the foot of the Riding Mountains which continue the Pembina Mountains northward; there, the main line of the C.N.R. carried modern means of transportation another sixty miles or so to the north, while Amaranth was, so far, the end of steel in the east. Between the main line of the C.N.R. and the lake, great forests swept towards the Arctic, via the lake-and-rock country of the North-West Territories which offered no limit to the imagination.

The school which the inspector had picked for my summer work was only twenty-six miles away. To reach it from here, I should have to go to Amaranth first, then north for nine miles, then east again for another ten. The nine-mile stretch north lay all the way over the so-called Big Ridge, the largest of the great moraines which scored all this country, running roughly from north to

south. Subsequently to its being laid down as a moraine, it had formed the shore of the receding waters of Lake Manitoba; and its surface layers had been stratified by wave action into marvellous smoothness, unmarred, so far, by the havoc which, within the next decades, mechanized traffic was to make of it.

While to others life here in this desolation might seem exile, to me it held forth a promise of paradise. If I could live here as a married man, I could combine the two great satisfactions for which I craved: I could plant an island of domestic life in the wilderness; and I could write again. For, long ago, by virtue of the books I had written, the wilderness had become my real home.

When, at night, we returned to Gladstone, I must have been feverish; in reporting to my wife, I am afraid, I used glowing language. I never thought of the fact that hers had been a sheltered life; that she had never lived where, at night, the wolves were sniffing at the door.

She caught my enthusiasm; and the only thing which gave her pause was the fact that the distance was thirty-four miles in a direct line and that there was no railway connecting the district with the town. For even in order to reach Amaranth where the train penetrated only twice a week, I should first have had to go south to Portage La Prairie, a detour of over ninety miles. That there were not even direct roads—connections which could be called roads—I did not mention. I was willing to leave difficulties to be dealt with as they arose.

So far I should get a bicycle; later, when snow came, I should get a horse; perhaps, for the worst part of the winter, two horses; I promised that I should be with her every week-end—a promise which I kept, if only after a fashion, for what we called week-ends sometimes dwindled to a few hours.

The arrangements were soon made. Both my wife and I were to open school on July 1st. At least the printed agreements signed by us called for that date; and so we never thought of the fact that July 1st was Dominion Day. The official trustee at Winnipeg assured us that Plymouth School—as it is called in my books—its real name was Falmouth—would be ready to open; and that the cottage was fully furnished apart from linen, curtains, and bedding which my wife would have to take.

We set out on June 29, a Saturday, hiring a car for the purpose of moving us in. The back seat was piled high with bundles, chiefly of bedding; suitcases were strapped to the left-hand running board; my bicycle I held on the one to the right. In order to reach our seats, we had to climb over the doors.

The weather looked threatening; and the driver who did not know the roads over which we should have to pass was in a hurry. Having been engaged a few days ahead, he had made his enquiries; but his information dealt only with the

main landmarks. Since the straight road north led over stretches which it might be impossible for a car to travel in rain, we went east, towards the lake, until we struck the Big Ridge which continues south almost as far as Portage La Prairie. Having reached it within an hour, we turned north, to Amaranth, a desolate little village consisting of a dozen houses, two stores, a boarding-house, and the railway station. The population presented a mixture of Russo-Germans, Swedes, Icelanders, Armenians, Jews, and Indians or half-breeds.

Here my wife bought a bag of flour, for she knew that she would have to bake her own bread; and then we turned west, along that road of which much has been said in *The Turn of the Year*. The distance was only seven miles now but the road, which every now and then degenerated into a mere trail, led, for long stretches, through a watery sort of muskeg bridged by corduroy, poplar trees being laid across it to keep it from sinking away into the fens. Perhaps once in two miles we passed an incipient farmstead.

First of all we went on to the school where we found everything locked and nobody about, in spite of the fact that the inspector had advised the man who was temporarily in charge. A glance through the windows showed that there was no furniture of any description in the cottage. The place gave us a chill reception.

But we unloaded the baggage in the diminutive porch where we could only hope the rain which threatened would not reach it. Then, since the driver meant to return via Amaranth in any case, we resumed our seats in the car and were soon speeding east again, to hunt for the man whose name had been given us by the inspector of schools as that of the holder of the keys.

By this time, the driver's demand for hurry had become pressing. Huge, low-hanging clouds were trailing hems of rain-dust; and he now knew that the road promised to dissolve, when wet, like so much brown sugar, for its metal consisted of a greasy sort of marly silt.

At the nearest farm, where a host of children scattered at our approach into the enveloping bush, for all the world as if a bomb had exploded, an enquiry brought the information, given by a large, comfortable-looking, but coarse-fibred woman, that the man to whom we had been referred lived on the next place, a mile farther east, two miles from the school.

While we were covering that mile, the rain began to thicken into a steady drizzle; and our driver refused to do anything beyond stopping long enough for us to alight before he shot away, putting on speed, in the direction of the Big Ridge which he meant to reach before the road melted. We could hardly blame him.

And there we stood, a quarter of a mile from the miserable log hovels of a

farmstead which lay far from the road, to the left or north, crowded by primeval woods. There was no way out; we had to go forward. I picked the little girl up; and we grimly proceeded through the rain which, fortunately, was not yet heavy.

At the house, we were received by an ancient granny who looked like a witch from Grimm's *Fairy Tales*. When we succeeded in making clear to her who we were, she explained in broken English that her son had that morning gone to town, with the team, to fetch the furniture for school and cottage.

All about, darkly, wept the poplar bush.

By this time, some realization had come to me of what this meant to my wife. At moments it seemed as though she were in the grip of an icy fear. I don't know what sort of divination prompted me; but it seemed imperative that I return at once to Amaranth to see to that furniture. Could I leave my wife and the little girl with this repulsive-looking creature? What else was there to do? It was my plain duty to act.

In a few words I explained to Catherine what I had made up my mind to do; and I tried, of course, to speak about it as cheerfully as if it were the most commonplace thing in the world. Seeing the necessity of it, she agreed.

I returned to the school afoot, to fetch my bicycle which I thought I could still use for a while on the grassy margin of the road which was flanked by deep draining ditches. Within an hour I passed once more the dismal homestead where I had left wife and child. So far, the rain had been light; and though I had skidded a few times, I had managed to remain in the saddle.

But the clouds were thickening; and shortly the rain began to come down in earnest. The wheels of the bike began to pick up the sticky soil which soon gathered in rims of mud four inches in diameter. From then on, I had to push the machine; and I had to stop every few hundred feet in order to scrape the mud off with my bare hands. I was, of course, wet through to the skin.

At last, hungry and tired, I reached Amaranth in the early afternoon. My bike I deposited at the nearer one of the two stores, for it had become an encumbrance. Fortunately, I succeeded in finding the man I was after; but only to hear from him that the station agent had refused to release the goods which had arrived. This he had done for two reasons; first, the shipment had, by some mistake, unpardonable indeed, been addressed to the inspector, forty miles away; and second, it had been sent charges collect. This was the first example of the utter inefficiency of all administration from a distance; I was to meet with many other proofs by-and-by. For the moment, it seemed truly Russian.

The young man was, when I met him, on the point of going home, leaving his task undone; but I stopped him; and in order both to gain time for thought

and his good will, I bought him some tobacco and invited him to have lunch with me at the boarding-house. It did the trick.

Meanwhile I had time to mature my plan; and I gave my guest his instructions. Fortunately I had enough money in my pocket to pay such charges as there might be; and I made up my mind to sign the bills of lading in the inspector's name, preceded by an inconspicuous "per".

At the station I succeeded in assuming a sufficiently authoritative and gruff air to intimidate the agent who bullied the "foreigners" many of whom, I found out, were better Canadians than he.

"What's all this I hear?" I said. "Give me those papers." And I signed them with a scrawl to which I added my initials. "As for the charges, there is a mistake. But I'll pay them. Give me a receipt. I'll recover from the road. Hurry up, now. This man has to get back to the school before dark."

Before long we had everything loaded and were on our way. Most of what we carried got wet, of course; but, perching on top of the load, I managed to protect the mattress of the bed. It rained and rained, in sheets and bucketfuls at last. We sat, with horse-blankets draped over our shoulders.

By the time we passed the man's place again, it was dusk, for the going was heavy. By the time we reached the school it was dark.

We unloaded, leaving the furniture in the crates; for by this time I was in a hurry to rejoin my wife. When we arrived once more on the farm, the young fellow actually had the decency to hitch one of his horses to his buggy and to drive the three of us back to cottage and school.

There, my first task was to get the child's cot set up so that we could put her to bed. To a child's mind any removal, any break in the routine, any permanent change of scene has something almost catastrophic; but she was so overtired that she promptly went to sleep.

Then my wife and I went to work; and it was long after midnight before we felt justified in lying down ourselves. One thing proved disconcerting; blinds and screens for the windows, though figuring in the lists we had received, had been forgotten; and the cottage stood within fifty feet of the road, west of the school. It is true, even these fifty feet were crowded with bush which prevented a direct view from or into our windows; there was bush on every hand, even between the cottage and the school.

The next day was a Sunday, the last of June; and I was not going to leave for Leifur on the Lake, to take over my school, till Monday morning. By this time, it had come home to us that Monday, too, was a holiday.

All Sunday we worked, interrupted every now and then by visits from the settlers among whom the news of our arrival had spread overnight. Some of

them expressed their disappointment at the fact that my wife, not I, was going to be their teacher. They had wanted a man and did not know how lucky they were in having a teaching genius instead of myself. My wife was to work something like a miracle in that school where none of the children, to begin with, knew a word of English.

The settlers, however, had taken it for granted that school would open on Monday; and after a brief consultation my wife agreed to let it go at that. To these settlers in the wilderness Dominion Day meant nothing.

By night, we had brought order out of chaos. The furniture was stripped of its crates, cleaned, and set up. Apart from the porch, the cottage contained a kitchen, seven by eight feet; a living-room perhaps eight by ten; and a diminutive bedroom where the bed and the child's cot, standing opposite each other, left a passage less than two feet wide.

On Monday morning, July 1st, I did the last few things that had to be done and got ready to leave on my twenty-six-mile drive to Leifur. It was a glorious, sunny day.

When I swung up on the seat of my wheel, the children of the district were arriving from all sides; my wife stood on the stoop of the school, and our little girl was excitedly toddling about; she had never seen so many children together. I waved a last farewell and was off.

My own part of the summer and winter that followed, I believe, is abundantly given in *The Turn of the Year* and *Over Prairie Trails*, the one dealing, at least in part (*The Gloom of Summer*) with the two months which followed immediately; the other, with the fall and winter drives to be made when I had returned to Gladstone. For me, it was a period of recuperation; matters spiritual as well as material fell once more into their proper places. In that respect these rides and drives had, on me, the effect of poetry; under their influence matters resumed their proper proportions. This period, therefore, remains to me the climax of my life.

But I must give at least a hint of my wife's side in all this as, in snatches, she revealed it to me at a later date.

Most people have the idea that courage consists in doing the difficult and even dangerous thing without knowing fear. But not to know fear often simply argues ignorance or lack of sensibility. It implies a far higher type of courage to know fear, to conquer it, and to act as though no such thing existed. It was this kind of courage that was called for on the part of my wife.

I have already said that she had never lived any life other than a sheltered one. Born in a town and raised within a large family, she had, as a child and an adolescent, never known what it is to be alone. It is true, she had, in her early girlhood, lived for a year or two in pioneer districts, earning her living as a teacher among people who seemed more or less alien to her; but even then all responsibilities had been those of others; she had returned to a town and, a year later, had married me. What this marriage was to imply, she had so far, happily, never known. My long illness at Virden had been a sore trial of her strength; but only now did circumstances combine to lay the axe to the root of her spirit. It was an experience which, like having gone through death and come out living, left her a changed being.

The first inkling of the true nature of the position in which she found herself came through the little girl who, throughout that day and the next, wandered disconsolately about, unable to grasp the fact that I was gone; surely, she seemed to say, I must be hidden somewhere about the place. For several days she never smiled; and she did not fully recover from the shock sustained until, on Friday evening, with a thunderstorm just breaking overhead, I jumped off my wheel and caught her up in my arms to run for the shelter of the porch before the downpour started.

Of the people among whom my wife was to live alone for close to a year, she knew nothing. They were rough and ready; they were often coarse in manner and speech; many of them were formidable-looking; they were powerfully built for their task which so far consisted largely in felling trees and grubbing out their roots. They were honest and fundamentally decent-minded; but they were not her kind. Gentle manners and polite speech meant nothing to them. She was as much an exile as I had been among the hoboes twenty-odd years ago.

Above all, the cottage stood by the road; and that road was to become almost personified as a conception of horror. It was no more than a graded trail connecting two towns locally important for their trade in timber and firewood; as I have said, the nearest neighbours were a mile away, to west as well as east. The towns, Amaranth and Glenella, were rough, noisy places where Indians, Icelanders, and Ukrainians congregated in stores kept by Jews and Armenians, all of them types unknown to her. The school stood in a wilderness surrounded by forest and swamp. At night, the wolves howled close to the cottage, driven by hunger. On one occasion, late in the fall, when I was already driving Peter, the horse, but before I had built a log-stable to house him, I saw myself forced, on one of my week-end visits, to go out after dark to catch that horse which, frightened by its strange surroundings, had broken loose and would not let anyone else approach him. It was a black, wind-tossed night, and within ten

yards of the porch steps I ran into a bewildered pack of coyotes—so bewildered that, before they scattered in every direction, in wild, elastic springs, they had touched me and knocked their heads against the lantern which was swinging from my hand, and turned, snapping and yelping. Every now and then there was a story going the rounds, of the larger timber-wolves having laid low a calf or a colt. Both coyotes and timber-wolves, which met in this district, hunted in packs, with a cunning almost human, driving their prey into the swamp where horses and cattle were equally helpless. I once saw horse and buggy disappearing in it, the driver having jumped to the road. On another occasion I watched a number of them manoeuvring, in the dusk of the evening, to cut off a flock of geese which was trying to cross the road, to return to the farmstead whence they had strayed. Since they disappeared in tall sedges, I did not witness the end, but terrified squawks proclaimed their fate.

Slantwise across the road from the school, to the north-east, the swamp was so treacherous that, more than once, before it froze into solidity, a horse or a team disappeared in it; below the deceptively green surface covering it like a film a few inches thick, there were huge pockets of water. Once, after a heavy rain, four horses drowned in a shallow ditch west of the place because they could not extricate themselves from the clinging and yet spineless mud of silt, with its binding admixture of alkali.

The gravel ridge on which school and cottage stood was, in that respect, safe enough, of course; but to the north-west the forest that had once covered it had been burned over in one of the periodic bush-fires. The sight of it, with charred boles reaching into the sky like a forest of Flying-Dutchman's masts, was anything but cheering. During that fire, a settler had saved himself by spending several days in his well. In myself there is something, a chord, which resounds to any kind of desolation; there was no such chord in my wife. The whole landscape, hot and humid in summer, bitterly cold in winter, and utterly untamed by man, gripped her soul as in a vice.

It is one thing, in winter, to watch a prairie blizzard from the warmth and comfort of a well-built house in city or town, and to admire the utter unconcern with which elemental forces interfere with man's devices and institutions. It is quite another to feel your very walls moving and shaking under the impact of ruthless squalls while the snow piles in on the lee side to above the height of the windows; especially when you know that your husband is out on the marsh, many miles away, stolidly fighting his way against wind and drift, in constant danger of being jammed tight among the stumps of trees buried under the snow, or of going astray in the utter confusion of nature. The country is full of stories of people who, under such circumstances, have lost their lives, to be found in spring, in the icy slush-pools left behind by the melting snows.

On occasion the drift was so thick that it was unsafe to leave the cottage even to cross to the school without carrying a string as an Ariadne thread by which to find the way back.

Before long this young woman lived only for the week-ends and the rare holidays. It soon became clear that, on Sundays, I always had to leave early, from Falmouth, no later certainly than at noon, and often right after breakfast, if I wanted to feel sure that I could make Gladstone in time for school on Monday. From Gladstone, no matter what the weather, I always left, with one exception, on Friday after four. But it was often Saturday morning, and once or twice it was late in the afternoon of that day before I reached Falmouth. On account of the prevailing winds it was always more difficult to go north than to go south; and invariably it took longer.

Since so much depended on the weather, we became, at both ends, the most anxious watchers of sky, wind, and cloud. Sometimes, when I had to leave the cottage, there was anguish in my wife's face. Perhaps a blizzard threatened; perhaps the air was opaque with flying or drifting snow. Since I had to go, I tried not to see it. On one occasion, though I had left the cottage on Sunday morning, at ten, and though by that time I was driving two strong horses, I did not reach Gladstone, forty-five miles away by the road I had had to adopt, until eight-thirty on Monday, with just enough time to spare for changing clothes before, without breakfast, I had to hurry to school. And for every minute of these twenty-odd hours I had been driving my horses, over drifts in which I sometimes did not see them, with muscles taut and nerves tense. Any rare holiday—Thanksgiving, Christmas—made us feel as though we must make the most of it by living faster, by putting more things into the pockets of time. Throughout the winter, it was always a triumph when I got home before midnight on Friday; it happened rarely enough. Invariably I found my wife waiting; and then there was a whole, unbroken day ahead. Once, soon after school had opened at Gladstone—I was still riding the bicycle—rain overtook me on the way out before I had left the town more than six miles behind. For the remainder of the trail which I was still following, twenty-eight miles, I had to walk and to push my wheel which was heavily laden with supplies. It was the first time I had been delayed; and it gave my wife a foretaste of many an experience to follow.

Whenever I arrived during the night, the little girl woke up; and, as soon as I entered the cottage, she climbed out of her cot and snuggled sleepily down on my knees where, wearily, I had dropped into a camp-chair. By that time she had accepted the routine of my being absent during the week.

All of which may sound pathetic enough; but it was only that outside of the young woman's life which I could see as well; the inside of it I did not know

until years later.

Let me mention the subject of heating. Even that tiny cottage could be kept warm only by means of two stoves, one in the kitchen, the other in the living-room for which a small, so-called air-tight heater was supplied. In this bush, swept by the relentless winds of a Manitoba winter, there was always the danger of fire; sometimes, during a blizzard, a sudden up-draught would suck streams of sparks into the flying air above the roof. My wife never dared to go to bed before both fires were out. Invariably she ceased adding fuel about eight o'clock; and gradually the inexorable cold—it was often forty below and sometimes lower—invaded the cottage. Bed was the only place where, with the help of a hot-water bottle, it was possible to keep warm; but she never lay down until, shivering, she had convinced herself, by stirring the ashes, that there was not a spark of glow left in the stoves.

Often, in the intense cold—in the coldest nights the air is always calm—the trees all about would startlingly come to life with reports like pistol-shots; their wood was splitting by uneven contraction; or their bark was bursting in long strips. Or, when the wind was blowing and whistling or shrieking weirdly around the eaves, boards in the shell of the cottage would creak or rattle. Or the screech owl, resident here in its northernmost range, would launch its startling, laughter-like call. When my wife ran out to see that everything was in order about the place—as she always did, at the very moment when darkness fell—the snowy owls would circle about her head, so close that she could hear the whir of their wings.

It was characteristic of my wife that nothing frightened her for long which, in some way, she could explain. In that respect, she formed a striking contrast to such of the wives of the settlers as dropped in on her, now and then, at night. Hearing a creak or a rattle, these women would sit there, bathed in a cold sweat, not daring to speak above a whisper. My wife laughed at them; and then they would launch into tales of ghosts and werewolves and evil spirits; for, while racially Germans, they had come from Volhynia in Russia where the belief in witch-craft and in the animistic malice of nature is far from being extinct. But they never succeeded in frightening my wife. It was worse when they spoke of actual experiences, sufferings from loneliness or illness or bereavement; from poverty beyond the power of man to endure; or from loss sustained by reason of such poverty; or, still worse, by reason of their being shut off from help, cooped up, as they were, in this northland with its arctic cold; above all when they talked of men frozen to death while trying to get home through a treacherous stretch of the subarctic forest. For such tales had a personal application; and at the least they left a depressing effect behind.

Often, there disengaged itself, from such tales, an impression as if nature,

instead of being merely indifferent, were animated by an active ill-will; as if it were vindictively lying in wait and lurking for a mistake a man might make in dealing with it; then to pounce on him and finish him off; the malice of circumstance. Thus a whole, sunny, calm week was often followed by a lowering or vehement Friday, just when my wife's most ardent wishes were for a continuance of unchanged weather. It seemed that all untoward meteorological events were reserved for the week-ends. Thus, in summer, when that had been welcome, there had not been a single thunderstorm except on Friday or Saturday. Now it came to the point where she looked with misgiving on sunshine, or on a rise in temperature, if either came between Monday and Friday; for only one law of the weather seemed certain, namely, that it was subject to change. If Wednesday was propitious, Friday was almost sure to be forbidding. Even the men, bringing their children to school in their bob-sleighs, were, in such cases, often discouraging; when, on Friday morning, the snow was flying or drifting, they would say when asked—and how could my wife resist the temptation of asking them?—"No. He can't start today. He'd never make it." So that, the last day, she was often divided between her wishes; she wanted me to come; but she did not want me to expose myself to danger which stay-at-homes exaggerated to themselves. At any rate, I always came. But it was true that, on occasion, I had come near giving in; in such cases, it was precisely the thought of wife and child which kept me going. Once, on my way out, the temperature being very close to fifty below zero, I saw, in a fearful snow-drift no more than six miles from Gladstone, the head of a horse sticking out of the snow, frozen stiff; and as, turning aside, I passed with a shudder, I saw a corner of the sleigh and the head of the driver who was still sitting upright in death. On my way back to Gladstone, I watched for the sight; but it had been buried under an additional layer of snow two or three feet thick.

The worst enemy of man, however, is man. As I have said, the cottage stood no more than fifty feet from the road, the only clear road in the district which led right through from the town in the east to the town in the west. A good deal of the wood that was cut for fuel in this section, to be used in the towns to west and south, and even in the more distant cities, was hauled along this road, eastward or westward, to Amaranth or Glenella, there to be piled in long tiers and finally to be shipped by rail; and much of it, as I knew only too well, was hauled at night when the roads were smoother and harder.

The whole country is rolling, from ridge to ridge; I have already mentioned that it is scored by moraines running roughly from north to south. Now it so happened that the highest of these ridges, apart from the so-called Big Ridge which out-topped them all, was the one crossing the west-east road a mile or a

little more from school and cottage. During the summer this had been a welcome fact; for, in coming, on my bicycle, from Leifur, I could always be seen five or ten minutes before I arrived; and the little girl was sure to be watching for me. She had been told that this was the day when I should come home; so that there were wavings of hands and joyous shouts preceding the meeting which invariably took place on the road. But in winter I came from south or west, where the land lay low and marshy and the view was cut off by the forest which crowded close.

Every chance traveller from the east, however, rare as such were, had a full view of school and cottage in their bluffs of trees and shrubs the moment he topped that ridge; and if it was night, he saw every light that might happen to be burning at either.

We had, of course, long since seen to it that blinds were sent out; unfortunately, when they arrived, they were white, allowing the light to shine through. Every night, then, my wife hung the windows, which gave on all sides, with dark rugs, pinning them to the window-frames and stuffing the interstices between lintels and curtain-rods with rags. Then, in the falling darkness, she went out to make sure that no ray from her lamp betrayed the light inside. Yet, whenever, in this utter wilderness where sound carried far, through an atmosphere made dense by the contraction of the cold, the rattling of wagon-wheels reached her ear, or the jingling of sleigh-bells—and she was everlastingly listening for them—she got into a panic; and in her panic she would blow her lamp, to sit there in inky blackness, following the passing teams with her mind until she was convinced that they were once more out of eye or earshot. Only then would she dare to relight the lamp; for, once the little girl had been put to bed, what could she do with herself until it was time to lie down, but sew or read? In such a district, with the school overlooking the road, she always knew, of course, when a settler of the neighbourhood whom she knew had gone to town in the morning; and at night she often said to herself, “That is so-and-so now, going home”; and her feelings were friendly enough; the very sounds seemed reassuring. But she could never feel certain; and no precaution was ever neglected. It might even be that she had asked such a settler to bring her supplies from town; and then she would sit breathless in the dark until she heard his voice when he called to his horses to stop.

Sometimes whole strings of teams passed—I myself had once counted twenty-two in a line—carrying loads of firewood; and she could hear the men shouting from one to the other, perhaps angrily, perhaps jocularly. She would listen to the heavy tramp of their feet on bare ground—for the high grade was swept by every wind—or to the crunching of the snow under their steps as they trudged stolidly along by the side of their horses; for on account of the intense

cold it was rarely safe for them to sit on their loads. Occasionally, too, gay young gallants would drive past in smart buggies or cutters, waking the echoes with their songs or their ribaldry.

There was still another cause for anxiety. Ever since my long illness at Virden my health had given rise to worry. Was I well? For there had been times when I was not. During that winter I suffered from at least one vicious cold, with my temperature running high; and I had secured leave of absence, grudgingly given, for the school-board considered that my wife's place was in town; and I had myself driven out to Falmouth, to go to bed and be nursed.

The question arises: then why? Why should this young woman bear what she was bearing?

I did not know; *I* should have been happy there; and she professed to be happy. She would have done anything on earth for me. She believed that what she was doing was in my interests. Consequently, there was never even the remotest thought of her giving up, of not going through with it. At the time, she did not even give me the slightest hint of the fact that she was living in constant, deadly fear; it was years later before she confessed to it.

And the almost incomprehensible thing about it all is that, taking matters all in all, we were both happy. Today, it seems to have been the happiest year of our lives.

⁂

To that result, one thing contributed more than anything else, at least as far as I was concerned; I was writing again.

Not, for the moment, in the sense that I was producing finished books; for that there was hardly the time; but I was taking copious notes—which were never used. The taking of notes merely helped me to clarify matters in my mind. For those who know the handful of books which I have published, I need hardly say that this was the time when *Over Prairie Trails* and *The Turn of the Year* took shape. *Settlers of the Marsh* became an obsession, though I planned it at the time as it was written later on, as a trilogy with the title *Pioneers*; and *Len Sterner* or *Adolescence*, for which a publisher invented the preposterous title, *The Yoke of Life*, a work of much older origin, became definitely located two miles north of Falmouth.

Many things crystallized in my mind.

And then fate played me another of its little tricks.

A vacancy occurred in a rural school no more than six miles from

Falmouth; and simultaneously I had at Gladstone just one unpleasantness too many. Since it has some historical significance, if only for the war psychosis, I will briefly touch upon it here. It was, by the way, the year 1917.

In previous years, a Governor-General's medal had been awarded to the student ranking highest on his aggregate in the final examinations of every high school in Manitoba. For economy's sake, and on account of the war, this medal had been withdrawn for the time being. But an assistant of mine boldly hinted that I, being "some sort of a foreigner", was purposely suppressing that medal. What my purpose in doing so could possibly have been, she never explained. One Saturday, in my absence, she broke open the drawers of the desk in my class-room where, among other private things, I kept my correspondence under lock and key; there were letters from my wife, for instance. Needless to say, she found nothing to confirm her preposterous accusation. In my indignation I took the matter to the school-board; but this body supinely professed to be unable to see what they could do about it. I had expected that at least they would offer to see the egregious lady and to exact an apology; but they didn't. I promptly applied for, and obtained, the appointment to the vacancy in the bush-land and resigned my position at Gladstone. This meant, among other things, that I had to dispose of most of our precious furniture, the last payment on which had just been made. It goes without saying that I did not get half its value; but there was no choice. We could not have afforded to pay storage.

Financially, the arrangement we had entered into the previous summer had proved a success. We were free of debt at last; we even had a small reserve; and I owned two good horses one of which I promptly sold when I joined my wife; the other I still needed to take me back and forth to Ferguson School—which, in older books, figures under the name of Macdonald. The proceeds of that sale we invested, as we had done with the rest of our savings, in Victory Bonds. Meanwhile our joint earnings were still to amount to a hundred and thirty dollars a month, which was more than we needed.

We continued to live at Falmouth; for, small though the cottage was, the one at Ferguson was no larger; and the improvements we had made at Falmouth gave it some semblance of a home.

It will be noticed that, by taking this step, I was cutting myself loose from what, three years before, had opened up before me as a career. I was fully aware of it; but I did not care any longer; my true career had once more identified itself with my life as a writer. On account of the expense involved, in examination fees and for an entirely imaginary extra-mural tuition, I had also, in the disturbance of all these moves, dropped the idea of getting a degree from the university. It seemed too irrelevant.

Now, during the following summer, the yard of Ferguson School was to be fenced; and, being on the spot, I was to act as the representative of the official trustee in making the arrangements. I had to call a meeting of the ratepayers and ask for tenders. One evening in July I drove over to preside at my school.

For two miles the road led north, along the margin of the swamp, where it followed the windings of the ridge on which stood Falmouth School; then, for three or four miles, it led straight west over a graded trail laid through dense forest.

At one of the highest spots of this east-west road, where the ground sloped gradually up from the south—it was another of those ridges, though an insignificant one—there was, to the north, an abrupt descent, perhaps a sort of pot-hole, accentuated by the fact that, in order to maintain a uniform level, yes, a slight descent eastward, in the floor of the ditch which was designed to carry the water out to the lake, it had to be cut the deeper the higher the ground rose. At this point, then, this road was thirty or forty feet above the forest floor to the north.

I, being preoccupied with the task ahead of me, and perhaps with the plan of a book, was driving absent-mindedly along; Peter, the horse, knew anyway where we were going.

But at the precise moment when we were topping the crest of that ridge, out of the bush to the south, straight and swift as an arrow, there tore a vicious dog, half wild, perhaps with an admixture of wolfish blood. With one leap he hurled himself at the horse's nose and hung there, snarling and shaking the head of the horse. Peter, frenzied with panic and pain, rose on his hind-feet, pawing with his fore-feet for his assailant; and the next moment, coming down in front, he lashed out with his iron-shod hind-feet, demolishing the buggy at the first blow.

In order to save myself from these feet, I had no choice but to leap; and I did so blindly. There was not even time to look; and so I leapt to the north where the descent was perpendicular. As I landed on my feet, I felt something giving in my spine and collapsed. For perhaps a second I lay stunned. Then the horse's wild, thundering gallop along the road brought me back to consciousness. I rose, somewhat painfully, it is true, but without becoming aware of any serious injury received. I regained the road where the fragments of the buggy lay strewn about, with nothing but the wheels intact, and set out to follow the horse.

About half-way to the school I came upon the dead body of the dog, trampled down, at last, by the horse's hoofs.

At the school, the horse, still bleeding from his nose, was wildly circling

about the yard, to escape from the pursuing settlers who were trying to capture him. As soon as he heard my voice, he stood, apparently docile; but when I touched him, he trembled and snorted. We tied him to a tree.

After a brief explanation, the meeting was held; and then we placed Peter, for the night, in a nearby stable to let him calm down. I went home in a borrowed outfit.

While I was wincing with all sorts of sharp, shooting pains, I paid no particular attention; I ascribed them to the severe shaking-up I had received. It was only the next day that I became alarmed.

I was working in the garden which we had cleared and dug when suddenly, without warning, my legs crumpled up under me. I had no feeling in them, nor any power; I don't remember how I got into bed.

But a few days later I seemed to be recovered; I resumed my drives to the other school; and in my leisure hours I worked again in the garden. It became, however, at once apparent that Peter, the horse, was spoiled for my work; he had become a run-away, getting scared at mere nothings; at the sound of a cough, for instance. I had to dispose of him, which I did reluctantly, exchanging him for a much lighter but quiet mare which I counted myself lucky in finding without delay.

It took weeks and perhaps months for it to be borne in upon us that henceforth I could no longer trust my limbs; and towards the fall of the year I went to Winnipeg to consult a doctor. This consultation opened a prolonged tussle with members of the medical profession which was to last for nine years and to end with a clear and unequivocal vindication of my own diagnosis of a spinal lesion. So far, the man consulted professed that he could not find anything wrong; but he expressed a suspicion that there was trouble with my kidneys. He advised me to see a specialist; and that specialist pronounced me a diabetic. Hearing where I lived, quite out of reach of medical help, and making a favourable estimate of my mental powers, he named certain books for me to read, on the "starvation method of treating diabetes", and told me to take matters into my own hands.

I still see, with my mind's eye, the dismay in my wife's face when, on my return home, she caught sight of those books in my suitcase. Henceforth, then, it seemed, I was an invalid and had to be treated as such. Every now and then, during the years to come, I was to have a breakdown, accompanied by a sudden paralysis of my lower limbs. In the intervals, though often subject to excruciating pains, I was able to go about my business. I failed, of course, to see how diabetes could account for these attacks; but, when you are in the hands of the doctors, you are helpless. It is best to give in.

It was this threat of invalidism which hung over me which led to our next step. For what should happen if I were disabled?

The point was this: my wife's certificate was not, so far, a life certificate; and it was on the point of expiring. The regulations of no Canadian Department of Education take successful experience into full account; on the expiration of a given period, at least up to a certain point, they require the holder of a certificate to attend another Normal Session before a new certificate is issued. My wife might have carried on for another year; perhaps for two years; but what if the state of my health deteriorated to the point of total disablement? We talked the situation over with the greatest care and came to the conclusion that she should attend that Normal Session at once; that is, during the fall of 1919.

What was I going to do? The problem was to find some way for my wife to get home at least once a month; the little girl would have to remain with me. We had a few hundred dollars in reserve; but it was not sufficient to carry the two of us. I should have to teach.

At Ferguson School, where I had engaged on leaving Gladstone, my salary was sixty-five dollars a month, not enough to see us through, for my wife's trips home were bound to be expensive. The ratepayers with whom I talked matters over were sufficiently appreciative of my services to declare, at a meeting held for the purpose, that they would gladly pay somewhat higher taxes if I could be retained at a salary of a hundred dollars. That, my wife and I agreed, was in excess of our needs. I asked the official trustee to raise me to eighty-five dollars. He refused.

This was the time when, as a consequence of the war and its immediate aftermath, even teachers' salaries had begun to rise at last. We secured some newspapers and became aware of three vacancies in high schools so located as to make it possible for my wife to join me and the little girl for an occasional week-end. I applied for all three and was promptly engaged by the board of the Consolidated School at Eden, in the foothills of the Riding Mountains, at a salary, if I remember aright, of eighteen hundred dollars. That seemed to solve at least our financial problem. It was true, the through train over the main line of the C.N.R. did not stop at Eden; and there was only one local train a day from Winnipeg, which arrived about four o'clock. The train in the opposite direction left Eden at nine in the morning but did not run on Sundays; which made a combination about as unfavourable as it could well be; for my wife would invariably have to ask for leave of absence on Monday if she wished to spend the Sunday with us. On the other hand, there was, eleven miles south of Eden, the town of Neepawa, on the C.P.R. line, where a daily train from Winnipeg arrived at two at night, meeting the opposite train, to Winnipeg, at

about the same hour. By that road, my wife would be able to leave the city on Friday evening, arriving at Neepawa in the small hours of Saturday; and on Sunday, this being a daily train, she could leave Neepawa at the same hour and arrive at Winnipeg in time to reach the Normal School at the opening hour. There remained, of course, the problem of how to meet her at Neepawa; but we left that to be solved later on.

I promptly sold horse, buggy, and sleigh.

We did not make the move till towards the end of summer, packing up the remainder of our furniture in perfect leisure.

Having done so, we went to Winnipeg, to spend a few days in the city, shopping.

My wife promptly found a boarding-place, at thirty-five dollars a month, which was approved by the authorities of a paternal Normal School; and we expended an indispensable minimum on her wardrobe; not, however, enough to give her, at ever rising prices, a coat fit to wear in a Manitoba winter.

We had never felt as downcast as we did when, on August 5, at eight in the morning, we took leave from each other on the platform of the Union Station where I, with the golden-haired little girl, boarded the train.

That train had barely begun to move when the little girl, whose fourth birthday it was, flew into a panic at her mother's remaining behind; and till we arrived at Eden I had all I could do to distract her from the full realization of what this separation was to mean to her. She had taken *my* absence tragically enough at Falmouth; but she had never yet been away from her mother. The world seemed very cruel indeed.

At Eden we were received by the secretary of the board, a Methodist minister who proved to be most helpful and kind. The first night, he informed me, we should necessarily have to spend at the hotel; and there would be great difficulty in finding a suitable house. At night I wrote to my wife in as cheerful a tone as I could, dwelling on the one point which I could praise; the school building deserved the highest commendation.

Next morning, accompanied every step of the way by the little girl, I explored the town which consisted essentially of a line of shops and stores strung out along the gravelled highway which ran from Dauphin to Neepawa. After a while Mr. Henley, the minister, joined us. Incidentally, in the course of the morning, I happened to ask him why my application for the position had been so promptly accepted. At Gladstone, I had, in reply to a similar enquiry, been told that the board had asked the high-school inspector to look over the list of some sixty applicants; and he, in his own list, had placed my name first. At Eden, to my consternation, I was told that mine had been the only

application received which asked for a salary of less than two thousand dollars. I had been accepted for reasons of economy. It was not exactly the answer I had expected.

There was only one house available, a small, tumble-down shack in the last stages of decay. Downstairs, there was a single, if large room with a lean-to cubbyhole which might conceivably serve as a “kitchenette”; upstairs, there were two rooms quite uninhabitable on account of their utter dilapidation. Its situation was at the southern extremity of the village, in line with the school which stood west of it. Beyond, there stretched the fields. It was a case of necessity; I had lived in worse places; and my wife, whom I could not have asked to share such quarters, was not with me.

The rest of the day was taken up with moving in. I had my furniture brought over by a dray and was soon busy knocking down the crates. There were only two large pieces left: a very comfortable, wide bed, and the huge, flat-topped desk at which I am writing this minute. In addition, I had a deal table, a few straight-backed chairs, a camp-chair, a coal-oil cook-stove, several boxes with dishes, and books, books, books. With the latter I had not yet parted; and they overflowed everything.

Carefully, on account of my disability, I set about arranging these things in the room. The bed I placed in one of the far corners; my kitchen-equipment, in the other; and the desk I set up in the centre where it would receive light from two windows.

By night I was installed. It was inconvenient; it lacked all comfort; but I could have endured conditions much worse had it not been for my wife who was bound to suffer severely under the separation.

Sharing our bed, for May had outgrown her cot, the little girl and I lived through the night; and next morning there came what, for the moment, proved to be an alleviation of at least one of my worries. A young matron came to see me about May. She had a little boy of May’s age; and she found it exceedingly difficult to keep him at home; for he had no playmate. She would be delighted to take care of May during school hours if I would let her be that playmate. I arrived at a favourable estimate of Mrs. Cannon who, being the daughter of a minister in the city, had had a corresponding education. It seemed to be a solution for one of my major problems; and tentatively I agreed to the proposal.

What Mrs. Cannon thought of me and my surroundings in this shack I do not know; and, at the time, I cared less.

Henceforth, from the day when school opened, I took May over to Mrs. Cannon’s apartment—she lived above her husband’s hardware store—starting

every morning before half-past eight; occasionally I dropped in at noon; and invariably I fetched her at four o'clock.

In the afternoon of the first day I had a letter from my wife which seemed to indicate that she was keeping her courage up; and I answered it by as cheerful a missive as I could find it in my heart to write, giving her, of course, the news of the arrangement I had made with regard to May.

As far as I was concerned, the opening of school eased matters for the moment; I was too busy to give in to my manifold misgivings. As I have said, this was a Consolidated School comprising seven separate districts each of which was served by a van transporting the children to and from school. These vans had to be checked on arrival and before departure; and the pupils remained at school during the brief noon-hour, when supervision had to be provided for. My lunch consisted of a hurriedly-taken bite or two, got ready in the morning, according to formulas prescribed for diabetics. At night, I prepared supper for the little girl as well. The only alternative to the arrangement which I had made would have been to engage a girl or a woman to look after the household; but that would have cost more money than, under the circumstances, I could afford to spend. A few days went by; and matters seemed to settle into an established routine.

Then Friday came, the first Friday after the opening of school. At four o'clock, heaving a sigh of relief, both on account of the momentary cessation of work and of the fact that things seemed to have worked out well, I went to fetch the little girl and crossed the street to get my mail.

I found a letter from my wife which completely upset me. She had lost her courage. I might say that this was the only occasion on which, in a quarter century, I have found her despondent.

I canvassed all the possibilities of relieving her distress. Unfortunately, I was, for the moment, without ready money; my wife's installation at Winnipeg had consumed the greater part of our available funds; and I, of course, had not yet received any payment on salary account.

But there were our Victory Bonds, deposited at the local bank. It was after hours, of course; but I hunted the banker up at his house; and when I explained the situation to him, he readily returned with me to the bank where I hypothecated one of the bonds. He sent my wife fifty dollars by telegraph. This remittance she could not cash that night; she would have to wait till Saturday morning at ten; and by that time the train for Eden would have left Winnipeg. So I sent an additional wire, asking her to take the Saturday night train to Neepawa where I should meet her.

Then I searched the town for a car whose owner would be willing to take

me to Neepawa during the small hours of the following night. I found one who was willing to call for me at one in the morning if I paid him ten dollars for the trip. It goes without saying that the little girl and I talked and laughed all day over the impending visit of her mother. It seemed like manna fallen from heaven.

On Saturday I spent the greater part of my time cleaning up the shack so it would not have too depressing an effect on my wife; and while I did so, the little girl ran after me, trying to be helpful, and laughing by the hour.

At night, I put May to bed fully dressed; and in spite of her excitement she promptly went to sleep, so completely had her emotions exhausted her.

I was seized with a sudden inspiration. I sat down at my desk and, in a veritable fervour of creation, wrote down, in its practically final form, the first chapter of *Over Prairie Trails*. No matter how severely, both in an emotional and physical sense, the next five months were to tell on me, as a writer I was to flourish amazingly.

When, an hour after midnight, the rickety Ford, exhausts wide open, thundered to a stop on the highway in front of my shack, I picked May up, bed-clothes and all, without even trying to waken her, and carried her to the back seat of the car. During the whole of the precipitous and rough ride I sat by the driver's side, half turned in my seat, and held her with outstretched arm to keep her from rolling down on the floor which was littered with a miscellaneous assembly of tools.

As, through the inky darkness, we approached Neepawa, the train was just rounding the last curve from the east, with a mysterious shifting and blinking of red and green lights. When we came to a stop at the station, I had the greatest difficulty in rousing the little girl to a realization of the fact that her mother was coming.

We spent a glorious Sunday in the late-summer weather at Eden and had a long walk in the hills. Having seen Mrs. Cannon and approved of the arrangement I had made with her, my wife picked up courage again, little as she liked the shack where I lived. We pressed the owner of the ancient Ford into service once more; and during the night from Sunday to Monday my wife returned to the city. The little girl seemed to accept the situation with a courage which could hardly have been expected from so young a child.

Three weeks went by. If, by the end of the term, we were to balance accounts, it seemed imperative that my wife should hold out for the full month. But by that time we were both satisfied that we had come through so far. She asked for, and obtained, leave of absence on Friday, so that she could take the direct train from Winnipeg which arrived at Eden about four in the afternoon.

Unfortunately I had a slight cold; and in my case any cold, no matter how slight, was cause for worry. Unfortunately, too, I had, in my letters, quite truthfully boasted of the exceptionally good health which I had enjoyed during the, so far, glorious fall of that year. My wife, finding me somewhat under the weather, suspected that my favourable reports had been given only to keep her from worrying. It was not the case; but I will admit that it looked uncommonly like it.

On this occasion I was able to read her three completed chapters of *Over Prairie Trails*. I felt rather proud of them; but that, of course, meant nothing. What did count was that it revived her courage. The thing had to be gone through with, that was all. She returned to the city by the Sunday night train from Neepawa.

During the following week, however, I missed two days at school, Wednesday and Thursday, while I nursed the cold which had reached its crisis, I took all possible precautions, called in the doctor who was reassuring, and followed his instructions. During these two days, the little girl went to Mrs. Cannon's by herself. But I made the mistake of saying nothing of my cold in my letters to my wife.

She, mistrustful, called up the local postmaster over the telephone. This was early on Friday morning; and, naturally, she received the information that I had not been at school for two days. The postmaster did not know that I was sufficiently recovered to resume my duties within an hour.

It so happened that this was the day of the local school fair; and in the afternoon I was kept busy till about five o'clock.

To my amazement, at half-past four, accompanied by the little girl, my wife walked in. She had taken the morning train without even asking for leave of absence.

Naturally, I laughed as though the joke were on her; for here I was at school. As a matter of fact, however, the cough still persisted; and, not without a feeling of relief, I obeyed peremptory orders and went home and to bed. Monday, for some reason or other, was a holiday in the city, though not at Eden; and my wife had two full days, with Friday evening and Monday morning thrown in. This allowed time for me to get rid of my cold, in spite of the fact, or perhaps because of it, that, on Friday night, the weather had taken a sudden turn; snow had fallen; and, as it turned out, it had fallen for the winter. In western parlance, it had "snowed up".

Thus, when Monday morning arrived, my wife felt reassured and promised, of her own accord, that this time, unless the unforeseen happened, she was going to wait the full four weeks. For various reasons we arranged

that, the next time, I was to be the one to make the trip. That would involve still greater expense; but, for reasons which I have forgotten, it seemed the indicated course.

When I had to go to school without seeing her off at the station, the parting between us was, thus, an exceptionally cheerful one. Unfortunately, the little girl took it, for the first time, tragically, in the full sense of the word “tragic” which implies the acceptance of a cruel fate.

Leaving me at the gate of the school-yard where the vans were already arriving, my wife took May over to Mrs. Cannon’s; and already there lay a shadow on the face of the little girl. In front of the door which my wife had no longer the time to enter, for the whistle proclaimed the approach of the train, she bent down to kiss her good-bye. Spasmodically, for a moment, May clung to her. She did not cry; but she was fighting her tears down; and when she had entered, she ran to a front window and stood there, her face glued to the glass. My wife had crossed the street and looked up; and, seeing her, she read the child’s expression of wordless despair. That, barring one other, which remained mercifully hidden in her ignorance of the future, was perhaps the most heart-breaking moment in my wife’s life with me.

Merciless though the thing was, it seemed it had to be done unless my wife was willing that all that had gone before during that fall should be jeopardized now. She hurried on to the station.

The little girl was a changed creature. It was as though an almost adult realization of her plight had come to her; as though she had looked behind the veil. Ordinarily, of course, she was still the little girl; she forgot herself and played about with apparent unconcern; but she gave the impression that she knew there was something that must be forgotten; and that is one of the most cruel things in life. At times she became unnaturally thoughtful; on many a day to follow, when I took her down to Mrs. Cannon’s where she had so far seemed perfectly at home, she suddenly clung to me as if she could not face the ordeal of seeming cheerful in a strange house. And then, one morning, she did burst into tears and begged to be taken along to school. This happened with increasing frequency; and invariably I did what she asked me to do, in spite of the fact that Mrs. Cannon disapproved. At school, I put her in the teachers’ office, with some picture books to look at; or, on some rare occasions when her case seemed especially grievous, I let her sit in my class-room, in a back seat, where she never disturbed anyone in the least.

Winter had now come on in earnest; and the days and the weeks went heavy-heartedly by. I believe no month in my wife's life had ever seemed so long.

But my hours fled; for I was feverishly at work.

My day was as follows: I rose at half-past five and lit my fire. Often the temperature in the room was zero. Sometimes, when a winter storm was sweeping down from the western mountains, it was the faint rustling of papers floating about in the room which woke me; for the pressure of the wind on ill-fitting windows and rattling doors created fierce draughts. Then, for two hours, I sat at my desk, writing, forgetting the world, or anxiously watching the minute hand of the clock moving far too fast.

Next, with the fire roaring in the heater, I prepared breakfast; and only when it was ready did I wake the little girl to dress her. After breakfast it was my daily task to brush out her golden hair and to braid it in two long plaits which I wound round her head. That done, it was time to go to school; and I took her to Mrs. Cannon's.

At noon, I ate my hurried lunch, hardly ever sitting down for the purpose, and pacing the room instead. When I had no noon supervision to do at school, I even snatched a few minutes to write again, for what I was putting down on paper had become so vivid and urgent a vision that I should have liked to project it by one single, concentrated effort of the will. Often, when I had to tear myself away, I was in open revolt, damning the world and all its irrelevant exigencies.

At four I went for May; and together we crossed the street to the post office to fetch the mail. When there was a letter from May's mother, I read her the most cheerful passages, sometimes on our way home, sometimes after I had relit the fire in the chilly room.

Then I sat down at my desk. In addition to *Over Prairie Trails*, much of *The Turn of the Year* was written during those months; for to me these two books have always formed a unit. In fact, they were originally conceived as a single book; and what distinguishes them in their printed version was the result of later recastings of the second volume.

Meanwhile the little girl played about, sometimes, in her hours of forgetfulness, noisily. In her unhappy moments she would come to my elbow, pull at my sleeve, and demand my attention; and in order to distract her, I interrupted myself and played with her for a while.

At six o'clock, I made supper; and soon after I put her to bed.

And then there followed four, five hours of the most strenuous and concentrated effort. Perhaps a blizzard was blowing outside; ice-cold draughts

would give me alarming shivers; and, in my absorption, I would allow the fire to die down till the frost invaded my limbs. Impatiently, I replenished it.

I learned much about myself during that fall.

Thus, in the attempt to set down my vision, I realized that I had at bottom no language which was peculiarly my own. In a way this was an advantage to me; I had half a dozen of them instead. But in another way, it was a disadvantage and even a misfortune: I lacked that limitation which is best for the profound penetration of the soul of a language. I ground my teeth in my struggles; and, for the moment, all my struggles were with words.

Another thing had an almost shattering effect on me.

When listening to what I had read her of those books, my wife had formed a new plan. I was to devote myself entirely to writing. She knew by this time that my material was next to inexhaustible. When we were together, I was now pouring out the contents of my old writings and adding to them new plans upon plans. Even if my health did not give out, she would permanently make the living; soon she would have her life-certificate.

What troubled me in all this was a profound suspicion. She expected that our ultimate financial salvation was to come from my books. In other words, what mattered to her was that my books should meet with success. But to me that did not matter in the least any longer; what mattered to me was only one thing: *that those books should be written.*

In that opposition lay the germs of the tragedy to come; and, with profound misgivings, I began to foresee it.

Often, during the later stretches of this quarter-century of our married life, the plan has come to me of writing the whole story of that life from her point of view; and whenever I thought of such a plan, an inevitable title attached itself to the unwritten book: *The Life Heroic.* It is most unlikely that I shall ever write that book; even if time and occasion served, I don't think I could do it; and time and occasion will no longer serve; I have given up and resigned myself. But I feel very poignantly that the world is the poorer without it. There are many kinds of heroism; and it is not those that become spectacular which are the most inspiring.

Meanwhile, in this interval of the month of four weeks before I went to the city, four things happened, two auspicious, two sinister.

About the middle of the month a man came to town for some purpose or other who had himself written and published books. In my official capacity I had some dealings with him; and these dealings led to a confidential talk. I told him something of my writing career. He asked me to let him see a manuscript or two. I showed him the bulky volumes of *A Search for America* and the just

completed clean copy of *Over Prairie Trails*. There was no time for him to do more than browse about in them for an hour or so. When he handed them back, he laughed.

"No wonder," he said, "that you've never been able to interest a publisher. Your books have never been read. Don't you know that these days manuscripts must be typewritten and on one side of the page only?"

I did not know; but I considered it hopeful news. Perhaps it was this technical lack of my manuscripts only which had prevented their being printed long ago.

Next, I received an unexpected remittance; a sum which I had loaned to a settler in Ferguson district and which I had written off as a loss; it had been overdue for some time, and I had no intention of suing for it. That money, then, would buy the typewriter which I needed.

These were the auspicious events.

Then, one day at school, when, during hours, I was called downstairs, my legs went numb at the precise moment when, at the top of the wide, straight stairway, I was reaching for the hand-rail to descend. The thing came on with a sharp pain as though my spine had been struck with the point of a knife; but it was a purely momentary attack. It is true, I slipped down the fifteen or twenty steps, hitting each of them with a bump; but, arriving at the bottom, I rose to my feet without a moment's delay and was able to go about whatever business had called me from my class-room. It was as though a warning had been given.

Then, one Friday morning, we woke into a world whirling with the worst blizzard of the year. The moment I opened the door to take May to Mrs. Cannon's, I realized that she could not possibly face the shrieking blast. She had shrunk back, and was clinging to me in that way which had by now become familiar and which meant that she could not bear the thought of being separated from me for the day. Turning back into the room which was not even yet fully thawed from the night's freezing, I lifted her to a chair, opened my old, ragged fur coat, told her to put her arms about my neck, and closed the coat over her thin little body. I was going to take her with me to school.

Over the bulky coat, I was clasping her with my arms, bending my head down into the collar, partly in order to protect chin and throat, partly in order to reassure her by the nearness of my face. At the gate, we turned into the school-yard and made for the school.

That day, only one high-school pupil and half a dozen public-school children arrived. Every last one of the vans had been either overturned or blown off the road. But the law required school to be kept open even for one single pupil; and so the day dragged wearily out.

The mail train was due at four o'clock; but it did not arrive. When May and I had returned to the shack, I kept listening for the whistle which was invariably blown for a nearby crossing. Since this was not a through train coming from any great distance—it was made up at Winnipeg—it seemed unlikely that it should be delayed for more than a few hours; no doubt it had started its run on time.

The whistle blew about seven o'clock; and May was not yet in bed. I hesitated; I did not like to leave her alone before she was sound asleep; but I was impatient to get a letter from my wife who had not written for two days. Outside, the wind was howling and hissing with unabated fury.

So I told the little girl that I was going to the post office to fetch news from her mother; she would have to play by herself for a while. She was exceptionally mature for her age; and I felt sure that she would touch neither stove nor lamp. I weighted down the papers on the desk at which I had been working and put on my coat. In half an hour, I told May, I should be back.

I fought my way to the post office through the utter darkness and against a gale opaque with snow. In the deserted and sleepy office, I received my letter, read it, felt reassured, and started on my way home. The town was abandoned; apart from myself, nobody had allowed himself to be lured out even by the prospect of receiving longed-for letters. In the streets, the elements ruled supreme. So I kept to the middle of the road where the drifts were lowest. Thence, not even a light could be seen in house or store.

I had covered about half the distance when, in the middle of a drift, the very thing happened again which, a few days ago, had happened in school, at the top of the stairs; but it did not subside so quickly this time; there were no steps to jerk back into place whatever had moved in my spine.

My head was perfectly clear. I simply sat down, half supported by the snow about me; but I was unable to move my legs.

For an hour or longer I worked with my arms, trying to cover some ground by lifting myself forward, with legs and feet dragging behind. The trouble was that the snow offered no firm support; and I lost my bearings in the utter darkness that tore past me, driven by the fury of the wind which was the only thing that indicated direction.

It was not long before exhaustion was added to my other difficulties; I had to be content to rest while defending myself as best I could against the stinging cold; I might have to wait for daylight before I was rescued. Two years ago I had defied the snow, the cold, and the wind in the wilderness between Gladstone and Falmouth; and here I was in town, more helpless, yes, in greater danger than I had been at that time. To the west of me there stood scattered

houses: the manse, the dwelling of a thresherman, the cottage of a sempstress; to the east, a store and a shop. But to my eyes the world was a blank of blackness.

I tried shouting; but the fierce tug of the wind snatched the voice from my lips and threw it aloft. Could a man freeze to death in the centre of this village street, within less than a hundred feet of human habitations? I thought of the little girl in the shack; no doubt carrying her in the morning had brought on this attack. I renewed my struggles till exhaustion overtook me again. Hours went by. I thought of my wife, only twenty-seven years old!

And suddenly I heard the faint tinkle of sleigh-bells borne on the wind from behind. In a panic—for in addition to all else there was the imminent danger of being run over—I raised myself on my hips, shouting and waving my arms. Then, by the faint and fitful radiance of a hurricane lantern dangling from the dash-board of a sleigh, I saw two horses rearing above my head, in the air which was horizontally streaked by the flying snow. They swerved, tugging at their lines as their driver became aware of what was in the road. They knocked me over with weaving feet; but somehow their hoofs failed to hit my limbs. A moment later the man was bending over me.

Shouting, I made myself heard and explained to him what had happened; and he hoisted me like a flour-bag to the seat of his cutter.

At the house, the door would not open; something was in the way. But when my rescuer had lowered me to the ground in order better to apply his strength, the door yielded; and by the light of the lamp which was still burning though it flickered smokily in the draught, I saw my little girl lying across the opening, fast asleep, her face streaked with the dried channels of her tears.

By some miracle a remnant of warmth still lingered in the room; and I remembered having used two or three of the hardwood sticks I had for the fire; they had yielded a bed of embers.

My rescuer propped me against the desk, turning the chair in front of it, closed the door, and lifted May to the bed. Then, having helped me to undress and, under my direction, replenished the fire, he went for the doctor.

Meanwhile, half sitting, and propped by my pillows, I somehow managed to undress the little girl and to put her night-clothes on her. She never woke; and soon she was snug and warm again.

When the doctor came, I explained to him what, in my opinion, the trouble was. He insisted that it was purely muscular. But he massaged my back, replenished the stove, and left me.

Even while he had been at work I had seemed to feel it in my bones that a different sort of manipulation might be effective. The moment he was gone, I

slowly worked myself over on my side and began to pound away with my fist at that spine, till, accompanied by unbearable pain, there was a sudden click—a sound that, in years to come, grew quite familiar to me and my wife.

The consequence of my thus taking matters into my own hands was that, before daylight came in the morning, I was on my feet, moving about with the help of two chairs which I used like canes, pushing them about. Though every movement was painful and seemed precarious, I soon had the fire going once more and some sort of breakfast prepared.

Outside, the storm blew with unabated violence.

It was Saturday; and, the little girl playing about, glad to be with me, I did a modicum of work at my desk. But above all I used the day for the purpose of threshing the whole situation out with myself.

I did not mention anything of all this to my wife; for I was going to see her in a week's time. But I knew what had to be done. For a while at any rate, she would have to make the living; after that we should see.

Seven years ago I had come north to find a hermitage for myself in the Pembina Mountains, determined to renounce all material comfort and human relationship. From that plan I had allowed myself to be side-tracked, first by a task, then by marriage. Where the hermitage was did not matter; nor, so I argued, did it matter, for the purpose of my work, whether I was alone or with wife and child; so long as I could concentrate on this one thing, my work.

Incidentally, the moment I had a typewriter, I should once more have to open the campaign against the publishers, if only to test the validity of my wife's confidence in my powers.

A week later, on Friday night, May and I went to Neepawa to board the night train for Winnipeg.

It proved quite impossible to awaken the little girl in the back seat of the car. Once or twice she opened bewildered eyes; but she at once fell back, inert and overcome with sleep.

Then the train was approaching. With one arm I picked her up in her wraps and, the suitcase hanging from the other hand, I staggered across the platform. The moment I left the car, the driver put the engine in gear; and the vehicle clattered away to the thunder of its exhausts.

I had not intended to take a berth in the sleeper, thinking that, even though I might have to sit up, I could somehow arrange for May to continue her sleep. But when the train came to a stop, a single glance showed me that every last seat was taken in the day coach.

I staggered on to the Pullman. The porter relieved me of the suitcase; and I

climbed the steps with May in my arms. In the vestibule I met the conductor.

"Any berth vacant?" I asked.

"I have one upper."

So, with the porter bringing my suitcase, I lifted my human burden into the berth and climbed after. I did not undress but half sat, half reclined through the remainder of the night. The little girl never woke till we were in Winnipeg.

That Saturday was crowded with business. I bought the typewriter and many other, smaller things, for our needs were desperate. The prices of all things were nearing their peak.

There was one other thing I wished to attend to. Even with regard to my new book, *Over Prairie Trails*, I felt by this time so little confidence—not with regard to its value, but with regard to its appeal to a possible public—that I had, in my mind, looked about for a confirmation of my wife's estimate. I read her the book, of course; and she was enthusiastic; but she might be prejudiced. In Winnipeg, I knew one man, a high-school teacher, whom, for some reason or other, I credited with a modicum of judgment in matters literary; so I rang him up over the telephone and told him of my difficulty. He promised to meet me at a stated hour in the lobby of the Y.M.C.A. building in the city. But, though I waited there for several hours, he failed to appear. Weeks later, he wrote me to apologize. I had, after all, to depend on my own judgment.

My wife had the offer of a school not far from the city, in the bush-country east of Selkirk, in a Ukrainian district under the administration of the official trustee. Her salary would be nine hundred and fifty dollars; and we decided that she had better accept. She needed a school with a cottage; and apart from those administered from Winnipeg, there were very few of them.

Then, all things being settled for 1920, I returned to Eden for another four weeks. On December 1st I asked to be relieved of my duties at Christmas.

And now there followed two almost lurid weeks of desperate work. I made a typescript with five carbon copies of *Over Prairie Trails*; it was the shortest of all my books. As before, I worked for two hours before breakfast; I did one page at noon; and I typed again at night, sitting up into the small hours of the following day. Typing, as I did, with one finger of each hand, I was slow, of course; and I made many mistakes. In my ignorance of common usage, I single-spaced my lines and used so-called onion-skin paper. But by the first week of December I had my usual six copies ready.

During my brief stay at Winnipeg I had made it a point to get, from the leading bookseller, the present addresses of all Canadian publishers; for I considered it useless to send this book to any others, in the United States or in England. My manuscripts were promptly sent out.

Then I began to pack up. Since there was the constant danger of again dislocating vertebrae, this was a difficult task. I unscrewed all the parts of my desk, manoeuvred the crates into place, and, slowly, slowly, slipped, first the top, then the chests of drawers into them. Thus the little girl and I lived for the last two weeks in a chaos of crates and boxes. Only the bed remained to the last.

It was my intention to leave in the morning of the day after school had closed. Fortunately, the parents of a pupil of mine who lived in town, seeing my predicament, invited May and me to spend the last night at their house; and that enabled me to finish the crating and packing in the afternoon. By night we were ready to leave.

I had, however, barely arrived at Winnipeg where, at the boarding-house, I occupied a room adjacent to my wife's, when, probably in consequence of my recent severe exertions, there was another attack of my trouble. In one respect it was not as bad as the last had been; it did not totally disable me. In return it did not yield as quickly, either, to treatment by rest or by violence.

The Normal Session closed; and at last my wife had her life certificate; in that respect, at least, we were safe.

We were ready to go; and the sooner we went, the better; for life in the city was expensive. There was a single fifty-dollar Victory Bond left in reserve. At last my wife was told at the office of the official trustee that all was in readiness; the cottage awaiting her occupancy.

The name of the district was Ashfield; and it lay six miles east of the station of Little Britain on the electric car line from Winnipeg to Selkirk.

Our removal was begun under the most inauspicious circumstances. We left Winnipeg on New Year's Eve. I was barely able to crawl along, and we had to take a taxicab to reach the terminal of the car line. At Little Britain, whence we were to reach the school, we were met by a team of bob-sleighs. It was an hour's run through beautiful, mild winter weather in the aspen country of eastern Manitoba—a landscape of which I was especially fond.

But at the cottage we found my wife's predecessor still in residence and the whole place in a condition which made it impossible for us to take possession. The dirt was indescribable; and most of the furniture was broken by rough usage. We had our own furniture; but it was not there; at the best it might be waiting for us at the railway station, four or five miles away. For several days we might have to make shift with what we found; and, to mention only one

thing, the bed was in a state which precluded any possibility of our using it. We were willing to rough it and to get along with a minimum of comfort; but cleanliness was an indispensable requisite.

Our driver, having deposited our personal baggage—trunk, suitcase, and a bundle of bedding—on the snow at the gate, had promptly departed; and my wife, leaving me in the distasteful company of the woman we had found in possession, had to find another team to take us back. When she had succeeded, it took me ten minutes to cover the distance of perhaps a hundred and fifty feet from the door of the cottage to the gate of the yard. The worst of it was that I handled myself under a feeling of profound humiliation.

It was nine o'clock at night when we arrived once more at the boarding-house in the city where, fortunately, our rooms remained vacant.

On January second, my wife went to see the official trustee. Most obligingly he hastened to send a man out to Ashfield to investigate. When the report came in, it entirely justified my wife.

Characteristically, the official trustee professed that he had known for some time that my wife's predecessor was not a woman to be trusted with a school removed from local control; he had kept her in charge, he said, for the very reason that the ratepayers of the district had sent in complaint after complaint; he had to show them that they had no say in the matter of deciding who should or should not teach their children; as a representative of the provincial government, he would brook no meddling. He anticipated the Fascist methods of central Europe!

As far as my wife was concerned, he was fair enough; he offered to have the place thoroughly overhauled by painter and paperhanger; to replace the broken furniture and the bed; and to see to it that the lady in question left at once. As a matter of fact, he merely transferred her to a neighbouring district. He further agreed to pay our expenses for the duration of the delay caused by the circumstances—the bill, of course, to be footed by the ratepayers of the district. These expenses we were at great pains to keep as low as possible.

Being assured at last that our grievances had been redressed, we moved out again; and we found the cottage and everything in it spick-and-span. I was still unable to move with any degree of freedom; and so, on the day after our arrival, school having opened in the morning, my wife walked the five miles through the bush, after four, to the station of Gonor, where she identified our furniture standing unprotected on the snow of the platform and arranged to have it brought out.

We settled down. My wife entered upon her quadruple task of housekeeping, raising a child, nursing an invalid husband, and teaching a

neglected school. Every morning, before leaving the cottage, she helped me to my desk where I sat propped by pillows till she returned at noon.

We had been there for no more than a week when the entirely unexpected or unhoped-for happened.

Messrs. McClelland & Stewart, of Toronto, one of the six firms to which *Over Prairie Trails* had been offered, accepted it for publication in the fall of 1920. This was one of the cases in which a Canadian house, without any anticipation of profit, accepted a book because, in their opinion, it deserved to be published.

I was exultant, of course. In the first place it seemed as though, after all, I should be able to keep faith with my wife's expectations; in the second, the fact seemed to confirm what the literary man had said to me at Eden. This was the first typescript I had ever sent out; and it promptly found a publisher; perhaps there would actually never have been any difficulty in the past if my manuscripts had not been written by hand.

Success was a stimulant. I felt so buoyed up that I set to work with a tremendous enthusiasm. The prospect seemed to have its effect even on my health; I began to move about more freely.

There followed a few months of amazing fertility.

First of all I attacked *A Search for America* which still comprised some three hundred thousand words, in spite of the fact that it had, in the past, been rewritten six times. I did not yet type it; but by severe surgery I reduced its bulk to about a hundred and fifty thousand words.

Simultaneously I resketched and largely rewrote, during that spring, four other books: the little volume which was to appear in 1923 under the title *The Turn of the Year*—though, so far, the title essay remained unwritten; the book which I called *Adolescence* and which, in 1930, appeared under the title *The Yoke of Life*; *Our Daily Bread*; and that terrible, three-volume novel which I called *Pioneers* and of which a garbled extract was to appear in 1925, under the title of one of its parts, *Settlers of the Marsh*.

In addition, I took abundant notes for a book which still remains unpublished because I am not yet satisfied with it: I called it the *Ant Book*. Whether it will ever be published will depend on whether I shall still find the necessary leisure.[5]

[5] Published by The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, Toronto, 1946.

It was work from morning till night. The little girl, four years old, played about.

Meanwhile we were more or less prisoners in the school-yard; we had no means of getting about; and so it was only natural that we should begin to make plans for buying a horse once more.

Yet my health seemed to improve; and by and by we resumed our old habit of taking daily walks after four. All about us stood the thin, chill poplar woods, crowded in places with underbrush consisting of juneberry, wild plum, and hazel.

Only to the south there was a sort of village formed by the farmsteads of the Ukrainian settlers. Here, the land was still divided in long strips running east-west; for it had once abutted on the Red River, cut up into “river-lots”; decades ago these had been shortened by subdivision; yet the dwellings continued to be ranged close to each other along the road.

Our chief entertainment consisted in planning a house of our own, set in these woods, to be built when success had come. By this time, my wife had infected me with her optimism; once more, even for me, life lay ahead. We searched for, and found, a place where trees and shrubs—hazel, in this case—were, by nature, arranged in such a way as to mark off front and back yard as well as building site. Already I had begun to feel, I being now forty-eight years old, that, if ever we were to have a place of our own, be it ever so modest, we could not wait for trees of our planting to grow; our grounds must be devised in such a way as to make use of growth already established. To do so, we brought an immense amount of ingenuity into play.

This amusement was to remain our chief entertainment for another twelve years; and when possession became a fact, the place, from which I am writing this moment, was far from bodying forth our dreams.

The difficulty of securing supplies at last forced us to face the problem of buying a horse. We were six miles from the town of Selkirk; and for the greater part of the distance there was only a trail. The settlers were willing enough to bring what we needed; but they did not go out of their way to enquire. Once or twice, after I had recovered, I walked; but it was not easy to carry provisions home; they were often bulky and sometimes heavy.

Spring was on its way; and summer lay ahead. There was pasture aplenty in the glades of the woods and even in the school-yard. So, an opportunity offering, we bought pony, buggy, and sleigh, a complete outfit, for one hundred dollars.

Against the winter, of course, some sort of stable would be needed. Our walks, henceforth, became logging expeditions. Armed with a hatchet, for I dared not swing an axe, we went into the bush, to select boles with a diameter of not more than six inches at the butt. I squatted down, if possible with my

back against a stump or a tree, and hacked away with my weapon till my wife, or, more often, the little girl gave warning that the tree was about to fall. Finally we dragged these poles, stripped of their branches, to the yard, where we leaned them with their tops against each other, wiring them together. Slowly, thus, in the course of months of labour, we built a pole-stable in the form of an inverted V. In the fall, we meant to have a few loads of straw thrown over the structure to make it wind-proof and warm; and to make it, ultimately, when the hay gave out, edible as well. When completed, this stable fitted our pony as a glove fits the hand.

Another difficulty had to be solved. The pony, left to roam the countryside in search of pasture, became wild and hard to catch when wanted. A regular routine established itself. With or without the help of the school-children, we manœuvred till we had the little horse inside the school-yard. Then May stood and played her mouth-organ. Instantly the shaggy little beast would come and stand over her, touching her shoulder with hanging lip. When we first discovered this musical propensity, or this friendship between horse and child, we were afraid to make use of it, for the pony was a fierce kicker; but we soon convinced ourselves that he would never hurt the little girl. When he was standing thus, May, still playing and holding the mouth-organ with one hand, reached up with the other and took the pony by the mane. Then anyone could walk up and slip his bridle on.

Thus our lives, for the moment, resembled an idyll.

The summer holidays coming around again, my wife re-engaged for the following year; in the fall a book of mine was to appear; we were full of hope.

From day to day, during that summer, I expected to receive the proof sheets of *Over Prairie Trails*; but they did not come. At last I wrote to the publishers.

In their answer they stated briefly that economic conditions forced them to postpone publication indefinitely. Meanwhile I was to consider myself at liberty to offer the book elsewhere.

The old story was beginning over again. I had already offered the book to every Canadian publisher.

At once the trouble with my spine made itself felt again. For seven weeks I had to remain in bed; and, since we were so near Winnipeg, my wife began to urge me once more to seek medical or surgical help. I did as she wanted me to; but my choice of a practitioner was necessarily blind. I happened to hit upon one who specialized in fallen stomachs; and he promptly diagnosed a fallen stomach in my case. For months on end I was bandied about from one physician to another; and all of them had abundant X-ray photographs taken.

Out of the nine hundred and fifty dollars of my wife's income, we spent over six hundred on doctor's bills.

Which was not the worst. The worst was that all our hopes with regard to the book were dashed to the ground; and that was serious for several reasons. My wife kept repeating that she did not mind being no matter how poor, so long as our poverty was borne for the sake of some sort of achievement. I knew that achievement meant publication to her, if not financial success. She never put it that way. What she said was that she was willing to go on indefinitely provided I went on writing. But I knew only too well that the other thing stood behind it at least as a hope.

I myself was growing weary. I had been writing for thirty years; there was nothing to show for it except stacks of manuscripts encumbering my desk.

I was thinking along new lines. In all my writing I had, so far, followed an inner urge which I had never questioned. My theoretical or critical thinking I had done in the abstract, as it were. Or it had been applied to the work of others, chiefly the dead. I had evolved certain aesthetic theories which sometimes did and sometimes did not agree with those of others—of Benedetto Croce, for instance.

Whether a book was successful or not meant nothing to me; what mattered was whether it was a work of art. But what was art?

Hamsun's *Growth of the Soil* had recently appeared. Perhaps no other book has had a more decisive influence on the formulation of my theories. For the moment its effect on me was so great that I shelved my own book, *Pioneers*, unfinished. It seemed to me that Hamsun had done what I had attempted. It is characteristic of my whole attitude towards what I came to define to myself as art, that I considered it entirely unnecessary to finish a book the subject of which had been successfully dealt with by another. This attitude is not invalidated by the fact that I resumed the book at a later stage. I came to the conclusion that my aim had, after all, been fundamentally different from Hamsun's. In Hamsun's book I came to see a thing I abhorred, namely, romanticism; which means essentially a view of life in which circumstance is conquered by endeavour only if endeavour is aided by the *deus ex machina*. In other words, as I expressed it to myself, if man is justified by faith instead of by works; or if faith persists in the face of the strongest disproof and is ultimately upheld by an external intervention, natural or supernatural. This intervention is personified, in Hamsun's book, by the figure of Geissler. That has never been my view. Incidentally, speaking for once in self-defence, this fact alone should have protected me against Lorne Pierce's assertion that *The Yoke of Life* is a "pale imitation of *Jude the Obscure*". *The Yoke of Life* may be an artistic failure; and, personally, I consider *Jude the Obscure* a very great

book, artistically one of the greatest novels ever written; but it is a pessimistic book; whereas *The Yoke*, whatever it may be worth, stands beyond pessimism and optimism. It was, by the way, conceived before *Jude* was written; it was written before *Jude* came to my hand. I was then, as I am today, handicapped by my inability to buy books; and libraries have always cold-shouldered me, at least in this country. I found it easier to get books from Berlin or Paris than from Winnipeg.

But to return to that fall of 1920. Roughly speaking, this was the position at which I had arrived in my thinking.

Art has its being, not in the activity of the artist—which is only its occasion—but in the mental and emotional reaction of him to whom it is addressed: there is its true and only material; what is commonly called its material should properly be called its tools.

Just as a tree, falling in virgin forest, out of earshot of man or beast, does not produce sound but merely a wave-like disturbance of the air, thus writing which finds no reader does not produce art, which is in its very nature a reaction. I likened my work to such a tree falling; its sound arises merely in the nerve-centres of him who hears. I remained unheard; there was no sound; there was no art. My work was futile. So long as I remained my sole reader, whatever of cunning there may have been in my writing—and, naturally, I thought there was a good deal—was a sort of spiritual self-abuse. There was, of course, the usual explanation of my lack of success in which the majority of unsuccessful writers indulge; namely, that the fault lay with others not with themselves. In my own case, I have always dismissed that explanation as too facile. It did not seem to fit the facts. From the facts, however, I suffered. Today I know that nobody finds in art what he does not bring to it, if only potentially . . .

Years later, in the prologue to this book, I have dealt with this same question from a different point of view.

When school had re-opened in the fall, I wasted a good deal of time by surrendering to my despondency. I did not mind being poor; I did not mind remaining obscure. What I did mind was that all my past and present endeavour echoed away in a void, ineffectual, useless. I was a burden pressing the earth; I was a drag on my wife. There was only one way in which I could redeem myself in her eyes: by making money; and it will be seen, by those who read between the lines, that here, indeed, there was a fall. For the present year, however, it was too late.

In this mood, one of despair, just to be doing something, I sat down to write at last one of the two books which I had now been planning for thirty

years. From the beginning I knew I was spoiling it; just as later I was to spoil *The Master of the Mill*, because a publisher took it upon himself to advance me a considerable part of the possible royalties. In order to write the *Ant Book* in a way which would satisfy me, I had to write it out of an exuberance of triumph, sitting, as it were, on top of the world. As it was, it became harsh and bitter; it became a grumbling protest against the insanity of human institutions; it became a preachment. What it should have been was a laughing comment on all life, which, from moment to moment is always in error; while, through the ages, it slowly creeps up, up, up. It was an axiom with me that human evolution has not yet freed itself from its animal trammels. So far, the book has withstood all endeavour to remedy its fundamental defect; for, as I have said, I was never again to free myself of economic bondage; and with me, too, as someone has said of somebody else, the kind of success I wanted would have acted as a tonic, whereas failure acted as a specific poison.

Suddenly a ray of hope blazed like a meteor through our firmament.

A copy of the current issue of the *Saturday Evening Post* having strayed into our cottage, my wife, browsing in it, said that here was the natural outlet for *A Search for America*.

I wrote to the fiction editor, giving him a fairly accurate idea of what the book was.

To my surprise I received a prompt answer saying that the editor was extraordinarily interested in books of the type I described. Could I let him have a copy of the manuscript by such-and-such a date? If so, it would have his personal attention. After the date named, it would be dealt with by others; for he was going to leave on his holiday.

There was no typescript!

Allowing for the time the manuscript would have to spend in transit, the date gave me ten days.

I made a careful count; even the recently abridged version was of a hundred and fifty thousand words. Fifteen thousand words a day?

What was worse, I had no typewriter ribbon fit to use. The one which I had bought with the machine was worn to shreds; another which the banker at Eden had given me after it had been discarded for office use proved to be so dry that it would not yield a legible line. I thought of writing through a sheet of carbon; but my carbons were also exhausted. I had no money with which to buy carbon or ribbon; we shall see in a moment just how poor we were.

And then I had an inspiration. Using the second ribbon, I typed a line over twice, in the same space; it became faintly legible; repeating the process for a third time, I produced a good line.

I set to work. Rising at five in the morning, I settled down at the typewriter; and after a hurried breakfast at eight, I returned to it; and again after dinner. By four o'clock I was completely exhausted.

But at that hour my wife came home; and she promptly took the typewriter over. She was slower than I; for, in spite of my one-finger technique, I had by this time developed a considerable speed. Yet even she, while I rested and later laid the fire for supper, bringing in, with May's help, wood and water for the night and the next day, managed to type out some five or six pages, single-spaced, of seven hundred and fifty words each. After supper, I resumed my seat at the machine and hammered away at the keys, sometimes long after my wife had given up watching me and gone to bed; she and the little girl had, in this cottage, a separate bedroom.

Thus, writing every line over three times, we did, after all, manage to produce a legible typescript of the book within the ten days.

As it turned out, we might have taken our time about it; for the *Saturday Evening Post* very promptly returned the book with a printed rejection slip. I am firmly convinced that the manuscript never reached that fiction editor.

In fact, we might have taken seven years for the task; for it was not till 1927 that the book was at last printed from that very typescript. But when it appeared, it did some extraordinary things for us; it made an instant success which has since run into tens of thousands of copies.

Before the end of the year I was to have one more attack of my spine trouble. A local teachers' convention was to be held in the city; and my wife had agreed to give an address on the teaching of foreign-born children.

Early in the morning I drove her, in our cutter, for the snow lay deep by that time, to Little Britain on the electric car line. The little girl, of course, came along for the ride. We arranged that I should meet my wife again at four o'clock. Then May and I returned to Ashfield.

It was a bright, cold winter day; and all went well till, on our return home, May and I had alighted in the yard. The little girl ran into the house which we never thought of locking.

Just as, having unbuckled the pony's back-band, I was reaching up to strip the harness over his rump, preparatory to stabling him, I sat down in the snow. The pony, with his harness on his back, walked off to his diminutive stable.

It was close to the road; and as I lay there, a pair of bob-sleighs passed, with two men on the flat rack. They saw me; and one of them said to the other, plainly audible to me, "Drunk as usual." The strange thing was that I did not believe that either of them had ever seen me before; certainly neither had ever seen me drunk. The only intoxicant I used was my work.

I lay still for a while, exploring the possibilities by tentative, very slight movements. Then, carefully, I worked my way to the steps and at last called for the little girl, now five years old.

When she opened the door and saw me, she became frightened and ran away, calling, “Don’t do that, daddy! Don’t do that!” She thought I was trying to scare her in jest. But I spoke to her and succeeded in quieting her down. Then, with her help, and with a chair to lean on, I got to my bed. At noon, under my directions, it was she who got us our lunch.

By three o’clock I was so far recovered that I somehow made my way back to the sleigh. I was on the point of sending May for help when a farmer happened to pass. He put the horse between the shafts.

I fetched my wife from the station; but when we got home, I had to be helped into the cottage and to bed where I remained for several weeks.

This attack made me very despondent, for I was already planning a way out of our troubles. Strange to say, when I got up again I could handle myself better than I had been able to do for years; and as it turned out, six years were to go by before I had another attack. As if to make up for the respite, however, it seemed as if the seriousness of every successive attack stood in direct proportion to the time elapsed since the previous one.

As I have mentioned, out of an income of nine hundred and fifty dollars for the year, over six hundred dollars went for doctor’s bills, X-ray examinations, and treatments prescribed. Nothing seemed to do me the slightest good. Now this was the year when prices of the post-war period reached their highest points. Sugar was twenty-eight dollars a hundred pounds; butter, which we went without, was a dollar; flour, in this wheat country, was twelve dollars the bag. There was no abundance of anything in our cottage. The little girl was excessively fond of jams, which we could not afford. I personally have always considered it as the nadir of our fortunes when, at Christmas, we found that all we could spend on the little girl was thirty-five cents.

Early in the new year I went to Selkirk to lay in a scanty stock of necessary supplies. For the second time in my life I *found* money; a five-dollar bill this time. I laid the whole of this princely sum out in strawberry jam. At home, the rejoicing was great.

But the central fact determining our outlook was that the book had failed to appear.

My wife had done what to almost any other woman would have seemed the impossible; and I was in revolt. Once more I broached the plan of returning to high-school teaching. My wife did not believe I could or would do it; but she saw my despondency and humoured me.

It seemed a hint of providence which decided the issue.

Eden was advertising for a principal and an entrance-to-high-school teacher. Playfully, my wife and I laid a wager. If we were both accepted, so that we could teach together in the same school, and at a joint salary of not less than three thousand dollars, we should go; if only one of us was accepted, we should decline.

But I felt confident that Eden would jump at the chance of having me back; and so it turned out. Since they could not have me without my wife—we had made that abundantly clear—they engaged both of us.

When school closed, we had nothing in reserve, not even enough to pay for the removal; and besides, my clothes were in rags. But we sold horse, buggy, and sleigh for what they had cost us; and—a curious windfall—my wife received a bonus of one hundred dollars for having stayed out her full year at Ashfield.

PART FOUR

AND AFTER

X

AT EDEN we remained for a single year; for, with salaries of qualified teachers still rising, we found that, in making a change, we could better ourselves by four hundred dollars a year; and, for the moment, nothing counted but our earnings. We moved to Rapid City where, incidentally, my work was lighter than at Eden, and where my wife occupied the position as principal of the public school.

I must touch on three points, my health being the first.

Though now and then I had a minor set-back, I held out wonderfully well as far as the spine was concerned. But as if to make up for that, another serious trouble declared itself. As was mentioned in its proper place, I had, at the age of fourteen, undergone an operation for *Otitis Media*. From that age I had lived to be fifty without further suffering from that source. Now suddenly my ears began to plague me again; and there developed an ever-increasing deafness. It was this deafness, in conjunction with other things, which shortly forced me to abandon all further thought of class-room teaching. It is a most distressing handicap to me today.

There was something ironical about it; for, before accepting the position at Rapid City, which called for a university degree, I had at last regularized my standing. When, after writing on the third-year examinations at Gladstone, I had left the town and returned to the pioneer districts in the bush-country, where my second period as a writer was to begin, all academic aims had yielded place to literary ones. I knew, of course, that the Department of Education at Winnipeg would have allowed me to go to Rapid City without the degree; but it was repellent to me to ask once more for a favour. Besides, I considered the examinations as a mere formality. On very short notice, seventeen days, I went to Winnipeg to write on the fourth-year course, with German and French as majors. I passed with first-class honours. The heads of both departments, Professor Osborne of the French and Professor Heinzelmann of the German department, strongly recommended me to go on to Chicago or Harvard and to get my Ph.D. But I considered such proposals as being beside the point. I had never desired academic honours for their own sakes; and I had to consider the loss of time as well as the expense which such a course would involve. The irony consisted in this that, for eight years I had filled positions requiring the degree without holding it; and now that I held it, I was, within two years, to be forced by my deafness to give up teaching!

Secondly, I received, at Rapid City, late in the summer, the by-now-no-

longer-expected proofs of *Over Prairie Trails*; and in the fall of that year, 1922, the book appeared in print. The first thousand copies were sold within two months; but, unfortunately, the second edition could not be got ready before the New Year; and accordingly, owing to the peculiar conditions of book-selling in Canada, it fell flat.

The publication had far-reaching consequences for my life as a writer; above all, it brought me a number of new friends who were of my own mentality, who encouraged me, and with whom I could discuss my work. I became acquainted with the Wesley-College group in Winnipeg, notably Arthur L. Phelps, Dr. Riddell, and Watson Kirkconnell. These were followed, somewhat later, by the late W. L. Grant of Upper Canada College, Dr. W. J. Alexander, the dean of the teaching of English literature in Toronto, and Carleton Stanley, Professor in McGill University, later president of Dalhousie University.

Thirdly, just before leaving Eden, we bought a Ford car. With that purchase began a chain of developments which has not yet reached its end and which, in retrospect, seems to me to be the most disastrous departure I had ever made in my life. If I were to give a separate title to that part of this record which deals with it, I could only call it *Externalization*—meaning the externalization of a life which, so far, had been concentrated on the realization of purely internal aims. It meant the temporary degeneration of all my powers; and I am only just recovering from it, when, quite, possibly, it may be too late.

Once before, at Virden, when I furnished our house, I had done what might have led to such an externalization. Two circumstances, which in themselves had seemed misfortunes, had in reality saved me. Firstly, the furniture had been bought on the time-payment plan which, except in the case of essentially externally-minded people, is bound to lead to its own collapse; and the purchase was immediately followed by a long and trying illness.

Here is the point. People like myself should never allow themselves to be side-tracked into material ambitions; which, of course, does not necessarily mean that they should be or remain poor. It should be their only aim to live in conditions which require a minimum of energy and mental distraction for their upkeep. My wife saw this quite correctly when, in 1928, she proposed that we go to the northern end of Lake Winnipeg, there to live among Indians in the wilderness. Why we did not do so will appear in due time.

Naturally, the disastrous consequences of the new departure did not show at once.

On my shelves stood scores of manuscripts awaiting either publication or a final revision to fit them for the press. They, or some of them, for I did not

consider all of them worth troubling about, were sufficient to keep the publishing mill grinding for a good many years. Among them was some of my best work—*Settlers of the Marsh*, for instance, which was still in its three-volume form. By this time I had changed my mind about Hamsun's *Growth of the Soil*; it no longer appeared to me to be one of the eternal books; nor did its ultimate aim any longer seem to be the same as mine.

Consequently, *Settlers of the Marsh* was once more taking possession of me. It was in that year, in the summer of 1923, subsequent to our first year at Rapid City, that I finished my work on it, apart from the ruthless cutting-down it received two years later.

Since a measure of detail may throw some light on the story I have to tell, the story of a conflict between material and spiritual things, I will add a brief account of how I came to take the book up again.

We had, in our car, gone to a small, unfrequented, but marvellously fine-sanded beach on Lake Winnipeg, south of the little town of Matlock, there to spend the holidays at small expense in the company of a copse of willows and the waters of the great lake. We had two tents, one for sleeping, one for every other purpose of the simple life; and, in addition, of course, we had the Ford car. For the moment it was our aim to do nothing that was not implied in the day-to-day tasks of campers.

For a week or so I was kept busy putting together, out of drift-wood, a rustic table and a bench or two. We took our daily swims in the lake; we had long walks along the neighbouring beaches, north and south; and we explored the bush that skirts the lake. All of which involved a minimum of mental exertion. Our fireplace was a sheltered nook on the crest of the beach; and at night we used to light huge fires there, ten, sixteen feet long; and when the flames had subsided, we used to sit about in deck-chairs, irradiated by the ruddy glow of the embers, and to enjoy the peace of interstellar space. Even the thought that that peace was no more than the effect of infinite distance from the seat of fierce and fiery revolutions contributed to our contentment. Our nearest earthly neighbours, too—who were Indians—were a mile and a half away. It is in itself characteristic that what happened should have happened under such circumstances.

One day, while going about my tasks, in the most leisurely way, my mind began to revolve about that book, *Pioneers*; at first in a detached, almost ironic way, as if it barely concerned me any longer; as if, indeed, it belonged among the other follies of my youth. I had been at work on that book since 1917, during the fall and winter of the long drives over prairie trails; and in 1920, in that marvellously fruitful spring, I had worked it out. As of its own accord, that spring, its "pattern", as I call it, had emerged. But even then one scene had

defied me—the scene between Clara and Niels which, in the later, published version, occupies pages 231 to 244. I had seen clearly what these two people had to say to each other when, at last, they stood face to face on the rock-bottom of their human nature; but somehow I had failed to see just how they would say it. It may be simpler if I say that I had been afraid of tackling that scene.

The novel reposed, strangely—for did it not look as if I had had a presentiment?—in the back of the Ford car, tied up in a bundle. I thought of how it had worked itself out, slowly, inevitably; for the central figure, Niels Lindstedt, reached far back into the past, to a summer day when, in some little lake in Nebraska or South Dakota, I had had a swim with a young Swede who, for some reason or other, confided to me that, up to the day of his recent marriage, he had not known of the essential difference between male and female. In 1920 I had fitted the whole story together, setting it into the panorama of the Manitoba bush settlement between Glenella and Amaranth, or between Gladstone and Falmouth. I remembered, and smiled at myself, how feverishly I had worked; how I had been impatient at the necessity of eating and sleeping; how I had again wished to be able to project the whole vision as it were by a single flash of lightning struck out of my substance by some divine steel; for landscape, characters, destinies, they were all there, but still hidden by the veil which could be lifted only by slow "creation".

And suddenly, here at the beach . . . I don't know what manner of imp it was that, after a week or so, jumped at my throat and threatened to throttle me unless I set to work, then and there, without further delay and excuse, and wrote that missing, central, pivotal scene.

Consider the raw injustice of the thing. For years I had been absent-minded, forcing myself by a sheer effort of the will to attend to my daily tasks; for years I had been unable to enjoy the beauty of any landscape, for in every scene I had set eyes on I had looked only for what was relevant to the setting of my book; for years I had, in every person with whom I came into contact, not excluding wife and child, reacted only to what referred to the human world inhabiting the bush-country of Manitoba as I had "created" it; for the landscape as it lives in this novel and in others, and its human inhabitants as well, were mine, were the product of my mind; yet, to me, they had become more real than any actuality could have been. For years, yes, decades, every figure in this novel, as in others, had, from day to day, sucked my life blood to keep itself going, leaving me limp as a rag, making me a bore to others and a burden to myself.

And here, at last, I had shaken off all that; I had bought a car, I was having a holiday—the first that could be so called in thirty years; shortly I should

again be engaged in doing part of the work of the world; and I was trying to lay in a store of strength and courage to carry on for another year.

But this imp that whispered to me proposed to throw me into the furnace and burn me to a cinder, in order to distil my blood and infuse it into two creatures who had no right to exist on this earth except what right I had myself bestowed upon them.

The trouble was that, after all, I *had* given them birth in my mind and, therefore, power to dispose of my substance. I had, scores of times, gone through the same experience before, and so I knew that no protest would avail; it was best to give in without further struggle.

Henceforth, every morning after breakfast, taken in a sort of wistful and apprehensive silence, I withdrew behind a willow-clump on the beach-crest where I had as much privacy as I had ever had in a study, except that startled birds and furtive small mammals intruded; for at any human intruder, those of my camp not excluded, I scowled fiercely. “Come within compass of my eyes, and you do so at your peril; if looks can kill, you are as good as dead.” And thus I wrestled with the Lord, trying to force him to delegate to me His power of giving life.

When, after three or four hours, I emerged, I was good for nothing; I was a mere fragment of a man, fit only to be put to bed; and when, after weeks of effort, towards the end of our stay, I came out to be my ordinary self again, I was mild once more, it is true, gentle, and ready to eat from the hand of my wife; but I had lost weight instead of putting it on; and I was less fit to do a year’s teaching than I had been when we had started our holiday.

But the scene was written; the last link in the chain of that novel was forged; and, for a year or two, there was satisfaction in that; though, today, I no longer ascribe so much importance to the scene as I did at the time; others seem more vital to me; but the book as such “stands”.

The interlude cost me my holiday; but I think of it with regretful longing; it was to be the last but one time in seventeen years that I felt I had done what I was meant to do. The experience was to be repeated only once: when I wrote certain parts of *The Chronicle of Spalding District*, as I shall ever call that book, in spite of the publishers. It was to be, so far, the last but one time that, in my work, the miracle happened by means of which the words, which were my tools, transcended themselves and became entities of their own.

And then I went back to my last year of teaching; I did not, of course,

know that it was going to be the last. The fact is that, during that year, I felt as if I were fighting a desperate struggle against drowning in the ever-mounting tide of deafness.

Just a word about that deafness, for many people with whom I come in contact fail to see what an affliction it is.

In company with a single person, I can still carry on a conversation, provided the person speaks with reasonable distinctness and sits with the full light on his face; for I have developed a marvellous skill in lip-reading. The worst trouble is that I cannot distinguish direction of sound; so that, when several people are engaged in talk with me, I never know who is speaking and therefore cannot focus my eyes on his lips. It will be readily understood how impossible, in these circumstances, class-room work must become. Often, even when I hear the sound of speech, I hear it only dimly; and, not having seen the lips of the speaker, I reconstruct, out of blurred fragments, what may or may not have been said, ex-post-facto.

My wife and I often laugh about it; for I may sit in company, and people may think they are carrying on an interesting discussion with me; they are often surprised at the readiness with which I agree when they unfold heterodox views; they are even delighted; and it has come back to me that I have been quoted as endorsing views with which I disagree to the point of violence. The fact is that I nod obligingly to almost anything that is being said; or I utter a few non-committal words which are fastened on to as implying agreement. When it is imperative that I should understand, or when laughter follows something that has been said, so that I wish to share in the laughter, I simply look at my wife; and to everybody's surprise and, sometimes, embarrassment, my wife, taking care that I see her lips, repeats what has been said. Invariably, in such cases, there is silence all around—not the silence of attention—and I catch every word. As for music, I have learned to appreciate the radio; for I can glue my comparatively sound ear to the loud-speaker; and I can turn on the volume. It has been found necessary to remove the radio to a room from which sound does not carry throughout the house; for otherwise all conversation elsewhere would have to cease, drowned out by the thunder of the machine which, as a rule, I turn on twice a week. Until two years ago when I got my radio, I had not heard any music for decades.

Thus, even an affliction can be the source of fun.

Watching, then, the progress of my deafness with a sort of humorous fascination, I was all the more intent on making the most of my remaining powers. I have hinted that the purchase of the car was a violently new departure for us; and I half anticipated that it would prove a disastrous one; it, too, I watched with humorous fascination.

Then, it may be asked, why the car?

In order fully to understand the matter, one must have lived, as an "intellectual", in a small western town. In some respects Eden was worse than any other place we had ever lived in. Our house, supplied by the school-board, for they had at last realized that they could not keep a principal unless they housed him—was little better than the shack in which I had lived before. There was no yard to speak of; there was no lawn of any description, its place being taken by a patch of foul weeds. The by-ways of the district were muddy whenever they were not dusty; the highway had become unsafe for the pedestrian through the ever-increasing motor traffic. We were as much prisoners in our house as we had been at Ashfield before we bought the pony; worse in a way, for at Ashfield there had been a yard and, around it, the woods.

And . . . the brutal fact is that we had the money now; though, of course, we never thought for a moment of buying anything but the cheapest car we could get. Above all, we both needed holidays; and that meant the ability to go away, for days or for weeks. It was the time when camping became fashionable. Tourist-camps had not yet become the abomination they grew to be a few years later; besides, the car could take us beyond their range, into the wilds.

But the mere fact of possession had its influence and bore its fruit. Our eyes were focused on material gain.

Faced with the necessity of giving up my position by the end of the second year at Rapid City, what was to take its place in supplying us with a sufficient income? The years were rolling around; even my wife was in her thirties now; soon, soon old age would be upon us; what was needed was money.

When *Over Prairie Trails* and *The Turn of the Year* had appeared, I made, urged by my wife, a new attempt to get other books published. Before I did so, I tested them out by letting a few of my new friends read this or that, or by reading extracts to them or in public.

For I had become extraordinarily diffident with regard to all work that had been finally written. When I first conceived a book, I felt perfectly sure of myself; confronted with the written page, I was assailed by doubt. It was true that the two books so far published had met with nothing but applause from the people whose judgment I valued.

But these were essays dealing with the landscape and the weather of Manitoba. So far, not one of my novels had been tested; and I hesitated over them. I did offer *A Search for America* to McClelland & Stewart who had printed the other two books; they promptly declined. Besides, I believed what

they said, namely, that they had lost money on me; I did not want them to lose any more. According to my wife, I had given them, by this offer, an opportunity to cover any hypothetical deficit; they had allowed that opportunity to slip by.

There was one explanation: while my essays had found their small public, my narrative was perhaps not, was most likely not, sufficiently compelling to put itself over. I still, fondly, believed that publishers knew what they were doing when they decided to accept or decline.

At last I wrote to Arthur L. Phelps, asking him to read a few chapters of the *Pioneers* in manuscript. He did and applauded. It was he whom I asked because, under the spell of *Over Prairie Trails*, he had undertaken to write an introduction to *The Turn of the Year*. My hesitation was over the question whether my characters were alive, or came to life, in the book. He answered with an emphatic affirmative.

I made a clean typescript of Volume One; and even then I hesitated.

Characteristically, when it came to making once more a definite offer, I offered Macmillans the *Search*, still in that manuscript made within ten days at Ashfield. They declined. On my part, this was something like a subterfuge; for I still believed—and I believe today—that, artistically, this was my weakest book and would, therefore, stand the best chance with the public; whereas *Pioneers*—in which, so far, Niels Lindstedt's tragedy occupied, comparatively, a very much smaller space than it did in the later abridgment—went, in my opinion, too deep into human nature to strike a publisher as a good risk; like Ibsen's dramas it refused to stay on the stage and came out, beyond the footlights, into real life.

The book was too real, too true. In that land of the imagination, where matters work themselves out to more valid conclusions than in real life—if they didn't, the Wellses and the Hogbens would be right; there would be no justification for art—I had described exactly what happened, no more; but even in that fuller form it was, in Shaw's phrase, an unpleasant novel. Personally, I thought it a great book; personally, I loved it as a beautiful thing; but . . . To this day I am not quite sure that it conveys to others what it conveys to me. If it does, nobody has ever said so.

But Phelps' striking reaction encouraged me; and, giving *A Search for America* up as a dead loss, I at last sent Volume One of the *Pioneers* to Macmillans. It came back with the effect of instantaneousness. A letter accompanying the rejection stated that no book of the kind stood a chance in Canada. This from Macmillans!

Whereupon I went to work slashing the book to pieces and reducing it to

its present one-volume form.

Then, having at last given up my position, I ran amok.

Once more I made six clean copies, typewritten this time, of every book I considered finished. My wife had faith in all of them. Nothing, according to her, was needed but that they should be offered to the right people. Ultimately some publisher would “take me up”, in bulk, as it were; and the public would awaken to my merits.

I made a long list of publishing firms, hundreds, thousands perhaps, in the United States and in England; and henceforth we made it a rule never to worry over rejections. The manuscripts went out and came back; sometimes there were several in a day; and everyone received a new wrapper of brown packing paper—I bought a whole roll of it!—and then it went out again. We never allowed a manuscript to remain in the house for more than twenty-four hours unless a Sunday intervened. We must have spent hundreds of dollars on postage; but then, up to the summer of 1924, we had been making three thousand four hundred dollars between us; and we had never changed our style of living. We had savings at last; and my wife insisted that I should devote myself entirely to writing and to the task of placing my work. In academic circles my existence as a Canadian writer was slowly being acknowledged. My time was bound to come, according to her.

We spent another summer in our camp on Lake Winnipeg, this time in undisturbed leisure; and yet shadows gathered about us. I was fifty-two years old; my life was lived. My wife’s salary as principal of the public school in Rapid City had been raised to thirteen hundred dollars; and on that we could subsist.

Then, in the fall of the year, I had my first invitation to speak to an audience of men of letters.

Instead of giving an address or lecture, I made up my mind to read from unpublished work, selecting for the purpose one essay dealing with some aspect of literary criticism; one short story, *Snow*, later to appear in *Queen’s Quarterly*—February, 1932; and the scene of what was now *Settlers of the Marsh* which had been written two years before on the beach of Lake Winnipeg.

The audience was small; but it so happened that Lorne Pierce, the editor of the Ryerson Press of Toronto, was present. Like myself he is deaf; but he must have understood enough to be curious. After the reading, he asked me for the manuscript of *Settlers* and invited me to have breakfast with him next morning, at the Fort Garry Hotel.

When I met him there, his first words were, “I had a very bad night, owing

to that confounded book of yours." He had started to read it after going to bed and had found it impossible to lay the book down before he had finished it.

He asked me to leave the manuscript with him; he would see what he could do with it. Briefly, the outcome was that, in the summer of 1925, George Doran printed the book in New York; and the Ryerson Press handled it in Canada.

Its publication became a public scandal. Libraries barred it—London, Ontario, forming an honourable exception; reviewers called it "filthy"—W. T. Allison, over the radio; Lorne Pierce nearly lost his job over it; people who had been ready to lionize me cut me dead in the street.

As a trade proposition the book never had a chance; what sale it had was surreptitious. I resented this; it was the old story of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* over again. A serious work of art was classed as pornography; but with this difference that the error, in Flaubert's case, increased the sales; he lived in France. In my case, and in Canada, it killed them. Above all, of course, it was before the time when sex novels had become the fashion; and the problem of the book had not been treated with that levity which was shortly to make Aldous Huxley's early work so sweeping a success. The book vibrated with the horror at the abuse of a natural instinct which converted desire into lust.

During the summer, however, the prospect of seeing at last a novel of mine appearing in print had, for the moment, had an effect on me similar to that of the acceptance, by McClelland & Stewart, of *Over Prairie Trails*.

Between the dates of the acceptance and the publication of *Settlers of the Marsh*, the whole of *The Chronicles of Spalding District* came into being. I have to speak of it once more at this point.

I have explained at some length how, in the fall of 1894, the central figure of Abe Spalding had come to me; how later, in 1912, the saving of his great crop had been added to his story; how, in the spring of 1913, I had made the observations which were to result in the description of the "great flood" coming down from the Pembina Mountains; and lastly, I might add, the death of Charlie had been added when, at Eden, I witnessed from the window of my class-room, a scene enacted on the road coming down from the Riding Mountains, in which a pupil of mine was crushed under the wheels of his load of wheat. Even the seduction of Spalding's daughter Frances and the development of Abe's character which was begun by it had had their origin in actual happenings witnessed. Nothing of all that had been written down; but by this time it formed part of the novel as it lived in my mind: Abe Spalding had at last lived his life; yet something had to set me on the way.

Before I could write the book, Abe Spalding would have to die; and I had

to see what became of his work after death.

From this it might seem as though the book were a patch-work compounded of episodes taken from actual life. It is not; in every case the actual happening merely released in me certain reactions which led me on. As far as I was concerned, it was rather as if, in what happened, I *recognised* what had already happened to Abe Spalding. Nothing of what I witnessed was used directly or in a literal sense.

I am emphatic about this because self-styled critics have ascribed to me as a person opinions and emotional reactions which were Abe Spalding's. It is ever so. When a process of observation or analysis leads a writer to trace a given philosophy of life—in this case, the philosophy which is based on moribund moral judgments—critics assert that philosophy to be the writer's, the more cogently so the more convincing he makes its manifestations. I am, of course, not talking of real critics; with very few exceptions I have not met them. One "critic" exclaimed, after reading the book, "Here is a hero after Mr. Grove's heart!" I wondered who had told him that; for I believe I have hidden myself fairly well.

What I wish to underline is precisely the fact that, in Abe Spalding's career, as given in my book, there is not one episode, not one opinion arrived at by him, not one feeling released in him, which, properly speaking, had anything to do with myself, beyond the fact that I laboured to understand them. With the building-up of the story I had, consciously, no more to do than I could have with the growth of a tree in my fields. I have tried to explain this in an article published in the *University of Toronto Quarterly*; but, as far as I know, there has been nobody who had ears to hear.

It is for that reason that I feel I must insert what follows; for, strangely, the very thing which set me to work at the task of writing—which was also the thing that completed Abe Spalding's story in my mind—never found its way into the book. Abe Spalding's death, and what followed after, was necessary in order to round off his life before I could write it; but for the story of the district as I had conceived it it was irrelevant; and in the finished work it is never mentioned.

One day in the fall of the year a friend of ours, a real-estate and insurance man in town invited me to accompany him on occasions when he went driving through the country to see new "prospects" or to collect premiums. I was glad to do that; for I was always curious with regard to the past of any district I lived in; and he, having been born and raised at Rapid City, was full of the lore of the country. As a rule, when he alighted to do business. I remained in my seat in the car and waited for him.

One day, however, we stopped in the yard of a place the very magnificence of which lured me to stroll about among the buildings. Inside of a rustling windbreak of cottonwoods, still green, enclosing a four acre yard, stood two vast and imposing barns painted white; to the east of them stood an equally imposing house built of red brick.

I wanted to see more of the place. To my surprise I found, when I opened the horse-barn, in a building capable of housing fifty or sixty head, two sorry nags lost in the vast expanses like the proverbial needles in a haystack; and in the cow-barn, where I counted a hundred and twenty stanchions, with automatically-filling water pails and a battery of milking machines, I found one single scrub cow, Holstein as to colour, Jersey as to size and conformation, looking miserable and forlorn where she stood humped up. As Dr. Johnson would have said, she was ill-bred, ill-born, ill-nurtured, and ill-kept; and no doubt she was soon to be ill-killed, ill-dressed, ill-cooked, and ill-served.

When, in a mood of profound depression, but also of a finally-aroused curiosity not to be denied, I entered the magnificent house by the back door, following my friend, I found there a numerous family of tenants crowded into a single room which served at once as kitchen, dining, living, and sleeping quarters. In the other rooms, towards the front of the house, as many as I could look into through open doors, the floors of quartered oak had been ripped out, presumably to provide kindling and fuel.

This farm was in the Riding Mountains, north-west of Rapid City, two' hundred miles or more from the district of Morris—which, in my mind I had already come to call Somerville and where, for decades now, I had located Abe Spalding; but in my imagination the place transferred itself to that locality, just as my meeting with the man had transferred itself from Saskatchewan to Manitoba.

Once more the sight of all this decay behind a magnificent exterior had done something to me. I was profoundly moved. I was no longer at any concrete place near Rapid City in the Riding Mountains; I was in a vastly more vivid world where facts had meanings and became truth. It was as if I had received at once a revelation and a shock. All I saw jumped, as it were, into place, in that world of the imagination, as the tesserae of glass in a kaleidoscope fall into ever-changing patterns when you rotate the tube.

"Abe Spalding is dead!" I said to myself. "I have stumbled on the place which was his and which has been handed over to shiftless tenants because his aging widow has moved into a town similar to the one from which she had come."

When my friend and I were sitting once more in the car, he tried to tell me

the story of that farm; but I did not listen; my deafness helped me; but I remember to this day the effort I made not to look at his lips.

Once more I wish to call attention to the fact that nothing of all that I had seen and inferred went into the book as it came to be written and ultimately printed under the title *Fruits of the Earth*. That is the rule with me; actual conditions and actual happenings merely help to set off the processes of creation.

That night I began to write Abe Spalding's story.

And here is another point which I wish to make. So long as my life remained one of the imagination only, there always came a point at which, if the central figure of an evolving story-context was vital enough not to fade from my world, I had to write that story whether I wished to or not. I think it should by this time be abundantly clear that in this, the writing process, there was never the slightest thought of publication; there was never any thought of a public. "Nobody but a blockhead," says Dr. Johnson, "ever writes save for money." I am that blockhead.

And here is a second point. I always dread the writing; not merely because it involves an enormous nervous strain and a drain on my own vitality; it is much more important that, by writing the story—necessary as that process may have become—I have to take leave of the figures involved in that story. They cease to be living beings to me; they lose their "freedom" as it were; they cease to develop. But I cannot help myself. Even today, as I am writing this record, I should much rather go and hoe my corn or watch the cows in the field; I would rather do anything but write, more especially if, by doing something else, I might make a few much-needed pennies. But I also know that, unless I do as my inner needs dictate, I am letting myself in for serious trouble. For those figures of mine will not stay down; they won't let me rest or sleep; they want to be born into death. For what my writing does for them, as far as I am concerned, whether that writing be successful or not, is not so much to give them birth as it is to give them burial. They were born long ago; they have lived their lives almost in spite of myself; and now they want to die. Though there are a few deluded people—as there should be—who assert that only after these figures have died to their creator can they begin to come to life in the minds of others. It is a curious fact that I have never re-read a book of mine once it was printed.

In this record, I know, I am dying to myself.

XI

IN the spring of 1926, the publication of *Settlers of the Marsh* had proved an unmitigated disaster, and Abe Spalding had been disposed of.

A series of disasters were to overtake us. If we had ever needed a holiday, we needed it now.

In the previous year we had, in the car, gone to the Rocky Mountains; and that trip had opened our eyes to the possibilities of motor travel.

This year we went to British Columbia and California.

We were ready for the further disasters.

In the fall—to be quite precise, on September 13, soon after we had returned to Rapid City, having spent eighty-eight days on the road without ever sleeping under a roof, at a total cost of less than two hundred and fifty dollars—there was a general election. My wife cast her vote at noon, on her way to school; I followed her shortly to the polling room.

In our back yard there happened to be a pile of winter fire wood. This pile I had to pass as I returned home in order to reach the back door which I had left open. Behind the pile there was a window; and on the sill, outside, there lay a key. I stopped, looking at it; for its presence puzzled me. If that key had not been there, the whole story of my life for the next few years might have run a different course, who can tell? I half climbed up on the wood-pile and reached for it; the wood slipped under my feet and my movements, no doubt, were awkward; things happened in my spine; a second later I lay on the pile, inert.

I twisted myself on to my back; and on my back I was to remain for sixteen months.

For this attack refused to yield to rest and such treatment as we had found effective in the past; it had all the appearance of a permanent paralysis.

I was sent to the hospital at Brandon, on a stretcher, in the baggage van of the train. Again X-rays were taken; again without result. The Brandon physicians asserted that, apart from an attack of lumbago, there was nothing wrong with me. However, tentatively, they were going to remove my tonsils. Now my tonsils had served me well for fifty-four years; and I hated to part with them. I had myself shipped back to Rapid City.

The run of disasters was now broken by two encouraging things.

Hearing of my plight, Phelps and Kirkconnell came to pay me a week-end visit; and they brought word from Graphic Publishers at Ottawa that they were

willing to print any book I cared to give them. Both Phelps and Kirkconnell insisted that it should be *A Search for America*. I was reluctant to let that book go out; and it took a deal of persuasion; for by this time I had convinced myself that it needed a ninth rewriting which it was most unlikely to receive. However, Phelps and Kirkconnell insisted, and at last I gave in.

Graphic Publishers at once accepted the book.

The second thing that happened consisted in the arrival of an invitation from a Winnipeg Daily to fill a page of their magazine section once a week. I was promised a fee of twenty dollars for each contribution. I gave them a total of twenty-six short stories which netted me five hundred and twenty dollars.

Throughout that winter I lay in bed, in what, had we had the furniture for it, would have been the parlour of the house. Every morning, I rolled myself painfully over on my side, with my left hand supporting a point in my anatomy just above the hip, for, without that support, the pains soon became unbearable. My head rested on high pillows, so as to enable me to see, at a downward angle; in front of my bed the typewriter stood on a chair. Behind my back a supply of paper lay ready to hand, on the bed; and thus, in the course of twenty-six weeks, I ground out twenty-six stories of five thousand words each.

Meanwhile, every night, one or two worthy citizens of the town dropped in to help me to stand up for a minute or two; for I was determined to take myself in hand. I refused to accept the verdict that, for the rest of my life, I was to be confined to my bed.

My wife learned to drive the car.

By the time the summer holidays of 1927 came around, I was once more able to crawl about, on crutches. I had not yet left house or yard. But slowly I was reaching the point where, by careful manœuvres, I could hoist myself into the right-hand front seat of the car; and I had a few tentative rides, with my wife at the wheel.

On the last day of June we set out to spend a week or so with a brother of hers in southern Manitoba. After that, we were to visit with the Phelpses in Winnipeg.

It was at Winnipeg that the first shadow, unrecognized, of course, of the third and most stunning of the disasters fell across our path.

Our little girl, now nearly twelve years old, said a strange thing. “I wish,” she said, “we were going home.”

This was a most unusual thing for her to say; for she liked travelling. For us, it settled the matter; we started for Rapid City on the following day, July 18.

On July 19 May was gaily playing about in our yard with a playmate, her laughter and merriment echoing into my open windows. I was in bed again; it looked as if, after all, I had overdone it by making that trip.

On the morning of July 20, the little girl complained of an abdominal pain; and since her mother found that she was running a temperature, she called the doctor in who diagnosed acute appendicitis. We insisted on a consultation. An immediate operation was advised.

In the afternoon, my wife and the two doctors took May to the nearest hospital, at Minnedosa.

Before midnight she was dead.

Even today we dare not mention her when the anniversaries of her birth or her death come around.

XII

IN TOWN, it was generally expected that my wife would ask to be relieved of her work. Had she done so, she would have gone insane. It was only the necessity of going on with her routine which enabled her to live.

And now, as if we had at last paid our dues to the fates, break after break seemed to come for me. In the fall of the year, somewhat to my distress, *A Search for America* appeared, thirty-three years after I had written its first version. It was perhaps natural that I did not like the book any longer. It seemed very juvenile to me, full of garrulity and even presumption. During the last seven years I had read of the text only one brief chapter when Phelps had asked me to present something of my unpublished work to the English Club of Winnipeg. The book impressed me like the ghost of a man who had died three decades ago.

But it made an immediate success with the book reviewers; which, of course, did not mean a sales success.

Meanwhile my Winnipeg friends—friends of my work rather than of myself, for, being fifty-five years old, I had perhaps grown too set in my ways to make ready friendships—had made up their minds to place at my disposal the best that medical and surgical science had to offer. They asked me to go to the general hospital of that city and to have myself examined by the leading orthopedists of the West who had volunteered their services.

I went about Christmas; and various specialists once more had their “go” at me. An operation was proposed; my shins were to be split in order for one half of each to be grafted on the corresponding side of my spine. This entirely confirmed my old diagnosis of the trouble; new X-rays, taken in the positions which I had always advised, proved conclusively that four vertebrae were displaced. I should perhaps add that, wise at last in the ways of hospitals, I had insisted on lying in the public wards where no charge is made for X-ray photographs.

I conferred with my wife and one outside physician. The result was that we declined to have the operation performed; which left that matter where it had now been for exactly ten long years.

On January 13 I was discharged from the hospital; and a friend took me to the station in his car. At Rapid City, my wife took me home.

The following day I went, on crutches, to the post office to fetch our mail which arrived about three or four o’clock. I remember the occasion with

special vividness, for several reasons.

At the corner of Main Street stood three men, leading merchants of the town. They were talking politics. I stopped for a moment; and their conversation reminded me of the fact that, sixteen months ago, to the day, my present attack had come on just after I had cast my vote in a general election!

I had voted for a man who, regardless of party, I trusted would do under any circumstances what he considered best for the country. Not being a reader of, much less a subscriber to, any daily paper, I had never heard how that election had come out.

"By the way," I asked, "who got in, sixteen months ago?"

All three of the men looked up, amazed at my question.

"XY, of course," one of them grumbled.

XY had not been my choice.

Another of the three merchants, an extraordinarily atrabilious and skinny person—the other two were portly—was not without his share of caustic wit. He gave me a shrewd glance. "By the way," he said, "there was something strange about that. You may remember that AB was a candidate. At this polling station in town he polled one single vote. That must have been yours."

"It was," I said. "I am glad to hear of his defeat."

This caused a quick lifting of three heads. "Glad?" the atrabilious iron-monger repeated. "How do you make that out?"

"Well," I replied, "if anybody else had voted for him, I should ever after have suspected that I had been wrong in my choice."

Which was good repartee, but poor policy.

I nodded and went on to fetch my mail.

Among the letters I received was one from Graham Spry who at the time was general secretary of the Association of Canadian Clubs at Ottawa. He asked whether I would go on a six-weeks lecture tour among Canadian Clubs in Ontario. In the name of the association he offered me twenty-five dollars a lecture, with a minimum of four lectures a week, and expenses paid.

This was news indeed. I promptly accepted, of course, and as promptly received an advance of six hundred dollars on expenses; apparently Spry had been tipped off as to my financial position.

But I was still walking on crutches. I could hardly lean on them while lecturing; I took myself in hand.

The last advice my Winnipeg physicians had given me, with one of the leading orthopedists as spokesman, had been to sell my car; never again to try

“to tie my own shoe-laces”; and, for the rest of my life to consider myself an invalid, doomed to the wheel-chair!

Instead, I went to Winnipeg to have myself fitted with clothes. This was imperative if I wanted to address clubs of men and women embracing all classes of the population.

At almost the same time, no doubt as a consequence of the, so far, only literary success of the Search of which up to that date, no more than a thousand copies had been sold, *Our Daily Bread*, recently rewritten and typed, was accepted by Macmillans, both in Toronto and New York, and by Jonathan Cape in England. As far as our financial circumstances went, it seemed as though the break had come at last.

No doubt it was this fact which had its immediate results in a vastly improved physical condition; but I was far from being restored to any degree of agility when, six weeks later, I started out on my lecture tour, giving my first address at Portage La Prairie; but by sheer force of will I developed a definite technique in handling myself. For a good many months to come every movement I attempted had to be effected by a conscious effort; I could never abandon myself to instinct. Yet, I believe, few of the many hundred people who heard and saw me suspected a chronic invalidism. I was fifty-six years old but looked forty.

From the beginning my lectures were a success; but my culminating performance, on my way out, came at Ottawa where I carried off a minor triumph by merely telling the men something of my life, a very little, which gave them a glimpse of my struggles and the reasons why I had been willing to face them. After the lecture, when I was completely exhausted, I was kept on my feet bowing till, as one observer remarked to me afterwards, I “had taken three bows more than had been accorded to Stanley Baldwin”—a way of gauging success which amused me vastly.

At night, when I was to address the Women’s Canadian Club, I began speaking after nine instead of at eight o’clock; twice it had been found necessary to change into a larger hall in order to accommodate the crowd.

Already, in the afternoon, the rush for *A Search for America* had begun at the local bookstores; a second large edition—large for Canada—had to be got under way at once.

Incidentally, an American publisher enquired for the rights, but unfortunately I insisted on a large advance. The publishers who ultimately brought the book out in the United States were an unstable concern; and so was the English firm which offered to handle it. Of that I shall have to speak again; for, financially, this book which had the largest sales-success of

anything I have published was to cost me good money instead of bringing me wealth.

For the moment, however, I rode on the crest of the wave. As newspaper men expressed it, I was a "front-page head-liner" whose views on God-knows-what were eagerly printed. After Ottawa, where I had perfected my speaking technique and where, incidentally, I had discarded my canes, I went from triumph to triumph. Wherever I appeared, I was lionized; and I might have enhanced my success had I surrendered myself. But I had to husband my strength; and if I was able to go through with my tour, I owed it largely to the care with which I watched over symptoms.

By the end of the six weeks allotted to this first lecture tour I had addressed twenty-five clubs and a good many other organizations, most of them educational institutions, for my contract forbade me to address associations which rivalled the Canadian Clubs in purpose or scope. At Ottawa I had been assured that, in the coming fall, there would be a second tour, this time through the west; and, early in 1929, another tour through the east, extending to the Atlantic seaboard. Two thousand copies of *A Search for America* had been sold. I bought a one-thousand-dollar government bond.

When I returned to Rapid City, my wife and I made up our minds that this momentary success did not warrant the slightest change in the scale of our living. Whatever the lectures and my books netted us, directly or indirectly, must go into reserves. A reserve was needed worse than anything else.

As far as our financial status went, the year remained prosperous enough. In the summer we motored east, visiting all the eastern provinces except Prince Edward Island. My lecture tour had won me many friends; and some of them had extended invitations to me and my wife. Distraction was an imperative need.

In the interval between the lecture tour and the holiday trip I had prepared two books for publication: *Adolescence*, which, under the horrible and misleading publishers' title *The Yoke of Life*, was not to appear till 1930; and *It Needs to Be Said* which consisted largely of undelivered addresses, though its *pièce de résistance*, the last essay, was to be delivered as a Canadian-Club address during the fall and the following winter.

It was at this time, too, that I typed out a more or less final version of *The Chronicles of Spalding District* which again had to be ruined by a publishers' title when it finally appeared in 1933.

Henceforth, beginning with the success of these three lecture tours and with the publication of the two books of mine which had a sales success, for *Our Daily Bread* appeared in the fall of 1928, just when I began the second

tour, the development which had begun with the purchase of our first car, in 1922, began to be accelerated, the acceleration being, of course, causally connected with that success. There are many explanations; there are many excuses; and I have, since that time, often said that the catastrophic development was primarily due to the fact that the success was not large enough in a financial sense.

For ten years to come I was to struggle incessantly and to the full extent of my powers to create for myself and my wife a material environment remotely in keeping with those expectations which had been mine when I had first been stranded on this continent; or at least such living conditions as would give us the indispensable fraction of what other people, those with whom we lived in daily contact, considered the minimum to be demanded of the gifts which this modern material civilization has to bestow—gifts which, in any rational world order, should constitute the common birthright of mankind.

The Yoke of Life did not appear till we had moved to the east; and it remains to explain how and why we did so.

In the spring of 1929, when I was on my third lecture tour, again in the east, a new prospect opened before me. The president of the Macmillan Company of Canada made me an offer whereby I was to join the firm as one of its readers or editors. Since there were to be no strictly-defined office hours, for the reading could be done at home, such work would leave me freer than I had ever been in the past while making my living as a farm-hand or as a teacher. For that reason the proposal strongly appealed to me. Besides, as Mr. Eayrs, the president, expressed it, the work would pay for my bread and butter; and other earnings, royalties and lecture fees would be "velvet". We owned four thousand dollars in government bonds and had an additional thousand in the bank; not a bad showing for that brief burst of glory. I authorized Mr. Eayrs, at his request, to assemble all my books so far published under his single imprint.

During the spring and summer of 1929 we therefore made all preparations to move to Ontario. The long, severe winters of Manitoba were beginning to tell on me; and the east seemed to hold out certain prospects; two-thirds of my lecture fees had been earned there; Toronto was the centre of the publishing business; and most of such new friends as I had made lived in Ontario, Quebec, and the Maritimes.

But even before we pulled up our stakes in the west, clouds had begun to gather on our horizon. *It Needs to Be Said* had fallen flat; the only echo I received from its publication had come from Europe; the lecture field seemed to be exhausted in Canada; and, worst of all, world conditions had begun to crystallize into the Great Depression. The first fruit of the latter circumstance

was the withdrawal of the Macmillan offer.

But I had one personal reason for the removal to the east which overshadowed all others and which remained unaffected by our economic situation. I had to do something to distract my wife. At Rapid City, every street and every corner was a reminder of May. If I suffered from tragic memories, my wife suffered from a mortal wound.

It was at this time that, as an alternative to our going east, my wife proposed to go north, into the wilderness surrounding the foot of Lake Winnipeg where it empties itself into the Nelson River, there to live an entirely primitive life, in just such a shack as I had dreamt of in 1912 before I had allowed myself to be side-tracked by the interlude of my teaching career. I would gladly have done so had it not been for one single thing, namely, the appalling void which May's death had left in our lives. Already there was, in the background of our minds, the dim purpose of starting our married life over again by having a second child.

In the early fall, then, disregarding what was happening all over the world, we made the move, storing our few sticks of furniture for the time being, and using the car for the trip. Since Mr. Eayrs had offered us his summer cottage, we made our first stop at Bobcaygeon where Phelps too had a place next door which he said we might use. Between the two cottages, we spent a halcyon month full of a strange, tragic beauty. Once more we planned, determined not to consider our lives as lived.

I had two books ready for publication; and there were a score of manuscripts awaiting a last overhauling. A year or two of leisure and freedom from worry would have brought others to the fore again, the *Ant Book*, for instance. In addition, there were scores of plans. For many years, so I felt, I could keep up publication at the rate of a volume a year. It never occurred to me that, with such successes as I had had, there might ever again be the slightest difficulty in finding a publisher; I had not yet fully grasped the peculiar condition of the publishing trade in Canada which demands that a book, especially a novel, must first appear abroad where, naturally, there was no particular enthusiasm for novels with a purely Canadian intention and setting.

Thus we had a belated holiday that year, tasting to the full the vast, sad beauty of the fall; not a worry, not a care cast a shadow on our contentment; for we carefully avoided speaking or even thinking of May.

Shortly we received a second invitation. Dr. Currelly, curator of the Royal Ontario Museum of Archeology, owned a magnificent place at Canton, near Port Hope. He had just built a small but charming cottage for Susanne, his

daughter; and to this she invited us for the month of October. We accepted; and we had the most delightful change imaginable; instead of the lake, there was the farm, with marvellous elms in front of our door. The weather remained golden; and when we stepped out of our cottage, the falling leaves rustled about our feet.

It was during our stay at Canton that I heard from Graphic Publishers again; they hoped to have another book of mine. But in many ways their handling of *A Search for America* had been unsatisfactory; what sale there had been had been due to my lecture tours.

However, I was told that the company was undergoing a radical reorganization and that great things were expected from it. Since we were only two hundred miles from Ottawa, I made up my mind to see for myself.

When I arrived in the capital, I found an amazing state of affairs; but, so it seemed to me, not a hopeless one. I had by this time acquired a certain amount of insight into the workings of the publishing business; and I had ideas. These I freely discussed with such members of the directorate as I met.

When I returned to Canton, I found, awaiting me, an invitation to address certain organizations at Hamilton.

It was time for us to leave Canton; and there were friends at Simcoe who had been inviting us. Since Simcoe is only forty miles from Hamilton, we accepted both invitations.

By this time we had begun to feel at loose ends. So far, we had intentionally banished all thought for the future; we wanted to live in the present, if only for a few weeks. But at last we were faced with the question of how and where to spend the winter. I had always, perforce, been a fatalist. I often express my attitude by saying, metaphorically, “The Lord will provide”; by which I mean that it does not pay to worry unnecessarily. Had there been any immediate danger of our having to break into our invested holdings, it would have worried me very much indeed; the bonds must remain inviolate. But we still had close to a thousand dollars in the Winnipeg bank.

At Hamilton, where, as planned, we went from Simcoe, we received a new invitation, namely, as we understood it, to spend a week or two with friends there, beginning with Armistice Day.

Meanwhile what? We could not indefinitely remain at Simcoe.

The year before, during my lecture tours, I had made at least one lasting friendship at London, with R. E. Crouch, the librarian of the city. Boldly, for I was anxious to see him again, we invited ourselves to his house for the latter part of the first full week of November.

But even at London we could not outstay our welcome. By this time we

felt like castaways on an uncharted sea. On November 10, my wife, who, on account of my deafness, did all telephoning for me, spoke to our Hamilton friends over the wire. The invitation was repeated most cordially—for the Thanksgiving dinner next day.

Since we had understood the previous invitation to be for a week or two, we were disturbed by the wording of the new one. We had counted on that respite to make up our minds. Besides, all this travelling was costing us money; and we saw the moment coming when our cash-in-hand would be exhausted. Since leaving Canton we had not remained in any one place long enough to secure a remittance from Winnipeg.

On the way to Hamilton we talked matters over; but we could arrive at no decision. We were not on sufficiently intimate terms with our friends in that city to lay the situation frankly before them and to ask them to back a cheque of mine; besides, the 11th of November was a holiday; even a wire to Winnipeg would lie over till Tuesday.

We found there had, indeed, been a misunderstanding; we were not even invited to take our baggage out of our car. We never betrayed, of course, that we had expected to remain for any length of time.

Just before dark, having shared a fine turkey, we took our leave, running out of the city by the first road to which we came; it happened to be the highway to Toronto. We had about five dollars left.

We spent the night at a “tourist home” by the roadside; and next morning, our funds reduced to the price of one more filling of our gasoline tank, we set out again, still taking, by a sort of inertia, the direction of Toronto.

We had friends there; but both Eayrs and Currelly had already been our hosts that fall; and we felt it would have been an imposition to inflict ourselves on others: W. L. Grant, of Upper Canada College; the poet, E. J. Pratt; W. J. Alexander, professor emeritus of English Literature at University College; and so forth.

Again I remember the occasion with vivid accuracy; perhaps because what happened seemed to symbolize my whole life on this continent.

I had entered the city via Queen Street; and when we came to the Yonge Street crossing, espying a vacant space by the curb, I ran the car out of the line of traffic, stopped, turned to my wife, and asked, laughing, “What next?”

“Cross Yonge,” she replied laconically.

I did so, driving very slowly, to give her a chance to change her mind. But she let me proceed, at a snail’s pace, till we had left the city behind. Then we had a frugal lunch; and with the very last of my money I bought three gallons of gasoline. That left me with five cents in my pocket.

In order to get the most out of my available fuel, I speeded up now till we were approaching Port Hope. I had been anxiously watching the gasoline gauge on my instrument panel, doubtful whether we could make the town. If not, I should have to telephone to garage or service station.

Now the approach to Port Hope, along Highway Number Two, consists of a steep descent; and we had just made the first downward dip when the engine went dead with a "Ph!" We proceeded by gravity till we reached the foot of the hill, with Main Street stretching level before us. At random, as the momentum of the car exhausted itself, I turned to the curb.

Having attended to gears and brake, I looked up, feeling somewhat uncertain what to say or to do. And there, beyond the sidewalk, stood the Port Hope branch of the Royal Bank. I took that as a sign from Heaven. "The Lord will provide."

Reaching into the back seat for our club-bag, I extracted a number of papers: my driver's licence, an expired identification card, some letters, my Winnipeg bank book; and then I alighted and entered the bank.

I spread my papers on the accountant's desk. I told him I was stranded, showed him my bank book, adding that no withdrawal had been made since the last entry, and asked him whether he considered my papers sufficient warrant to cash a cheque for a hundred dollars.

He wavered.

At that precise moment a door opened from the left; and out stepped the manager. Seeing me, and taking the situation in at a glance, he held out his hand. "You need no identification here, Mr. Grove," he said. "I heard you speak in this town a year ago. What can we do for you?"

Two days later I heard that this manager had suddenly died, from causes unknown.

I reboarded the car with a hundred dollars in my pocket, filled my gas-tank, and asked once more, "What next?"

"Turn towards Bobcaygeon," said my wife.

It was a glorious, frosty, late fall day. So far, there was no snow.

By the time we got to Peterborough, my wife had made up her mind. "You will have to settle down to writing," she said. "We like the Bobcaygeon landscape; perhaps we can have one of the summer cottages fixed up for the winter."

That was what we did.

We had set out without the slightest idea of where we were going; unable to form a plan, we had left things to chance; indeed, apart from my wife's idea

that I must write, there was nothing that called for any plan. One place was as good as another. Yet, what we did was to prove decisive in precipitating us into another phase.

⁂

I felt worried. We should have to live on available funds; it was most unlikely that I should have a chance to earn money.

However, within a day or so we were settled; we were making a cottage winter-proof, at some expense; and I tried to write.

But I could not consider this move of ours as final. I had come east with the definite purpose of solving our economic problem. I did not care how I did it; but that purpose must take precedence over anything else. I felt that in various branches of business I could render valuable service; above all, of course, in the business of publishing books. My immediate prospect had been interfered with by the depression; but that very depression made me the more doubtful whether I could make a regular income with my pen. The very fact that at last we had some reserves seemed to emphasize the need of adding to them.

I had never written a line for money, not even when I wrote for the magazine section of the Winnipeg Tribune, though, in that case, I had connived at two or three changes the editors had made in my texts. The demands of the reading public had never entered into my considerations.

In spite of that I had at last had a certain measure of success. During the previous year my royalties had run to sixteen hundred dollars. Surely, I said to myself, they are never again going to fall below that sum; if they didn't, we should have all we needed from that source alone. Happily, I did not yet know that within a year that royalty income was going to fall to $32.88; and, for the next year, to precisely ten cents. But the immediate income, of course, did not constitute the whole of our problem; we had to provide for our old age as well.

I did some serious thinking. I understood at last that my whole attitude to the public and to my environment implied that I had refused to fit myself into life as it is lived in America; I had refused to conform. It is true, in one sense I had become American; I still saw America as a democratic country, and all my instincts were democratic, if not anarchic; in the sense that, in all authority imposed from without, I saw at best a necessary evil which must be reduced to a minimum. But I also had, by this time, come to the conclusion that there is no worse, no more objectionable tyranny than that of the "solid majority" as Ibsen calls it. The solid majority worships the eternal average, the colourless

mediocrity which I despised. My books exhibited numberless weaknesses, known to no one as well as to myself. At the same time I felt that slowly, slowly I was becoming a master of my craft; and, at any rate in Canada, I knew that I was the first novelist to rely, for what is commonly called "the plot", that is, for the sustaining interest which compels the reader to read on, on a deepening of human sympathy for, on an understanding of, the chief characters rather than on a heightening of curiosity and excitement. I imagined that a small fraction of my potential public had come to acknowledge that fact. It will be seen that I had not yet gauged the capacious dearth of mature judgment and sure taste in Canadian readers. Nor had I as yet fully comprehended the utterly hopeless ineptitude prevailing in what is commonly called literary criticism in Canada; for that I had to study its attitudes to others than myself. Surely, in a population of nine millions there must be a handful of people capable of appreciating genuine effort; but I still failed to see how small that handful is.

My wife, I knew, expected that, ultimately, my books would make money for me. It is true, she had once said to me, "I would rather be able, one day, to point to another book of yours on those shelves than that you should leave an estate of a hundred thousand dollars." In that she had been perfectly sincere. Yet she had also said that our only economic salvation lay in the ultimate success of my books; and I knew, of course, that often a single work gave all a writer's output, past and future, its final chance.

It was during the brief Bobcaygeon interlude that I became conscious of the contradiction involved; and once more I said to myself that, if anyone, my wife was entitled to such security as such a success would afford her. For years it had been she who had made my literary work possible. But I should have preferred to give her that economic security by means other than literary. Our economic difficulties were not yet compelling enough to make me envisage a compromise with my literary integrity.

I did not and do not worship poverty as such. While, theoretically, I agreed with Thoreau when he said that "None can be an impartial or wise observer of human life but from the vantage point of what we should call voluntary poverty," I fully realized that voluntary poverty in his sense meant abstinence from marriage as well as from commercial activities. Besides, Thoreau had never been really poor; no matter how low he had set his standards; no matter how frugal his life had been, he had always built his theories on the datum of a sufficiency of the material things. To us, poverty meant constant worry, because ultimately it was bound to mean destitution; it involved an unremitting slavery.

Though I considered myself more lavishly endowed for spending than many of the millionaires I had come to know, I did not want luxury; what I

wanted was leisure to do my work. If there had ever been the choice between a decent poverty, similar to Thoreau's, secure from the want of essentials, and such affluence as led, let me say, to the building of Palm Beach East, I should unhesitatingly have chosen the former.

Such a poverty had been my dream in 1912 when I had exchanged manual labour for mental labour. For a brief spell that desire for a shack and utter freedom had been possible of fulfilment; when we had left the west, we had had a total of five thousand dollars, the interest on which would have given us twenty-five dollars a month. If, as my wife proposed, we had then gone to the northern foot of Lake Winnipeg, I should have been able to hammer out the ultimate implications of my thought.

But I had felt that neither she nor I could undertake to live out our lives under the shadow of May's death. That death still had to be integrated into our very beings; it had to be made part of the foundation on which any further life could be built.

I want to make it clear, emphatically, and beyond the possibility of misunderstanding, that, what happened to us after the wilderness had been rejected, was done by the east which, in its worship of money and nothing but money, is an outpost of the United States; just as the United States has, economically and socially, become an outpost of a misunderstood Europe. No doubt, if we succumbed to the influence of this east, we were as much to blame as the east itself; my instinct had guided me right only when, in my early days, it had taken me among the pioneers of the west.

At Bobcaygeon, then, I turned, during that brief interlude, and under the silent pressure of my wife, to the possibility of modifying, if temporarily, all my literary aims and of making concessions to the demands of the public. I tried; and I shall shortly discuss why I was bound to fail, as I had failed in everything that I had ever undertaken with an economic aim in view; this book is the record of a failure; and its explanation: a double failure, an economic and a spiritual one, for ultimately the one involved the other.

For the moment, then, although we had gone to Bobcaygeon in order that I might write books in which the miracle should happen again, as it had happened in certain brief passages of *Settlers of the Marsh*, the economic problem overshadowed all others.

Such was the state of affairs when a letter reached me from Ottawa, written by that lady who, at the moment, was controlling the destinies of Graphic Publishers. She begged me to come and to stand by her in her difficulties; to be, as she expressed it, "a tower of strength to her".

We spent an agitated afternoon before I replied. Snow had fallen; it was the

end of November; and it was bitterly cold. Yet we walked and walked, talking and talking, discussing every angle of the situation as it presented itself.

My wife was in favour of my going—for a brief stay. She was not in favour of our sacrificing all the expense we had gone to in order to instal ourselves at Bobcaygeon for the winter. Against that I argued that we could not afford to spend money to help others. I did not tell her how utterly impossible I had already found it to work under economic pressure; nor that, once more, in my fatalism, I saw in this call a hint how to solve our problem in a new way. I did say that, if I went, she would have to come along; and it would be for good or at least for a considerable length of time.

In that I was actuated by two considerations extraneous to our personal problems.

I knew, I had seen on that visit to Ottawa made from Canton, that the firm was embarked on a course which I could not but consider as disastrous; it planned to erect, in connection with a small publishing business, a huge printing plant; and that at Ottawa, whereas Toronto was the established centre of the book trade in Canada, and in the face of the fact that no great publishing firm, not to say anything of a small one, had ever found it quite expedient to do its own printing. Why I considered this quixotic, I need not explain; but my very good reasons were later to be proved correct. For personal as well as national reasons I wished to see Graphic prosper; I could hope to dissuade the firm from its erroneous purpose only if I was on the spot and took a more or less permanent position with the company. Graphic Publishers had, so far, produced only ugly books; and it had pursued a vulgar policy of advertising—two defects which I imagined I could remedy.

Secondly, I felt convinced that the lack of success with which the firm had so far met was largely the consequence of their injudicious selection of books to print; they had been trying to meet a popular demand which could be met far better and far more cheaply by established firms in England and the United States. If, in one capacity or another, I joined the firm, I should insist on having the sole decision with regard to acceptance or rejection of manuscripts. I knew by this time that the writing of books was one of the major if least profitable industries of Canada where a higher percentage of the population than anywhere else aspires to literary fame and with less justification. By using what judgment I flattered myself to possess, I thought I could do a useful piece of work.

Incidentally, I saw in a flash that here was an opportunity to make a certain amount of money by means other than writing. It would enable me to preserve my uncompromising attitude as a man of letters.

It might also mean, at least for the time being, a cessation of all literary work. What did it matter? My health was improved; I was only fifty-seven; I felt as young as ever. Even today I am a young man.

By evening we had decided to go.

It took us a day to get ready; and during that day there was an abundant snow-fall. By next morning, the snow-storm was over; but the temperature had dropped to twenty-eight below zero. The roads being icy, it took us two days to reach Ottawa, where we arrived on December 2.

Again our stay at Ottawa was a mere interlude. It is true, it filled nearly two years and it comprised another illness of mine as well as the birth of our son. But spiritually it resembled the Empty Quarter in Southern Arabia. For the moment, my salary was fixed at three thousand six hundred dollars, to be shortly raised to six thousand. Successively we moved, first into a boarding-house, then a suite, and finally, and perhaps a little prematurely, into a summer cottage on the Ottawa River.

I remained in the employ of the firm for only a little over a year; and that year was a nightmare. Not only was there, within the firm, incessant wrangling; there was also incessant worry; for, after all, I had come too late to do any good. As for my salary, it was always difficult and sometimes impossible to collect it. Once I met the pay-roll out of private savings, taking, as a security for the one-thousand-dollar advance, a mortgage on some property connected with the plant.

The point was that, apart from myself, there was not a person on the staff who knew anything whatever about books; not one of them was even a reader. Manuscripts had been accepted for publication on the say-so of a bookkeeper, an estimable young lady, but devoid of even a trace of literary judgment. Even in a purely business sense, nearly all who had a decisive voice were rank amateurs who believed that dividends could legitimately be paid out of capital. I was expected to move books which had been dead from before their birth, at full prices and without advertising. Since *A Search for America* had had a spectacular success, it was taken for granted that, having become a member of the firm, I was under a moral obligation to feed book after book of mine into what I considered a suicidal enterprise. Instead, I insisted on buying my own rights in that book back from the firm.

Not infrequently, during that year, I felt as if, for the sake of this moribund firm, I were ruining my health, my reputation, and my sanity. It goes without

saying that the hopelessness of the situation did not appear at once; there were many things which were kept hidden from me and my fellow-victim, the president of the company. It was only by slow degrees that the secret history of the enterprise unfolded itself. For current funds, for instance, it depended entirely on the sale of shares.

I must say a word about the now notorious novel contest staged by the firm. From the beginning I had been opposed to it; but in this matter, too, I came too late to veto the plan. I did the best I could under the circumstances; I cut the sums that were contemplated as prizes down to one quarter: $2,500, $1,500, and $1,000 respectively. I was aware, of course, that these sums, judiciously awarded, might do considerable good to those who received them; but I felt also convinced that, in Canada, there were no three writers who would ever justify the expense in a commercial sense. To avoid an utter waste in any other sense, I agreed to act as chairman and convener of the judges' committee, insisting on a free hand in making the awards exclusively on the basis of literary merit. I also reserved for myself the right of naming at least one of the other two judges. This, I considered, would give me a practically decisive voice; for I felt certain that Barker Fairley, whom I chose, would agree with me because I trusted him to recognize merit where I found it myself. The third judge, nominated by the firm, was W. T. Allison of Winnipeg.

Since the contest could not possibly bring a commercial success to the firm, no matter how the prizes were awarded—for there was no body of work from which a deserving choice could be made; and since, in any case, such a contest is more or less of a hoax—for how can anyone, out of hundreds of manuscripts, pick the most promising?—I made up my mind that at least those who received the money, if they received it, which, by that time was doubtful to me, should be those who needed it most. As I had anticipated, no unanimity was achieved; W. T. Allison dissented from the choice made by Barker Fairley and myself. Unfortunately, at least one of the winners, Raymond Knister, was never able to collect the whole of the prize money before he died, shortly after Graphic itself had expired.

For months I ploughed through masses of utter piffle, reading evening, morning, noon, and night. The manuscripts were, of course, submitted anonymously, but in a very short time I attached, in my mind, the authors' names to a dozen of them. I knew my "Canadian Literature". Among the rest, there was nothing to choose.

I made up a parcel of twenty-five manuscripts and sent it to Barker Fairley who, in turn, forwarded it to W. T. Allison. Fairley and I picked the identical three; but not one of them figured in Allison's list. Fairley and I laughed over

it. But even among the three we had picked there was not one which could justify the expenditure of the firm's money. Yet the names selected were those of Raymond Knister, Marcus Adeney, and Ella Wallis, all three potential writers of merit, but, in Canada, doomed to obscurity. Morley Callaghan, Mazo de la Roche, and myself had, of course, made no entry.

I, as was to be expected, became at once the object of vicious attacks. I believe today that the choice made was the best that could be made. Raymond Knister has, of course, never appeared before the public with his best work. We lack, in Canada, a sufficiently large body of men and women interested in Canadian letters to insist on seeing experimental work by young writers encouraged not because it presents achievement but because it holds forth promise—such a body as exists in almost any older country where the national importance of letters is recognized.

When, after a little over a year of work with Graphic Publishers, I resigned my position, I did so more or less under pressure. I refused to do the impossible, one might almost say the dishonest thing, namely, to promise the shareholders immediate dividends. It went without saying that no such dividends were in sight; and when I openly said so, I felt at once that I was no longer wanted. It was my considered opinion that, even if the company were once more reorganized on saner principles, no dividends could reasonably be expected within five or six years. The powers that be demanded them within a few months, even if they had to be paid out of capital not yet subscribed.

Once more my wife and I were confronted with the question, "What next?"

My own inclination would, at this stage, have taken us to England. I knew that, if ever I was to subsist on my pen, it would have to be by what I called hack work. In Canada, we had only four periodicals—the University Quarterlies and the *Canadian Forum*—which would print the sort of thing I could write; in England, there were fifty of them. Writing for periodicals, on topics of the day, cannot be carried on from a distance.

Meanwhile, our son Arthur Leonard had been born. In the spring of the same year, I had undergone an operation for appendicitis; my health was still delicate; my wife was averse to facing the task of fitting herself into an unknown environment.

This time it was I who proposed to return to pioneer conditions. The interest on our investments was not enough to carry us; but I was quite willing to do the sort of teaching I had done at Ferguson, in the past, in a small rural school. I argued that, there, even my deafness was no absolute obstacle. My wife would not hear of it; and I gave in to her. She felt that the work of teaching would definitely have put an end to my literary prospects.

One desire we shared: we wished to have a roof over our heads which we could call our own; but, as I said, if we bought any kind of property, it must be one which, in one way or other, would at least contribute to our support.

During the summer of the following year, 1931, I made a number of scouting trips. We had six thousand dollars in apparently safe investments on which we expected to be able to realize whenever we wanted. Besides, we had a thousand dollars in the bank and held a mortgage of another thousand on property owned by the promoters of Graphic. I might add right here that the latter sum was ultimately recovered, under great difficulties and at considerable expense; the small payments that were made from time to time dribbled away as they came in.

The outcome was that I bought a small farm north of the town of Simcoe in Norfolk County; there, I meant to breed Jersey cows for a living.

What happened was again symbolic of my whole economic life on this continent. To make the purchase, I had to sell our investments. I saw a broker and was told that I could get around six thousand two hundred dollars for them. But, since the land deal had not yet been completed, I did not close the sale. When, two weeks later, I saw the same broker again, he exclaimed, “If only you had come a week ago; the market has gone to pieces, and you will get five hundred dollars less today.” This was a blow; but meanwhile I had tied myself down. It could not be helped.

Worse, when I bought the farm five per cent milk sold at four dollars a hundredweight; it was this price of milk which determined the price of the cattle which I bought as a foundation for my herd. By the time I was ready to start selling milk, a few months later, the price had broken and dropped to a dollar and eighty. In spite of the fact that I could not produce the milk at that price, I held on for seven years, always hoping that matters would right themselves. When I sold out, I had to write off a total loss of two thousand eight hundred dollars, or four hundred dollars per year.

Meanwhile, to finish with this topic at once, I was, for half the year, doing manual work as hard as any I had done in the past. Often, when the morning’s or the evening’s work was done, I went home and lay down on the floor of my study, too tired to eat a meal or even to undress in order to go to bed. It must be remembered that, by the time we were installed on the farm, I was sixty years old.

It was at that time, by the way, that the affairs of *A Search for America* had to be wound up. The book had appeared in Canada in 1927; in the United States, the following year; and shortly after in England. In the latter country it had never been sold, for the publishers promptly went into bankruptcy; the

United States firm followed, after having done untold damage in the Canadian market by illegally exporting copies on which I never received a cent of royalties. Graphic Publishers were the last to bite the dust. In each and every case I had to buy out my rights and to acquire the remaining copies, with the result that in the end I was eighteen hundred dollars out of pocket. No matter what I touched, in the realm of material things, potential profit turned into actual loss.

XIII

AND NOW, in this record, I have arrived at a point where I have to explain a development which I find it the most difficult of any I have touched on to make clear.

For the first time in our lives, after seventeen years of marriage, my wife and I owned property; and when I look back on the dozen years elapsed since we acquired it, I am more than ever convinced that property you own, owns you.

While the land I had bought comprised some of the best soil in the county, and while barns and sheds were in fair repair, the house, one hundred and three years old when I bought it, was little more than a windbreak. It was a loose-jointed, ramshackle affair of eight rooms, with floors of pine, two inches thick, which, in a century of hard use, under the hob-nailed shoes of pioneers, had been worn into a series of hills and valleys; with walls which had never been properly kept up but patched here and there as the necessity arose. The outside covering was of axe-hewn clap-boards hanging precariously on hand-forged, square nails which had rusted holes into the wood. Every breeze penetrated the worn-out shell. When I brought my fist against the bottom of the weather-boarding, a wave ran through it to the eaves; and of the last coat of white paint only the faintest traces were left. In places, one could see daylight through the walls from inside.

Yet this house had possibilities. The window-sashes needed replacing in order to bring back its colonial dignity; but the dignity was still there. What had attracted me more than anything else was a grove of cedars and spruces between the house and the highway that ran past the property. Behind the house, though not on my land, towered an elm which was one of the most magnificent trees I had ever seen in my life. The fields, too, were divided from each other by rows of fine trees: basswood, elm, ash, maple. A meadow behind the barn-yard was crossed by a pleasant creek.

My wife, not perhaps taking full account of my agricultural antecedents, was horrified to think that I meant to work a farm. I, on the other hand, was convinced that it would be possible to combine the tasks of a farmer and a writer. For a while, of course, I should lie fallow; I had been lying fallow for some time; but, under the load of anxiety caused by the precarious state of affairs in the Graphic business, there had been no mental rest.

As for my books, *The Yoke of Life* had appeared while we were at Ottawa; and at least one reviewer, Carleton Stanley, soon to become president of

Dalhousie University, had hailed it as a great book. A year or so after our settling on the farm, *Fruits of the Earth* appeared in England and Canada. The following year brought me the one single honour that has ever come to me out of Canada; the Royal Society awarded to me the Lorne Pierce gold medal for literature. A few major plans remained to be attended to: *The Master of the Mill*,[6] the *Ant Book*, *Two Generations*, and one or two others; of minor plans, a few more were to emerge in the course of the next few years. I looked forward to the same sort of life which I had been leading before my marriage. I worked, to the limit of my strength, on the farm; and in my scant leisure hours, I tried to write.

[6] *Master of the Mill*, 1945. The Macmillan Company of Canada, Limited. Selected as Required Reading, Modern Literature, University of Toronto.

But between that remote past and the poignant present there was one essential difference. In the past, my farm-work had been a mere routine; often it had been a hard routine; but it had left me mentally free because the farm had not been mine. While, in a sense, my time had been less my own than it was now, there had been no worry; my only real preoccupation had been with my books. That, of course, had also been the case while my wife had made our living; though even then pressure on my power of production had been noticeable; I had always felt that I must justify her extraordinary exertions by extraordinary achievement on my part; and pressure and anxiety are mental states in which artistic achievement becomes impossible. I have never been able to do my best unless I could allow ideas, moods, expressions their spontaneous life. There is a fundamental difference between books that are "made" and books that have "grown". I have already tried to make it clear that I am so constituted as to be able to produce books only that have grown. Which is equivalent to saying that, in order to evolve matter for artistic formulation, I must, to borrow Lamb's expression, be so acted upon by my subject that it seems to direct *me*—not to be arranged by me; it must "impress its leading and collateral points upon me so tyrannically that I dare not treat it otherwise lest I should falsify a revelation".

Which implies that I could never be a "professional writer"; nor do I believe that the greatest books have been written by professional writers. By this I do not mean, of course, that the writer can remain an amateur in the American sense; like any other craftsman he has to master his craft. What I do mean is that he cannot do his best and most essential work—the kind of work that no one else can do, and the kind which integrates him in the spiritual history of his country—if, for his material existence, he makes himself dependent on the financial success of his work.

It implies further that, to me, the greatest good on earth is leisure; not the scanty leisure which I had had, nibbled off from hours of preoccupation with other things: absolute leisure, available at all times. I am the man who looks on; as life flows by, he sees and fashions a few things *which have come to him* and which, slowly, but inevitably, demand artistic formulation.

A wealthy friend of mine once said to me that, to make me produce, poverty was essential. As in most sincere utterances, there is a kernel of truth in this. If I had been wealthy throughout, I might have become an artist in spending. It is most unlikely that, after my twentieth year, I should have spent a great deal on luxuries; by that time I had had my fill of them. But a good many poor people—writers, artists, poets, pioneers—would have led easier lives; I was a born Geissler. If wealth is intelligently used—it rarely is—it provides its own preoccupations.

Till I was twenty, I had had all the money I had ever had any use for, at least after my mother's death. I had travelled wherever and whenever I wanted; I had never dreamt of going to a hotel of the second rank when one of the first rank was available; I had dressed and dined regardless of expense.

I had not been born *in* poverty; it had never occurred to me that I might be born *to* poverty. In spite of my middle-class descent, I had, in childhood and youth lived like, and considered myself, a *grand seigneur*; not consciously, of course, for I did not know that there was any other mode of living. Clerks that waited on me seemed to belong to a different race; just as a seal does. As such, I was ready to face privation in any form; as a pioneer or an explorer; that is, for a purpose. What I could not have faced was mediocrity in any form, for instance in the mode of life necessitated by a small income, as a superior clerk or a lower Civil Servant, without motivating aim; and that disability has remained with me. It was the reason why, when urged by influential friends to seek a living from the government, I asked for the appointment as a lock-master or a lighthouse keeper rather than for that as an assistant archivist. The irony of it is that, had I asked for it, I might have received the latter whereas the former was denied. One does what is needed to achieve a purpose; but one despises mere gentility.

Into my old life of careless spending there had, at the age of twenty, come the amazing break. By one step, within one week, I had had to make the change from a life in which I had drawn nothing but the great prizes, to a life in which my daily bread depended on manual labour. But that had not changed my aims in life.

The strange thing was that, had I become wealthy again by means of my books—such things have happened—at no matter what stage of my subsequent life, I could never again have become the careless spender. I had looked at the

under side of life on this planet; I had seen slavery persisting into this so-called civilization. Had I not remained a slave myself, I should have devoted my wealth to the task of abolishing slavery in no matter what shape. Wealth, unshared, would have been sin.

Even with a salary of six thousand dollars—though we had it only for a few months—we did not change our mode of living. We did not buy a more expensive car; we did not rent luxurious quarters; we did not have servants to wait on us.

Yet, I repeat, I hold no brief for poverty as such; and to the fulfilment of my task, that of formulating what came to me, the grinding sort of poverty in which I had lived presented at least as many obstacles as great wealth could have done. Poverty, in the sense of a lack of luxuries, has nothing repulsive to me; on the contrary, it may be the hallmark of an aristocracy of the spirit. What I revolted against was that the mere essentials were not forthcoming without a continual struggle which at times absorbed every last ounce of my powers. The mere mechanics of making a livelihood, by a conspiracy of circumstance, seemed a Chinese puzzle to me.

And thus we reached the point where we seemed to be settled.

Up to a certain point, my wife would also have been satisfied with the mere essentials; we had been satisfied with them in the past; it was she who had voiced the desire to live in the wilderness. All this was suddenly reversed. A limit appeared to her readiness to go without. It was an inexorable, perhaps it was an inevitable thing.

If May had lived, she would, in all probability, have been self-supporting by this time; my wife and I could have done as we pleased. Now there was once more a little child who was entitled to a proper start in life. He was to receive an education opening all avenues; he was to be raised in a manner which would enable him to harbour a proper pride in himself. I had welcomed his birth for the very reason that it provided my wife once more with a task that led beyond her. After May's death, she had one day said, "The terrible thing is that there is nothing left to worry about."

There was also this that, in spite of our poverty, I had become "somebody". Friends as well as strangers called. Occasionally they came from distant parts of Canada and even from Europe. Neither my wife nor I cared for display; but there came a time when she demanded a minimum of comfort and the decencies of civilized life; she was entitled to have them.

But about the social life of eastern Canada there is a peculiar atmosphere; there is only one standard, the money standard. People saw how we lived; they turned their noses up. That, my wife could not bear.

Finally, property imposes demands of its own. A plot of grass has its private life. Unless it is that of an aristocrat, it is that of a ragamuffin. A house that has its possibilities cries out for their realization.

Add to all this a certain weariness. For forty years I had lived a life below the standards native to me. That atmosphere of exploration or pioneering of which I spoke had exhausted itself; there remained the naked facts. For forty years I had never had a bathroom; my bath I had taken over a tub or a basin; the fact that Niels Lindstedt had done the same was no longer a remedy. And at last we owned this property; any improvements we made would be our own. It is true that, from the moment when we had acquired it, I had realized that, from the point of view of my literary aims, it was a mistake to have bought it. But what had been done could not be undone. We were caught by the depression as in a trap; all values were falling; we had to make the best of it. I was getting old.

Above all, I was getting old. Till we had come east, we had felt that life lay ahead. At over sixty, life lay behind. Even my wife had to acknowledge the fact. She was herself no longer the young girl who, at Falmouth, or even at Ashfield and Eden, had valiantly fought; she, too, was forty; and the realization of it sent her into an occasional panic. Worse still, she felt as if it were time for her to resign herself; life had given her nothing but empty promise. I, apparently, was going to remain what I had always been, a failure. She, too, faced that possibility at last. Whenever we looked at the list of those who applauded me, we became doubtful; the list had grown; among them were people from all over the Dominion, from England, from continental Europe. I knew that my books stood on the shelves of great European libraries, in the British Museum, in the state library of Berlin; among the antipodes at Canberra. The character, the abilities, even the standing of those who composed the list seemed to furnish a guarantee of the validity of their judgment. But there was, after all, the possibility that they were one and all mistaken. That possibility even my wife could no longer deny. Besides, they were all so-called intellectuals; and in Canada, so far, intellectuals counted for nothing. Intellectually, Canada is a chaos; the light has not yet been divided from the darkness.

For decades I had contended that nothing is in itself either great or small; its sequel makes it so. Certain actions—and artistic “creation” is an action—may or may not determine the future when it has become the present, quite apart from their internal merits. All interpretation of the past is teleological; it is meant, it is constructed as an explanation of that which is. No matter what has happened in the past, its importance is solely determined by its share in moulding the present. It is never what might have been; it is only what

happened to happen which decides the value of any deed. It is, of course, futile to speculate on what might have been. Inexorably, at the end of the individual life stands death. Only the future could decide whether my work was to count for anything in this world; and that future I was certainly not going to see. It made me laugh when a certain book-reviewer called a novel of mine "a classic". "Why does he not wait a few hundred years," I asked, "before using such a grandiloquent word?"

I have said that the word posterity is too rarely used these days; I still believe it is. The artist should always build his work as if it were meant to last through the centuries; and only the great commonplaces of life are worthy of being forever repeated and expounded anew.

But I will admit, when there are other, realizable aims to claim one's attention, it may be a discouraging task to hammer away at what is beyond the reach of man, namely, perfection. "Alas, what boots it with incessant care. . . ?" Why not snatch at the day and squeeze from it what sweetness it may contain?

My depression was deepened by the fact that most of my friends were among the older people of this generation: the people who had lived their lives; who, like myself, belonged to the past rather than to the present or to the future. Perhaps I was already potentially dead?

Had it been possible for me, at this stage, to repeat that extraordinary burst of production by means of which I had, under similarly depressing circumstances, written *Over Prairie Trails*, things might have been different; but, for that, too, I was too old, it seemed.

What, then, more natural than that I should focus my eyes definitely on the present?

Some work I could still do? Some . . . "job"? My friends, or some of them, were bestirring themselves. What did I want? They laughed when I said, "Give me a lock, or give me a lighthouse to look after." But they tried to get that for me; in vain, of course; I might have saved myself the humiliation of asking. To those in whose power it lay to hand out such appointments, my work counted for nothing. In Canada, anyone who has seen service as a political heeler takes precedence over a mere writer. It is very natural, indeed.

One man I cannot omit mentioning in this connection, though—a man genuinely desirous to do something for Canadian letters. I am emphatic about the last two words.

The man in question is Senator A. C. Hardy of Brockville. I had met him; he had met me; but our acquaintance was of the slightest. In 1928, he had heard me speak at Ottawa; after my lecture, we had exchanged a few words,

ineffectually, for we were both deaf. I don't suppose it was a secret that I was a poor man. He, being wealthy, wished to ease my life; and, if I am correctly informed—it was years later that I heard about it—he placed certain funds in the hands of an intermediary known both to him and myself. For several years, my struggle for a living going on unrelieved, Senator Hardy lived in the comfortable consciousness of having done a generous deed. He did not know that the intermediary had embezzled the funds for himself.

Years later the whole matter came out in an entirely casual and yet dramatic way the details of which need not concern us here. Suffice it to say that, shortly after, we had a talk in Senator Hardy's office at Brockville—the only real talk we ever had in the absence of a crowd which prevented us from understanding what was being said. In the course of it he dropped a remark which has remained in my memory. "People," he said, "who devote their time and energy to public service should not mind accepting help from others who are able to help. You should not mind it." Ever since, he has from time to time helped out of his own accord. Thus, in 1933, when he heard that I was doing manual labour, he sent an entirely unexpected cheque, telling me, in a covering letter, to use the money for hiring help so I could reserve my own time and energy for the work that was proper to me.

Naturally, while I accepted this, I never felt justified in revealing to him the full extent of my needs. Had I done so, I feel convinced that his generosity would have been equal to the demand. I have given his name because it is due to him. It is a strange fact that his gifts nearly always came at a moment of extreme need. More than once, when receiving a cheque from him, I have said to my wife, "The Lord will provide," If my work should at any time prove to have been of some value to this country, not only I, but Canada, owes him a debt of gratitude.

I have more than once spoken of the need for leisure.

All art is the product of leisure. The nomad hunter of the neolithic age could not hunt at the same time and carve the image of a running deer or a couchant lion. It might be said that he could hunt one day and carve the next. The argument would be fallacious for two reasons. In the first place, the hunter is more frequently unsuccessful than successful; starvation hangs over him like a threat; nobody has ever been "creative" under a threat. The task of hunting is an absorbing one; even while not actually engaged in the chase, the hunter is preoccupied with that task. He must explain to himself why this or that game escaped him, so that he may avoid his mistake the next time; he must fashion bow and arrows and sharpen the flint tips; he must recover his own powers of endurance. While, during the chase, he may be thrilled by the line, from head to tail, of the fleeing deer—in other words, while he may have artistic or

aesthetic appreciation, rare as it must be—his chief concern is necessarily with the deer as representing so much meat, not so much beauty. In the second place, it is a singular, perhaps regrettable, but nevertheless inevitable fact that the appreciation of beauty, and the desire to reproduce it, is almost invariably the attribute of him who is more or less unfitted for the chase. Suppose he is not afflicted with a physical disability—an improbable assumption—he is at least likely to suffer from a disinclination to exert himself physically; and often from a disinclination to kill that which appeals so strongly to his aesthetic sense. If the hunter sees that curve from head to tail, the chances are that, at the moment when he should launch spear or arrow, he will stand and *look* instead. At the decisive moment he will be, with his aesthetic sense, the deer instead of being the hunter. But, by a singular dispensation or compensation, the aesthetic sense usually develops in connection with some physical or mental disability. Perhaps it is merely because physical disability confers leisure; but I believe the thing goes deeper than that. Long observation and study have convinced me that, even under the conditions of civilized modern life, aesthetic appreciation and, *a fortiori*, a creative urge is almost invariably bound up with a disability of some sort, be it temperamental only. To the absolutely healthy human animal the chase, whether after meat or after money, is more important than anything else.

Here is another point. His preoccupation with the chase leads him to despise the other man to whom the *result* of the chase seems vastly less important than the fact that, in deer or hunter, it brings out certain lines, certain attitudes, certain tensions which, to him, seem to be of cosmic significance; which *are* of cosmic significance. This is quite irrespective of the further fact that, when the artist—for he of the aesthetic sense is the artist—reproduces that line or that attitude in bone or stone, in song or tune, even the hunter falls under the spell of the work of art. That the artist is not a hunter constitutes him a cripple, physical or mental, and therefore an object of contempt as well as, paradoxically, of a reluctant admiration. For his work partakes of the nature of a miracle which, to the primitive mind, confers a “power”—perhaps the power of enabling the beholder to hunt with greater success: the work of art becomes a fetish endowed with the functions of magic.

Apply this reasoning to mankind as a body. Only where there are leisure classes is art in demand; only there does a feeling for beauty, for style, for expressiveness develop. Unfortunately it is rare that the creative gift is joined to the gift of appreciation. The leisured class is an aristocratic class, for in the last resort aristocracy means plutocracy or arises from it; and aristocrats do not, as a rule, favour, in their own ranks, gifts other than physical. A certain very great Hungarian nobleman whom I knew prided himself on the fact that,

when a document had to be signed, he affixed his cross and left it to such menials as his notaries to attend to the rest. As a rule, I say; for there are exceptions; but these exceptions are viewed with profound misgiving by other members of the class.

Yet, so long as the demand for beauty, style, and expressiveness is more or less confined to an aristocracy, the case of the artist—that is, of the cripple—is not the worst; for *noblesse oblige*; the aristocrat takes pride in brushing the crumbs from his table so that the needy may pick them up, especially those who, like minstrels or sculptors or so-called "fools"—those privileged to speak the truth—give him pleasure.

The artist, it is true, resents the necessity of picking up those crumbs; socially, he is, therefore, a rebel; he claims the crumbs as his right. Often he assumes the airs of one who, in his turn, despises the normal people who devote themselves primarily to the acquisition and the enjoyment of the good things of life—which means the aristocrats, or, nowadays the "*bourgeois*". That is the reason why so many artists, some of the greatest among them, Beethoven or Michelangelo, so often seem crabbed, ungrateful, irritable, yes, perverse. They know that what they are doing is more enduring, perhaps more important than what their patrons are doing, even though they may be ruling states and empires. What they receive in return is at best a pittance which, so it often seems to them, is ungraciously given.

For the artist, the case has become much worse since aristocracy has vanished from the world. The creative mind has seen itself forced to be the public entertainer who, like any organ-grinder, must rattle the tin-cup. He who succeeds in that office of a public entertainer, it is true, may reap all the rewards of a seller of hardware; but he can do so only by striking a compromise between the thing which only he has to give and the thing which the public has already been schooled to accept as entertainment. Unfortunately, the real artist is intransigent; it may take him a long while to change the public taste. As Landor has said, "The poet must himself create the beings who are to enjoy his paradise."

Meanwhile he remains, if not physically, at least temperamentally unfitted for what appears to him the paltry task of making a success of his material life. The aristocrat who was the Maecenas, as often hated as loved, has disappeared; a more or less stupid public has taken his place. What is everybody's task is nobody's task; the artist starves, metaphorically, if not in fact. Since he is unsuccessful, as any artist who is worth his salt, barring fortunate accidents, is bound to be for at least a considerable length of time, he is, socially and economically, as much of a rebel as he used to be under the aristocratic regime; and now he is an impotent rebel.

One might protest that there are two ways out. He may combine his work as an artist with some “practical” occupation; or he may, for a time, degrade his art in order to catch the public pennies. Grillparzer did the former; Arnold Bennett, the latter. In either case the result is there for everybody to see. Intentionally I choose two supreme talents to illustrate. Arnold Bennett’s case is the more easily understood of the two. He wrote the *Old Wives’ Tale* to save his immortal soul; and he wrote scores of other books to provide him with expensive living quarters and a fine motor-car. Consequently, this man, more highly gifted perhaps than any of his contemporaries, simply does not exist as a force moulding the spiritual destinies of his country. It has been said that it was success which spoiled him; there is this truth in it that success gave him a glimpse of what material wealth could do for a man. He changed his milieus from the middle-class population of the five towns to that of the London plutocracy; but that does not, in itself, account for his artistic downfall. If, after this change, he had waited till he could understand his new milieu, he might have continued to produce great works; but economic pressure was upon him; and he yielded; he forced his great talent; it left him in the void.

To a certain point I had done what Grillparzer had done; but there was a fundamental difference between him and myself. Throughout his life, Grillparzer lived in the country of his birth; he was familiar with all the grooves in which he could run; he chose the civil service. I had come from Europe to America; at every gate through which I might have passed into a career which would not absorb me completely, as trade would have done, there were thousands waiting to enter; and they knew “the ropes” as the vulgar phrase goes. Whenever I tried to improve my occupational status, I felt like one who must scale a ladder in competition with others who are physically more powerful than he. The things I attempted seem almost ludicrous. I applied for the position of a book-adviser in a department store; for that of a proof-reader in a publishing house, at thirty-five dollars a week. Always without success.

I was willing to reduce my chance to do literary work to a minimum; at the age of sixty-five I was back where I had been at twenty-one. I am shy; I am reluctant to put myself forward; I am sensitive to humiliation; I am easily discouraged. Those were the last two attempts I made to break into any of the standard careers.

The thing had other consequences. The profound discouragement which was the outcome of such experiences prevented me from making use of the leisure which was thus forced upon me. I was one of the great army of unemployed.

I must at least try the other way—the way which Arnold Bennett had

deliberately chosen of his own free will. I must try to write pot-boilers. But I am I; and I had four decades of the opposite endeavour behind me. Invariably, when I tried to write what the public seemed to want, my work turned into a parody of the prevailing fiction which commanded success. In one case, when I had set out to write a mystery story, relying on an ever-increasing tension of curiosity to carry the reader forward, the story as such took charge; the result was a study of criminal procedure-at-law the significance of which entirely escaped the two or three publishers to whom I offered it. They wanted mystery, not a criticism of legal procedure.

I had not the patience, not any longer, to go on; I refused to send out manuscripts to hundreds of publishers as I had done in the past. Yet, in a single year I had written four full-length novels of that type; but, having made the attempt with one of them, I decided not to offer the other three. I had wasted my year; what is worse, I had enormously increased my discouragement.

I made up my mind that I was a failure. Failure breeds failure. At the end of this period of eleven years since we left Ottawa, I had a decided inferiority complex. In that time I had, in addition to the four pot-boilers, written three novels which derived their being from decades of thought. These satisfied my own standards. But I simply added them to the long line of manuscripts which stood already on my shelves.

Meanwhile *The Chronicles of Spalding District*, re-christened *Fruits of the Earth* had appeared in England and Canada and fallen flat (1933). There is much in the book which is unique; and if my whole situation had been half-way normal, I should have viewed its commercial failure with perfect equanimity. But even in my dealings with publishers, I was now under a handicap. Many a publisher is willing to take his chance with an untried author when he is reluctant to back one who has failed; and I had two commercial failures to my debit: *The Yoke of Life* and *Fruits of the Earth*.

On the other hand, I was now too old to do much else; so, what was there for me to do but to go on? This is the place to speak of one more striking episode of my writing life.

One June day of the following year Hugh R. Dent, of J. M. Dent and Sons, visited my house. He was still enthusiastic about *Fruits of the Earth* which he had published. He wanted another book. I outlined to him the pattern of the one on which I was working, *The Master of the Mill* and he wanted the manuscript then and there. In my diffidence I insisted on working it over once more and estimated it would take me another six months. He promptly offered me an advance of five hundred dollars for the first refusal. This sum, he added, was not to constitute a charge against my estate—an expression which amused me vastly, for what was my estate? But I did the exactly wrong thing; I

accepted.

The book went forward under insuperable difficulties; but it was not they which ultimately defeated me; it was the fact that, to me, this advance constituted what, to the business man, is a draft presented by his bank at a critical moment—a moment when the draft reveals his bankruptcy. I had accepted money for work which, for that very reason, I now found myself unable to do; for in spite of Mr. Dent's assurances I felt tied down to a schedule; henceforth I could not wait for the moment when things clicked in my brain; I had to force myself. There are, of course, plenty of writers who would not be disturbed in the least; the fact might even act as a stimulus. To me, it amounted to an inhibition. Everlastingly I was in a hurry; by October the book must be finished; Mr. Dent wished to publish it by next spring. Well, I rewrote the book and disimproved it. Even while I was at work I felt that I was ruining what had been the makings of a great book. In its old form, of course, I could not send it out; among other things, the first draft was much too long for publication. In 1928 I had made an exhaustive study of the flour-milling business which formed the background of the story. Everywhere, in the old manuscript, the traces of this study were still discernible; processes were explained in full which should have been merely hinted at; every character, even the least important, carried his full biography attached like an amnion. Thus a certain clerk who appeared in the book only for the purpose of opening a door to one of the major characters, was not only minutely described but mentally derived from his antecedents for three generations, with his future career at least adumbrated. I know of only one other writer whose technique, in building the hidden background of his work, resembled my own; Henrik Ibsen.

The task of rewriting this book clearly consisted in this. Out of materials carefully assembled and submitted, in the body of the manuscript, to every available test, historical and biological, I had to shape a final structure in which these details formed the skeleton overlaid by the flesh. Whatever was mere skeleton had to be covered or pruned out; a scenic perspective had to be established; the significance of every development which I saw clearly enough was all that concerned the reader. I could not do it; I could not step back far enough to gauge the effect; I was unable to see *what had to be left out*.

I was in a constant panic; and it did not take me long to become aware of my impotence. I had taken money for a task which remained to be done; and that fact incapacitated me for doing it. Again and again I told myself that this was ridiculous; but there it was. I felt I had undertaken a thing beyond my powers. Strange to say, when, years later, I attacked the book once more, this time without the prospect of immediate publication, I at once succeeded in finding the inevitable form—the only form in which the book can convey its

message. To recast it in that form took less time than I had had available in 1934.

When the manuscript had gone to England and been returned—a fact which meant nothing; how many times had not my other books been rejected?—I re-read it and found that every minutest detail about that clerk whom I have mentioned remained in the text as if he were one of the major characters. Instead of reducing him to the shadow he ought to have been, I had tried to force him down the reader's throat. I laughed at it; the publisher's readers were quite right in disadvising publication; as it stood, the book could not be printed. It took me years before I could see the thing in its proper light. When I did, my verdict was very different from theirs. What these readers should have said was this: "The manuscript contains the materials for a fine book. Let the author write it." But nobody said that; least of all myself. The readers paid me compliment after compliment; but that was merely a sugaring of the pill. Curiously, some of the very executives of the firm through whose hands the manuscript had gone were furious; "What can you do with such people?" one of them said to me; to which I replied, "Don't you think they are right?"

As I said, it took me several years before I could see matters in their true bearings myself. The reason was, at least partly, that my preoccupations were with other things, above all with *Two Generations* of which I am going to speak in a moment.

Among the three books which satisfied my own standards and which were written during the seven years was *Felix Powell's Career*. It is a serious book which deals with a sexual problem; and it is written with a savage sort of frankness which should have convinced everyone of the sincerity of its purpose. I offered it. Publishers and agents alike failed to see its true import; they put it down as pornography. From that moment on I ceased offering my work; one or two manuscripts were still travelling about. I withdrew them.

There was also a book which I personally considered a mere trifle but which I liked nevertheless: *Two Generations*. My wife also liked it; but she insisted that I should add a chapter "to wind up" certain characters. I did not agree with her. I contended that, by adding an epilogue, I should merely destroy the architectural balance.

Since my wife refused to be convinced, I proposed to arbitrate the matter by asking two competent judges to read the manuscript; for, even though I was content to let the book lie, I wished to bring it as near perfection as I could.

Long before I took action in the matter, another idea came to me. As I have said, I was suffering from an inferiority complex. Perhaps I had entered upon a decline of my mental powers? I liked the book; did I like it because it was

worthless? The plan of having it read by others might decide that question; it might once for all settle my writing career for the future. If it brought the advice to forget about publication, I was going to abide by the verdict. I thought of the awful case of Scott who, at an age younger than mine by several years, went on producing books which his most sincere friends had the greatest difficulty in persuading him, in the interest of his reputation, to withhold from the public. I was not going to follow his example.

Between us, my wife and I ticked off the names of those in whose judgment, on a point of technique, we had confidence. We fastened on to those of W. J. Alexander and Barker Fairley. Both very kindly did what I asked them to do; and on the technical point both decided in my favour.

With regard to the other question, which, of course, I had withheld from my wife as well as from the two critics, the outcome was rather amazing to me. Neither W. J. Alexander nor Barker Fairley suggested that there was a falling-off of my powers; on the contrary, they saw in the book a new departure which they considered as hopeful and promising. Dr. Alexander worked himself up into an enthusiasm over the book which finally induced him to ask a number of others to read it; every one of these shared his opinion of the work.

In writing it, I had set myself a specific task. The setting was the transition, in Ontario, from pioneer conditions to an urbanized rural life which brought about a conflict between fathers and sons; in fact, *Fathers and Sons* would have been the logical title; unfortunately, Turgeniev had anticipated it. He had anticipated me once before, for the natural title of *Our Daily Bread* would have been *Lear of the Prairie*. The theme was one which did not demand a very profound disturbance of the emotional constitution of the characters; instead, it demanded a careful, nice balancing of the forces, conservatory and initiatory, which actuated them. I felt that here was an opportunity of writing a “pleasant book”, in Shaw’s sense of the word. Perhaps it was for that reason that the novel, when completed, seemed to me to be a work of slighter import than my other books.

Dr. Alexander’s estimate contradicted my own; he considered it incomparably the best thing I had done. He found in it a true and significant picture of rural life in Ontario. When he had made the test on a number of others, he wrote me about it; and I could not for a moment doubt the sincerity of the verdict. Those to whom Dr. Alexander submitted the manuscript could not have been influenced by the desire to please me; they gave their opinion to him, not to the author.

Under pressure from him, then, I made up my mind to act contrary to my previous resolution and once more to offer a book. Three Canadian publishers shared Dr. Alexander’s opinion; but, since most Canadian publishers are, after

all, mere agents for British and United States publishers, they were under the necessity of securing publication abroad. In this they failed. In the summer of 1938 I withdrew once more.[7]

[7] The book has since appeared, first in a limited edition of 500 copies; then, in the fall of 1939, in the usual trade edition published by the Ryerson Press.

XIV

HOW, in these years from 1931 to 1940, did we manage to live?

Early in 1932 my wife had once more taken matters into her own hands and opened a Kindergarten School which, during that first term, was operated at a loss.

But she saw an opportunity; and, within a year, she turned the kindergarten over to a sister of hers who came to live with us; and she added a full public-school curriculum, with striking success. By 1934 she had an enrolment sufficient to warrant the expectation that, within a short time, her enterprise would expand into a private school of considerable reputation and proportions. We were living in the open country; but people were willing to see to the transportation of their children over the two, three miles from Simcoe; and even over the five, six miles from Waterford.

The house, large enough to harbour both school and living-quarters, was in bad repair and badly laid out; it could be heated only at an exorbitant expense. In the fall of 1934 we made up our minds that it was imperative to rebuild it, starting with the outside.

These building activities promptly took charge of us. We now had the outer shell of a well-built house; the interior was next to clamour for improvement. We had to keep our minds focused on material things.

Personally, I could have gone on living under any conditions. *Over Prairie Trails*, an inspired book, had been written in surroundings worse than our present ones, and under difficulties which to many would have seemed insurmountable. The point had been that, at the time, I had never paid the slightest attention to my environment. There had been the routine of teaching, of course; just as, in the two decades before 1912, there had been the routine of farm work. But my inner consciousness had remained free; even while expounding the intricacies of the binomial theorem, my mind had been on my book. Provided I did this and that, and did it well, the material necessities were "added unto me".

From 1934 on, our whole thought was, for years on end, almost passionately concerned with our material surroundings. I suddenly *saw* the conditions under which we lived; I became conscious of the ugliness of this interior of a house. The wood-work, for instance, was old, worn, shrunk, and warped; it was an offence to the eye; worse, it was of pine painted to resemble oak!

As I said, I could have lived and worked in any surroundings; provided always that I did not need to consider these surroundings as the final setting of my life. So far, my eyes had been focused on a goal, namely, artistic production; I had closed them to the road over which we had to travel to that goal; and that road consisted in our lives from day to day. From the point of view of life, this is, of course, profoundly wrong: it would be far better to live from moment to moment. Any overwhelming ambition annuls life from the moment of its conception to the moment of its attainment.

I suddenly saw. Now I am so constituted that, to look at ugliness, consciously, and day after day, is the same to me as having to listen, day after day, to lies. When I began to see the end of my life in our day-to-day existence, the inside of our house became an eyesore to me. Such a life, to a constitution like mine, spells tragedy.

But the trouble with all material ambitions is that they are realizable; realized, they leave you in the void.

Improvement in material conditions involved the keeping of a maid. But the moment you have a maid, you are no longer master in your own house; you are not even the one who decides your own standard of living; that standard you have to adjust to what your maid expects of you if she is not to consider it as below her dignity to serve you. You are in the power of a machine which directs you with a cumulative compulsion. Maids, for instance, demand so-called modern “conveniences”; or they turn their noses up at the job you offer.

The first thing that was needed was an automatic water supply. Technically, this offered no difficulties; for throughout my farm, which is crossed by a creek, the water table lies high. But the installation involved an expense of a thousand dollars; for walls had to be opened and closed.

That, in turn, brought up the question of rearranging the whole interior. We might have installed the water system and left the house unchanged. But sooner or later the alterations would impose themselves.

Next came the question of toilet and wash-room for the school; and it opened up the whole question of plumbing. One proposed change inevitably led to another. The expense would be more than we could hope to pay off in three or four years.

All this planning was done in the spring of 1935. It seemed a pity that nothing should come of it.

When the summer holidays began, we were still divided in our counsels. Even with the school flourishing—and it did flourish—we could not hope to lay by more than a few hundred dollars a year; and beyond the land and the buildings we had no reserve. Yet I seemed to see that my wife had set her heart

on going through with the scheme; not to do so would have meant a personal defeat to her. For days, for weeks we talked of nothing else; and, while we were living through this mental upheaval, I, of course, was doing no work. It was impossible to live the life of the imagination when material actualities demanded undivided concentration.

I felt unhappy. It was all or nothing. If we carried out part of the plan, we must carry out the whole; or we must accept the fact that it would remain fragmentary for good. The expense of duplications we could not afford.

My bad conscience arose from the knowledge that I was a ratepayer in good standing. It was true, there was a mortgage on the place; but interest and amortization had always been paid without a day's lapse. Banks live on the loans which they make. I knew I could go to town, and any bank would gladly advance all the funds needed.

One day, late in June, I cut the Gordian knot. I saw the banker with whom I had done business during the preceding years and arranged for the necessary credits; I signed contracts. My wife I confronted with the accomplished fact; and I saw she felt relieved.

For week upon week we lived in dust and dirt; but when the work was finished we had a new house, the admiration of friends and callers. When our family doctor entered the dining-room for the first time, he stood and exclaimed, "Why, this is a jewel!" Yet it was all done with comparatively cheap materials.

While the building operations were going on, I was, of course, kept busy. The dining-room, to mention one thing, was panelled in chestnut and elm, to be finished in the natural colour of the woods—all the finishing to be done by myself. Every panel had to be selected, to be compared with all the other panels, to be matched and tested in the light to which it was to be exposed. The "figure" of the wood used for the posts had to be scanned and harmonized; the three doors were made up from timbers inspected at the mills. As they are today, they look, without imitating anything, like three symphonic movements from Beethoven's Sixth.

In the end we had, in addition to the three-thousand-dollar mortgage, assumed a debt of two thousand dollars. There had been a few pretty anxious days; but at last I could cast up accounts.

I had bought the place for seven thousand dollars; I had stocked it for three, covering this latter sum by the mortgage. Now, including alterations made at the barn and fencing in the fields, a total of fourteen thousand dollars had gone into the making of the place as it stood.

More than ever was it necessary that my books should yield an income;

more than ever was it impossible for them to do so!

As matters worked out, we could not have done the work at a more opportune time; in 1934 and 1935 the prices of building materials as well as wages of skilled labour had reached their nadir. Shortly, the Dominion housing scheme and the so-called Home-Improvement Plan drove prices up along a steep gradient. Within a year the cost would have been forty percent higher. It is ever so; when a government sponsors a scheme ostensibly designed for the benefit of the "consumer", business, real ruler of the country, sees to it that the benefit accrues to itself.

Income dwindled. Lectures were asked for now and then; but the fees offered dropped from twenty-five to ten dollars. On one occasion I received, for three lectures given at Toronto, a fifteen-dollar fee plus fifteen dollars expenses; on my way home I had a thirty-dollar repair on my car!

A newspaper agreed to carry certain materials of mine. It took me an average of three days a week to supply it; they paid me seven dollars for the first month.

The greater the need, that is the everlasting refrain, the less my ability to supply it.

⁂

One asks at last, what does this standard of living amount to? The argument which I mean to set forth does not apply to myself alone; if it did, it would not be worth my while to expound it. It does not even apply to individuals only; it applies to whole nations; ultimately it applies to mankind.

It is the argument against material progress.

Not that my argument necessarily outweighs other arguments which may be advanced in favour of the present and more especially American trend. From time immemorial material progress has been interwoven with the spiritual life of the race; it will probably remain so to the end of time. Besides, the possible increase in the material welfare of the masses—of, let me say, the Badawin in the Rub' al Khali of Southern Arabia; for we must cease considering such question from the purely local point of view of the illiterate—may be worth any retardation it necessarily involves in their spiritual pulses. In many cases—I have tried to hint at this before—material progress stimulates spiritual endeavour; and spiritual, or intellectual, effort as often as not advances material welfare. It may well be that that is what Christ meant when he said, "Do not ask what shall we eat" . . . In the total balance, the material victories of mankind may, in terms of human happiness, be worth more than

the benefits conferred upon it by its religious leaders, philosophers, poets, sculptors, painters, and musicians combined, though I doubt it. But I am not competent to cast up such a cosmic account; if I were, this would not be the place to do it. Yet the argument remains; and it should be stated.

What should be stated is the debit side which is so commonly overlooked; for there is a debit side even in the material field. We are apt to forget the cost of material progress, the cost to the nation and to mankind, the cost in human happiness, in human life. It will forever be one of the great tragedies of history to me that Sir John Franklin vanished in the arctic wastes; that Captain Scott and his gallant companions froze to death on their return from the South Pole; and these are merely two of the spectacular cases. Every sky-scraper erected in the United States, every canal dug through every isthmus, every air-line opened up exacts its toll of human life—and who will evaluate the worth of a life that is lost? It exacts its toll in human happiness as well; for the sheer physical labour required to bring such things about can be supplied only by some sort of slavery. I am profoundly distrustful of what is called civilization. Perhaps one has to have lived—as I have done; as I am doing—on the frontier, or beyond the frontier, of a life that is reasonably secure in order to understand why I call the present civilization the consolidation of barbarism; at least if security of life is acknowledged as the first postulate of what can legitimately be called civilization.

But I am trying to leave the way open for an impartial trial. It is for that reason that I am emphatic in defining my attitude in this argument as that of the advocate who submits his brief with the full consciousness, yes, the definite intention, of presenting only one side of the question. For I repeat, the argument remains. I shall try to state it.

Why is it that the most triumphant expression of human joy should have come out of a life so devoid of material enjoyment as Beethoven's? Why is it that, even in that supreme scherzo of the Ninth, there are those terrible undertones?

Of course, I can state the argument only as a personal one, distilled out of my own life. When I was a farm-hand, I was happy; I had no material wants beyond those requisite to leave me free to follow my thought. Today I have the appurtenances of a civilized life, if on a modest scale, and I am not happy. Necessarily, the fact makes me pause. If there were no responsibilities involved, I should gladly leave the place I live in and join the army of those who are on the road; and if, as it would be bound to do, such a course, at my age, led to my physical breakdown, I should still take a savage sort of satisfaction out of the fact that I should have to "crack up" by the side of the trail, by way of a protest against what we call civilization. I apologize for the

vehemence and vulgarity of the expression; but only vehement and vulgar expressions are at all adequate to the case.

Let me begin my exposition with an instance ludicrous in its pettiness.

It will be remembered that, towards the middle of my thirteenth year, I had been seen by my father surreptitiously entering a barber-shop to have myself shaved. When my fourteenth birthday came around, my mother and I were far away; but a parcel arrived for me from my father, containing a fine and very complete shaving-outfit: razor, strop, and brush. I felt the irony; but it did not wound me. I used that outfit for decades; I am using parts of it today.

In 1939, then, these things were fifty-three years old. The block-strop will easily do for the rest of my life; it may even do my son as well. It is of the brush that I wish to speak.

Like the other things comprising the outfit this brush was very good; my parents never bought anything but the best. It had given service for more than five decades; but now it was in its extreme old age; its life-span proved to be shorter than mine. It had become thin on the head; many of the bristles had dropped out; others had broken. Yet, to the age of sixty-six I had had no other.

Then, one day, when I had to shave in a strange city where I was to give a lecture, I found I had forgotten that brush at home. I borrowed my host's. Compared with my own, this borrowed brush, still in its infancy, was a marvel. A single touch of it on my face covered an area ten or twenty times as great as that lathered by my senescent article.

I conceived the bold and purely material ambition of owning a new shaving brush myself, the second in my life! On my return home I visited a shop where such things are sold; and since nothing but the best would do to replace what had once been the best of its kind, I found I should have to expend the enormous sum of three and three-quarter dollars for what I wanted. I could not spare that amount for the moment; I was not going again to assume a debt. I continued to use my old brush. But it did not satisfy me any longer; my ambition would not let me rest. If I laid aside a quarter a week, it would take only fifteen weeks to make the purchase on a cash basis; and I acted accordingly.

But, if the purchase as such had not been the easy matter it would have been for a Croesus, the worst was to come. While a stick of shaving soap had, in the past, lasted me a year—this is based on the records of decades—I found that, with my new brush, such a stick refused to last more than the three months which radio-announcers promise. The brush as such absorbed many times as much lather as the old one had done; and this lather, which does no work on the face, is just so much waste; it represents an entirely unproductive

outlay. It is quite true that the task of lathering—again as the announcers promise—became almost, though never quite, a pleasure. Possibly a little time is saved, too; but, in contradistinction to that of the business man, my time is not money; and in my circumstances, it was decidedly poor policy to pay seventy-five cents a year for a saving of perhaps seven hundred seconds.

This is a general argument, not a personal one. Seventy-five cents a year should be a matter of serious consideration to anyone, regardless of economic status; for these seventy-five cents represent so much of someone's labour.

I tried to find my old brush in order to reinstate it; perhaps, I thought, I could still use the new one as a birthday-present to someone whom I wished evil. Unfortunately, my little son had appropriated it as a paintbrush to beautify his playhouse!

Put the case this way. In an arctic expedition so-and-so much food is taken. If one of the members surreptitiously uses more than his share, all the others may be in serious danger. But so long as there is not an absolute surplus in the production of mankind, mankind as such must be considered as a unit embarked on the expedition of life; and mankind includes every Siberian, every Indian, every Chinese who may starve in a famine. Until we have acquired that universal outlook, there can be no true civilization on earth.

For everything we acquire, so-and-so-much life has to be paid. My life was, or should have been, the life of the imagination. The life which is peculiar to me consists in letting other lives work themselves out within that, to me entirely mysterious, entity which is known to others by my name. What I am, as a consciousness, has nothing to do with it; I have often doubted whether there is anything that I can legitimately call "I". I have also doubted whether any so-called personality can be considered as an end in itself; for better or worse, our lives are part of the life of mankind. Willy-nilly we live for a while under the illusion that the link in the chain has as much reality as the chain itself. Death destroys that illusion; and death may well not be the cessation of anything whatever. We live as much in others as we live in ourselves. For the chain of the generations the life we live for others, in others, is the one thing which has any importance whatever. If we consider our indirect influence, it may extend through eternity. All of which is said here merely to indicate that the waste involved in any so-called high standard of living, which is always individual, may well be infinite.

But I admit that the illusion of the individual life considered as an end in itself is very powerful; at the stage at which I must leave this record, my wife and I were held in thrall by that illusion. It is the peculiarly American philosophy of life that to have is more important than to be or to do; in fact, that to be is dependent on to have. America's chief contribution to the so-

called civilization of mankind, so far, consists in the instalment plan; and that plan imposes a slavery vastly more galling, vastly more wasteful than any autocracy, any tyranny has ever imposed. A free life is impossible under its rule except for the rich who can dispense with it; that is axiomatic.

But I wish to go beyond the mischief wrought by partial payments.

We had rebuilt the outside of the house at a cost of roughly a thousand dollars; this was a so-called investment. But for its own protection it demanded henceforth a yearly expenditure equivalent to ten per cent or more of its cost. Every two or three years the house had to be painted if it was not to deteriorate at a rapid pace. There are hardwood floors; they demand wax instead of water. Even water is no longer free. It is supplied by a pressure system. Whenever a tap is turned to draw it, a motor in the basement is automatically set in motion, consuming electric current which has to be paid for. Since a bathroom is useless, at least in winter, unless hot water is available, an electric heating system consumes thirty dollars' worth of current a year. I might go on and on. In other words, the question arises what consumes more of "life", not only for the individual but for mankind: to do a thing in the direct or in the indirect way: to draw the water from a well or to have it pumped by a motor, for which we pay out what we call money—that is life—in purchase and upkeep; money which enslaves him who gives it and him who receives it—the latter by means of the money wage.

One more such trifle, and I shall have done.

During the winter of 1937 a thoughtless person inflicted upon us the loan of a radio set which was in her way; and for the first time we came into contact with this miracle of modern technique. I, for one, heard in quick succession Beethoven's Fifth, Sixth, Seventh Symphonies which I had not heard for fifty years. My whole youth seemed to stream back upon me; my wife felt that she was in touch with a wider world.

I hesitated. I argued that the purchase of a radio would mean another break with our whole previous policy of going without. It would introduce a new factor of distraction. But, being half converted already, I said that, after all, we had missed many things.

I took two wax imprints of the gold medal awarded me by the Royal Society of Canada and sold the metal for the exact price of the smallest receiving set I could buy.

We forgot the implications. No matter what the salesman said, the set consumed current; a licence fee was needed for its operation; in time it would require repairs.

What is perhaps worse remains: so far I had been able to think that man

was a reasonable animal concerned with serious things; for all I knew, the world might be full of unguessed-at splendours. I found that, by and large, nothing of the kind is the case: the ether resounds with stupidity and vulgarity.

There was a real danger. The mere possession of so many of these toys of a modern material civilization brought with it a change in our whole outlook on life. Standards changed. Sums which, in the past, would have staggered us appeared as mere trifles. No longer was a yearly income of nine hundred dollars sufficient, as it had had to be sufficient at Ashfield, to defray our expenses and leave six hundred over for doctor and hospital bills while I wrote *Settlers of the Marsh* and *Our Daily Bread*. I had, for what we both still considered my essential work, at best two or three hours out of the twenty-four; and they were never safe from invasion by worry.

A last consideration will make the argument, as I can present it, complete. An anecdote will serve to illustrate.

When my wife was at Falmouth and I went home, on Fridays, it so happened that one day, some six or eight miles north of Gladstone, I met the school inspector returning from my wife's school in his car. We stopped and exchanged a few words. It was a dismal, sleety day; and the inspector's car was splashed with mud, from top to bottom; mud had worked into every crack in the shell of the car; mud was grinding down its roller-bearings.

I asked about the road.

"You'll make it," he said. "You've got the advantage over me. It'll do your horse good to do a piece of real work. When he gets there, he'll rest and be the stronger for it. As for my car, I must write off seventy-five dollars in depreciation."

He had touched on an essential point.

Man had domesticated animals to do the roughest part of his work. Up to a certain point these animals recovered from any exertion that man might require; and in addition they reproduced themselves. That was "conquest of nature".

Machines do not do that; they need upkeep, repair, and replacement. They neither recover; nor do they reproduce themselves. They are the bottomless pit. Their use is not conquest, it is exploitation of nature and of our fellow-men. More or less, all work is done, today, vicariously; surely, its total cost to mankind is thereby increased, not diminished.

It is the curse of all material things that they do not renew themselves; and they require more labour in their preservation than in their production; and at the best even the preservation is only provisional. By the same token he who owns them pays in the aggregate more for their upkeep than for their

acquisition. Expense—that is to say, waste of life—devours its own offspring, like time; and it has a cumulative effect. Is it worth it?

In that question lies the force of the argument against material progress. That part of mankind, of course, which lords it over the rest will answer the question in the affirmative. How about the total balance?

In my own case, the price I paid was twofold. In the first place, there was the loss of my contentment. Henceforth I had to exhaust my mental, spiritual, and physical strength in the vain effort to keep up what I had acquired; the material things had enslaved me. As for my wife, she was no longer the brave, undaunted girl who, having found a purpose in life, had faced life squarely, courageously, in that destitution which in this country—and to an ever-increasing extent in others as well—is imposed as a penalty on those who dare to live for things other than material. She was pursued by the furies of worry; from morning till night she was bent upon making both ends meet; and at the same time she kept repeating that only through the financial success of one of my books could we ever hope to pull ourselves out of the slough of despond. But the very clarity with which this problem was grasped prevented its solution; there were no longer any new books which were bound to conquer, immediately or in the long run; this was the second instalment of the price I had to pay. The plans that emerged—for in spite of all they did emerge—were still-born from the start. Yet I feel as certain as I have ever felt of anything, though it can never be proved, that they would have matured of their own accord had I lived in a hut in the bush, never caring. What shall we eat, what shall we drink, wherewithal shall we clothe ourselves? Mentally, I was as alert as ever; though I was facing the time, and saw it approaching, when that mental alertness would fade into the twilight of a coming senescence. That maturing of my plans would have satisfied *me*; and I do not think it beyond the possibilities that it would have redounded to the benefit of my wife, my country, perhaps of mankind.

Was it worth it?

Suppose I went out on the road once more, leaving wife and child? Suppose I merged myself once more in the life which is that of the unemployed—for mankind as such is unemployed so long as a fraction of it is—I could see myself sitting by the roadside, jotting down thoughts or imaginations that have come to me. I should taste once more the triumph of creation, the utter triumph of the pangs of birth; and I should *grow* inwardly as nothing can make a man grow except the vicarious living of scores of other lives.

But, after all, there are things which a man does not do.

As I have said, this is an argument against material progress; but it is an argument only; it is not the verdict.

AUTHOR’S POSTSCRIPT

The above record closes in the year 1939. In 1938 the author had to give up farming by doctor’s orders. He has since been in ill health which in 1944 resulted in a paralytic stroke.

As for his literary work, after 1938 he was occupied by what he considered a panoramic novel of Canada, entitled *The Seasons*. Since he is now disabled, there is small hope of his ever completing that novel. There are, however, three or four completed books and between sixty and a hundred short stories, read for the first time in 1945 by anyone outside his family; though a few of them have appeared in quarterlies and daily papers.

He cannot close this note without mentioning that since 1944, the time of his stroke, he has been in receipt of a pension from the Canadian Writers’ Foundation. Apart from that, since 1940 he has acted as reader and adviser for The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited.

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

Book name and author have been added to the original book cover. The resulting cover is placed in the public domain.

[The end of *In Search of Myself* by Frederick Philip Grove]