

so near is
grandeur

by

LESLIE GORDON BARNARD

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By Leslie Gordon Barnard

ONE GENERATION AWAY

JANCIS

THE IMMORTAL CHILD

(An Essay)



so near is
grandeur
by

LESLIE GORDON BARNARD



TORONTO

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*“So nigh is grandeur
to our dust”*

—EMERSON

Foreword

The stories collected in this volume were written over a period of years. They are the product of many moods and occasions, and yet I hope there is a thread of unity running through them, to which the title may contribute.

This is not a war book, but it is impossible that stories written in the past decade or so should fail to reflect something of those urgent years, almost six of which were occupied by a struggle so vast that the mind is staggered by much more than its statistics—a struggle which, for most of us, began officially in the fateful days of September 1939, and ended, more or less officially, with the atomic bomb. Back of its beginnings were the apathies and follies at which none of us can afford to throw stones; beyond its ending lies either spiritual greatness—or destruction. This book is concerned more with men than machines, with individuals rather than events. It is stating the obvious to point out that the atomic age will be no wiser nor greater than the individuals who by thought, word or deed—or the absence of them—help to shape and direct it.

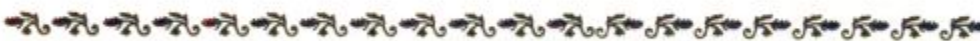
A few of these stories have not been published previously, but grateful acknowledgment is made to the editors and publishers of *This Week*, *Collier's*, *Canadian Home Journal*, *Strand*, *Holland's*, *Queen's Quarterly*, *Star Weekly*, *Modern Woman*, *Family Herald & Weekly Star*, *Saturday Night*, and other periodicals in which stories included in this volume (not always under the same title) have appeared either in original or reprint form.

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L. G. B.

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Stoop Down and Drink



HE was dreaming of Jenny when the sound awoke him. He sat up sharply, aware of the scrape of boots over the encrusted rocks. Slowly he turned his eyes to his kit containing such belongings as he had saved from the swift foundering of the ship. Somebody had been at it. The bomb was gone. Sooner or later he had feared it must come to this. Even for himself that lethal legacy of Hardy's had begun to exercise a terrible fascination. One cannot always, even fitfully—one's tortured body racked with pain—dream of home. Desperation lies nearer at hand. Painfully he raised himself, stumbling to his feet. Down by the shore, white in the intolerable glare, lay the lifeboat. There was food in her still, sufficient for days; but what mattered food to men in their case? Like a man walking in his sleep, not easily, but with the dragging incapacity of a nightmare, he made his way towards the men who now huddled in conference in a corner where the rock formation would best suit their purpose.

They saw him coming, and the eyes with which they watched him were no longer friendly. And yet, as if respect for his office lingered, they awaited his coming. These were men who had confided in him, who had matched his own memories of home and Jenny with other places and other names that brought a gruff kind of pride to their lips. Big Steve with his woman out in Edmonton; Haddow, the little Cockney, whose "missus" was the "best ever"; George, the steward, with his "parcel of kids at home"; Masterman who, for all his boasted conquests from Malay to Murmansk, from Portland to Panama, cherished a picture of the one girl who mattered, back home in Vermont. These were men who had laughed and yarned with him on shipboard, with whom he had sung in those first days of survival after the ship was only a remembrance, with whom he had endured long days in the open boat, haunted by the knowledge that food meant little if the water failed; with whom he had rejoiced at last in a landfall, clambering ashore only to find upon the sprawling, arid rock traces of where abundant rains had coursed back from the higher ground again to the sea—perhaps quite recent,

and more than ever a mockery to parched men who now sought in vain for the precious water which at some time had filled the pools, so that poor Hardy, cursing, had run and flung himself belly down and drunk his fill from the sea.

It wasn't pretty—the way Hardy died. These men remembered. And they remembered what Hardy had, all the time, in his possession.

"I shouldn't want to go the way he did," said George, the steward.

"You don't have to," Big Steve told him, uneasily.

"I don't like to think of it," said Haddow, in his thin, Cockney accents.

"And all the time he had that," said Masterman.

"Gawd, I'd 'ave used it," breathed Haddow.

George, the steward, said, "I'm scared to look at the sea now, that's what I am. There's a place down there near where he died, with the sky lying blue in it, looking cool. When I was a kid at home we had a pond—"

"Shut up," ordered Big Steve. "Padre, you'd better take charge of the damned thing!"

That was how they talked the day Hardy died, forgetting for a moment the raw agony of their own throats, the fever in their own veins, that had increased every hour since. For how many hours since? An uncounted eternity; the mind at times wandering, dreams of home and comfort becoming mere interludes, prefacing new chapters of endurance on this atom of rock and sand, of scrub and rank sea-grasses, set in a vast infinity of sea and sky, marked with mocking evidence that here, perhaps not so long ago, the clouds had gathered and water from the relenting heavens had fallen. He read in their despairing eyes a question, a demand to know why rain should be lavished upon an empty rock, to dry under the greedy eye of the sun before men made in the image of God flung their suffering bodies ashore. And if it fell then—why not now?

What is man that thou art mindful of him?

Am I Moses, he thought bitterly, to smite the rock and bring forth water?

There was not a cloud in that implacable sky; no promising plume of smoke to the horizon's rim; not a single shower, that desperate men might have strength to put to sea again, with hope of a better landfall and at last a homecoming.

One by one they came to him. Big Steve to say, "I keep thinkin' of that bomb we took off Hardy, padre. I can't get the damned thing out of my mind" . . . and little Haddow, "It'd be a ruddy sight quicker, padre" . . . and George, the steward, "I'm scared, padre. I'm scared of the sky lying blue in

the water where Hardy drank. I'd not want to die like him" . . . and Masterman hinting where amongst the rocks it would be surest to end, and not to promote, suffering.



Now they were no longer confidants. Now, as he came to them across the rocks, their eyes were harsh and angry and defensive—the eyes of men separated from him by a great gulf. Did they not understand that he, too, was tempted, that there is no clemency for one more than another, that the raw agony of suffering in him was not less monstrous, but that his spirit must rise above the flesh; that somehow, for them and for himself, he must cling to a supreme conviction?

It was Big Steve who spoke, his tongue so thick that the words came hard.

"You prayed for rain, padre, but where is the rain? You prayed for a ship, and our eyes are out of the sockets from watching. Now we want something *sure*, and something that's quick. And we won't be talked out of it."

"It's a good place here," said Masterman.

"Let's get on with it," said George, the steward. "I don't want to have to die like Hardy did."

"Gawd, yes!" murmured Haddow.

"Are you with us or not with us, padre?"

Well, why not? he thought. Here in this enclosure of rock, itself crumbling into slow dust as if it could not endure for ever the intolerable glare of the sun, they would huddle close, trusting that death would be swift and without respect of persons. Pluck out the pin, and let the answer to the implacable heavens be a sudden blotting out of little men caught like insects on an unimportant mound of earth. What difference a few hours, except that now it might be quick and merciful, and then a slow inescapable torment?

"Now," breathed Masterman.

Only George, the steward, remembered him, in a sudden hoarse appeal, "Say a word for us, padre."

Poor lads, half crazed . . . *may they hunger no more . . . neither thirst any more . . . nor the sun light on them, nor any heat.*

Big Steve's fingers tightened. You pull the pin . . . you count . . .

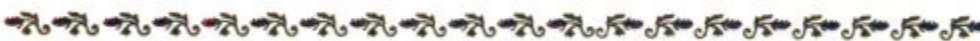
Then, suddenly, the padre leaped forward, snatched the bomb from Big Steve's hands, and flung it. "Get thee behind us, Satan!" he cried.

It rose in an arc against the uncompromising glare, falling not in the midst of men to blot them out and leave torn bodies for the gulls to peck at, but at a little distance, striking with a deafening detonation against a crumbling surface of soil and rock whose fragments now descended with a pelting mimicry of rain. Dust rose, even here, chokingly, a last indignity to mock them.

“Damn you!” cried Big Steve, and lunged, and the padre fell, his face cut and bleeding. But George, the steward, turned and went blindly down towards the sea to drink his fill of water that was salt, and die like Hardy died.

The padre staggered to his feet, brushed Big Steve aside, and was given strength to try and stop this madness. Ahead, in his despairing course, George tripped and sprawled across a ledge of rock, sobbing his anguish as the padre reached him and put an arm about him. “George,” he said, the name forced through lips upon which his own blood tasted warm and sweet. “George, I—” and then he stopped and stared. The steward, lifting himself a little, stared also. Both found strength to raise a shout that brought Big Steve and Masterman and Haddow stumbling towards them.

A moment later, dropping on his knees, the padre was bidding them stoop and drink. He was offering them the boon of water. He was wetting his fevered lips at a deep pool where water from those once abundant rains still lay, stored-up and sweet and cool in a basin of rock, life-giving, hope-renewing—hidden from sight beneath the crumbling, arid surface, but now at last exposed by an exploding bomb from the hand of a man who believed that men should die only in God’s appointed time.



Last Word



HIS sallow face lifted in the tropical sunlight that scorched the freighter's deck. Heinkel saw the island grow like a smudge on the pale waters. "Sorrows of God!" he muttered. He stood splay-footed on a deck that dipped in a slow roll against the unsteady horizon. "What island is that?" he asked, but hardly heard the mate's reply. The smudge was quickly becoming identifiable. As the mate swung up to take his place on the bridge, Heinkel cursed under his breath. "Sorrows of God," he repeated.

A shadow fell athwart him. He saw it was The Woman. He always thought of her that way. There were two male passengers besides himself, but only one woman; she had joined the ship at Rangoon. He was a little in awe of her. She wore a pith helmet and clothes of masculine cut. She walked like a man and looked like a saint. There was a firmness about her jaw and a serenity about her eyes that disturbed Heinkel. Sometimes when she looked at him he felt uncomfortably transparent, so that in her presence he was always propitiatory. "Looks as if we were going to drop anchor," he smiled.

"Don't you know why?"

"No," said Heinkel. He evaded her eyes; let her save her glances for the heathen, he thought, rumour having it that she was a missionary of sorts. Her voice came as from a distance. "The Captain was telling me," said Miss Boggs. "It seems that a ship met disaster in these waters. Carrying munitions, I understand, and blew up. There was talk of sabotage, that kind of thing—but nobody quite knows, because wireless communication was cut off just after the word came through that the survivors were taking to the boats. None have been found. We're hunting for them." Heinkel shook his head. "So many terrible things these days," he said, and glanced again at the island, now clearly visible on the port bow. "Sorrows of God," he sighed.

Miss Boggs turned sharply.

"You say that so often," she reproached him, "and I don't know that I like it."

"Sorry," mumbled Heinkel. "It's just a saying. I don't mean a thing by it."

"Exactly," said Miss Boggs, "and actually it means so much."

He endured the rebuke. The floor of the sea was less uneasy; the water held more colour; surf ran on reefs and spouted from rock formations; speed was reduced. The beat of the engines was like the thudding of Heinkel's heart. A bell rang. There was a churning aft, and the sound presently of a rattling anchor chain. "You will be going ashore?" inquired Miss Boggs. "The Captain said we might." About to refuse, Heinkel let it pass. Already a boat was being swung out on the davits, ready for lowering; a rope ladder appeared overside to accommodate the landing party. The Captain, a tubby, leathery-skinned man, burned almost black, gave orders to a boatswain and a crew of six. Any passengers going? his brows inquired. The Woman went first; then the Eurasian merchant, olive-skinned, excessively polite; then the man who looked like a beachcomber and was something respectable in tea. They all looked at Heinkel.

"Coming?"

"N-no—yes, I guess I will."

"Make up your mind," said the Captain.



The distance widened between themselves and the ship, narrowed between themselves and the shore. The oars flung up jewels and harried strange creatures haunting the translucent depths. A chattering of bright-plumaged birds diminished as the keel scraped the beach. They went ashore. The tea planter gave it as his opinion that men had been here before this. Heinkel, ever propitiatory, helped The Woman out. He led the way to a patch of shade, the tropical sun becoming an embarrassment. The boatswain spread his men out in a fanlike search. How beautiful the place was, Miss Boggs remarked, how bright the birds! Look at that creature, quite tame. "*Where every prospect pleases—*" She smiled, and met the eyes of Heinkel. A seaman came running, calling for the Captain.

"Well, Wilks, what is it?"

"Three men, sir—" He was a bit breathless.

"Where?"

"Murdered, sir! Half buried in the sand."

"Sorrows of God!" cried Heinkel, evading The Woman's sharp glance.

"You'd better stop here until we tidy up," the Captain told Miss Boggs.

"I'm not afraid of death," Miss Boggs said calmly.

He coughed. "Quite so. But this is the tropics."

"I'll stop with the lady," offered Heinkel quickly as the others withdrew, and Miss Boggs said, "Oh, thank you, but if you wish to go—"

"No. Oh, no."

She studied his face. "Are you—afraid of death, Mr. Heinkel?" She smiled. "I have known it to be a friend."

He nodded. He glanced out to sea where the vessel lay safely at anchor swinging a little with the tides, and the empty glitter of the sea found some reflection in his eyes. A seaman appeared. Cap'n's compliments, and could they come now? A few words were to be said. Miss Boggs followed first, Heinkel at her heels. The Captain was saying, "I figure it this way. These survivors got ashore along with one or more of the chaps responsible for the sabotage, and the one or more guilty of the crime decided that dead men tell no tales, and then took off in the ship's boat. There's no trace of anyone else on the island. That's my reading of it, but there's not a damn thing to say yes or no to it, not a damn thing—oh, sorry, Miss Boggs. We're ready now, I think." The men removed their hats, but holding them aloft to ward off the unfriendly sun; Miss Boggs, in her masculine way, lifted her helmet, too, and again the serenity of her face disturbed Heinkel. She was moved, he saw, but her compassion had in it some austere assurance. As if, perhaps, death did not end all. He was afraid of her, frightened of the powers in which she trusted . . . "—dust to dust," intoned the Captain hastily, "ashes to ashes—" . . . The slurring of his voice, his anxiety to be done with this, could not deny a certain dignity to the ritual; the ancient words cast their own spell. Heinkel stood stolidly, his eyes on the ground. Miss Boggs gazed upward. "Amen," pronounced the Captain, with relief. For a moment there was silence, then a shuffling of feet, and dispersal. They had done what they could.

Well, that was over! Everybody moved, except Miss Boggs, who remained staring up raptly. Just above was a bright-plumaged bird.

"It *is* tame," she said. "I've been watching it. It probably belonged to one of these poor fellows from the ship." She began to call it in a coaxing voice. The bird disregarded her; it flapped, bright-crested, to a branch above Heinkel's head and there swayed for a moment. Heinkel put up an arm as if to ward off an evil spirit suddenly embodied. His brain raced again, seizing upon words the Captain had used. Dead men tell no tales, he thought, dead men tell no tales. For just an instant his eyes were drawn to The Woman, but

she had no responsive glance for him now. She was staring at the bird with a terrible expectancy.

Majestically the parrot raised its head, its plumage ruffled. Its voice was a raucous iteration as it flew, clawing for a hold, to Heinkel's shoulder. "Sorrows of God," it squawked. "Sorrows of God! Sorrows of God!"



Church Parade



IN a short time now they will pass by the house. There will be the sound of drums; people will line the street and flock to the windows; the steps of our house will, like other residences, become common property as a point of vantage. Grandmother, from her upstairs window, will lean out, holding her shawl close about her, and wave a flag. She has not failed to do so in years, and this year she will do it with a special high pride. Young John is marching to-day. It is his first Church Parade.

John is less excited about it; I found him rather bored when I caught him polishing buckles and leather in the sunlight of the back porch this morning. Or else he affected boredom to cover sheepishness at being discovered in this pursuit of soldierly vanity. He is inclined to resent the importance Grandmother attaches to a mere garrison parade. I tried to tell him that the coincidence of Grandmother's birthday must be taken into account. He looked up at me and then went on with his polishing, more vigorously than ever, and I knew his appraisal of this pretext was the same as mine. For there is something about a parade that stirs our family blood. The sound of a drum sets our hearts beating queerly, and the skirl of the pipes has only one degree less of magic than the sight of kilted tartan swinging above bare knobbly knees. As for Grandmother, she is ninety-seven to-day. It is a tremendous age to sustain; but her back is not bent with it, nor her eyes grown dim. Sometimes we feel it a grave pity that she has kept no diary; a very young Queen was then in the early years of a long and illustrious reign; what a pageant there has been since!—and on into the bewildering kaleidoscope of our modern times. Grandmother still reads the newspapers—without spectacles—but you can see that she has a certain contempt for times that are out of joint. The world to her, I think, is a nursery where badly disciplined children play at dangerous games and are apt to put each other's eyes out. She lives in a past when there were giants—Disraeli, Gladstone, Lord John Russell, to pick at random; and Victoria herself. Her legends of them admit faults, flaws, but they are the faults of greatness. She speaks of

them all as if they were personal friends. I think her only link with the present is her family; the world about her scarcely exists. Now and again, on very fine days chosen for her after much family consultation, she goes out driving behind a pair of horses hired, with their driver, from a public stand. When people stare at her going by, she bows a little distantly. It is the superior nod of a world that was solid and sure to a jittery and unsubstantial age. But the smile at the corners of her mouth is rather lovely to see. In her youth Grandmother was a great beauty, as a large, lighted picture in the library bears witness.

Grouped about Grandmother on the library wall hang other pictures, mostly, and in a sort of apostolic succession, men in uniform. Another of these will be hung in an apportioned space to-day. Our young John has had his done by an older academician who would not affront Grandmother's tastes with too great liberties in the matter of colour or line. With the worst grace in the world John submitted, but the result will measure up fairly well. Grandmother gets it as a birthday gift from the family, at her own obstinate dictation. She does not understand why we should, any of us, raise objections. There is a space on the wall near Uncle Billy that she covets for it, and she says if the picture is not finished now she may not live to see it. She has us there, but we would have given in anyway.

Aunt Meg considers it a bit stiff—the pose and all; but the boy looks like that. He almost creaks yet with newness. I can see Radcliffe in him, Radcliffe as I remember him, and from one or two indifferent snapshots that remain of him. He would never pose for his portrait, and I happen to know that he destroyed any likenesses of himself that last night before he went away—his battalion left in the morning. It seemed unnatural and cruel, but he saved out one for his mother, knowing she would not betray him. He was bound he'd not be hung in the family gallery. People said he was queer that way. Young John hasn't shown, as yet, even a small percentage of Radcliffe's sensitiveness and quiet rebellion. He is more easily dominated. He thinks he is in uniform to-day of his own accord, but that may be a willing blindness. Of course, he is too young to know; much younger and less mature, too, than Radcliffe was. And this stiff raw young soldier will hang to-morrow beside Uncle Billy on the library wall.



Uncle Billy was Grandmother's favourite brother. He was immensely tall, and fair, and wore huge moustachios if you believe his picture, which looks peculiarly unalive and wooden; and there was no one his equal, if you believe Grandmother.

Grandmother's bedtime stories to her children and grandchildren were not built about Brer Rabbit and his ilk, but about Uncle Billy. James, who was later to die helping to take a position that was lost again to the enemy in an hour, and who left to their mournful pride his sons Perry and Arthur, and his daughter, Maybel, mother of Radcliffe; Mark, who was a year his junior, and even the much younger Sarah, mother of the twins, now Aunts Meg and Clara, knew Uncle Billy as something so gay and altogether fascinating that he couldn't be confined in any of your picture books, but was a composite of all heroes, with the virtues of all and the weaknesses of none—so that, looking through the few books they were allowed, their children would cry, "That's like Uncle Billy!" and Grandmother would admit, "Something, my dears, but not so tall, nor so fine-looking as he was. No one could compare with him."

A thing like that becomes a tradition in a family; with the passing years, Meg and Clara, and especially James' three children, imbibed the doctrine of Uncle Billy from Grandmother, who, by the time a new generation arose, had woven into the fabric threads of such palpable falsity, which she believed to be implicitly true, that Radcliffe, puckering his brow, would protest, "But Granny, he couldn't; he'd be a deader, Granny!" and Grandmother would say, "Not Uncle Billy, Radcliffe; he bore a charmed life."

Radcliffe was rather a thorn in Grandmother's side; he had an uncomfortable way of wanting to reason things out, and a still more uncomfortable way of sitting, hunched up in a chair, his thin young arms embracing his knees, bringing to bear upon her a silence more withering than speech. It was Radcliffe who, in the years of his innocence, asked her one day—it was on his return from his Great-Aunt Wilma's second marriage, which she declared to be honouring to dear James' memory because after all her second had been in South Africa too, something to do with the commissariat—a most responsible post:

"Granny, did you ever get married?"

"My *dear*!" said Grandmother.

"Then did you marry Uncle Billy?"

The proposition seemed reasonable enough to Radcliffe, who was not for some years to be aware of the technicalities of the married state.

"Dear child, no. Uncle Billy was my brother, just like your grandfather and Aunt Sarah."

"Oh!" After a moment he pressed the next query. "And what was he like?"

Grandmother was never quite at a loss, especially in dealing with the dead, and she painted a picture of Grandfather that was more than just. There was no more dim and obscure portrait in her gallery. To us of the younger generation, who tried to delve in the dust of the past and find out for ourselves, there was no revelation granted. Contemporaries of his were few, and upon them he had made no apparent impression. One knew from the way Grandmother spoke, with a slight but stately reserve, with the least folding of her hands, the faintest lifting of her chin, that here was something that might just as well, and perhaps better, remain a mystery. There was, however, one link with him; he might be portrayed in oils, and hang amongst his posterity on the library wall, but there was something more tangible than that. And when Radcliffe put his challenge that day, she took him to see it. We were in the country house at the time. I happened to be there and went with them, and stood watching the ceremony of opening an old trunk in the attic, wondering again at the fineness of Grandmother's hands as she unfolded the ancient uniform and held it up for Radcliffe's awed inspection. To this day I could not tell you what uniform it was; it seemed, like Grandfather, to lack final identity—to be something upon which no definite finger could be put. But one felt Grandfather more in those moments than some living people one met. The very endurance of mystery created him and made him ghostly real.

A queer thing occurred that day. Radcliffe, fingering the faded, decaying fabric with its tarnished braid, suddenly began to sob.

“Bless the child,” said Grandmother. “What ails him?”

Nobody, still less Radcliffe himself, could tell. When coherence was granted him, he explained gravely that something in him got bigger and bigger and would have burst him right open if he hadn't cried. Nobody laughed at him. I think we were a little awed and frightened, and Grandmother, who was not one to countenance idle tears, put Grandfather's uniform back in the chest, and said we all had better go out and play in the sun, for the rain that had kept us indoors was over, and the world a shining green.



It seems a far cry from that day when we ran from the dusty attic out into a clean-washed world. Some of us, remembering Uncle Billy and Grandfather and the folded uniform, wanted to play soldiers, but Radcliffe said, “No, let's have a paper-chase.” He and I were the hares, and I can still remember how fleetly he ran, breathing me badly, looking back now and

again to shout, "Come on! Come on! Run!" And so we ran, with the wind on our cheeks, and the wet grass under our feet. I had never seen Radcliffe run so fast. We sped past the vegetable garden, with its redspiked pickets and the tomatoes ripening on the cross-bars; under the big pine tree and the lattice where it always smelled mouldy, even in fine weather; past the wild-rose vines and into the meadow where you could always be sure of getting quantities of daisies; then on by the river-bank, scrambling down; over the fence of the parsonage next door; into a ploughed field where a man with a hoe watched us suspiciously; across the main road and into the woods, the paper trail growing and fluttering behind us.

"We've beaten them," Radcliffe cried. "We've got away!"—and threw himself down on a flat stone that the sun had dried out already, and lay there looking up at the sky and the race of clouds before the clearing wind. He seemed suddenly to forget all about the paper-chase, and I was afraid the hounds would overtake us after all, but I glanced back and there was no one yet in sight.

"Oh, I want to do so many things!" he said. "Ever so many things."

He lay there, and I didn't know what he meant or what to say.

Then he was up again like a shot.

"Come on!" he cried. "Let's run. They'll never catch us now."

We ran again, reaching the creek, not swollen and torrential as in spring, but a mere trickle now, with great flat stones lying in the sun, and the shadow of the red bridge—for so we always called it, though now you will find it a thing of modern concrete—falling across the stones and the small, minnow-haunted pools. We followed the creek bed, our paper trail scattering white clues behind us, plunging more deeply into the woods. A tramp, ragged and unshaven, paused in the act of washing some garment in a deeper pool, and his eyes followed us until we were gone, wondering, I suppose, or perhaps envying, such young energy. Breathless, I followed Radcliffe, but he was too fleet for me, running as if life or death were dependent on his flight. Sometimes he would turn and look back, and by a word or wave of his arm encourage me, but in the end I lost him and only the sparse trail of paper that he left behind him told me of the way he had gone.

It seems a far cry from then, and yet no time at all until those days already dropping into the past, but which a snatch of song, a chance word, an invisible link, can make vivid: the days when Grandmother, and Sarah, and Meg, and Clara and the others were all busy with their knitting and their newspapers. The days when many who looked out of the windows were

darkened. And, somewhere in the midst of them, one day that stands out, when the message came, at once a tribute and a regret, officially curt and terribly final.

Grandmother stood rigid, looking at us all a little sternly. "No tears," she said. "No tears. He died for his country." We respected the spirit. We went about the house as those to whom a great pride had come, and upon whom a very great honour had been conferred.

And now our John wears the khaki. He is a well-built, rangy youngster. He will march well.



People have long since been gathering in the streets; somewhere bells are chiming; the afternoon sunlight tips far buildings and, nearer by, throws patterns of trees and leaves and the angles of buildings on the pavement where presently marching men will go by. Girls in holiday attire stroll with their lovers, talk and giggle, see and are seen. Occasionally a false rumour springs up and there is a pressure that forces the patient front ranks of waiting people outward. The police genially clear them back. Long since, all door-steps and window-sills and galleries have been occupied. There will be bands and flags; line after line of youths; officers with ribbons up. The crowd will make holiday. Many of them were not born when Radcliffe marched this way. It is a very gallant sight. There is something about parades—an expectancy.

The crowd is well-ordered. A little pressure has broken the front lines again, but they are quickly restored. The rumour is not false this time. The parade is coming. From our upper window it is possible to see sunlight glinting on metal, to hear the music of the bands, and, very faintly, the skirl of pipes.

Somebody says, "They're coming, Grandma!"

She will not be helped from her chair, managing herself. Way is made for her so that she may have the best of the window. She holds a flag in her hand, a small silk flag on a stick. The younger generation, abashed and uneasy at such transparent patriotism, would not presume to stop her nor dissuade her. She has waved flags before when the soldiery marched beneath her windows. She is a salute from a vanished age.

"There's our John!" she cries. "There's our John!"

For a moment the flag flutters more vigorously in her blue-veined hand.



And there young John was, conscious that we would be watching, a little afraid that by any sign he should show he knew; a bit fearful, perhaps, lest anyone guess he had any connection with the very old woman who waved a flag from an upper window. But I, standing beside her, thought how straight and fine she looked, as if a bit of history had come alive; old history looking upon what was not history yet. Her lips moved. I caught the words that I fancy were for herself alone:

“Billy wore scarlet. All in scarlet, and no one so fine—the day he went —”

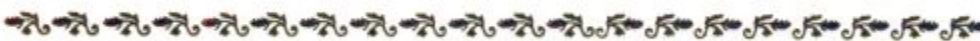
My eyes were for our John; young John, clean-limbed, smooth-faced, the lines of babyhood scarcely erased yet, the fine yellow hair on lip and chin not yet knowing the razor. And suddenly, looking at him it was not John at all, but Radcliffe, who once had run so fast with me in a paper-chase on a day after rain; it was not a church parade that would be dismissed fifteen blocks west but one that would end only in a road that has no return.

My hand closed on Grandmother’s arm, and I felt her fingers, thin and cold, clutch mine. And I knew in that moment that ninety-seven years of living had not dulled her awareness.

Her lips moved again.

“All soldiers!” she said. “God help us—it’s in the blood!”

And suddenly, unexpectedly, the flag still fluttering in her hand, she began to cry.



The Yellow Cart



I WAS a boy at the time, but I can still remember the atmosphere of mystery and terror that haunted me during that holiday at the sea. I can remember sitting with my hands locked about my knees, listening to my elders tell of the girl whose body was found down by the cliff face where, on bright days with the clean winds blowing, I had thought no ill thing could happen. I remember that, later, everybody took on their lips the name of Millie Jones. Millie helped with the chores in the cottage of old Angus, the fisherman, where my parents took lodgings; a freckled, homely slip of a girl she was, and, as I know now, one of the meek who have not yet quite managed to inherit the earth. Then she seemed to me one of the immortals because daily she drove the yellow, two-wheeled fish-cart to the wharf and brought back a shining load of fish for the local market.

Old Angus had a daughter, Sophie. I think she must have been very pretty; Millie said she was. Perhaps because Millie knew that it was unlikely any romance would ever come her own way, she worshipped Sophie, and enjoyed vicariously her love affairs, of which there were quite a few, I gathered, until Joe Green came into the picture. People said she had caught him on the rebound. I puzzled over that; but, having seen Joe and Sophie more than once when they thought they were alone, I knew at least that she had caught him good and tight. When I asked Millie what rebound meant, she said she guessed it was along of Joe having gone first with Jeanne Adams who had a quarrel with him and broke things off. It didn't occur to Millie or to me, then, how dark a shadow that quarrel was to cast over Joe and Sophie or how, in the end, Millie was to be mixed up in it so strangely.

Even now I can recall what terror infected me when people spoke of Jeanne Adams and of what had happened to her. They talked always in whispers when she was mentioned and I was near, but spoke more loudly and openly of the inquest and of Joe Green's part in it. I asked Millie, because anything I wanted to know I asked her, but all she said was, "Joe, he wouldn't never do such an awful thing, but people know how he quarrelled

with her, and then it was bad Llew Hardy and Al Sholtz finding him that way. And it was worse, him running off the way he done. He should've stayed and faced it. I hope to God he comes back himself before they go and fetch him."

Millie had her wish. Joe came back. I remember the night well, with rain coming in from the sea and the wind back of it; he was soaked and shivering when he reached old Angus' back door. I'd gone out to see about some fishing tackle and I almost ran into them. There was Sophie hanging on to Joe, and Joe saying, "You don't believe it of me, do you?" and Sophie just shaking her head and burying it on his wet shoulder. Then Joe said, "It's true I was with Jeanne that evening, but it just happened I met her on the road and we walked along together, like. We went out there past Llew Hardy's place and Al Sholtz' cabin, and then we came to the lighthouse path and I turned off alone and left her to go on. I swear to God I was alone," Joe said. "I went and lay in the grass above the cliff and wished you were with me, and by-and-by it got darker and the stars came out, and then—then I heard the scream. I ran, and after a while I—I found her. That's how I was kneeling beside her body when Al and Llew came to see if anything was wrong. I swear to God, Sophie—" Maybe I shouldn't have listened even that much, but when you're a kid, and people keep hushing up whenever you come near, your ears get big. I didn't know then what it meant, but I guessed whatever it was about Jeanne Adams was pretty awful.

Joe gave himself up that night, and I heard he was in jail up at the County town. I'd seen the building, with its barred windows, and I thought how different it must be to look out just on a dusty square when your eyes had always known the wide blue spaces of the sea. I asked Millie would they hang Joe Green, and when, and she looked frightened and said I mustn't speak so. Millie was a queer one in some ways. I said my prayers like any kid who'd been taught to; but Millie just talked to God as if He were in the room; I'd hear her at it sometimes when I passed her bedroom door. "What we need, God," I heard her say, "is a miracle, because this is awful hard on Sophie and Joe. They're nice, decent people and they love each other just like you want people should and they're sure in a bad spot, so I guess it's kind of up to you." That was the day before the trial when, I heard it said, Llew Hardy and Al Sholtz would be the chief witnesses.

Much as I wanted to, I wasn't allowed to go. The trial lasted two days, and both days and all night the rain was heavy, and the windows shook in the wind, and somewhere along the coast they said a ship had sent up distress rockets. I felt as if even the weather was making it hard for Sophie and Joe, and by the way people talked and shook their heads, and by the

look on Millie's face, I figured things were going badly. Then a juror was taken ill and they adjourned the court for forty-eight hours, and I heard the girls talking about it. "I can't stand it, Millie," Sophie said, "I can't stand the waiting." But Millie told her, "Listen, Sophie, I been prayin' awful hard for you and Joe. Maybe it was God made this fellow take ill, you never know." I wanted to laugh at the idea of God making a man sick because of Millie; but Sophie just cried, and I crept away because I didn't like to hear her crying.



Next day the sun came out for a time, and it felt good after the wind and rain; it was bright over the sea in the afternoon, and I went out and walked. I went past the fish-market where every day Millie came with her cartload of fish from the wharf, and down past the Baptist Church and the Masonic Hall and Dr. Gunter's surgery; everywhere people were talking about the trial, until you could almost see the rope around Joe's neck. I felt pretty sick about it as I went along the shore road towards the lighthouse thinking of how Joe had come this way that awful night. I might have been scared of the road, but the sea was blue and bright, so I went right out to where Joe said he had been that night and I stood there looking around. I could see the bay and the fish wharf and the road winding white past Llew Hardy's, where the clotheslines were always full of kids' garments, and past Al Sholtz' cabin with his nets out drying. I went and looked at the place where they said Jeanne Adams was found, and I wondered what was so terrible about it all, except that she was dead. Away off I could see the boats coming, and then I saw the women and girls assembling by the fish-houses, and I ran down, meaning to see them bring the day's catch in. There was a creak of wheels, and, sure enough, it was the yellow, two-wheeled fish-cart bright in the sunlight; I'd often asked Millie why she didn't oil the wheels and she said she guessed she would sometime.

"I'm going over to see them land the fish," I told her.

Because I had on a suit of clothes my mother wouldn't want me to get all smelling of fish, I didn't get into the cart but walked behind it across the causeway and out on to the wharf. I remember that by the time we got to the slip where the boats would tie up the sunlight had faded, and a mist began to come in from the open sea. It was always fun to watch them land the catch; the boats would snub against the slimy green piles and the fishermen would take their two-pronged forks and toss the fish up. The fish would slither across the scaly boards to where old Angus lifted them with his own fork into the first tub. From that the women and girls would take them, slitting, gutting, passing them through successive waters until they reached the

salting vat. Now and again old Angus would set aside a special fish for Millie to put into her cart for sale on the local market.

When Angus saw me, he grunted, "Now don't you get dirtied up, young feller, or your ma will be after my scalp"—so I sat on a bollard at a little distance and watched them. Presently, they began to talk about Joe Green, and I wished they wouldn't. I wanted to enjoy the fish.



One after another the boats came in, and about the last to come was Al Sholtz. I can see him now, standing with his sea boots in the sludge on the floor of his boat, tossing the fish with an easy motion of his arms which were bare to the shoulder and tattooed with anchors and a ship and a woman with a tail like a fish. I kept looking at him, and at Llew Hardy, thinking how they'd found Joe by Jeanne Adams' body and how people said Joe and Sophie needn't look for any sympathy from those two. They said that, to Llew, love and marriage meant a lot of kids underfoot and a full clothesline and empty pockets, and that, as for Al, he was a bachelor, kind of sunk inside himself, to whom young love was only something to keep a sharp and doubtful eye on. I remember how fast the daylight faded, and how the mist became a fog blowing in from the sea and striking you with a chill so that, young as I was, I felt it to my marrow and wished I'd brought a jacket; so I got up and went to the end of the wharf to see the tide swirling in, and when I came back I knew, even before I heard the actual words, that they were talking about Joe again. Al Sholtz was saying, "Listen now, I don't want to hear no more of this. If Joe hangs, as he damn likely will, it's because he done what he done, not because of Llew and me. There was nothin' we could do but speak the naked truth of it." And Llew Hardy said, "Sure, we was under oath, wasn't we?"

"Aye," agreed old Angus, and he nodded his head gravely, "that's so, lads."

"We spoke nothin' but what we saw with our own eyes," Al said.

Then Millie spoke up. She said, "There's two ways of saying things. It wasn't drug out of you like you hated to say it. You spoke like you'd be glad to see Joe Green hang."

They all stopped working then and looked as surprised as if one of the fish in the tubs had popped up to make a remark; it wasn't at all like Millie to talk up in company, because she was the silent sort and, as it seems to me now, humble as her own homeliness. I thought, "She's made an enemy of Al Sholtz and I guess of Llew, too." Youngster as I was, I remember deciding

then that it is the people you think you can kick around who come out strongest when you least expect it. I looked at Millie, and I could see she was awed at what she'd said but she wasn't taking any of it back. Her snub nose was more than ever in retreat, and her eyes were frightened, but she stood up to them all. "Joe," Millie said, "he never did this thing to Jeanne. I ought to know," she said.

"What talk is this?" cried old Angus, but he stared at her like the others.

"I'm just saying I know," said Millie.

"Just what is it you know?"

"I know that *somebody else* done it."

I'll never forget the feeling I had, or the way she said those words, or how everybody went tense and waited as if they expected her right there and then to name the person; but they got no more out of her. The louder the women shrilled and the harder the men stared at her, the more Millie shrank back into herself, until old Angus quieted them at last. "Enough of this," he said. "Whatever it is that Millie knows, this is neither time nor place to hear it. Get on with the fish now, it's darkenin' fast and the fog's comin' in thick." For quite a while after that nobody dared speak again; it was Al Sholtz, I remember, who had a sudden word of warning. He said, "I'm just thinking if there's truth in the girl's talk, then Joe Green's innocent, and it stands to reason if that's so, which I don't admit, the person who did it is still on the loose. I'm thinking that with the dark and the fog it'll be wise for none of our womenfolk here to go home alone."

"There's sense in that," nodded old Angus, and I felt a cold prickling down my spine and, what with the fog and all, I sneezed. Angus looked up sharply. "You boy," he said, "along home with you before the dark comes full. Away with you now."

I was afraid not to go. I was more afraid than ever when I got out on the road and saw how thickly the fog was caught in the trees and the hollows, and all the whisperings came back to me and what Al Sholtz had said, and I wished I hadn't come. Then I decided what I would do: I would wait until I heard Millie come along with the cart, and I would go home with her even if it meant that I'd get my clothes all smelling of fish.



It's queer, when you think of it, that nobody remembered Millie, who had been loading her cart with fish when Al Sholtz spoke his warning, or worried about her having to go home alone. If they did think anything of it, I suppose they thought that Millie would be safe, being so homely and all. I

waited for her, but she didn't come. Others went by in groups, but I kept well out of sight, being scared of old Angus, and at last their footfalls died away. It got darker and foggier, and I wished Millie would hurry. Up above the fog there must have been some daylight still; I could hear the gulls screaming. After that I listened hard, but there was only the moaning of the fog-horn. And then, at last, I heard the sound of creaking wheels, yet different, as if it wasn't Millie's cart coming along, but the ghost of a cart, if there could be such a thing. I thought of *Treasure Island* and the sound of a peg-leg tapping down a street by the sea. I remembered how when I'd read it first the tap-tapping seemed to be in our own street and then on our stairs, and how I sat up, forgetting the book on my knee, and listening—but there was only the sound of my own heart going too fast and too loud. The creaking of the cart was like that now, and I greatly wished myself back at old Angus' place, safe and warm by the fire.

Presently, I could just make out something looming up in the fog and I called twice, my voice almost sticking in my throat. "Millie," I called, "Millie!"—and the cart stopped. "God help us," said Millie. "I thought you was safe at home by now." She told me to get up beside her, and I was quick, in spite of my clothes and the fish, to put my foot on the hub and grab hold of the high wooden side and pull myself up. There was a narrow seat across in front and when I sat on it my feet went far enough down to feel the slithery piles of fish.

"You're shiverin'," Millie said, and I told her I was cold.

"Just cold?"

"A bit scared, too, Millie," I acknowledged.

"That's honest," Millie said. "Here, maybe you'd like to drive."

I was glad to take the reins. Millie sat beside me and I could hardly see her face.

"Millie," I said, "what is it you know?"

"What do I know about what?"

"Who did—did *it*—to Jeanne," I said, and I thought, with the gooseflesh pimpling out all over me, that it must have happened right near here.

"I wish to God I knew," Millie said.

"But, Millie, you said—you told them—"

"What did I say?"

"You said you knew who did it."

"I never said no such a thing. I said I knew Joe never done it. I said I knew somebody else done it, and of course I knew somebody else must have

done it. I had to say something. It made me just sick, hearin' them talk that way against Joe. So I just up and spoke."

That made me feel kind of gone inside, because I'd expected a lot of Millie after what she had said, and I knew very well the others had, too. I tried to tell Millie how it was—that they all thought she really knew and could name the person. Millie just laughed, a funny little sound in her throat. I told her that even Al Sholtz had weakened and begun to wonder if the womenfolk should go home alone; then I fell silent. Neither of us talked much after that, and the creaking of the cart seemed louder and lonelier than ever. Whenever I hear a noise like that, even now, I can feel the cold fog against my cheeks, and my spine prickles when I remember how, going up a slight rise, the cart stopped creaking. "Get on, Duke," Millie cried, but Duke didn't get on. I was just going to shout at the horse, too, but I didn't; it came to me somehow, because as yet I couldn't see a thing, that Duke hadn't stopped of his own accord, that somebody had stopped him, somebody who was groping back towards the cart and us. I don't think the tap-tapping of a peg-leg ever sounded more frightening than the scrabbling of those hands trying to get a grip on the high wooden sides of Millie's yellow fish-cart. Millie didn't scream, but I heard her breath coming short and sharp, and then I felt her taut body move in a swift, sudden act. I knew what it was. I knew by the sound of the blade quivering in wood that she had struck with her fish-knife. Then, catching the reins from me, she lashed Duke and the horse broke into a gallop. She kept lashing him as I am sure she had never done before, and Duke's hoofs beat into the sand of the road as if the devil himself were after us. We didn't speak, either of us, until the village lights ahead of us made us feel we could breathe again.

"Millie," I said, "do—do you suppose that was *him*?"

"Yes," Millie said, "and I only wish I'd seen him so as I'd know."

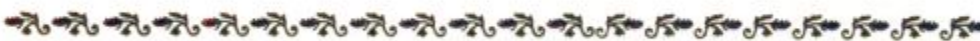
When we passed a street light I saw her face and it was white as a sheet. She said I should go home at once and get a hot drink, and not tell anyone—yet. She said she'd go on to the fish-market and get rid of her load.

I heard the cart creaking on down the street and I went into the house and ran upstairs, and I was never so glad in my life to see familiar things—the three-master old Angus had carved and rigged for me, a decorated shell I'd bought from a pedlar, and some fossils from the cliff-face near where they had found poor Jeanne Adams. By-and-by I went down to get warm by the fire that was lit in the front room, and Sophie was there. She looked up but I don't think she even saw me. I wanted to tell her I was sorry, but instead I backed out and went to the kitchen, and so I was there when Millie came in. I knew right away that something was up. She was looking sick and

queer, and when she saw me she said, "I want you to come with me, right away." I didn't ask where or why; I just went, and for some reason my heart was beating lickety-clip. We went past the Baptist Church, and the Masonic Hall, and when we got to Dr. Gunter's surgery with a light burning in the round globe and his name on it, Millie almost dragged me up the steps. Mrs. Gunter opened the door for us. She said, yes, the doctor was in, but he was busy for a moment with a patient and for us to sit in the waiting-room. She glanced from me to Millie, and I saw an odd look come on her face. She said, "Why what's the matter, Millie, have you cut your hand?" Millie stared down at her closed fist and I saw that there was blood on it, and I remember how, as if she couldn't stand it any longer, she opened her hand then. Mrs. Gunter gave a little cry, and I hung on to the side of my chair, trying not to look and yet not able to turn away.

"I'm sorry to bother the doctor," Millie said, "but I didn't know who else to go to with it. I want him to tell me what I should do. It was when I was unloading the fish," Millie said, "that I saw it."

Just then we heard the side door of the surgery close, and knew the doctor had seen his patient out. The door into the waiting-room opened and Dr. Gunter came in. If he had seen Millie and me right off I suppose he would not have said what he did to Mrs. Gunter. Boy as I was, I knew then. I knew why Millie might have been found on the road just like poor Jeanne Adams was. I saw that there are strange weavings that work things out sometimes, and I knew that Millie had wrought her own humble but effective miracle for Sophie and Joe. Not seeing us, the doctor looked at his wife and laughed, and said, "Well, I've seen plenty of accidents to people's hands before to-day without their owners looking as if death-on-horse-back were after them. Why the devil should a hard-bitten fellow like Al Sholtz be all caved in because he's lost a couple of fingers?"



Headlines for Peter



I WILL try and explain to you about Peter. It was I who walked with him on that day when his name became suddenly one for the newspapers to headline in a minor way. It is queer to think of Peter in the newspapers at all. Behind his huge spectacles he seemed to retreat, almost to shrink, from a publicity-ridden world. He was taken by many to be stupid, but that is the kind of judgment one must endure. In crowded places I have been with him and have heard his plaint, "What's wrong with me? I don't seem to belong to all this." Apart from Nature he had no gift of acceptance, but he had never questioned a tree or a meadow or a stream. It is pleasant to reflect that, on that last walk we had, beauty was not denied him. We could not, under the tyranny of Time, quite escape the city; the flow of its life rolled by on wheels, incessant, hurried; but the side of the highway was ours, and the lake lay blue to the horizon. Inshore it was a trifle muddied, but the middle distance contained every subtlety, dominated by a spectral jade, and the rim was an unbelievable ultramarine. Peter suggested we get our feet on the sand, and a beach received us kindly. It was utterly deserted except for ourselves and two children who, at a little distance—against a sunny wall, its stones white in the glare—played with their dolls as if it were summertime. Adults knew, of course, that it was winter, even if the snow had vanished and the temperature had given us an incredible interlude. Peter and I seemed the only ones willing to believe.



We sat on the rim of a breakwater and forgot there was a margin of ice inshore and that the wind was not quite a summer one. Peter liked wind. Sitting there, chucking pebbles into the small, lapping waves, he told me of this.

"I have a feeling about it," he said, "I couldn't tell anyone but you. I have a recurrent dream. I don't know if it is a dream," he amended slowly,

“but sometimes at night I go out and fight my way through darkness that is so airless it chokes me.” He looked at me through his heavy glasses. “You won’t think me crazy, will you? Anyhow, I keep on fighting the suffocating stuff, and then I find myself climbing. It is a very steep height, like a cliff, I think, and sometimes I fancy if I could look down below the sea would be there. But always on top there is a wind, not a gusty wind, you understand, but steady—small at first, and then growing stronger. I turn my face into it and lift my head and it grows stronger and stronger; then, by-and-by, I can lean right on it, as if it were a cushion, but living, and after a time there is no cliff, no sky, no sea—just wind. And I”—he paused and coughed—“I am a part of the wind, inseparable. It’s a tremendous thing, exultant, victorious, and then—then the wind drops, and I fall. I wake up in my bed shivering with an intense coldness.”

One of the children over by the sunny wall was making mud pies. Four flat stones were her stove. Her round, red mouth was open with complete absorption. She patted the cakes into brown, wet ovals with her baby fingers and centred them on the stones. One could feel, by the way she sat and watched them, that they were cooking satisfactorily.

“The point is,” said Peter, “that if one could go just one touch further there would be either oblivion—or the answer.”

I knew that behind his heavy glasses his eyes were full of the quest. I said, “If you went further you might not be able to come back.” He said, “If one got the answer, if one discovered the source of the stream, and the meaning, one wouldn’t want to perhaps.”

A row of pollarded willows ran along the wall behind the children; the tips were a rusty brown and an active colour descended as far as the parent trunks. When the wind blew, they made a weaving tracery against the intense blue of the sky; when they were still, almost an incandescence resided in them. Peter spoke of them, his voice again tranquil. We shared them. Behind us, the sound of waves on sand and pebbles was lulling. We were silent, watching the willows; a word could have destroyed them. The children’s voices, floating towards us, were safe. Their play was reality, too. Into their dolls they had breathed the breath of life; indeed, one of the dolls had told a lie and was being spanked. This must have been a very dreadful lie, and the offender might even be denied a taste of the beautifully browned cakes when they were ready. The second doll, naked and unashamed, was being bathed in a scooped-out hollow half filled with doubtful water. It protested about its ears being washed too thoroughly.

We chose, after a time, two large rocks, and sat on them, facing the hard, ultramarine rim of the water. “Peter,” I said, “the people who live on this

lake, and on the river above and below it, have few of them seen the source, but if its origins were impenetrable they would still be able to judge of it—a bit. And if they followed its course to the sea or even got a distant glimpse of the big waters, they could deduce possibilities. They can ladle it up and quench their thirst, they can drop their nets and find food, they can launch their little boats and be borne on its flood.” He did not answer me. I felt an accusation of triteness; but it may only have been that he was watching the children.

An enthusiasm for cleanliness had swept the family. Both dolls were now being taken, not to the safe, sunny shallows of a scooped-out pool, but across that narrow strip of inshore ice, to be dipped in the cold outer waters. One could only hope they had strong constitutions. Peter laughed aloud when they were set to dry, propped against hummocks of ice.

“They will breed a strong race,” he said, “if they survive.”

There was about Peter’s laughter something of that spontaneity I have noticed so many lose as they grow older; a joyous thing when it had, as now, the right occasion.

I would not quite forsake my own plaything. “We only see,” I insisted, “that part of the stream which is contemporary. Recorded history, especially biography, gives us a glimpse of other reaches. The human spirit has never been without its finer and more significant manifestations.”

He looked at me. “Not bad,” he said, “but you lay it out too neatly. We’ve got to get beyond analogies and symbols and similes. We’ve got to become one with the wind. What I mean,” he explained, “is that the mind will never do it unaided. The mind is self-conscious and secondary.”



By now the cakes on the flat stones were done to a turn—warm, brown, and succulent. Small hands transferred them to wooden platters of driftwood and garnished them with half-dead grass. One of the dolls was already dressed and seated on the warm sand. “Dinner is weady!” called the cook, triumphant.

“Wait till I bwing Cwistabel.”

Christabel, poor child, still lay naked on her hummock of ice, taking what comfort she might from the sun. Her mother, too busy about the stove to complete the toilet, now left her well-browned cakes and ran. This haste was her undoing. Her feet slipped on the ice that guarded the shallows, and we heard a sharp, piercing cry. For a moment Peter, running, obscured my

vision, then I saw that the other child was in the water. Christabel's mother had, by slipping, knocked her in.

The water was not too deep for Peter; first he was to his knees, then, when he got her out, to his thighs. I ran to his aid. "It's c-cold," he chattered. "Here, take her up to that house, and be quick. Put my coat around her." Peter's overcoat lay tossed in a heap on the sand. I took the terrified child in my arms; she had swallowed water and was in distress. I tried to ease her. Other screams startled me. "Cwistabel's going away. Cwistabel's going away. She'll be dwounded!"

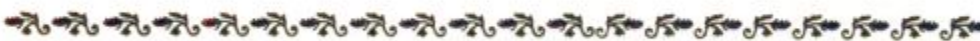
It was true. Christabel was floating outward, carried by a small wind off shore. I had time only for a glance, but the agony of the child's face was unbearable. She looked at Peter with sudden urgent hope. Peter was throwing off his jacket. I called to him to get a long branch or a boat. But rescue must be immediate. "You take that kid up to the house," he shouted, "she needs attention. I'll get the doll. I might as well be wet all over now."

I obeyed. There was a gate beside the willows; a lawn so green it might have been springtime; a comfortable bungalow cresting what was once a dune. A woman appeared and with instant perception took charge. I laid the child on a couch, and the woman's deft hands and kindly tongue went to work. There must be a hot drink, she said. For two, I amended, thinking of Peter. I hurried out of the house and, once on the beach, caught my breath sharply. Christabel's mother was crying happily, large tears streaking her face through grimy channels, in her arms a bedraggled doll. But where was Peter? I looked and called, thinking he had chosen some sunny nook to strip. I seized the child almost roughly, demanding an answer. Where was he, I asked. "He fwew Cwistabel at me," said the child, "an' then he wented away." She said it without surprise, with complete acceptance; the phenomenon of disappearance apparently offered no difficulties to her mind, but for a moment I stared in mystification, hearing only the lapping of the water and the voice of the wind rustling dead grasses on the shore.



It seems queer, I say, to think of Peter in the headlines. Quite as queer, almost stranger, than that he should have gone out, never to come back. "Life lost," say the newspapers, "attempting to save a child's doll." There are details not inconsistent with the facts, but I note references to wasted gallantry and foolhardiness. A reporter, who interviewed me, used the word. "It was godlike," I said. I tried not to be angry. I told myself he had not spent the morning on the beach and seen the dinner cooking, that he could not

understand. I tried to tell him that the body of my friend fished up from icy waters was important evidence. He gripped his pencil eagerly. Evidence? Of what? Not suicide? I told him, "No," quite sharply. "Of unseen things," I said. He shook his head and went away, and I reproached myself for thinking out loud. It is confirmation of my folly, no doubt, that I have written this, but I felt impelled to do so. It was I who walked with him that last day. I will try and explain to them about Peter, I told myself.



The Patient Man



ON the whole,” I said, “people are very patient.” “That is true,” agreed the man at my elbow, whom I did not know. We were caught in a swirl of human traffic flowing through a Montreal terminus; above us the flags of many nations were bright against the glass roof of the station concourse, and behind my chance acquaintance an angel beckoned heavenward a soldier of the first World War. My train was not yet called and by mutual consent we elbowed our way to a seat near the gates; there, in a slightly accented voice, he spoke again. I respected the fact that my new friend was one of those flags come alive for me.

“If you are not in a hurry,” he said, “I could tell you about a very patient man. That was when things first began to break up in Europe. I met him by chance, as we are meeting now, in a railway station. He was one of many—oh, so many people. He stood there quite dazed and lost in the crowd, but with an agony of determination, as you might say, in his eyes. He had come to the city, he said, to see a married daughter and she was not at the address. She had moved, they told him, it was impossible to say where. So now he must get back home. His wife would be worried if he did not return soon. ‘How long,’ I asked him, ‘have you been waiting to get on the train?’ He was not sure if it was two weeks or perhaps three; he had lost count of time. Mother would be worried. If only he could have sent her word. I knew he meant his wife.

“God knows where or how he lived; he did not tell me and I did not ask him; perhaps sleeping here like others—there were many trying to get away from the cities then. I have never seen in any man’s face such a hunger for home. He was old, you see, and this was not his place at all. He wanted to get back to where he would not be jostled by men and events. I can see him standing there waiting patiently hour after hour for a possible train. He wore a sheepskin coat that had seen plenty of weather and that had been painstakingly mended. Undoubtedly his trousers were his best pair, but they had got torn in the crowds and he had tied them with some ends of rope. ‘I

have a feeling to-day is my lucky day,' he told me and smiled up at me. That smile went through me like a knife. It is singular, is it not, how when terrible things are shaping and have already happened, the smile of one homesick old man can still matter? I can only state how it was with me. 'If there is any train at all,' I said, 'I will try and get you on it.'

"'Ah,' he smiled, 'I knew. This is the day.'

"I was afraid to disappoint him, but I did what I could, of course. I placed him by a pillar as you would a child, telling him not to stray, and then went to inquire, and after elbowing and pushing I came back with the news. A train was going and in the right direction; it would take him within forty miles of his home. Forty miles was nothing, he insisted; he knew every inch of the ground within forty miles and could make it on foot if necessary.



"There was a time of waiting, and I found a place for him to sit. Now and again he would look up and say, 'Should we not be moving?' I told him, 'All in good time; there is plenty of time yet. I will meanwhile see just what is best to do.' When I left him it was with instructions not to stir from this place, or I might never find him again. He was docile, trustful, but every movement of the crowd, each false alarm—and there were many—blew hot and cold upon his natural eagerness. He no longer asked whether or not we should be moving, but his eyes followed me with disturbing hopefulness and a final assurance I should have been very glad to share.

"As a general might plan a life and death campaign, so I planned my strategy, spending money for information from officials whose words agreed about as well as commentators' in time of war. I played a hunch, as you might say, and that hunch won. When the train backed in we were measurably near the right track. He would never have made it himself; but certainly, he never would have made it. He would have been trampled underfoot. With what triumph I stepped back when I had him seated in the carriage! It was the last carriage on the train but he was in it, though herded with many others, and in safe possession. If I had given him a corner of Paradise he could not have been a happier old man.

"The whistles shrilled. They are going, I thought. I would be glad now to see the train well out of the gloomy shed and away from the human waves that threatened still to overwhelm it. And then this thing happened. A tramp of feet echoed in that dull, horrible shed. There were shouts for way to be made. I do not know how way was made but it was made. A voice shouted, 'Clear that last carriage!' I stood my ground until pushed violently aside;

even then I could still see my old man. He stared blankly at those who came. They were not men of our own nation but on a mission to us, and even then they were arrogant and ruthless. I saw a man in the crowd spit on the insignia of one sleeve, but in the crush the act passed unnoticed. The escort of gendarmes was not needed; it pleased these alien officers to order people out of that rear carriage themselves—men, women, children. I waited for the old man. He did not come. He had his seat, and nothing else mattered. He sat there clinging to it. Probably he was too dazed to understand. Oh, they threw him out, of course. I fought my way to him and got his arm, but it took a good quarter hour to find a breathing space. He did not say anything for quite a long time. Then he spoke. I shall never forget how he spoke and what he said.

“‘There will be another train sometime,’ he said.

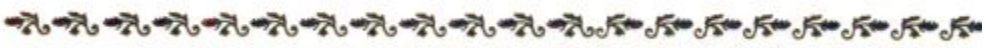
“I cannot tell you how it affected me; if it does not also affect you I cannot explain. I said nothing because there seemed nothing to say. By-and-by, he said, ‘I am very much obliged. It was very good of you.’ That was his gentle word of dismissal. I had done my best and he must not keep me; perhaps some other time a friend would again help him when the angel troubled the waters—you see I remember my Scripture. I thought of that then. I said he must come with me, and he followed me out of the station like a trusting child. I turned and saw the train pulling out, with one of those damned arrogant faces at each of the windows of the last carriage, and I would have given half my life just then to have the power to kick them out and lead the old man back to his seat and know he was going home. People in the mass you can somehow endure, but it is as individuals—”

My chance friend, who told me this, broke off. I waited. “You did get him home?” I asked. I felt it had to be. I demanded a happy ending.

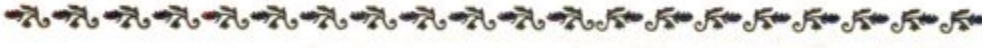
“Yes,” he said, “in a donkey cart, with others going that way. Very slow—but sure.”

“That is not the end of the story,” I said.

“Not quite,” he acknowledged. I waited again. I knew it would come. He had a small, dark moustache which he fingered a little, and underneath it a smile flickered. It occurred to me that only Europe could smile just like that. “Yes, you are quite right,” he said. “That is not really the end of the story. The news reached us the same night. Things do not always turn out so well. It was on a viaduct some sixty miles or so from the city that the train was derailed. It is a happy circumstance that the forward carriages escaped with a bit of a shaking up, but the rear carriage turned right over and plunged into the ravine three hundred feet below.”



Sweet Land



IF you should think this story is dated, I beg of you to think again. There are things we should remember and the memory of men is short. Sammy himself told me about this one evening by a Laurentian lake with a blue stillness mystically around us, and a loon calling. He came from south of the border but he had, as you will see, a feel for the north, too. I felt he was a neighbour chatting with me, and chatting about things that mattered a lot to both of us, and I suspect it won't do us any harm to hark back to them now and again. From what he then told me, I should judge that on that very morning whose dawn brought destruction to a village in Europe, Sammy slept peacefully in an empty box car which belonged to the Santa Fé railroad but was now jolting along gleaming rails in Pennsylvania. The idea that this remote event could affect his own destiny might well have caused Sammy to laugh in his sleep. He was still a free agent. This freedom extended even to his clothes, which at times allowed his pelt to protrude, and to his shoes which often admitted more than fashionable ventilation for his toes. Sammy was nobody's dupe. The thought of a drill sergeant barking at him to snap out of it, or of a bugle summoning him from repose while the air was still improperly warmed by the sun, was highly repugnant to him. The draft would not catch up with him if he could help it. By hidden campfires, or in the course of illegal journeyings, he had been known to denounce eloquently the iniquities of government, the evils of legislation, and matters of like moment. He could, at times, be blasphemous, and even give vent to his feelings in a manner which in certain other countries would soon have resulted in his being taken away and shot. Now and again, when somebody left a copy lying around, he read the newspapers, but his attitude towards the printed word was one of reserved suspicion. His mind was as open as his shirt to the four winds.

Weeks later Sammy was still a free agent. By that time he was indulging his liking for New England scenery, after a close brush with constituted authority in the neighbourhood of Atlantic City. Against the grey light of a

Connecticut dawn, a man hoisted himself furtively aboard the freight which Sammy had jumped, discovering Sammy's presence with the eye of one who has turned up a snake. "Hullo, pal," Sammy greeted him, "come on in. Welcome to our happy home." From the fellow's precise English, Sammy soon tagged him as a foreigner of some sort, but that was neither here nor there with him; it was part of his creed not to ask questions, and natural for him to offer to an uninitiate in this mode of travel the benefit of his own ripe experience. "Trail along with me," said Sammy, "and I'll put you on to the ropes." Pretty soon he discovered that he had a most attentive audience for his political and social theories and was led to become increasingly eloquent in a damnatory way.

"You seem to be terribly misgoverned," said the man.

"*I* seem to be?" Sammy blinked. "Where in hades do you come from?" Then, with a glance at the fellow's pained face, he pulled up short. "Okay. Okay. My mistake. You don't have to answer that one. This is a free country." But he began to wonder. Not to worry. He never worried; it took energy.



It happened that two nights later Sammy got his answer while on the prowl about a wayside station in a pleasant and still luminous afterglow. The notice was posted up conspicuously. Hans Grober, eh? Suspected of illegal entry. Enemy agent. Any person knowing whereabouts . . . Sammy returned to where he had left his man slapping mosquitoes by a creek, and handed him the poster which he had detached casually from the station wall. The effect was instantaneous.

"All right, take it easy," Sammy said. "Don't jump like you had a hornet in your pants. Let's you and me talk this over. Me, I've always hankered to meet up with one of you guys. You know how it is. I read about you now and then in the papers, but I like to keep an open mind. I'd be interested to hear your side of the story."

Slowly Herr Grober recovered from the shock. He sat staring at Sammy in the fast fading light. Then at last he said, "Are there many like you in America?"

"Well," said Sammy, "I don't say I'm typical, mind you, but we're a thinking people. We're not so easy led by the nose."

"I see you are an intelligent man."

"That's a big word."

Feeling his way, Herr Grober asked, "How would you like to make some money?"—then, appraising Sammy's face, he added shrewdly, "It would be made—quite painlessly. If you will continue to befriend me, to put me on to the ropes as I think your quaint phrase is, until I can get in touch with certain people, I will see that you are well rewarded."

Sammy stared back at him. He said, "I guess you got me wrong. What would I want money for?"

"I thought all Americans—" began Herr Grober, then hastened to say, "but we will let that pass. For a moment let us speak no more of it." He glanced at the scarcely distinguishable oval that was Sammy's face, but Sammy had shrunk into his shell. There was a decision he had to make. It takes effort to make a decision; moreover the mere idea of what might be entailed in turning this man over to the authorities was, he told himself, a pain in the neck. Might not his own status come into question? Might not intolerable things lie back of it—the draft, the drill sergeant, the war? He would wait and see. Meanwhile he would continue relations with this man and enlarge his own knowledge. There are two sides to every story; and it greatly pleased Herr Grober to tell his side, as there was no need for concealment now. "I came ashore," he related with pride, "from a submarine."

Sammy shook his head doubtfully.

"Wouldn't suit me. Too damned cramped, like."

"There will come a time when many of us will land on your coasts."

"So?"

"It will be for the good of America," Herr Grober said. "There are things necessarily to be changed."



Sammy sat back on his heels and sucked his pipe. He had been about. He figured he knew his own country a bit. He had lazed on California beaches, penetrated the Florida everglades, shot moose illegally in the Maine woods; the first sight of the Rockies had turned something over in him; and down in the deep south he had heard coloured folk singing songs in the twilight. He knew North America; over the Mexican border a senorita had once tried to teach him Spanish; he had heard loons call across northern Canadian lakes, and bathed in the waters of the Gatineau, and in the Annapolis Valley dusk stopped to listen to the hermit thrush. At the moment he couldn't call to mind, out of all this, anything he particularly wished changed. And there was Hilda. Behind a cheap lunch-counter where they sold fish and clams on

the route to Atlantic City, she had served him one memorable evening. Half an hour he'd sat there wolfing the food, with the reek of gasoline seeping in from the stream of cars passing the door, and watched her. How is it you can meet thousands of women and only remember one?

Herr Grober's voice jerked him back. "We would bring in the New Order," he said.

"I've heard of that," Sammy nodded. "It's something in Europe."

"For the moment—in Europe."

"It sounded to me," Sammy said, "damned uncomfortable in spots, but of course that's the newspapers for you. They get so mighty hysterical. What was the name of that place they made such a hullabaloo about a little while back?" The syllables came unfamiliarly to his lips.

"It is not so pronounced," said Herr Grober hastily, "It is, indeed, not pronounced at all. By order of our Fuehrer it is a name never to be spoken."

"Well, I don't hold with that kind of thing," Sammy said, "but anyhow I guess our papers gave it everything they had; you know how it is."

"We were very thorough," Herr Grober assured him. "Under extreme provocation, you understand, our men came at nightfall. All males over the age of seventeen were immediately shot. The women went to concentration camps. The children will be brought up by us to respect the New Order against which their parents so unhappily and unwisely rebelled."

Sammy said, after a moment, "Is that the straight dope?"

"I beg your pardon," said Herr Grober.

"I mean, is that God's truth you're telling me?"

Herr Grober was pleased to say it was. "We are a thorough people," he insisted. "After the curfew had tolled for the last time, this was done. Then at dawn our soldiers returned with fire, and bit by bit everything was set ablaze. I can assure you nothing remains, it will be remembered no more. This place, which defied our New Order, has been wiped from the map, expunged, one might say, from history; even the records of municipality and state—births, deaths, marriages, tithes—that sort of thing, all are destroyed." He struck his hands together, crushing an insect. "America is no doubt impressed?" he said hopefully. "I have myself been cut off from more recent news." He waited, but Sammy had no word for him. "You are very silent," Herr Grober said, and coughed.

"I'm thinking," Sammy told him, and he got up and walked away into the bush, where there was a pleasant smell of cedar and damp moss. Presently, a clear run of fields showed him a village beyond: houses, shops, a church steeple, twinkling lights. He returned to Herr Grober. "We've got to

be moving," he said. "There's a westbound freight through at midnight. She'll slow plenty on the grade."

"But I thought we were to spend the night here."

"You can stop if you like. I'm moving on," Sammy said, and Herr Grober rose with alacrity, saying, "I do not wish to be left here, my friend. I, too, am moving west, and I feel that travelling with you I shall get so much better to know America. The time will come when we are here in great numbers, and then we shall remember who were our friends and who were not. I shall see that you are looked after. Our Fuehrer himself will be grateful. He is always grateful to those who serve our cause. He will not be forgetful."

"Well," Sammy said, "a paperhanger once done me out of three bucks, and I've been kind of leery of 'em ever since. You know how it is."

Herr Grober let that pass. One must at times overlook ignorance, especially when it can be turned to one's own uses. As they moved on after that, Sammy didn't talk so much; he left that to Herr Grober. "Tell me more of the New Order," he would say, and he would lie on his back on some sunny slope, in between trains, and listen. Above him there'd be a sky tranquil with slow-moving cloudscapes, or by night the starry dome which had so often been a roof to him; and sometimes he would think of Hilda. He had looked her up once or twice, but last time she hadn't been at the counter. They told him where he could find her, though, and he'd gone to see her, and teased her a bit about her war plant job. "What kind of work do you think you're doing?" he said, and Hilda said, "What are you?" giving him only a half smile and a look which, when he let it, had kept haunting him ever since.

Successive freights, not without insecurities and forced landings, took Sammy and Herr Grober westward. "Where are we now?" Herr Grober would ask, and Sammy would tell him, "This is Pennsylvania," or "This is Ohio," or "This is Illinois." "It is a big place, America," Herr Grober admitted. "Much could be done with it."

"I guess that's right," Sammy agreed, for a moment wondering what he had done, except to grow to love its soil as if it were his mother; except to remember now, with an odd sense of finding something, the many towns he had been in, the little villages and their people, the farms where he had sought refreshment, the woods and hills and streams that were his familiar friends, the sound of surf on an outer island of Casco Bay, the long tumble of Pacific rollers.

Quite late one night the train clanked to a shuddering stop. "And where are we now?" asked Herr Grober.

"Where we get off," Sammy said.

"What should take us off here?"

"I said we get off, didn't I?"

Herr Grober, fearing to be left to his fate in the alien darkness, followed; such impolite speech could be taken care of at a more appropriate time. Presently there was a town ahead. What place was this, Herr Grober wished to know, but Sammy, striding along, did not answer. It was late, and not many people were in the streets, but from an open window came a sound of singing which brought Herr Grober to a halt.

"Come on," urged Sammy, "what are you stopping for?"

"It is a folk song I have heard," said Herr Grober uneasily. "In Europe. In Mittel-Europe."

"We got people from over there," Sammy reminded him. Herr Grober shook his head; it was hard to keep a race pure, he said. "Oh, I guess we ain't so bad at that," Sammy reassured him. "Maybe a strip-tease here and there, if you know what I mean, but they crack down on the burleycues when they get too hot."

"I think," Herr Grober said patiently, "you misunderstand. If your America would be really great it should learn how to deal with inferior races." Sammy had slackened speed. He figured they must be pretty near the centre of this burg by now. "You mean, I guess," he said, "we should handle 'em the way your fellows did that place, huh? How did you say the name?"

Herr Grober stiffened. "I prefer not to say it. Our Fuehrer has decreed it shall never again be spoken, or written. Its name and all memory of it are blotted out."

"Meaning those are the orders?"

"Those are the orders of our Fuehrer himself. Let us forget the accursed spot. Tell me, what is that light burning so wastefully at this time of night?"

Sammy had seen it, too. It looked just like the picture in the newspaper he had picked up, and suddenly his heart beat faster. Singularly, what he remembered in that moment was the school-house where, long ago as a kid, he had learned to sing in a shrill young voice,

*'My country, 'tis of thee
Sweet land of liberty—'*

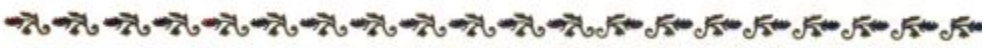
He supposed they'd sung it then partly because they were told to do it, it was in the way of routine, and sometimes he'd get the other kids laughing

while they were singing, making faces, and acting smart; but he remembered now, with an almost embarrassing emotion, the smell of autumn, with ripeness in it, and the sound of their voices, shrill and clear, and the way you could look through the school-house window and see the pattern of field and farm.

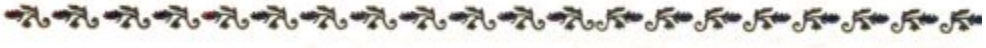
And then he remembered a girl in overalls who had asked him a question with a half smile to haunt him; and a day when he had lain in dusty security while young men in khaki swung by. "Take a good look," he told Herr Grober now, pointing to the words under the light, and trying to get his voice steady. "I've put up with you and brung you all this way to see it, just so's you'd know what America thinks."

It was then that Herr Grober became unpleasant, full of snarling and guttural incoherencies; and Sammy, indeed, had to exert himself, a proceeding he had once thought distasteful. When he turned his man over to the authorities, and requested them to show him the way to the nearest recruiting depot, they pointed out to Sammy that he'd have to wait until the morning, when they could put him in the way of it; so he went back and had another look at the thing which had brought him half across a continent so that another man might see it, reading once more, on a granite shaft where burned a perpetual light of remembrance, the words that had given Herr Grober such a bad moment:

"In memory of the people of Lidice, Czechoslovakia, destroyed by barbarism but living forever in the hearts of all those who love freedom, this monument is erected by the free people of America, at Lidice, Illinois."



Sunday at Min's



AS GRAMP walked slowly along the sidewalk a little wind shook the trees above him, and a few yellow leaves tumbled down. They drop early, he thought; seems like they drop earlier than they used to, but then everything's kind of changed nowadays. And he paused for a moment, leaning on his cane, looking up and down the street in which Min lived. He supposed it would be wrong, even wicked of him, to rebel; here was a bright Sunday morning and he'd been to church and was coming home to a good dinner at Min's.

Then he thought, they'll all be here to dinner. He began to tick them off in his mind; Min, Charlie and Emma, they were his own children. Walt, who was Emma's husband. Teresa, Charlie's wife. And, of course, little Gracie. Sunday dinner they took turn and turn about; at Emma and Walt's, or at Min's, as to-day. They never went to Charlie's. Charlie's wife wasn't one to set a table for a lot of folk. Ate out of cans mostly, if he could judge: Charlie cut himself off a queer slice when he married that girl.

Gramp consulted the gold watch that Gramma had given him many years ago; it was a huge thing and it never lost more than a few seconds all the years he'd carried it. They didn't make 'em that way now, he told himself; all for show now—streamlined, dinky sort of things. Well, maybe it was all right. He had to hurry, anyhow; Min liked him to be on time, something she never managed well herself. And suddenly his heart began to flutter. "They'll badger me about the farm," he told himself. "Not enough I should have rented it to a pack of strangers. Won't be happy till it's sold. I know 'em. Well, I'll not do it!" He knew what they'd call him—an obstinate old man who didn't know what was best for him, for everyone. He felt confused, his head in a whirl, thinking of them all. Their ways were not his ways. He reached the steps of Min's flat where an outside door led into a small marble lobby with two inner doors. One card said, "J. M. Berube"; now and again when they met, Gramp passed the time of day with this French-speaking gentleman; quiet people, himself and his wife, very polite.

The other card said, "Mrs. Horace Chalklight." It was written in Min's sprawling hand; she was always going to have a proper card, but she had a way of putting things off.

Min met him at the top of the stairs.

"My goodness," she said, "I thought you were never coming. Whatever kept you? We're all ready to sit down."

Gramp hung up his hat and put his cane in the stand. He went into the big, ornate living-room. Min ran to overstuffed chairs and plenty of colour. "Hullo, Emma," he said, kissing his daughter. "Well, Charlie, my boy. How are you, Walt?" And he smiled faintly at Charlie's wife. Teresa was petite, with a very short skirt and, he could only suppose, good legs; her heels were slender and high, her lips and finger-tips flamed. Well, she was Charlie's choice; he did it without consulting anyone, just wrote that he was honeymooning at Atlantic City. He brought her home afterwards for a visit. Teresa was very patronizing on the farm. Also she sat in the chair sacred to Gramma's knitting and smoked cigarettes, letting the ashes fall on the rug. It was a relief when she left. Gramp turned away. "Where's Gracie?" he asked.

"Come, Gracie," Min shrilled. "Gracie, do you hear? We're waiting."

"I'll fetch her," said Gramp. He knew just where she would be, sitting in his room with the picture book he'd bought her yesterday. Gracie was Min's adopted child; it was established long before Horace died that they would be childless. She was a shy child, keeping to herself, playing with familiars created to live in a small world of her own, a very real world to her. She had long, fair hair that Min often let straggle because it was a trouble to keep combed. Her big brown eyes had a fey look. Min didn't like her to play too much with the children in the street; she wished neither to arbitrate nor to defend, and when she did her scolding voice could be heard houses away; she always had an unpleasant feeling that the other children were laughing at Gracie's mother. Gracie was sitting now with the book, one leg twisted around the other, her eyes large with delight. Gramp chuckled. When Gracie got her nose into a book the Angel Gabriel would need to toot more than once. She took Gramp's hand and they went along the hall and into the dining-room together. Min was a bit hot and bothered, as she always was when dinner was on the point of being served. "Sit down, everybody, won't you?" she said. "I guess you all know your places. Mind that glass of water, father! Gracie, push Gramp's water further away. How do you like my new drapes? I got them at quite a bargain"—and she glanced a little anxiously at Charlie's wife. Teresa was making a play with Walt, but she looked up to say, "I should have thought you'd have kept away from yellow with this wallpaper."

“Oh, I don’t know,” Charlie covered his wife’s tactlessness. “By the way, I was talking to a chap, a guy I know pretty well in the real estate line—they don’t come smarter—and he’s sure he could get us an offer for the farm.”

Gramp’s head lifted. “What’s that?”

Charlie made it clear what he meant.

“I’m not selling,” Gramp stated firmly.

“Oh, but father!” said Emma.

“It’s absurd,” Charlie said, “to go on like this. You know as well as I do that as long as the place is on our hands you’ll fidget about it.”

Teresa smothered a well-bred yawn. “Walt was just telling me the most interesting thing,” she said.

“I wish you’d listen to this. What I say is, if we can get a buyer—sell.”

“Well, that’s all right with me.”

Gramp snorted; so it was all right with Teresa, was it? He remembered it was she who, at a previous conference concerning his destiny, had said, “There’s only you and Gracie in that big place of yours, Min.” So Gramp had come to Min’s. It was nice of Min, of course, and there was Gracie; but it’s not easy to uproot oneself after a lifetime in one place.



Sunday was Gramp’s worst day. Weekdays he could get down, if he wanted, to one of the markets and talk with the farm people who came in with their wares. He’d hang around and discuss crops and values, and smoke innumerable pipes with anyone who would talk politics. But Sundays! At home he and Gramma always hitched up and drove to church. In winter two great stoves would heat the place, glowing red-hot, and the cold air would feel good when you got outside again, and there would be a stopping for a bit of gossip, and then deep blue shadows on the snow as you drove home for dinner. In summer, the shadows lay heavy on the grass, and bees would drone in through the open windows. In autumn, the leaves would lie thickly under the twin maples that stood by the lych-gate, and the countryside, as if resting from its labours, would lie in a golden haze and, the weather then being neither too hot nor too cold, there was a deal of standing about on the church grass and a man could have his fill of gossip and neighbourly talk.

“I’d like to have some of the blue damsels this year,” Gramp said aloud. “Gramma always put up a lot of sealers.”

“Blue damsels!” laughed Teresa. “What in glory does he mean by that?”

Min flushed. "Blue damsons," she interpreted, in a low, embarrassed voice. "He will call them damsels."

"I've a notion," said Gramp, "to go up to the farm next week."

"Better leave it till I can fix it with this real estate chap to drive us up, father," Charlie told him.

"Walt might take you," offered Emma, and Teresa pouted, "If *we* only had a car—but what a hope that is."

"Maybe next year, honey."

"That's what you said last year."

"I haven't a car," said Min placatingly.

"You could have if you'd wanted to."

"Maybe," flared Charlie, "I should get myself bumped off like Horace did. That got Min out of the red."

"Please," Min pleaded.

"Sure, why don't I get myself cumbered up with an overload of insurance and jay walk you into double indemnity before the second payment comes due? That set Min up."

Teresa laughed. "Well, hurry up," she said. "Walt was just telling me where there's a good car going at a bargain. He knows a fellow—"

"Aw, forget it," Charlie said.

"I guess I'll need to," Teresa sulked, "unless you come into some of Gramp's money."

Everybody looked at Gramp quickly, but Min said hurriedly, "It's all right. Gramp's a bit deaf. Gets worse every day, I do believe." Gracie put down her spoon, a portion of gravied potatoes still clinging to it. "He always hears me," she said, "don't you, Gramp?"

"Eh?" Gramp said, cupping his ear. Everybody laughed and Gracie hid her face in her sleeve, the hot tears coming. "Don't be silly, Gracie," Min said crossly. "Stop that nonsense at once!" She sighed. "I don't know what comes over that child."

"You don't train her right," Teresa said.

"Leave the child alone." Gramp's voice was surprisingly loud; underneath heavy brows his eyes blazed, but Charlie said soothingly, "It's all right, father," and glanced sharply at his wife. "It's not all right," Gramp said. He touched Gracie's head, his hand resting on her fair hair like a withered leaf lingering in sunlight. By-and-by, when she was forgotten, Gracie took up her spoon again, prodding at her food. Walt began to talk of his car; he figured he had a good many thousand miles in her yet, if he chose

not to turn her in. Emma said she knew so little about cars, she wished she knew more. Teresa was heard to murmur that all her family had cars. "How about babies?" Gramp said. They all looked at Gramp as if he had let a mouse loose in the room. Min's cheeks flushed. Emma giggled. "I suppose," Gramp said, "if babies came in new models you'd have 'em to keep up with the neighbours." Walt laughed uncertainly; he offered Teresa a cigarette from his case, and lit it for her.

"Shall we?" said Min quickly, rising.

They all got up with a scraping of chairs. Gracie slipped down from hers, taking the old man's hand. "Let's go, Gramp!" she said. By-and-by, he told her. Teresa twiddled the dials of the radio, a new model Min was purchasing on the instalment plan; Min just couldn't resist the lure of instalment buying. "You get things that way, don't you think?" she said. Gramp had never done business on that basis, except, he remembered, in purchasing the farm. A week before he married Gramma, he'd paid down a good lump sum. Driven into town behind Dandy; there was a nice free-stepping horse for you. Cal Tewthorp, shaky even then and long since succumbed, was the notary. "Good luck, my boy," Cal had said. "How old are you?"—and Gramp had told him, "Twenty-four." Cal said, "Well, you've a long life ahead of you, barring accidents. I hear you're being married next week. That's a long road, too." Cal had come to the door and stood in the sharp sunlight, smiling at his young client. Long grey coat, pepper-and-salt trousers, fancy vest, bushy eyebrows, side-whiskers, shrewd eyes: two men in one, that was Cal. Hard in a bargain or generous to his own hurt. Gramp shook himself loose from the past. "Presently," he told Gracie, who was renewing her whispered plea.

Deep in an easy chair, Charlie was lighting a cigar. "How're you going to vote?" Gramp asked him, and Charlie said, "I haven't given it much thought yet. Not till next Thursday, is it?" Gramp stared at him, and then at Walt, who said, "Heck, what difference does it make?"

Emma edged in, eagerly but diffidently, "I was reading—I mean—now if women—"

"It's all a big racket," Walt confirmed his viewpoint. "Believe me, they're all of 'em in it for what they get out of it."

When Gramp stiffened, Min said hastily, "Oh, I don't know." She hated arguments, they made her mind tired.

"Walt's right about that. He's perfectly right," Charlie said.

Gramp felt confused. His own mind retreated to a day when there were giants in the land, some of whom he had worked with, or for, in days when

the election fever ran high; great days, those. Even speakers of the wrong political stripe had moved him at times more than he cared to admit. He had confessed this heresy to George Colby who, in an unguarded moment, replied, “It don’t signify much who gets into power after a matter of eight years or so. What I mean is,” said George, holding Gramp by the lapel, after a fashion he had, and his breath smelling vaguely of cloves, “it’s time then even us folks got into opposition again. Get too gol-darned sure of ourselves by then.” Although this had startled Gramp at the time, he saw now what George meant; but there was no really loose talk about politics then, not like some of the nonsense talked nowadays. Times changed, he supposed.

“It’s not just with us,” Charlie was saying. “It’s rotten everywhere, and nothing new at that. What about all the johnnies standing round in stone in our parks and places? Look how they’re being debunked. What I mean is, it just goes to show you.”

“I read an article,” Emma said. “I think it was in—no, I’m not sure—but anyway it told how—”

“That’s the way it goes,” Charlie said, “and always has, only we’re getting wise to it. Maybe there’s something in this dictator business after all.”

“Oh, I don’t know,” said Min, perturbedly.

Teresa’s fingers twiddled the radio dial, bringing up a wail, *Got a yearnin’ for you, baby*—bringing up a voice, “—and just what is the trouble? Not with one person, but with thousands, perhaps with you. Faulty elimination—”; bringing up a voice, for an instant, a contralto thread of sound, *‘Carry me back to old Virginny, there’s where . . .’* Gramma used to sing that song. Gramma came from the Southern States when she was a child of not quite eleven. She could remember, and sometimes in her soft, slightly drawling voice, would speak of things that, like this old song, turned the heart. And suddenly Gramp was with her that day on the return trip from one memorable venture south as far as Florida—St. Augustine, he recalled, with the old slave-market and the beach to which they drove. Travelling down they’d stopped at Mount Vernon, of course, where he had felt his throat tighten with a sense of roots deep buried in common soil, as once again he had experienced this in an ancient Philadelphia church, housing flags of her nation and of his, and colonial military inscriptions. That day there was a chilling wind in Washington and a threat of sleet, though the cherry blossoms were already in bloom; at the Lincoln Memorial, Gramma had been eyes for him in the reading of unforgettable words. “*Fourscore and seven years ago*,” she read aloud, “*our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty—*” Others gathered to listen,

until Gramma saw them and cried out, "My gracious!" but people stood very silent, watching them walk away.

At the dials Charlie's wife had snared a swing orchestra. She glanced at Min, who had just returned from the kitchen saying, "I never knew a girl who could break so many dishes"; Teresa's arched brows said, "Do you mind?" a shade too patronizingly. "No," Min nodded; she asked, "What are you all talking about?"

"Politics," Walt said. "Still politics." His eyes kept straying towards Teresa.

Gramp returned from Washington. He thought of something witty that George Colby used to say, and ventured to repeat it. Their eyes questioned him. "George Colby? Never heard of him," Charlie said, but Min thought she remembered some people of that name who lived up back of the second concession. Emma agreed. They had a tubercular daughter, or was it the son who had something or other? Gramp shook his head; it seemed incredible that they shouldn't remember George Colby. Walt summed things up: "Take it any way you like, governments are rotten. Shake 'em all up in a sack and it wouldn't matter a damn which came out first."

"You're damn well talking," Charlie agreed. He lit the stub of his cigar and sat back, thumbing his vest.

Accommodating her body to the rhythm, Teresa swayed forward. "Dance with me, Walt?" Walt got up readily. "Hey," said Charlie, "I like that. Haven't I a pair of feet?" Tight-lipped, Emma fingered a comic supplement, watching Teresa's lithe figure drape itself against Walt, watching Walt. Teresa had a lazy, langorous manner that could suddenly change its tempo when her body came alive. Leaning against Gramp's knee, Gracie was interested for a while. "Your Gramma used to be a great one for stepping," he said, "but it wasn't like this dancing they do nowadays. And Sundays we didn't dance."

Charlie's cigar was forgotten. He glowered at the dancers, studying Walt's face and Teresa's. He sprang up. "For God's sake stop it," he said. "Shut that damn thing off, Min!"

"What's eating you?" demanded Walt.

Teresa smiled sweetly. "Charlie has no ear," she said, "no sense of rhythm. Come on, Walt, try that step again."

Emma rose. "I think we'd better be going, Walt."

"Say, how do you get that way? Coming over, you told me you figured Min would ask us to stop for supper."

"Of course," Min said.

Gramp muttered, "I wish they'd shut that thing off," and, like a humming-bird in flight, Gracie darted across the room. "I know how to do it," she said. The radio went dead.

"Who did that?" Teresa left Walt, crossing to where Gracie stood frightened, stammering, "D-did you want it on again, Auntie Teresa?" She reached up a small hand. Teresa's palm came down sharply. "Get away from that radio," she said. "If I were Min I'd know how to handle you."

Gramp got up with surprising agility, advancing like an avenging army upon Charlie's wife who had turned on the orchestra full blast again. He stretched out his hand and snapped it off, and in the silence stared hard at Teresa who stepped back a pace, looking as if she'd been stung by a hornet. Then Gramp nodded, as if he'd summed her up, and he went and took his hat from the peg in the hall and his cane from the umbrella stand. "Get your things on, Gracie," he said. "We'll go out and get some fresh air. Put her hat and coat on, Min. You heard me?" Min said weakly, "Yes, father." No one else spoke. Walt's mouth was open. Charlie's cigar looked as if it had grown solidly into the corner of his mouth. As the door closed behind Gramp and Gracie a mild babel broke out.

They had to look carefully this way and that. Sunday afternoon traffic glinted and honked, racing by in shimmering streams. Gracie could dart quickly, but Gramp had to take his time, and she kept tight hold of his hand. Once they were on the grass of the park they felt safe. Gracie did a little skip and a hop, then came back to say, "We got away from them all, didn't we?" Gramp nodded, smiled down at her, and they went on. They sat for a while, so that Gramp could rest, on a bench where you could look down upon a serpentine, artificial waterway, crowded with boats and canoes at so much an hour, and with two swan boats, gay with striped awnings. Weekdays, sometimes, Gramp took Gracie on those, sitting on the very front seat when they could get it. By-and-by they rose and continued their walk. The sunlight was gentle on the path where leaf patterns already lay.

"Shall we go and feed the ducks now?"

He nodded. Above the trees stately puffs of white sailed a sea of exciting blue.

"Gramp!"

"Well?"

"I'm glad you came to live with us, aren't you?"

Gramp didn't answer. He was thinking back. White clouds in a summer sky; white clouds above a road and a fast-stepping horse, above Gramma and himself; white clouds above a field where a plough had cut clean

furrows, where new growths of green lay against a rutted earth, and grain rose heavy-headed for the sickle, where fields rested after harvest, the stubble brown and gold.

Gracie pointed. “Look, Gramp—the ducks!”

There was a duck-pond back of the barn where he kept the mower. “Your Gramma and me always had ducks,” he said. “Someday, maybe, I’ll take you. There’s other folks there now but they’d not mind us having a good look around.” She opened a poke containing bits of bread and crusts from a shelf under the dining-table where she had secreted them. Loud quacking proclaimed the feast, and other children came running to see. Gracie let some of the smaller ones help throw. Gramp’s face was relaxed and smiling, his decision made now. “I’ll not sell. Be hanged to them all. I’ll leave the farm to her, that’s what I’ll do. When she’s grown, and I’m not here, it’ll be hers.”



Gracie did her hop and skip as eventually they moved away. Her face was beaming.

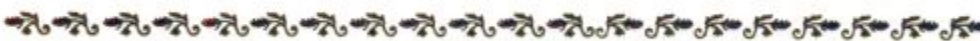
“Wasn’t it fun, Gramp? I won’t mind much—going back now, will you?”

He thought of Min and her shiny apartment cluttered with instalment purchases, of Emma and Walt echoing things they’d heard or read, of Charlie posing with his thumbs in his vest and a big cigar in his mouth, of Charlie’s wife with her scarlet lips and nails, her shrill impudence, and he was no longer afraid. Not of any of ’em, he told himself.

“No,” he said, smiling down at Gracie.

About them still lay the bright afternoon. Pigeons swept upward in an iridescent flight. Higher still, far up, was something that dipped and banked against the blue. He shaded his eyes for a moment to watch the plane. A strange new world, Gramp thought. Men with wings.

A wind ruffled the surface of the pond. More yellow leaves were shaken down, to be trodden underfoot or to lie warmly in the late sunlight falling on the path.



The Peach Tree



THERE wasn't more than enough furniture to make one small load, and Mrs. Bricknor was secretly ashamed for Sammy Bell to see it. Bricknor had arranged with Sammy Bell to move the things in his truck. The neighbours, too, in the street they left, all came out and had a look, and here in the lesser district to which they had come doors opened and curtains were pulled aside, while all the children who were not at school, and three dogs, came and watched the unloading. One of the dogs took very kindly to the back leg of the china cabinet that had come from Mrs. Bricknor's folks years ago, setting a precedent that was quickly followed. The cabinet stood with the rest of the furniture out on the sidewalk. People had to walk around it to get by. The cabinet had little shelves for ornaments and knick-knacks to stand on, and in the centre, about the height of a child's head, was a bevelled mirror. By standing on their toes the taller children could look into it. They began making faces to see who could make the worst face; then they would laugh uproariously and run, playing tag about the rest of the pieces. Bricknor told them several times to go chase themselves but they paid no attention, or at best retired to a short distance and geyed him. The spring sun was warm. Dust already blew up the street and a watering-truck came along, swishing the dirt and litter into the gutters. From the window where she watched, Mrs. Bricknor saw it all. We have come to this, she thought.



When I was a child, Mrs. Bricknor thought, we had a peach tree in the yard. In spring, like this, it would be all in blossom. There were never peaches to amount to anything, but it was lovely when in blossom. It was odd to be thinking about a thing like that when out in the street your few possessions stood orphaned and outraged in the full sunlight. The watering-truck came on and some of the water sprayed the furniture, though the driver

thoughtfully turned off the jets on that side as soon as he was conscious of the obstruction.

Bricknor came in now, staggering under a chair. It was a heavy, unlovely chair, and Mrs. Bricknor always hoped they might get rid of it, but Bricknor liked it. It was hard to sweep under or to move when she wanted to sweep around it, but Bricknor said why should she bother, it was a mighty comfortable chair. He sat a lot in the chair and smoked. Now, coming in, he put it down, cursing its weight but making sure of the best corner for it by the window in case he wanted to read. He didn't often read, but he might want to. You never knew.

Looking at him, at the chair, at this place to which he had brought her, Mrs. Bricknor suddenly sat down in the chair and he was afraid she was going to cry, which would make him distinctly uncomfortable. She was not a woman who cried easily, and he did not want her to now. He did not like to see women cry, especially his wife. Quite often Bricknor wished he were more hard-boiled and not sensitive to such things. But Mrs. Bricknor did not cry, only said in a flat voice, and certainly not speaking to him, "It is so long ago. So long. So long ago."

"What is?" Bricknor said.

"The peach tree. The peach tree we had in our yard when I was a child."

"Oh, that," he said.

He stood looking at her, waiting for her to cry, but she did not, so after a time he went out. Sammy Bell had the last of the stuff off the truck now; Sammy was young and strong, and he carried in pieces you'd think would take two men. Last of all, Sammy put the cabinet on his back, steadied it, and bore it in. That was the lot, he told Mrs. Bricknor. Where to put the cabinet, please? Anywhere, Mrs. Bricknor told him, it didn't matter.

"Thank you for helping us, Mr. Bell," Mrs. Bricknor said.

"That's okay," Sammy said.

"Has—has Mr. Bricknor arranged about paying you?"

"Sure," Sammy lied. He shifted the cabinet by the wall where it would get whatever light came through the window. "That's a swell piece," he said.

Mrs. Bricknor smiled faintly. She knew he was meaning to be kind. She knew he meant he liked the piece but also he was trying to let her down easy. He understood how she felt. It was a queer sensation to have a man understand her feelings. It made her at once happy and embarrassed, warmed and comforted, and yet as if a stranger had caught her naked. "Well, I'll be seeing you," Sammy said, because now he was embarrassed, having started something he couldn't finish. To break off is harder than to begin,

when you are inarticulate. He twisted his cap in his hands and went out, and she heard his truck starting.



The truck went on down the street, but the children did not disperse until it was long out of sight. They stood looking in at the door until Bricknor closed it. Bricknor came in, and Mrs. Bricknor almost guiltily got up off the chair. She knew she should get started putting things to rights, but she didn't start. Bricknor eased himself down into the chair and sighed contentedly.

"Well, that was an easy moving," he said. "One of the easiest we've had. It was a help having Sammy."

"Yes," Mrs. Bricknor said. "You—fixed him up all right?"

"Don't worry." He filled his pipe, one elbow resting comfortably on the faded chair-arm. Words came to her lips but remained unsaid. It was no good starting an argument; he either didn't hear you, or he tried to put you off, or he evaded it, as now. And she knew she couldn't trust herself with words; the things she felt were beyond expression. They crowded in upon her, constricting her throat, so that she put up a hand, with the thin gold band of her wedding ring pressed against her cheek. Bricknor got his pipe going, glancing up to say, "Look here, is something the matter? If there's anything the matter you should always tell me."

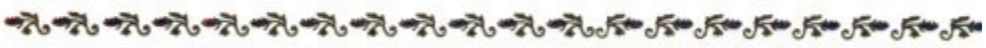
She didn't answer. Well-meaning man that he was, Bricknor felt upset. Presently, if she went on this way, he would not enjoy his pipe. She had these rare moods, of course, but she always got nicely over them. He must be patient with her and wait. What else, Bricknor put it to himself, could a man do?

Mrs. Bricknor began to push the furniture about, arranging it; and there was the cabinet. Light from the window fell full upon the bevelled mirror, and gave her back the picture of herself. She took hold of the cabinet as if to steady herself. She stared at the mirror which should have continued its faithful reproduction of her likeness. But what Mrs. Bricknor now saw was a sunny yard, and the face that looked out at her was the face of a child, suddenly rapturous at a reflected glimpse of a peach tree in full promise, rich in blossom.

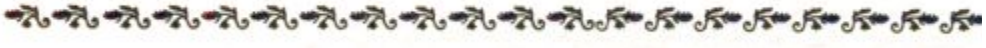
For once, quite surprisingly, Bricknor knew what she was thinking about. He struck another match, held it to his pipe, and threw the match down on the floor.

"You never got any decent peaches off the damned thing," he pointed out.

Mrs. Bricknor should have been impressed by this inescapable logic. Instead, illogically, and to the natural discomfort of Bricknor, she silently, gently, gave way to tears.



Cry Freedom



OUTSIDE the coffee shop people were gathering. From where we sat at a window table we could see the auditorium, which was their goal, looming in the fading light. My friend, who likes to think himself more of a radical than he really is, was inclined to rant a bit. “Freedom of speech?” he declaimed. “Bah, we have it only in name. I tell you”—but on a flood of vitriolic utterance he went out, being himself in tyranny to time. I sat enjoying the rest of my coffee, when a voice said, “Forgive my intruding, but I could not help overhearing.” The man who thus half hesitantly slipped into the seat my friend had vacated, went on, “The gentleman who was with you had much to say; but on this question of the right to think one’s thoughts, and speak them without fear, I could testify.” He spoke with a slight accent, but I could be sure neither of his nationality nor of his age; looking at me through heavy lens, he said diffidently, “Would it bore you if I told you my own experience?” When I reassured him, he said, “You are very good.” He toyed with some spilt salt on the table; his fingers were sensitive and well cared for. He began abruptly, “My wife and I had planned a garden,” then glanced at me as if doubtful of this beginning. “You understand,” he said, “we had long wished for such a place, but my salary as a professor was small; however we pinched and scraped until we had enough to buy a modest cottage well on the outskirts of the city where my work lay. From one side of the house we could see the open fields, a bit of a stream, and then the hills. It was at the commencement of vacation that we moved out, and I looked forward with anticipation to long hours in my new study, and good days in the garden.”

With a flick of his finger he toppled a pyramid of salt he had raised on the cloth.

“Will you believe me,” he said, “when I say that I never loved my land more deeply than when my wife and I walked together to the end of our small property and regarded this pleasant view? It was while we stood there, looking, that a man spoke to us over the fence. He was a neighbour, and

bade us welcome. He had questions to ask which I answered frankly and civilly, pleased at this overture of friendship. With this man, indeed, I soon became on intimate terms, and my wife with his. We spoke of many things, from gardens to politics. Before him, who seemed to know so much about men and affairs, I felt quite unfitted to speak, but I had my own private opinions, and my new neighbour drew them from me as if absorbing them into his own vast person; he was a tremendous, corpulent fellow. He was a good listener, but I was happier when we spoke of soils and fertilizers and flowers. It is odd now to think of how we planned the garden, my wife and I. 'Here,' we said, 'we shall plant annuals—there perennials.' Good God, perennials—to come up year after year!" He made little runnels through the spilled salt. "Forgive me," he said at last, "but I was seeing her, trowel in hand, mulching a rose bush—one that did not do too well. She usually wore a large sunhat and an overall sort of dress; it had blue spots on it, the colour of her eyes. Have I said she was fair, quite flaxen? It was her hair that first attracted me, but that is beside the point . . . My wife was the first to suggest a doubt. 'Sometimes that woman's eyes frighten me,' she said. I knew what she meant; they were spying eyes, that caught you unawares. But we laughed that aside. One cannot have one's neighbours made to order.

"You will say I was wrong, and a fool, to live so for my garden and for certain researches I was conducting; to be so divorced from the swift changes of my day; but one grows tired of shoutings and headlines, and I think many people overlook the fact that even vast political upheavals find the common people, and especially those at a distance from national centres, going about their affairs much the same. Even when the dark waves go over them, there they are afterwards, like grass, renewing the earth." He passed a hand over his forehead as if smoothing something out. "Perhaps I thought more of people—ordinary people—than was fashionable. In fact, there lay the root of my trouble. I hold very firmly that the State is the servant of the people, not the people of the State. When I said as much to my neighbour, he smiled and made no comment; frequently after that he was away from home, and even of the woman we saw less. But we were content with our own life. We built a small summer-house, and I would sit there reading or writing, watching my wife at her gardening—her sunhat bobbing on the paths, or the play of light on her honey-coloured hair as she sat by me and sewed. We were expecting our first child, when it had seemed we were to have no family, and that made us peculiarly happy. I am—not detaining you too long? . . . Well, one day I was going into town to buy some seedlings my wife desired. It seemed only courteous—for we were well out from the shopping centre—to ask our neighbour if there was any commission I could

carry out for her. She inquired whereabouts in town I would be, and then said there was nothing of which she could think. I don't know what made me go back a second time and kiss my wife; that she should cling to me a little I set down as natural in her condition. She waved to me as I boarded the bus that would take me to town.

"It was when I came out of the shop that two men stopped me. I acknowledged who I was. They said it would be necessary to go with them." He paused, shrugging slightly. "You will not ask me to go into the painful details. This man's hand was in it of course; he later testified against me. At first they were spuriously polite; then they were less polite. I found myself not a free man. They would allow me to communicate with no one—not even my wife. I could stand the other rigours, but I could get no rest, day or night, thinking of her. It seemed, and seems to me, so unnecessary; but such things are done where the State becomes more important than the people."

It was at this point I had to prompt him. I said, "They freed you at last?"

He glanced up quickly. "Yes. God knows why. The whims of self-appointed deities are strange. They came and said I was free to go, but I would do well to guard my tongue and my thoughts hereafter. I walked out of the place. I went home." Again he paused. "It is very hard," he said, "for me to explain. I do not understand cruelty, though I have seen it at work. It was not enough that she should suffer otherwise. They had come and trampled all her flowers and plants into the mud. Will you tell me why it should have been the sight of her sunhat lying mangled on the ground that pierced me as nothing else could?" We were both silent. He said, "I have kept you too long. It is enough to say that, eventually and with the help of friends, we left the country. It is not easy to turn one's back on the land one loves."



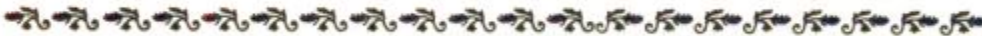
He was gazing now, not at me, but out the window. "Come," he cried, "something is happening in your streets. Let us see what it is."

I followed him out. Crowds, milling about the auditorium, were slowly being dispersed. Some were going quietly; many were vocal in protest; not a few remained, militant and threatening, surging around a heavily guarded door. We shouldered our way until we could see the door and its guardians. On it, like a seal or symbol, was a large padlock. I felt my arm clutched. "If you have any influence at all," said my companion, "use it in the right places. Cry freedom in the streets. Do not misunderstand me," he said, "I do not mean lawlessness—mob rule—incitement to violence. They are all from

the same pattern, and tyrannize over the rights of the ordinary citizen. But this?" His voice shook a little. "Watch it. To-day, it is this building. To-morrow, who knows what door? And next week—or next year—the thing may creep up to your own garden gate."

We fought our way through the crowd, and found the relief of an empty street. "Tell me," I said, "your wife—"

"You have a right to ask," he said, and allowed his eyes to meet mine firmly. "She had a very sensitive nature, as all great and rare spirits have. Hers was not a spirit to be confined nor made to conform. To-morrow," he said, "will be visiting day. She will talk to me, quite too happily, about her flowers, and about the child we shall never have." He nodded, started off, and then came back. "Has it ever occurred to you," he asked, "that there is more irrationality and madness outside restraining walls than behind them?" He did not await my answer to his question. I set it down, together with his story, for such of my fellow-men as may not be afraid to have an issue put to them in black and white.



The Far Hills



IT is a strange story I have to tell, and if you do not like such this would be as good a place as any to stop. For who knows but that you might get interested in Moira Duffy, sitting there bare-legged by the sea, a corner of her petticoat showing under the homespun, and her heart breaking as the slow tide came in?

“Better,” she said, “he should have followed the sea, and himself only coming home to me once at the year’s end.” With that she sprang up and ran to where the gate opened on a broad white ribbon of road. Beyond, field after field fled upward, brown, green, golden; and some silvered with the coming harvest when the sickles would be sharpened and the standing grain brought down. “It is there he goes,” she said, “and who knows upon what his eyes have looked?”

She listened as if for answer, but there came to her only the slight sound of the sea and the slow creaking of cartwheels on the road. Yet, when she looked this way and that, there was no cart upon the road, and less sign of the lover for whom suddenly—her thin, virginal body bent above the gate—she wept. For had not word passed from lip to lip that the man with the ox-cart had gone and was no more to be seen anywhere? “Would he had never come,” cried Moira, “to have bewitched the heart of Sean O’Connor and taken him from me.”

Now there were many that had met this stranger who afterwards could remember only the magic of his voice and the uneasiness of their own hearts. At the village public house there were those who pronounced him more heady than what they drained out of pots; and fishermen to whom he had spoken on the shore cursed his coming, declaring that they fouled their nets, and took no fish, and that the oars grew heavy in their hands. That is as it may be, for queer rumours fly fast. But, long as the story is told, it will be recounted how Gran O’Mara had words with him on the open highway, and Sean O’Connor behind a hedge where the trout-stream runs under the red bridge and so to the sea.

“And who are you?” Gran wished to know, looking him up and down.

The cart he drove was a flat hay-cart, and it contained nothing but himself, sitting straddle-legged on a box with a cushion of straw for his bony rump. His boots looked twice too big for his shrunken feet; his trousers were tied with wisps of straw above the ankles; his squat torso was covered with something that might be a smock or a loose blouse, so tattered that the threads of it streamed in any wind; and the hat he removed in deference to her was shapeless with use and weather.

“I am a carrier,” he said.

“And what do you carry that you go on the highway with a cart empty under you no less?” cried Gran, who was nobody’s fool.

The old man showed broken and yellowed teeth.

“Something that can travel faster than the wind and haunt a man all the days of his life. Ask at any public house if I do not sow the whirlwind. For such thoughts as mine men pay in food and drink and maybe a lodging for the night, which is better even than a hedge when it is flowering. Once I travelled in pots and pans, but that was before wisdom came to me.” At this he began boisterously to laugh. “Ah, ah,” he cried, “the things I have seen in my youth and the thoughts I have had while the years flew by above me. For it is young men who see visions and old men who dream dreams, which is something I heard a long while since, and how shall I say where I heard it or in what book it is set down, who have no education in the printed word?”

“May you be forgiven such madness,” cried Gran sharply, “and you so near your latter end.”

“Would you deny an old man his humours?” he asked, and pulled his forelock, goading his oxen forward with a long stick he had cut from a wayside bush.

Gran O’Mara looked back only once, and that after a long while, but by then the road was empty as a picked bone.



As for Sean O’Connor, who was the lover of Moira Duffy and they to be married before long, as all men knew, he came upon the carrier while the dew was still on the hedge and on the grass underfoot, there by the trout-stream that runs under the red bridge and so to the sea. “I am told,” said the old man, “that you are handy in the making of verses and the like. Come now, answer me this; whom should a poet love?”

“The woman of his heart,” said Sean stoutly.

“And have you met her?”

“I have that.”

“I wonder,” said the old man, lighting his pipe and drawing heavily for a time. “Tell me, lad, does she run before you like the wind, so that you can scarce put fingers on her? Is her form such that no two speak alike of her, save of a beauty past the telling? Are her breasts like hills in the morning mists, her eyes pools in which a man might well drown, her hair like grass under the summer wind, and do her lips cry destruction to him who would touch them?”

Sean had half risen, for there was a power of magic here.

“Who is this woman?” he cried.

“Ah,” said the carrier, sucking in his cheeks and letting them out again, “she is to be found now here, now there, but a man will best find her close to the place that gave him birth.” With that he stood up and took Sean by the arms. “What is it you look on now?” he asked.

“A road.”

“And else?”

“Fields, and a slope, and far trees by the ridge.”

“Beyond that again?”

“Hills with the mists on them.”

“It is there, if at all, that you will find her,” said the old man.

“And how shall I be knowing her?”

“By that which brings a dog to his home, a bird to its nesting place, or a man to his findings. But I can see that all this is beyond your courage.”

“No,” cried Sean. “No.”

The old man shrugged. “If you go seeking her,” he said, “despise nothing that you hear, for out of a bush may come fire and a voice, and in the hush of an evening she may speak and you thinking it but a thrush in the hedge.”

Sean sighed deeply.

“Has no man possessed her?”

“As to possessing her,” said the old man, “to possess her fully would be to lose her. And with that we will make an end of riddles, for my head is tired with long thinking and my heart has a mortal ache to it, and if you have so much as a small coin handy it will not come amiss.”

The dew had dried on the hedge and on the grasses underfoot before Sean O’Connor moved, and when he came to the Duffy gate he would have

passed by but for Moira herself calling to him, and at sight of him she knew, by that which a woman has within herself, that she had lost her power over him. From this same gate, looking this way and that, she now saw a figure appear on the empty road, but seeing it was Gran O'Mara she ran and hid, not wanting anyone's pity; for in Gran's face were the things she had been thinking, herself just having passed the post-office and the little shop with the pebbled windows, where she had often bought sweetmeats for the both of them when they were more children than now, Moira's fist held in Gran's, and the red head of Sean like a flag in the breeze before them.

"The blessing of God on this place," said Gran, opening the gate and going on into the house, "and I give you good-day."



It was dark within, after the blaze of sunlight on the road, but she could see that Duffy himself was home, and Moira's mother and the man named James who lodged with them.

"How can it be a good day," cried Duffy, aggrieved, "and our girl with a wasting sickness come upon her? At that," he said, knocking the dottle from his pipe, "I'd as soon have a nitwit as a poet for a son-in-law. Let him go, I say."

"And where would he be going to offend your sweet temper?" said Gran, helping herself to a seat by the fire.

"Keep your tongue off my temper," said Duffy, "which is no worse than some not a mile off the end of my pipe. As for your question, do I have to tell you, and him going by night to see a woman who, God help us, doesn't exist and her a creature of ill reputation at that?"

The mother of Moira spoke gently. "A spell has been put upon the poor lad, so it has."

"Better it were a whip!" cried Duffy, for at that moment Moira herself, coming in, went past them without a sign, and up the stairs. Gulls cried beyond the open door and the rush of the tide grew, and Gran O'Mara crossed herself, fancying she heard the sound of a cart on the road. And there came to her the remembrance of the sea moaning outside a house in which she was a child, and of how once, in a great silence, a step came and went, no man giving the reason for it, and that night no young woman would go home alone. And when the sun was up a body swayed from the branch of a tree, and himself dead a long while before; there being some who swore there was no rope nor other substance to be seen, but between the black head of him and the branch itself a stick could be passed and meet nothing, which

could not be so, but that was how it was in the telling. She shivered a little, drawing closer to the fire, and started when the lodger, James, rose and his heavy step was heard going upstairs to his room. There was scant furniture there: a bed like a bunk, a table with a candlestick of his own making and a great black book, a shelf to hold other books with names to puzzle a scholar, a row of seasoned pipes, and the faded photograph of a woman whose name or story no man had ever heard him speak. Moira sprang up at his coming, for she was in the room staring out at the fields and the folded hills where the mists lay.

“Don’t leave,” he said, and put a hand upon her.

“It is there he goes,” she told him, “and who knows at all upon what his eyes have looked?”

At the gentleness of his touch and the look in his face she could have cried, but he shook his head to show that there are better things for a woman to do than give way to tears.

“Last night,” he said, speaking more words at once than had ever been known since he came to lodge, “I followed Sean O’Connor. Where the gibbet stands above the rise of the glen I could see a long ways under the moon, for the mist was behind me, and the sea far down a lake of glass I was looking at when he came. Not seeing me, he stared a long time at the gibbet, and then went on a piece, and when I would have followed he was gone. I cried my loudest for fear of what might befall him, having had sight of his face, but neither man nor woman answered me nor any beast cried out, and so I came back, and there were thorns had pierced my hands, and on the bushes the berries were red like blood.” Then he shook his head, having frightened instead of comforting her, which he had been minded to do, and he was heard to curse as he stumped out of the house into the flooding sunlight that fell that day on land and sea. And Gran O’Mara sat listening again, fancying the slow sound of cartwheels on the roadway.



That was the night the fireflies showed themselves. Close to the sea there were none, but elsewhere in the moist dusk their myriad lamps were lit. It was said that so many had never been seen before, and there was much talk went about whether this were a thing of good or evil omen, some saying one thing and some another.

Moira herself walked by the sea, and it was there, in a cleft of a rock, she found Sean O’Connor. She came upon him so suddenly that neither he nor she was aware until their touch was upon each other. “Sean!” she said, and

put a hand out. "Oh, Sean—what has happened to us at all?" When he did not speak a wildness came on her, and she caught hold of him and would not let him go; but in a moment there was only stuff from his coat in her hands, and if it were not for that she would have said he had never been there at all, and she alone with the sea, and the birds crying faintly on the reef in the sharp stillness of the evening. She ran then, the shingle hurting her feet, the dust easing them, the wet grass of the fields cooling them—and there was Sean ahead. He went as one in step to strange pipings and now and again she lost him. Once he was seated on a stump, head in hands, as if to rest or to think, and at sight of the man's face her heart went out to him. But with the sound of his name he was up and away, and when she ran he took a hedge that a good jumper might measure with respect, and was gone; so she returned slowly down the slope in the dusk, and came to a small wood, full of the mystery of young trees, and in the silver light the fireflies swung a thousand lanterns. She stretched out a hand and in the cupped palm a small lamp was lit. She lifted her head suddenly.

"Were every one a lantern," she said, "I'd seek him with it until I brought him back."

Outside the cottage she could see her father and mother, and Gran O'Mara rocking in a great chair set in the twilight for her; and—looming large—the lodger James leaning on the gate. The sea was a slate beyond the rim of the night's tide. The road was white as if painted with one long brush stroke. As she came near, Gran spoke.

"What have you there?"

"A firefly in my hand."

As she released it, the pale lamp lit and faded and lit again above her.

"It is an omen," said Gran, and crossed herself. "When you are old this is a night you will be telling of, but whether of joy or of sorrow," said Gran, putting a hand for an instant across her eyes, "it is not given to me to know."



So long as this story is told, it will be related how it was to Gran O'Mara that Sean O'Connor came. He came beating with urgent knuckles upon the door of her cottage before she had shaken sleep from her. She saw the dawn creeping greyly over the sea as she opened the door, and there was the red hair of Sean like a passionate flame in her doorway. When she saw his face she looked a long time at it; then her thin hands reached out to take hold of a ragged coat from which part had been torn. "Tell me, Sean," she said. Sean spoke only after a moment and then in a voice that was hard for her to hear,

loving the boy not less than she did Moira. "He said that to have her was to lose her, and so it is. Now I am wanting only Moira, that was to be my wife, but my love has returned too late, for flesh was given her for the night and a frame that a man's arms could hold in the darkness of a hedge."

"You must go to her," said Gran, after a moment. "You must go to Moira."

"That I cannot."

"We will go together."

As they approached the Duffy cottage, stark and still against the grey waters, he was troubled and said, "She'll not be waking yet." There had been a storm somewhere at sea, which only now began to fret against the shore. Catspaws broke the still surfaces of the inshore pools, and far out the first white horses came rearing and plunging. The door banged behind Moira Duffy as she came out, and wind flattened the skirts of both the women against their bodies. "Speak to her, Sean," said Gran, her voice rising. "Take her to you."

"I cannot," he said. "Shame is upon me, for have I not been all night in the hills, and have held in my arms a woman not mortal under the cold stars?"

"Sean, listen to me. There is no such woman at all, but in your fancy."

"And she taking from my finger a ring that was my father's father's," said Sean, not looking up at all.

"And what," cried Moira, weeping for him, "would one not mortal be wanting at all with a keepsake?"

"God knows!" said Sean O'Connor, and he turned from her, but Gran O'Mara had a sharp, sure word to say. "There is a time for marrying and giving in marriage, and, God willing, let it be this very day." So she went into the cottage before the two of them, saying, "The blessing of God be upon this place, and it's yourself, Mary Duffy, is about to be a mother-in-law."

Fergus Duffy spoke heavily from the staircase. "What nonsense is this, and the sun not yet high?"

"If it's Sunday clothes you have to your name, Fergus Duffy," said Gran, "shake the moths out of them, for you'll be needing them. And who will be running for word with his Reverence?"

"I will," said the lodger James.

"There must be food and drink for all," cried the mother of Moira, beginning to fluster and fuss, a light coming in her eyes; but Gran, feeling

the weight of years, went and sat by the fire until the first of the friends began to gather. The word getting quickly about, they came from far and near, though it was the day of the great catch of fish on that coast, of which fishermen still speak, when so many were taken that their nets broke with the weight of them.



Rain came up over the sea before the vows were made, and the windows rattled even after the fiddles began to scrape, though it was blowing clear again when Sean O'Connor led his bride of an hour and they stood to seaward alone. Moira took hold of his arm. "The rain is all over, Sean, and there is light now on the waters."

"No words spoken," he said, "can change things, but only perhaps your own love. It is true," said Sean, "I have given you a ring, and my love with it, but not that which was my father's father's."

She held out a hand to him, but he did not see it, his eyes being turned from her; and at sight of him standing there, shamed by the thing that had been, she was hurt for him so that she could not bring to her lips what she had to say; but at last she spoke.

"Sean, look!"

He stared at her and at what she held out to him.

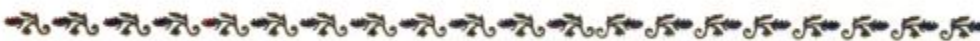
"Before God, Moira, and where would you be getting that ring?"

"From the hand that is holding mine and no other," said Moira, and averted her face for the moment, "when there was darkness so you could not be seeing my face and no clearness in your mind at all, poor boy."

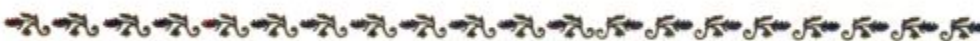
"So—it was you!"

"None other."

He held her until she cried out with the hurt of it; then he loosed her and she had to run after him to catch him where the new surf fretted the rocks. Fear was upon her again, but he turned and caught her by the shoulders. "Look in my eyes, Moira. Do you trust me still, and all that has happened like a tale that is told between us?" The wind held her against him and she could not speak, but a great light had come into the face of Sean O'Connor. "Let me be alone awhile," he said. "Let me be alone with the sea and the gulls and the wind and this thing that has come to me. For there is no wonder in the far hills, nor in the words of any man living, like that which has come to me this day."



September Nineteen-Thirty-Nine



SHE could not remember that the weather had ever been more lovely for the time of year. Sunshine fell on the green covering of the board room table. Traffic glittered up the side street towards Sherbrooke, where presently she hoped to catch a bus. The decorations on Mrs. Fetherstone's hat glowed with a life of their own, bobbing as she gave emphasis to her views. "And what is your opinion, Mrs. Coates?" Marion Coates glanced quickly at the president; she said, "I'm afraid I wasn't listening. I'm sorry." But she was a trifle defiant under the common indictment of their eyes. Could she say, "I was down in the office with Henry. I was up with my boy, Ted, at the Walters' house on the Boulevard"? She had listened, honestly trying to weigh the matter in hand, and then, quite suddenly, she had left the room; not physically, of course, but the mind has wings, it is not obedient to time and space. She cherished a natural, maternal fear for Ted, whom already she relinquished, bowing to the inevitable; but Henry—her heart had a special little ache for Henry. It would be hardest for him; but what was the president saying? Had Mrs. Coates no ideas, then, to add to the discussion? "No," she said, "nothing, I am afraid." She voted with the majority, a little guiltily, escaping as soon as she could, hurrying to get the bus. Sunlight slanted on the late afternoon traffic. There were supplies to buy; she would stop at her own corner for them. The grocer said, "Yes, ma'am, only two pounds to a customer." Some of the shops, she knew, were making capital out of it, insisting on a given quantity of groceries with each two pounds of sugar, even raising the price a cent or two—places to avoid hereafter. As she walked up the familiar street the trees were casting leaves like pale yellow coins at her feet. The grocer's boy, with unexampled promptitude, was already wheeling in her wake to deliver the provisions she had just ordered. He was whistling merrily. Nothing seemed changed: the same houses, trees, pavements, sights, sounds; and she thought, a catch in her breath, it can't be true; this is all so peaceful. A newsboy was tossing the home edition of *The Star* in the doorways on his usual route. She closed the door upon it, letting

it lie there; then, knowing that to be absurd and childish, she picked it up, glancing at it, setting it on the living-room table. Ada was out; it was her afternoon off. If Ted stayed up with Jerry Walters for dinner, which was likely, she would have the house alone with Henry. She would give him devilled kidneys on toast; peach shortcake; coffee meticulously brewed as he liked it. The activity cleared her brain, refreshed her, restored perspective. "And what is your opinion, Mrs. Coates?" She could laugh at that now, although she must have looked, and sounded, incredibly stupid. How far and quickly the mind could travel!

Glancing out the window, she could see Henry coming slowly down from the corner.



The years had greyed Henry Coates and he was a trifle thin on top, but ordinarily his walk still held the spring of youth. To-night he was conscious of fatigue that was not just physical. A busy day at the office—and, thank God, business was holding up well—he could take in his stride; the complication of orders cancelled or amended by jittery customers could be endured; this discomfort went much deeper. He supposed he was too easily disturbed. Friends said of him—hadn't he often heard them?—"Henry can't leave a problem until he's dragged the heart out of it." In these last days and weeks he had talked a bit and listened more, and thought most of all. He envied, even while he mistrusted, the glib optimism or candid pessimism of some men; at least, he thought, and was grateful for this, they had freedom to speak either wisdom or foolishness. A neighbour preceding him down the street called, "Nice evening, Coates. Grand weather." Acknowledging the greeting, he felt the comment was too casual. He was not a man who took easily on his lips the much-ridden word 'beauty;' but there were times when some alternation of light and shade, some hint of autumn in the full bloom of summer, some intricacy of shadow in the winter drifting, brought him up short. To-night, his car being in for repairs, he had taken a tram from St. James Street, luckily getting a seat, to which he clung on the longer Boulevard route rather than transferring at St. Catherine; as the successive levels were climbed the city fell away and he saw it swimming below him in the September haze. The flowers that bordered the lawns of the larger houses up here were bright with that autumn blooming which always seemed more perfect; the hillsides showed foliage that had been touched with a first frost, and down every avenue the leaves were beginning to turn. He remembered walks he had taken with Marion in fields near his home when the sight of rich red haws on the bushes, the hum of bees in late flowers, the Michaelmas

daisies and golden-rod set against the brown tapestry of the fields, held them both in an unfathomed peace. No need for words. A community of interest that he felt to be slipping from him—from them. Their silences, these last few days, were not the silences of mutuality, but of constriction, almost of embarrassment.

He let himself into the house, and Marion's voice greeted him.

"Ted home?" he asked.

"No. He's with Jerry."

"Be in for dinner?"

"I'm not sure. I don't think we'll wait. You look as if you needed—food, or something. Had a heavy day?"

"No, no, it's nothing. I'll go up and wash."

When he came down she was ready. Zinnias flamed in the centre of the table. Here was tranquillity, Marion thought. Just themselves, shut away from the world. Was that selfish—to desire it so intensely? Then she saw he had the evening paper, and her heart sank. But she said nothing, watching him serve the portions mechanically, absently. She wanted to say, "Henry, darling, can't we just—forget for a while?" then the paper, with its streaming headlines, brought a moment of panic. Was she taking this too easily? Had he insight, intuitions, denied to her; or more knowledge from moving amongst men down-town? For the first time she voiced a fear that had once or twice invaded her. "Henry, you don't think there's any chance of the democracies—of us," she amended, taking the burden on herself, too—"being defeated?"

"Only in one place," Henry said.

She hazarded swiftly, "Russia?"

"In ourselves," Henry said.

She felt small and lost, as if, indeed, this were not quite Henry, her Henry, with whom she had faced so many domestic and other problems—how small, how trifling they seemed now! Ted's teeth, schooling, future plans. The whims of Ada. A dispute with the laundry over lost linen. And they had seemed to matter so much. She flung him the cue, because she must know what he meant, "In ourselves, Henry?" and felt self-conscious, reaching for a straw. "Henry, can you believe that Mrs. Kremp has laid in all sorts of provisions, and boasts about it? Sugar, flour, tinned things—quantities of them. If that isn't hoarding—" But a movement of Henry's hand set Mrs. Kremp aside. He said, "What I mean is, are we going to be big enough inside ourselves to see this job through?" He tapped the paper with his finger. "As soon as we get calling names and shouting suspicions of each

other, childishly, like this, we begin to whittle down our defences. A chap I know was telling me they'd been badgering him over the telephone to know if he was going to resign from the Civil Liberties outfit. They've been after a lot of prominent people who lent their names to the movement. Can't you see it just doesn't fit?"

"Yes," Marion said quickly, "I see."

"As for this throttling down—censorship—that kind of thing—I guess we've got to stick a certain amount, but we'd better watch ourselves. Thank God somebody's seeing it and saying it." He fumbled in a notebook for a fragment of newspaper. "Listen to this, Marion, 'Freedom of thought, speech and criticism must survive, as it would be a tragedy if, on winning the war, we found we had lost the thing we had been fighting for.' That's Menzies of Australia," said Henry.

"Yes," said Marion again, "Yes, I can see that." She wished he would calm down; the devilled kidneys—and she had taken such pains with them—were getting cold on his plate; but, looking at him, she thought she would back him, protect him, against all the world in arms.

Henry said, spacing his words tautly, "I have a right to make up my own mind about things. I'd rather be—dead—than—lose—that—right."

She felt pride, hot and swift, in every vein. This Henry of hers! Henry who wore hats until she had to commandeer them forcibly, who had startling tastes in pyjamas, who was the father of her boy and often as much a boy as Ted himself, who came home to her each night from the routine of an ordinary office, whom—she saw now, felt the pang of it within her—she had taken a little too much for granted; to whom her heart went out now in an abandonment she hoped was not too emotional. To escape from this doubtful place, she seized upon the lance of humour.

"I wonder," she said, "where Mrs. Fetherstone gets her hats."

"Are they that kind?" He was being polite.

"Henry, have you ever seen an orchard walking?"

He laughed. The shadow was dismissed. She had won, had won so simply. She was able now to talk, to chat about trivialities, bearing Henry along on the tide of her inconsequence. When the telephone rang, she felt resentful. "I'll go," she said. When she returned, Henry asked, "Who was it?"

"Just—Ted."

"Is he at Jerry's?"

"With Jerry. They ate down-town."

He nodded. He wished presently to help her with the dishes. "No," Marion said, "Ada will do them in the morning. I'll just rinse and pile them"—and saw too late that this was a tactical error. Henry was in the living-room when she had finished; he had picked out a magazine and was staring at the date on the cover. She said, "I think our subscription has run out. Shouldn't we renew it?" He didn't answer her and she thought, that's like I was this afternoon. But what was he thinking about now; where had he gone?

Henry Coates had gone to a cricket match.

Saturday, September 1, said the date-line on the magazine. He thought, good God, what ages it seems since then.



Almost any Saturday in summer one could stroll over to the playing-fields nearby, leased from the boys' college by the Wanderers Club for their half-holiday sport. You could sit under the dividing line of trees and watch either of two games in progress, on the lower or upper field. At the interval, the ladies' committee would serve tea. A perfect summer day, this, warm but with a touch, a hint of autumn in it, to make this postscript to summer precious and important. You could set your camp-stool up against the trunk of an elm and rejoice in leisure and a game you had to know to appreciate. Half sleepy at times, and then the sudden sparkle, the change of fortune, the swift but subtle artistry with willow and leather. The ripple of applause. Voices in the lazy air. "T'others'll have to do it fast if they're to make all those runs before dark." A strong north country accent. "Aye, that they wull. Well hit, sir, well hit!" Occasion for pride here. That was Ted batting; a clean four into the tennis-courts. Then the tea interval. Players trooping in. Marion over to help serve. A box went the rounds in aid of club funds; equipment for next year. But would there be any games next season? One put that out of the mind, yet crisis was in the air; it hung, like the September mist, beyond the rim of this happy field. A stout, motherly woman was remarking to Marion, "You know, the people I'm sorry for are the Germans, I mean the ordinary—" He passed on, accepting his cup of tea. Marion smiled at him, offering biscuits. He returned with his provender to the camp-stool. Oldsters nearby were talking war now: sagely, gravely, all wanting to say something at once, to venture opinions, to be wishful, dogmatic, angry. Bound to come in, they said. Pledges to Poland. Ah, the game's about to begin again. Jerry Walters, in wicket-keeping pads, pulling on his gauntlets, ready to take the field with his team. It seemed only yesterday that Ted and Jerry were knee-panted youngsters; neither of them born when the last war broke upon the

world. Henry's own hair wasn't grey then. He was clerking in a down-town office; sixty-five a month and glad to get it. He remembered the crowds at the bulletin boards, the boys shouting extras on the streets. No radio then. And that night, up-town, bulletins hung at *The Star* Branch Office . . . "War Is Declared" . . . "The Die Is Cast." Crowds feverishly cheering. A man near Henry had said, "Those who cheer the loudest will be the last to enlist." And he, Henry Coates, had moved quite embarrassedly away, aware that his voice had been of the shrill herd. A band came along; the militia on parade, beardless youths stepping a bit self-consciously; the crowd keeping pace, or standing to watch, and cheering. "It'll be over by Christmas," someone predicted, and a young fellow bragged, "Hope to hell it isn't over before I get there!" Well, there would be no cheering now if it came. That would be a gain. Nobody wanted war.

A man said, "Good game, isn't it?"

"Eh? Oh, yes."

"What we need," said the man, "is a good spin bowler."

"Ah, that we do," chipped in another, beginning to reminisce. Respectful tongues took up the tale of giants of old, spoke names long revered in this ancient game. Men and places—Spofforth, Hearne, Ranjitsinhji, Woolley, Hammond. Lord's, The Oval, Old Trafford. And Henry Coates, Canadian born, wondered. As a boy he had seen white flannels on the Park in Westmount, and taken to the game, filling in when the men were short-handed; never very skillful at it himself, not half the batsman Ted was, who had followed in his steps, though, perhaps, at times a better fielder. But it was more than the game he loved; it was a long and hallowed tradition, and now a symbol of a land threatened but from which liberty could never be stamped out. He recalled his genuine emotion when he had first sighted Land's End, first travelled in a smooth-running train through English meadows, first 'done' the Strand on a bus top, first felt the magic of a grey city's life throbbing in faint, mellow sunlight. The man next him was now venting an ancient chant, "Oh, well played, sir!" Well played, sir! And a strange certainty lodged in Henry Coates; he felt his throat tighten. In a bigger game . . .



Marion's hand was on his shoulder. She had spoken to him twice, she said. She was saying something about renewing a magazine subscription. "Sorry, dear," he said, "I was—" but she nodded, she knew. "There may be news," he said, turning on the radio. A brief communiqué came through.

"They don't give you much," he grumbled, "there's more behind." And Marion thought how that was like all speech now; except for the wordy, the argumentative and dogmatic—who didn't really count—people were thinking and acting, not saying much. She had a sudden terrific sense of all the minds of the world working like shuttles, but silently, weaving back and forth—like hers and Henry's—past, present, future; caught here, caught there, without apparent pattern, yet weaving designs both bright and sinister. If only, she thought, one could mobilize minds! So many in all lands hating aggression, hating war, wanting peace, wanting freedom, desiring only the small, important items of living. If only, like the flights of our airmen dropping leaflets over enemy territory—a gesture under criticism, under scorn, but someday history might recall from it that we did everything, everything to hold back slaughter—if only the mind could drop thoughts, strong, purposeful, compassionate, finally redemptive. "Drop thoughts," said the clock on the mantelpiece, "drop thoughts—drop thoughts—drop thoughts!" She wanted to talk about this to Henry, but would he think her fanciful, or silly? He was saying something about censorship, and she accused herself. What right have I to keep it from him? He's got to know.

"Henry, when Ted telephoned—"

"Yes?"

"Henry, Jerry's joined up. The Air Force." She could not read his face.

He said, "And—Ted?"

"They've always done everything together, Henry."

"Then he's done it?"

"No. No, Ted wanted to speak to you first."

He reached out a hand and clipped off the radio; he put his hands in his pockets, jingling the coins there; he made little aimless excursions and movements—fingering a book, taking one from the shelves he and Ted had built in, putting it back again. There was nothing she could do for him; it was Henry's battle.

Even if she could think of anything to say, no words of hers could resolve this for him. In his own way, as was always the case with Henry, he must face the issue and see it through. She bent over some sewing. By-and-by she heard him go upstairs. She heard a window open, a blind thrown back. She kept on sewing, needle flying, but it seemed to her that with every faculty she was straining towards him . . .

The windowsill was bathed in moonlight. The moon rode clear above the chimney-pots of the houses opposite, tangling in the branches of the poplars. Crickets and cicadas were busy, and traffic hummed by on the thoroughfare at the end of the block. Some neighbour had on a radio too loudly. There was laughter under the window; two young people going by, their laughter, their footsteps fading. Henry Coates saw a column swinging down the road from Bramshott Camp to Liphook, past ancient houses and English lanes where roses rioted in summer and in winter berries burned bright in the holly hedges. The column, fully accoutred, sang as it swayed down the road to the station. He could hear them now, hear them singing words that were a part of his past. "*There's a long, long trail a-winding—*" He was with them. Harry was at his elbow. Destination: France. He and Harry always did everything together; Harry for whom the Flanders' poppies blew.

He was sitting on the side of the bed when Marion came up. It was one of Henry's rules never to sit on the side of a bed; but there he sat with his past. She gave no indication that she saw the bits of ribbon that once had decorated the breast of his tunic. Where had he dug them up from? She saw the strain in his face, and put a hand on his arm. He said, "It's a bit hard to uproot something that's been growing in you for a quarter of a century."

She said, "Yes, dear."

"It's like tearing a bit out of yourself. Before I left France, after the armistice, I visited all the old places from Ypres to Vimy, and I said to myself it must never happen again. I swore if I ever had a son—" She knew how it mystified and amazed him that men, even leaders, who had for so many years preached their own brand of pacifism, could—overnight, as it were—become war-minded without a struggle, without some spiritual readjustment so terrible that only a personal Gethsemane could suffice; she wondered if, when all this was over, they would be as easily reconverted. She ached for Henry, in whom the austere struggle was now being enacted; for Ted, who presently . . .

Henry said, "There's Ted now."

"I think I'd better go down."

He could hear their voices downstairs; they were coming up. The three of us, thought Marion, being pulled apart by something we had no say in. Ted said, "I guess Mother's told you? I wanted to speak to you first. I—you see, Jerry and I felt—"

"Yes. I see. You've made your decision."

"Yes, Dad."

"Is it too much to promise me one thing?"

“N-no, Dad.”

“You’ve thought this thing all through and decided according to your conscience?”

“Yes, we have. Jerry and I—”

“Then remember, always, Ted, to give other people—even if you disagree with them—the same right. Or am I wrong in supposing that’s the thing we’re fighting for?”

“Yes, I guess it is.”

“Well, you’d better get off to bed now. Your Mother looks ready for hers.”

And that was all. Marion, her heart constricted, cried out for something to which she could put no words, as if upon their altar the fire burned low, when there should be flame—some warm, shining, reassuring flame. Ted kissed his mother, stood hesitant, said a brief good-night to them both.

“Don’t go, Ted,” Henry Coates said. “I want to—” He held out a hand, “God bless you, Ted. Your mother and I will be—very proud of you.”

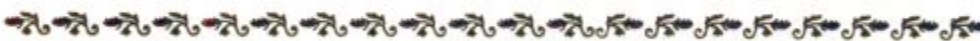
Almost the same words that an elder Coates had said to his son Henry a quarter century ago.



She fled to the bedroom, for now there was no denying the warm rain of tears. Release, relief, flooded her. She felt an arm about her. “Take it easy, old lady,” Henry was saying; that way of his of speaking casually, half humorously, when he was too deeply moved to risk serious speech. He snapped off the lights. “Come here a minute, Marion.” She obeyed, standing by him at the open window, his arm about her. “The same old moon,” he said, “but a new world.” She felt quick tears rush to her eyes again. A thousand memories were made precious to her because their content was imperilled; all they stood for was in jeopardy. She said, “Must we—must we lose all of the old?”

“No,” he said, “no, there are things that never perish. We’ve known some of them, Marion.” And he held her tighter as suddenly their years began to flow through them. “That moon has looked down on other crises,” he said, “and the world has come through. We will again.”

She felt his hand reach for hers. They stood there silently. No words were needed. Just a reaching out, a gripping of hands, a fusion of spirit and purpose. It seemed to Marion that here, at this open window in a very ordinary house, a symbol had blossomed in the moonlight.



Marching as to War



HE marched quite jauntily with the others, the disparity in his legs scarcely apparent. Or so he fancied. Ordinarily it was a quite perceptible limp, but now some deep elation in him cancelled all sense of physical weakness. As for death, men had marched towards that before, and would again. Toward death, and glory!

“Ah, ah,” Pierre thought, “but my Jeanne would be proud to see me now! I am marching again. I am marching again for France!”

It was odd that a girl should throw him a flower. He had caught it deftly. For a moment he was afraid for her as he saw a fellow near her reach out angry hands, but—slight wisp of a thing that she was—she had vanished safely into the crowd, with something of a smile on her face for him to remember.

Jeanne had thrown him a flower when he marched like this over cobbled streets, how long ago? More than a quarter of a century. He had marched then between lines of cheering people, not silent like these to-day, and she had tossed the flower and he had stuck it behind his ear—so! And later—later, he learned who she was. Still later she had visited him in hospital. Afterwards? God, how much happiness life could hold, their life together; the memory was warm within him still. Nothing could take that from him. The girls in this crowd, they were all Jeanne. This flower, first cupped and hidden in his hand, then stuck boldly behind his ear, it was Jeanne’s flower. The good God grant, if there be “a chink in the floor of heaven”—what a way she had of twisting words into pictures!—that she see her Pierre now. It is a proud day for him. See, he marches again.

Do not weep for him, my good people. What if he is a trifle ragged. What if no resolution can conceal that limp. What if he has been turned down for service, rejected when France needed him. Now, at last, she needs him. Now he is worthy of her. Limp and all, and a stubble of beard the sergeant would have shouted at twenty-five years ago.

*"Allons, enfants de la patrie!
Le jour de gloire est arrivé!"*

Come, come, my comrades! Chins up. We go to strike a blow for liberty. For France. We shall not be forgotten. Our womenfolk may well be proud.

"Pierre, a cigarette?"

"It is not allowed. Still, if you wish—"

"Merci!"

"Silence in the ranks!"

Grey buildings, have you seen anything like this? Such ragged unkempt men marching for France! You have heard martial music before, the tramp of many battalions has echoed from your walls. You know the sound of trumpets of old. But nothing like this. There should be trumpets on all the battlements. Flags on the housetops. This is a great day indeed. It is permitted that the over-aged, the rejected, the limping, should strike a blow for France and freedom.

Left wheel. Ah, God is surely good! This is the very street that knew his marching feet a quarter century or more ago. Grey-blue ranks left-wheeling then, flags fluttering, voices crying good wishes, small boys running alongside, cheering. It was from a window in this street that Jeanne flung her flower. One glances up. One is permitted a glance. There is a girl in the same window. She smiles. Not so sadly, girl. We march for France. Jeanne will be proud. Jeanne smiles down from the window. Should one think so much of a girl, of one's beloved, when one marches for one's country? Ah, but Jeanne is France. France is Jeanne. You cannot separate them. They are one.

March on, my Pierre. Think of your Jeanne. She will be happy that you march for France again.

In a moment you will be in the public square. The trees will fling out branches in benediction above you, because under them you have walked and spoken words of love. By that far wall towards which you march, you have kissed, when the sun was warm upon it, and by starlight, and when the kindly lamp of the moon hung above you. Here, if anywhere, she will be beside you. In the midst of harsh voices, shouting orders. "*My Pierre, you make me very proud.*" There is a wind in the square, and her voice is in the wind. Chin up, Pierre! It is a proud day to have lived for.

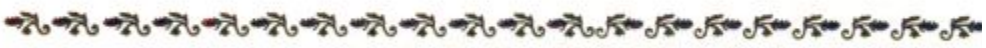
"Vive la France libre!"

The square is silent now. The trees stand sentinel above a hushed emptiness. No marching men remain, nor can any trace of them now be seen against a grey wall of ancient stones that will be there when a new day dawns.

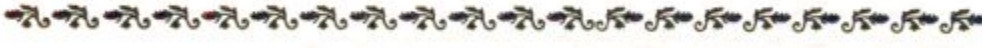
“The swine die well,” says an officer in an alien uniform. There is a thoughtful, unquiet look in his eye as he marches his firing squad back through deserted and hostile streets. “That fellow who shouted out—one would think it was his wedding day.”

The square is silent. The blood of hostages—men of France—has ceased to flow.

No trumpets have sounded. But a child, running by, has found a flower, still fresh, lying like a symbol on the ground.



Temptation



OLGA felt sure that the resolve in her heart did not show in her face. Could one tell the mission of a Judas from the face? Could one say, "This person is a Quisling, this one is not?" Old Hilda, of course, did not suspect; the candlelight illumining her honest features showed concern only for physical safety.

"You are not going out into the streets at this time of night?" she protested. "It is madness. Then, I shall come with you."

"No," Olga said, "no, I shall be all right. I am restless. I must have a little air."

"You will be careful?"

Careful! What is physical caution when there is black agony of soul, when there is darkness everywhere? Darkness in the blacked-out streets. Darkness of mind and spirit. Only one light: Sven—Sven's bright hair, Sven's last brave smile.

The empty streets are very still. It is good to be alone when one goes furtively to keep tryst with temptation. One does not have to endure the terrible inquisition of eyes which, in daylight, at a less solitary time, watch one going, and might conceivably guess the truth. Here was the market square, now deserted, but with the placard still on the wall. Always in her memory would be that moment when she had pushed through the crowd standing in front of it, to hear one of her countrymen read it aloud; hearing him, she had felt suddenly weak and terrified.

"No one will take that bait," he had said, and spat his contempt against the wall. "Besides, did anyone see von Konitz shot?"

Only her thudding heart answered. I did, I did. I saw von Konitz shot.

By what trick of fate must it have been she—she who had Sven to think of—who had been in the doorway of the bake shop? If only she had not seen the man run, gun in hand; not witnessed the impassioned triumph on his face.

Lead us not into temptation; deliver us from evil.

Think of anything but this; turn away from the narrow, familiar street that leads to—to betrayal. Think of old Hilda who daily walks past alien uniforms as if they did not exist. Think of the sky and the wings that one day, please God, will sweep across it to victory; think of the sea, and pray for whose who, at great peril, keep it for freedom. A sky whose stars cannot be stolen and shipped elsewhere, like butter and cattle and other produce to feed a ruthless invader; a sea whose waves answer no instruction but that which once stilled Galilee, or once, in more recent history, so people said, made an historic channel safe for little boats. Think hard of these things—of anything except that pale oblong of placard:

“Reward! For information leading to the apprehension of the murderer of Major von Konitz—” Not money; who cares for money? Other bait. “—the authorities will release any hostage named by the informant.”

Who saw von Konitz die?

I did. I did.

The price of Sven’s life, of Sven’s liberty; immediate release—and future immunity. “You have come to give us information, Fraulein? There is, perhaps, someone you love whom you wish released? It would be well not to delay. A word from you, Fraulein—”

One should not think of Sven; he is only one of many; put him from your mind, quickly. But how can you help thinking of Sven? Of his bright hair like a brave pennant held high as he went down the street, marching with the others. Men chosen at random, innocent of any crime. “You—and you—and you . . .” While there is time one should go back; back to the house where honest, unsuspecting Hilda waits, watching from behind a darkened window because there is danger in the streets—what danger she would not, could not suspect. Old Hilda would traffic with no enemy. But Hilda is aged; it is a long time since her love was green and could be stricken like a tender, lovely plant by a killing frost. Her heart does not cry out intolerably for a man who to-day, to-morrow, at any time, may die—not as a soldier in the field, but helpless behind stone walls or barbed wire where men are pent like cattle and at any time may be chosen to die. Three to-day, more to-morrow . . . “you—and you—and you.” And Sven? His dear body thrown into a lime pit.

“A word from you, Fraulein—”



The mind and the spirit struggle, but the feet move on. This is the street and there, across the way, is the building. A faint blue light, shaded from skies that might rain destruction upon it, burns above the door. A trooper stands on guard. Inside, behind the shutters, will be lights. And men who wait. Men with swastikas on their arms, waiting for some informant to come, by day or by night.

“You have come to give us information, Fraulein? There is someone dear to you, you wish released? What have you to tell us?”

I saw von Konitz die. I saw the man who did it. I know his name.

Lead us not into temptation.

Deliver us from evil.

I will lift up mine eyes to the hills.

There is a stirring now, a wind from the sea where the hills march boldly into the fiords. The darkness will soon be over. Dawn will come, setting pennons in the sky, driving the mists from the hills, touching the sea with the flame of a new day.

Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory . . .

Across the way, the trooper on guard stirs uneasily. The darkness plays tricks with one's eyes. One's nerves are edgy. You never know . . . these people . . . Is it imagination that he has seen a woman move, like a shadow? No, she was there; but she has gone.



Old Hilda was still on guard, watching, ready, quick to open the door. There was no need now for a candle.

“You have been so long, so long!”

“Yes.”

“You are—all right?”

“Yes, Hilda.”

“Come in quickly.” The old woman took her hand, stared into her face, and said, “You have heard the news, then?”

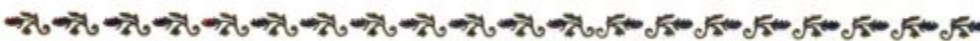
“News?”

“My brother Eric brought the word. Four of the hostages—four—.”

“Tell me, Hilda—quickly.”

It was not like old Hilda to cry, she who, dry-eyed, tight-lipped, resolute, had witnessed so much, who had stood on the pavements and in the subdued crowds, and had watched them go by—the young men, the hostages. No, it was not like old Hilda to give way. You think you cannot cry, yourself, that your tears are frozen; but they come like torrents. Two women—one old and one young—clinging to each other, weeping: one thinking, what if I had spoken . . . what if I had paid the terrible price?

“Praise God,” old Hilda was saying, “the little boats of Norway are still at sea. Four hostages have managed to escape. They are on their way to England and to freedom. And one of them is Sven.”



The Man Who Laughed



THERE was no sound, no movement in the Square. Almost one might think that these subdued people had ceased to breathe. Von Hemmel's chest inflated a little; he was aware of all faces turned towards the ancient stone balcony where he postured. This power was not his alone; he recognized its source, as an arm in rigid salute bore witness. His words rang harshly. "I shall not hesitate to use the utmost severity. The least infraction will be suitably punished." The hush in the Square was profound, profound as death itself. It held for a moment—to be shattered by a sound. Von Hemmel no longer held the centre of the picture. All eyes were turned away from where he was enthroned on his stone balcony. It was at another balcony they stared, of wood so ancient that it clung precariously to the house it served.

The Square buzzed with voices.

"Silence," von Hemmel shouted, "get me silence! Who is it that dared to laugh?" They brought him to von Hemmel, who was seated now behind a great oak table. "Here is the man," they said. So old a man? He stood humbly enough, a soldier securing each arm. The weight of years had bent his shoulders.

"You are the man who—who laughed?"

"That is so."

"How old are you? Come, speak!"

"I stopped counting at ninety."

"You trusted to your age to spare you," said von Hemmel, his voice rising. "Has it occurred to you that I have only to speak a word and you will be taken out and shot?"

The old man's head lifted. His eyes challenged von Hemmel's. "A few days more or less—does it matter? I have ploughed many a furrow in the good earth, and God has spoken to me when I broke bread by the hedge at the end of my field."

"The old man drivels—"

"Let him speak," von Hemmel told his aide. "He amuses me. Speaking of amusement, old man, why did you—tell me why you laughed just now out in the Square?"

"It was the only weapon I had."

Von Hemmel started.

"Weapon?"

The thin, cavernous face lighted. "You would rather I had used a gun. Is that not true? An old man's aim is not so good with a gun. But I have laughed at you, and that is more terrible than a bullet, and travels farther. All these good people in the Square will remember it and will take heart. And you will remember it. Long after you forget what I am saying, you will be unable to forget that I set laughter loose in the sweet spring air."

Von Hemmel sprang up, pounding on the table.

"Take this old fool away. He is in his second childhood. He is a mental case. Keep him in custody, but treat him well."

"I do not thank you for that," said the old man. "It is not that you wish me to be treated well. It is because you are afraid of me."



Von Hemmel had work to do. It is good to have work to do. It prevents one thinking. Before him on the table lay a sheaf of papers: reports, he could only hope, of civilian insubordination in this district. These people would find out the kind of man with whom they had to deal. He went to the window and looked down into the little Square. Where were all these people now? Of what were they talking? Damn their tongues; he knew. "Ah," they would be saying, "ah, the old fellow! You heard him, of course?" One would say, "I heard the old man laughing." And another, "Too bad you were not there to hear him." And they would be thinking, "In years to come it will be told to our children how the old man laughed in the Square." The sunlight was almost gone out there now, deep shadows growing everywhere; for a moment it slanted against a house whose gallery clung precariously to an ancient façade. Von Hemmel turned suddenly away. He summoned his aide.

"Who is that laughing?"

"Only the staff in the mess-room."

"Tell them to stop. No—no, not that. But make sure it does not occur again. And have lights brought. Can I see to work in the dark?"

There were only candles, Kurt said. When brought, they served to emphasize the shadows and the impressive loftiness of the room. They flung von Hemmel in caricature against the wall.

The pen rustling on paper made a harsh sound which subsided only when, now and again, von Hemmel cocked an ear, listening.

“Kurt,” he called.

“You wanted me?”

“Where is it you have put the old man?”

“In a small, empty room along the hall. He sits there in the darkness.”

“Doing what?”

The aide shrugged; he said, “At times, I think, laughing to himself, after the manner of the old.”

“Exactly. Listen.”

“I did not know it could be heard from here. I am sorry.”

The veins in von Hemmel’s face and neck distended.

“So you, too—”

“It is only that I did not wish you to be disturbed.”

“Yes, yes. Of course.”

The two men eyed each other.

“It is annoying,” von Hemmel said. “See that he is removed at once.”

“You mean?”

“Ach, Gott, must I put everything in words of one syllable? Take the senile old fool out and have him shot.”

Von Hemmel felt better. This is what he should have had done at the first, not parleyed with senility. One could now comfortably immerse oneself in work. Nothing now but the sound of pen on paper, or his own thick voice repeating the lines . . . “The least infraction . . . punished . . . utmost severity.” To-morrow the Square would bristle with placards. Von Hemmel rose and again went to the window. All was quiet. Quiet with a stillness, with a tranquillity, that was very old. Old as the sunlight now fled, to return with to-morrow’s rising. Old as the immemorial flight of pigeons whose wings were folded only until daybreak. Von Hemmel coughed. He spat out of the open casement into the Square. To-morrow his placards would be everywhere; posted by the door of the church now deeply in shadow; posted upon the walls of buildings . . . and upon that house from whose crazy balcony . . . Gott, they should know the stifling power of force, the silencing power of a bullet! The old fool, with only laughter as his weapon. Von

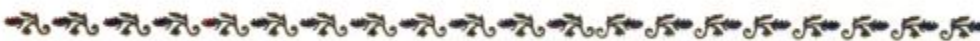
Hemmel almost laughed himself. But not quite. Instead he strode across the room, purple with anger, shouting for his aide. The flame of the candles bent as he passed them, then burned clear again. His words, when he spoke them, were thick and clotted.

“Cannot a simple command be obeyed? Must I speak twice to get things done?”

“But—”

“I will take no excuses. How long do my ears have to be offended by his senile laughter?”

Kurt drew back like a man warding off evil. A wind, unsuspected before, moved through the branches of the trees in the darkened Square. It lifted the drapes at the window and let them fall again. The aide stared at them, and then at von Hemmel. “The old man was executed half an hour ago,” he said.



There Is Also Honour



IT was the day Nick brought them home from the hospital that this happened. After a touch-and-go time of it they'd saved both his wife and the kid, and Nick was feeling good about that.

"Hullo, Nick," said the boss. "Glad to see you again."

Nick punched the clock. It felt good punching the clock again. "Thanks for sending the flowers, boss," he said. "They were swell all right."

"That's nothing Nick."

It warmed Nick to think of his wife and kid. He was glad he'd given them everything. The best doctors. A private room. All that. And they'd pulled it off. It was going to set him back a lot of money, but what is money when your wife's life is at stake—and the first kid? He'd work and slave to catch up, to pay it all. It was good to get back to the warehouse. He was still dazed a bit with his two weeks in the city, the loneliness of lodgings, the long waits at the hospital. Queer way to take your two weeks holiday, but he couldn't ask off any other way. And he had to be near his wife.

Small-town life looked pretty good to him, too: the sun shining on his own house in Maple Street, the busy traffic on Main, with people stopping him to say, "Glad to hear things went all right, Nick. Congratulations." And, three blocks along and two down, the warehouse where he had a pretty responsible job. One of those jobs a man works into, finds his niche, begins to be appreciated. Joe, of course, had carried on in his absence. Nick wasn't keen on Joe's type, but the boss got on with him all right.

"Your newspaper came, Nick," said the mail clerk. "Why don't you read plain English?"

Nick grinned. They liked to kid him about his Greek-language newspaper. He had been naturalized a long time now. He was proud of his citizenship. But once he had been a boy on an olive-clad hillside above blue waters, his home one of a straggle of white cottages. You can't quite forget. He took the paper with him to his own little office, one floor up. The place

was shut and plenty hot, but it felt good to get back. Two bluebottles buzzed in the windows, avoiding spider webs that had formed during Nick's absence. He thought he'd keep the paper to read later; then he decided to take a quick glance at it now. Right away he was thousands of miles from this office. He was seeing olive trees on a mountain slope above the blue of the Aegean. The village of his boyhood was in the news. So brief a mention, but it was there. He knew what was happening, there as elsewhere. He was proud, with an aching, terrible pride. Nick put down the paper. He must make his rounds; see that everything was all right since he left. He didn't trust Joe overmuch. "Hi, Nick, congratulations!" everybody said.

It was up in the dead storage on the fourth floor—a tomblike place where nobody went much—that he suddenly wondered, "What's different here? What's Joe been up to?"—not thinking then of the boss.



The boss was in Nick's office waiting for him when he came down. Somebody must have tipped him off that Nick had been up on the fourth. Nick looked at the boss and the boss looked at Nick. They both knew. "You're too damned thorough, Nick," the boss said. "So you saw the stuff up there?"

"Yes," Nick said.

"Listen, Nick, I'm just obliging a few friends, that's all."

Nick nodded.

"What's a few tires, Nick? Or a few hundredweight of sugar?" the boss put it to him.

Nick said nothing.

The boss shifted his feet. It was hot in here, but Nick felt a coldness inside him. The pit of his stomach seemed to have caved in. The two bluebottles droned in the sunny windows. "The guys I'm doing this for are big guys, Nick," the boss said. "They're good friends to have in a pinch. Got influence, see? They've done me favours. I can't afford not to do it. After all, a fellow has to eat, Nick. Has to know what side his bread's buttered on." His voice had a rasp in it now. "Well, he has to, hasn't he?"

Nick had nothing to say. His mouth and his tongue felt thick.

"I suppose," the boss said, "you're figuring to tip the authorities off."

Nick shook his head. He didn't say that he wasn't a one-man Gestapo. He didn't say he owed the boss too much. This job—better paid than any he could get elsewhere in town; then those flowers for the wife . . . They both

waited. After a time Nick looked at the clock above his desk, but only a minute had passed. The boss sat on a corner of the desk and smoked, which was against the insurance rules posted up on the wall, and you could hear the bluebottles buzzing around. Nobody came in. It was just the two of them—the boss and Nick. Joe wasn't in yet. Nick figured Joe must have been working a bit nights helping the boss get the stuff in while it was dark. Joe didn't matter, but the boss did. He said now, "Listen Nick, I can make things easy for you. I guess you're pretty much in a jam, eh? Sickness costs money. Bread'll have to be buttered pretty thin for a while. I can help out there. Be glad to."

Nick wished he could say something, but nothing came. He thought of all the people he knew here in town—who respected him, whom he respected in turn. He thought of the homes from which so many boys had gone to fight. This was his country. It was at war, to help free the oppressed peoples of the earth, people who still were dying . . . like flies . . . execution, starvation . . . beaten down, but not subdued. His people, back on hillsides he knew above the Aegean.

Now it was the boss who looked up at the clock, and then at Nick. In the silence the two bluebottles zoomed like planes angry for battle. Nick went into the little washroom, ran the basin full of hot water, and washed the warehouse grime off his hands and face. He filled it again with cold, and plunged his face and hands into it, sharply remembering how as a boy he had plunged into those blue waters where cottages were white on the hillside. He dried himself on the paper towels, then came out, took off his overalls slowly, and drew on his street jacket.

"I'm sorry, boss," he said.

"You're a damn fool, Nick," said the boss.



Nick picked up the Greek-language newspaper, his hands tightening on it until the knuckles showed white. He walked to the door of the little office for the last time. He had been very happy here. There'd never be another job where he'd be as happy as this. At the door he turned. It seemed to him there was something still to be said, something he very badly wanted to say. He felt the newspaper in his fingers, and the words came to him.

"Answering a question you asked, boss," he said. "No, you don't have to eat."

He went down the stairs, punched the clock for the last time, and went into the street. It was hot outside, but there was a breeze on Nick's cheeks—

a breeze blowing fresh through olive trees above the blue Aegean; singing a requiem above white houses in which women and children had died rather than betray a trust; and above roads on which full-rationed service with enemy overlords was offered in vain to gaunt skeletons of men who knew that bread is not everything; that there is also honour, even unto death.



For Valour Unrecorded



DR. CORTLAND, they're waiting for you." A hand touched his arm, and he said quickly, apologetically, "Yes. Yes, of course." He became aware that they were all seated again. The singing had moved him deeply, too deeply. It had seemed particularly appropriate here in the school chapel on this occasion.

*"O may Thy soldiers, faithful, true, and bold,
Fight as the saints who nobly fought of old,
And win, with them, the victor's crown—"*

He steadied himself, looking down upon the sea of faces. The Upper School. The Lower School. Alumni. Faculty. Parents and friends. With a gesture familiar to them all he flipped back his gown, cleared his throat, and opened the book. These were words not lightly to be taken on the lips, words that he could never read without a catch in the breath, an acceleration of the heart.

"Let us now praise famous men: and our fathers that begat us."

To-day they were praising men newly come to fame. Six of them who were on this platform, modestly wearing their laurels. Several who had not come home, would never come. Flight-lieutenant Jimmy Hawkins, whose picture had been in all the papers. Posthumous award for conspicuous gallantry in action. And, of course, Wes Brodie, who went down with his ship. Jones, Harpell, Cameron, Smith . . . oddly enough it was another face he was seeing, to which he could not yet assign a name. When you grow older, and you have dealt with many boys, you forget.

"Such as did bear rule in their kingdoms, men renowned—"

Freckle-face the boys called him. In knee-pants not so long ago, and always in some scrape or other: then filling out after a term or two, turning up on the gridiron, called suddenly into a critical game to streak like a small silver bullet through opposition, scoring while the crowd went wild. Story book stuff. He had happened across the boy the next day.

"Nice work, Holton!" That was the name—Holton.

"Thank you, sir."

"I suppose now you'll have your head quite turned."

"I hope not, sir. But it's nice to—I mean to say, sir, is it wrong to—to—"

"To like recognition? Umm—no. Quite human. Quite natural, if not carried too far."

A nice boy.

"All these were honoured in their generations, and were the glory of their times—"

And then Freckle-face was in uniform. Not the black-striped khaki of the gridiron. Battle-dress.

"Well, well, Holton. So you're off."

"I just came to say good-bye, sir."

"Good luck to you, Holton. I'm sure you will make the school proud of you."

"I'd certainly like to—to do something, sir, that would make them—" He had flushed, remembering. Both remembering. Both laughing—on an equality for a moment, master and boy. Shaking hands. Young Freckle-face saluting, striding away for the last time across the playing-fields, past the memorial gymnasium, across the campus where the shadows of the elms were lengthening.

"There be of them that have left a name behind them that their praises might be reported."

Young Freckle-face. Wait now . . . young Freckle-face . . . wasn't there some report of him? Something vague and far away and with a hint in it, if he remembered correctly, of the jungle . . .



Nobody would ever know what happened to young Freckle-face. No witness would tell of that day he slapped down more of the insects that ganged up on him, with difficulty freeing one hand for the act. This jungle was the devil, and the weight he carried grew more intolerable; but he was making it; the foul green gloom was lessening, and beyond lay the bomb-blasted clearing by which a man could chart his course.

"Take it easy, Holton."

"I'm all right, sir."

"Set me down a bit."

Young Freckle-face looked at his commanding officer, and what he saw he didn't like. "It's not far now, sir," he said encouragingly. "Our fellows are just a bit beyond us."

"Yes, I think you will make it, Holton."

"We'll both make it now."

The Colonel shook his head. "It's no go, my boy. Just prop me up a bit, will you? I've a—a couple of letters to finish. If you get through, as I'm sure you will, Holton, mail these."

"Very good, sir."

"And give this to Major Anderson. It's a bit off the record to mention this, but I'd like you to know. I'm recommending you, Holton."

"Thanks, sir, but—"

"I hope it comes through all right. What the devil are you grinning at?"

"Sorry, sir. I was just thinking of a master at the school I went to. The old boy taught me anything I know about literature. He was a beggar at seeing through you! I'd like him to know I'd pulled my weight."

"You'll get your wish, with any luck at all. Just make me as comfortable as you can."

"But, I—I can't leave you like this."

"I'm ordering you, Holton."

"Yes, sir, but—"

"There's nothing more you can do for me. And it's getting dark already."

"Dark? . . . Yes, yes, of course, sir."

Damn this swamp! A reeking place; furtive, poisonous. The jungle is an alien place. There is little to speak of home, except the heart which dwells with sick longing on familiar things.

"Holton, are you there still? I thought you'd gone."

"Presently, sir. You know, I was just wondering what your school was. Don't trouble to talk, sir—but I was just thinking how, even out here, you can quite suddenly be back there again. I suppose you remember the same kind of things I do—the elms on the campus, and the feel of the playing-field turf when you're running with the ball, and the way the light falls on the buildings towards evening." . . . The jungle is no place for a man to die alone. You can do nothing for him, perhaps, except to give him, in the quiet flowing of a friendly voice, a sense of home while the darkness gathers, and when he can no longer urge you to go because to stay with him is a risking of your own life, your own chances of home—and a citation for gallantry. "You know, sir, I have only to close my eyes, and there's old Cortland

flicking his gown and looking down his nose—or reading in chapel in a voice that always sent shivers up and down my spine. One of those voices, sir, that make you love the language . . .”

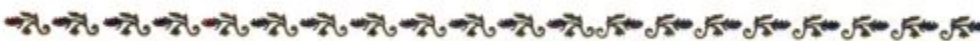


Young Freckle-face. Reported missing, now presumed to be dead. Dr. Cortland remembered this word. He supposed nobody would ever know how death had come to him.

Dr. Cortland’s voice wavered. He saw eyes lifted to him, and knew they were asking what had come over him. Was the old boy slipping? Through the windows he could see the campus and its ancient elms, and beyond that the playing fields where once young Freckle-face warmed to the cheers of the crowd. For a moment it seemed as if the boy were there again, but now one of a countless host of men who marched across the sunlit fields, long lines whose faces were not seen and whose names were not spoken—the gallant company of the obscure whose epics are unwritten, whose valour is unrecorded.

He straightened as if in salute; then, his voice steadying, he went on.

“And some there be which have no memorial—”



Something Has Happened to Joe



I GOT off the train in one of those late snow flurries that blanket the April grass and turn it greener than any rain. I felt good. To-morrow would be May, and I would go fishing with Joe. Every year it was a set engagement with me and Joe. Joe knew where the fish were. “How’s everything?” I called to Bill Sims, the station agent. “Oh, just fine,” Bill said; then, as an afterthought, “You heard about Joe?”

“No,” I said.

“Something’s happened to Joe,” he said. He hitched his shoulders in a queer little shrug and went off to see to some express parcels. I waved aside the taxidrivers and walked. There was May in the air already; this snow was nothing; the sky was blue in patches and presently the sun came out. I walked up the station road past the old grist mill and turned by Chafey’s Garage, and all the time I kept wondering about Joe. And about Kathie. I’d known Kathie as long as I’d known Joe. I used to watch the look in Kathie’s eyes when Joe and I would pass her, going fishing. She was pretty then, before she was married. Everything had started out fine, with Kathie helping Joe in the general store he had inherited from his father, but later on things began to slip. If you knew Kathie you’d know what it would mean for her to have a husband who let things go the way Joe did. Bills unpaid. The store neglected. Loafing in the wrong kind of places with the wrong fellows. It was partly Joe’s easy-going good nature. He always meant to pay those bills. He always meant to paint up the store, and fix things at the bank, and go and see old Mrs. Hertel about the bad lot of flour he’d sent her. Kathie never lost her love or loyalty to Joe, but on every visit I could see where they were heading. Once I put it up to Joe straight. “I guess you’re dead right,” Joe said, but I knew he wasn’t going to do a thing about it; we were fishing, and I hauled in my line, not wanting to fish any more that day, feeling something terrible would have to happen to shake Joe up before he would really see what he was doing to Kathie, and to himself. Now, it seemed that something had happened. I walked past the Wayside Tourist Home, still advertising its

chicken dinners, and past the United Church, and the Library, and Hermie Smith's Feed Store, and came to the hotel, where old Pop Lindsay was sitting outside. He said he figured summer was here at last. "Heard about Joe?" he asked. I said I'd heard something.

"Things do get about," Pop nodded.

"Just what has happened?" I demanded.

Pop said, "Find out if you can. I'd like to know."

I went on up the street, and stood for a minute looking at Joe's store from the outside before I went in. Joe wasn't there, but Kathie was. She stood there not saying a word, waiting for me to speak. I said, "Kathie, what's happened?" You could see she was all broken up over it. "I'd rather Joe told you himself," she said. I said I'd go on up, if that was all right. My room upstairs was the same as always: bright with chintz hangings, a framed calendar picture of a western harvest field, the flight of blackbirds, and a sporting print I'd once given Joe. Afterwards I shopped up and down the street for the latest news. Everybody could tell me that something had happened to Joe but nobody could say just what, except that Leddy Bates figured Jim Walker's kid, Billy, was mixed up in it. Leddy had seen the boy come out of his Granny Walker's that morning; later, of course, he heard . . . and then he remembered Joe stopping to speak to the kid at the corner, and both going off together.

Everywhere I went people talked about Joe, and what this would mean to Kathie. They'd tried to get the facts out of Joe, but Joe just looked at them rather queerly. They even asked the kid—this Billy Walker, Jim's boy. You remember Jim, who was foreman at the sawmill? Big husky fellow. Billy wouldn't talk. He said his father always said you shouldn't talk about things like that. "You find out. You can get it out of Joe," people said to me. Why should I? I said, but next day I went fishing with Joe. The sun came out warmly, and even if the fish didn't bite so well the buds were swelling. It was summer coming so fast it took your breath; it brought back all the summers I had known here, all the visits I'd made to Joe, and how I'd watched Kathie grow from a girl into a woman. I recalled how she and Joe had walked along this same river-bank, holding hands, lost in a misty happiness of their own just as young and lovely as the green mist I could now see through all the budding trees. I said, "This is going to make an awful difference to Kathie, Joe."

"Yes," Joe said.

"Maybe you'd like to tell me, Joe," I said.

Joe thought a moment. He said maybe he would.

“Was it Jim Walker’s kid?” I said, making it easy for him.

“He’s in it,” Joe admitted. He reeled in his line, took out his pipe and charged it, tamping down the tobacco with his thumb. “You knew Billy’s dad was killed?” Joe said.

I said, yes, I knew. I knew Jim Walker was dead.

“That was the day,” Joe nodded, “the day Billy got word at his Gramma’s. We went fishing,” Joe said.

“That day!”

“You’ve got to do something,” Joe pointed out, “so I just said, ‘Come on, kid, you and me’ll go fishing.’” He began to tell me about it. He said, did you ever walk behind a kid who’s just got word his dad’s been killed? You can tell, Joe said, you can tell by the way he walks, by the way he holds his head, how he’s taking it. He said that, walking behind Billy down the path wet with spring, he got to seeing, not Billy’s windbreaker and patched pants, but men in khaki inching through barbed wire and mine fields. Kids like this, only grown up a little. He shook this from him and there was the kid striding along ahead of him, and then he thought of something else. He thought, all the heroes aren’t out there. One’s going fishing with me this morning. He’s just a kid in a windbreaker and patched pants, but he’s got a soldier’s heart.

Joe said the fishing was good. They fished for quite a while, and then they came home, and the boy thanked Joe and went on into his grandma’s house.



For us, the fish weren’t biting any more. Joe said if I didn’t mind he’d be getting on back. Lots of things to do. We went back along the path. The flies had come out with the warmth. You could hear the birds racketing in the trees overhead. Hepaticas were up between the patches of late snow. We got to the main street, and in a moment we’d be back to the store.

I said, “Joe, that’s not all of it.”

“That’s not a bad guess,” Joe said.

I waited. By-and-by, Joe said, “The kid talked a bit—about his dad. He was awful proud of his dad, all right. Then he hauled a dog-eared sort of notebook out, and showed me. ‘I wrote it down this morning, when I heard,’ the kid said. He said it—well, that way—natural, like a kid would. ‘I was afraid I might forget it, and I wouldn’t want to forget it,’ he said, ‘because it was about the last thing my dad ever said to me’.” Joe told me what the boy

had written down. I said nothing. There was nothing to say. It was like a message from men who walk with death in far places. I knew now what kind of dynamite had blasted Joe. I knew why the store was painted up, and the bills paid, and old Mrs. Hertel's flour made good, and why everybody wondered, and why Kathie couldn't speak of it because it mattered too much to her.

These are the words written in a dog-eared notebook by a boy in windbreaker and patched pants, the day he got word his dad had been killed in action—lest he forget. “Listen, son, whatever happens, you remember this. Every so often you take a good hard look at yourself, and ask yourself what kind of a country this would be if everyone in it was just like you.”



The Little Man



YOU must make of this story just what you will. I am only the recorder; one who happened to be nearby at the time, and who had occasion to know some of the facts. Even that is a word to jib at. Facts? Well, you shall hear. It happened that I was doing a bit of slumming with my friend Erminger, who has a flair for that sort of thing, and was remarking to him, as we came from one foul tenement after another, on how close he could get to the people, when suddenly he caught my arm and pointed. "If I only had that man's gifts," he said.

"Not that ugly little man across the street?"

"Ugly?" He looked puzzled, then nodded. "I suppose, in a way, you're right. I never thought of him like that." He smiled. "Well, at least you gave him the correct title. The Little Man. He's known by that through all the district."

I was soon to learn more of The Little Man. No one seemed to know his origins, but they did know that one day he had arrived with a meagre lot of furniture, and settled like a benediction in the top flat of a three-storey tenement of riotous disrepute. The district was one where mischief rubbed elbows with patent distress, and where men—sincere in their way—sought to turn that to their own political account. Perhaps because he was concerned more with souls than with political theories, men turned to him for counsel and help. The Little Man, however, was not unconcerned about that feature of the life around him, and spoke of it realistically the day Erminger took me around to see him. I do not know that I can give any very definite impression of the place where he lived. I suspect it was bare and drab enough, but there were lilies growing in pots on the windowsill; these, and the glow of The Little Man's personality, I remember by way of warm compensation.

"You mark my words"—I was recalled to the conversation by Erminger's decisive voice—"we'll see mob violence down here before

we're through, and it will come from three sources."

Our host looked up.

"Four," he amended.

Erminger checked them over on his fingers.

"There's Fallahan, and—to use your own phrase—his zeal for God that is not according to knowledge. There's Gorvsky, and his super-Marxian madness. There's Churt, who'd turn us into dictator-ridden robots if he could. Three, I make it."

"Four," insisted The Little Man, quietly. "You forget the spirit that is common to them all. That's the fourth—and worst. Their theories may seem poles apart, but they're rubbing shoulders with the same demon." He rose and went to the window, looking down upon the roofs and chimney-pots not without sadness. "The mischief of it is," he said, "that most of them—the great mass of people, far too many at least—are like sheep. Make enough noise as you jump over your own pet stile, and they'll follow."

"Noise," agreed Erminger. "Now you've said it. We've got so we're as much afraid of our silences as of our shadows."

The Little Man turned to say:

"That makes it rather awkward, doesn't it, for the green pastures and still waters to compete?"



Perhaps because Erminger thought it was good for my complacent soul, he took occasion to have me meet the men of whom we spoke that day. I must confess that Gorvsky interested me. He had a massive face, and great, stooping shoulders, as if he had been bearing overlong the weight of the world's woes; but his head was up with a defiant tilt to it, and his shadowed eyes were both inscrutable and provocative. There was many a mean cellar or foul attic, and not a few better places, where his name was spoken with something close to worship. He sat and talked with us, quite rationally, until something I said provoked him. Afterwards, I spoke to The Little Man about Gorvsky's outburst.

"The trouble is," he admitted, "that as soon as a man gets bitter, he is in no condition to help solve his own or others' problems. And yet—and yet, can you blame them altogether?"

Churt was a different type; a bludgeoning sort of man, loud-voiced, dogmatic; a self-made man, sure of his own accomplishments, insensitive to any voice but his own. He would benefit the people, but upon his own terms;

it must be Churt's way or not at all. He would, I think, have reduced all names to numbers. Of this, too, I spoke to The Little Man, and he was silent for a time; then he said, but with sadness rather than irony in his voice:

"There was a king of old who numbered the people, and afterwards there came a great pestilence."

As for Fallahan, I was fortunate enough to be visiting that third-storey tenement one day when he burst in, full of an anger which apparently only high words and loud denunciations could satisfy. Gorvsky had been getting under his skin badly, and no Old Testament prophet in a mood of discouragement and wrath could have bettered his fulminations.

"Fallahan," said The Little Man, at last, "pull up a chair and sit down. And do take off your hat." Half-sheepishly, half-savagely, our visitor obeyed. "Fallahan," went on The Little Man, "you can quote scripture to beat the devil himself, but what worries me is where you'll fit into the picture when the hills break forth into singing and the trees of the field get to clapping their hands."

Erminger, who was with us, shot me an amused glance; but there was no humour in Fallahan. He rose, and his words filled the room with evil prophecy.

"Will your trees clap their hands when the fields are fields of blood?"

The Little Man took the thing upon his own lips.

"Blood?" he said slowly. "A strange word, Fallahan, a word of terror, and a word of power."



There is one other remembrance of The Little Man—in those days before the trouble arose—of which I must speak. We chanced in one morning when, climbing the steep, narrow way to him, our ears were assailed with the sound of nails being struck into wood. He was quick to open the door, and apologized for being so busy that he must continue while he talked. "I've been asked to help in a children's pageant at the mission house down the street," he explained, and smiled. "I can refuse nothing to the children."

We could not see then what shape his work was taking, but he hurried to ask us if we had heard anything of Fallahan lately. "He has had little to do with me since I spoke to him last," said The Little Man. He laid down his tools, and his hands touched the table, strewn with shavings and chips. "You know," he told us, "I cherish a hope—a dream, if you will—that some day

all of them will sit down together with me at this table.” There was a glow in his eyes such as I had never seen before. I saw his figure, too, limned against the window with its flowering lilies, and wondered that I had ever called him ugly. “There is something, you know,” he said, “in the breaking of bread.” He went on with his preparations for that pageant which, oddly enough, was to play its part in what followed. We know now that Gorvsky promoted the demonstration; that Churt saw his own chance; that Fallahan, scenting trouble, asked nothing better than that matters should be brought to a head. The irony is that all factions conspired in a secrecy that had in it as much fear of The Little Man as of the law. They did not wish him to interfere. It was best that he should be busy with the affairs of children. The Little Man only knew, to his delight, that half-reluctant small fry of all persuasions arrived at the door of the mission and allowed themselves to be drafted into the pageant. “The hope,” he had so often said, “lies in the children.” So he welcomed the children when they came to him.



Erminger and I dined up-town on that memorable night. Thus it was from an atmosphere of shaded lights and obsequious service that, disembarking from our bus, we were plunged into chaos.

“It’s here!” shouted Erminger. “Come along. This is something we must see.”

The place towards which we ran was a barren square, where trees still struggled to lend a touch of living green. At one end was a playground for children; and in the middle, facing an amphitheatre of concrete benches, was a bandstand seldom used, for by some neglect few ever came to give music to the people. Though the lighting was inadequate, we were aware that a black tide had swept in to engulf everything. Only the trees lifted pallid heads above that human tide that swirled about and threatened their very rootage. Even as we hesitated on the dark fringe, other tributary streams debouched from the unsavory purlieus and swept us with them. I give you my word that a fear came upon me of something more than the horror of being caught in a frenzied mob. It was something of that horror, familiar to us in dreams, when all rationalities of time and space are abandoned. I do not know that there had yet been actual violence beyond that of human units struggling for a strategic position in the scheme of things, but the leap of one’s mind was towards the issue of intolerance in all ages and in all lands. Police cars sirened their way through nearby streets. Ahead of them had come ineffective cordons, quickly swept away in the dark tide; behind them the fire brigade brought the safe persuasions of hose-lines to aid their

brethren. A searchlight began to sweep the troubled sea, then steadied and focussed on the central platform as if to pick out the leaders of this disturbance. Men retreated before it as if it were the eye of omniscience, spilling from that raised prominence into the doubtful oblivion below. The searchlight showed only the familiar structure of fretted wood. An ominous murmur and movement of the mob seemed directed against that beam. They did not want the light. Yet—by what trick of chance or destiny?—the light held.

I can set it down only in simple words. It is too much to expect that Time should spin as dizzily for you as it did, in that instant, for me. I can only tell you that at one moment the platform was empty; at the next, a man was being lifted up above the people. What thrust and urge got him there was a speculation, until suddenly one understood why, even in that dense mob, a way had opened for him. I cried to Erminger to look, but he was no longer at my elbow, and I knew I had to face this thing alone.

Against the background of a surging, shouting crowd, I saw a man bearing on his shoulders a wooden cross. Once he staggered a little under the burden, then he stopped and raised his hand as if in benediction or appeal. The tumult hushed; not instantly, but gradually, the silence spreading. No silence I had ever known was quite like that. I felt Erminger at my side again, and so we stood.

What officious fool made the move I do not know, but—as if the time were opportune—the police moved forward to disperse the people. “Damned idiots!” shouted Erminger, his words scarcely reaching me, for the tumult had broken out again. Helplessly, we watched the dark flood bear down upon, and engulf, the cross and the man who carried it.

The sirens shrilled again; the forces of the law moved to the attack. Then, over the heads of the people a fountain of water played; for an instant a rainbow hung between me and that central place. As I watched, a bird flew up, its wings tipped with light, and disappeared into the darkness. I knew that fountain to be only water from hoses operated by modern pumping-engines; I knew the bird to be only a frightened pigeon—but there are facts against which a man may on occasion rebel.



It was Fallahan who carried The Little Man home. It was Fallahan who opened the door to Erminger and myself, though he had denied admittance to many. The street seemed strangely quiet to us who had fought our way

through the square to get here. The Little Man sat in his usual chair, and would listen to no talk of his own injuries.

“What of the people?” he wanted to know.

“Dispersing now,” Erminger told him.

He shook his head. “Sheep without a shepherd,” he said. “Most of them didn’t know what they were doing. Are you there, Fallahan?”

“Yes,” said Fallahan, speaking from the shadows.

“It happened so quickly,” said The Little Man. “I might not have been there at all, but for the children.”

Erminger’s brow wrinkled.

“The children?”

“One does not like to disappoint them,” said The Little Man. “You see, I had promised them the cross.” He looked up. “The pageant,” he explained. “They were to strew branches, of course, and upon the triumphal path the shadow was to fall. Isn’t that—someone at the door?”

None of us had heard anything, but Fallahan made sure.

“Strange,” sighed The Little Man. “I fancied . . . there it is again. Surely you heard a knocking?”

He looked hopefully at us. Again Fallahan went, to no purpose.

“You’re expecting someone?” he asked, ill at ease.

“I am hopeful,” said The Little Man, “that Gorvsky and Churt—”

Fallahan stiffened.

“You’ve asked them?”

“My door has always been open to them, as to you,” said The Little Man, “and it may be they will come to-night.”

I caught back from my tongue a doubt that presented itself. It seemed likely to me that by now both might be under conviction of the law. But his expectancy was not to be brooked. And, in the end, they came: Gorvsky first and entering almost with violence; then Churt, gruff and unwilling enough. They had come to ask how he was getting along; after all, both owed him much. He spoke with quiet compassion of their own wounds.

In that poorly-appointed room at the top of the house we sat at table with him. When Erminger and I insisted that we had no right to stay, he would not hear of it. “There is room for all,” he said. The meal he set before us was a simple one. He served us himself. We were an ill-assorted lot to sit at table and break bread together, yet we were held by some common but indefinable bond, perhaps because we were less conscious of ourselves than of our host.

His presence dominated. His words kindled in us a strange warmth. I glanced at Fallahan, at Gorvsky, at Churt; for the time at least they were changed men. As to the future I dared not risk a prophecy. We so soon forget. We so soon turn to our own ways. But I can say this, that for that moment there was fusion in the room. We were lifted above ourselves. The barriers had fallen. I could only recall The Little Man's words as he foreshadowed this event. "There is something, you know," he had affirmed, "in the breaking of bread."



I cannot say just when it was there crept upon us a chill, a sense akin to loneliness, to separation, to loss, although it was none of these. Strangely enough it was Churt, ordinarily so insensitive, who gave voice to our dread.

"There's something in this room," he said, and got suddenly to his feet. Then Fallahan was up. "It's death," he said.

"It's more than death," said Churt, and instinctively we knew he had spoken the truth. Our eyes turned for comfort to where The Little Man sat smiling at us with that last strange smile which none of us were ever to see erased.

Gorvsky's eyes were no longer lidded and inscrutable.

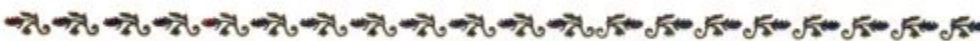
"God!" he breathed.

Fallahan swung on him. "What's that you said?"

Churt pushed them both aside, but he was too late. There was a crash as the body of The Little Man fell forward amongst the earthenware dishes from which we had eaten. One hand was outstretched, and the fingers were touching a book that we now saw lying open on the table, though we had paid no attention to it before. Fallahan reached for it.

"There's blood on it," he said, awed. "His blood. He was wounded, and none of us had eyes to see we'd done death to him."

Bewildered still, Churt stood stiffly by, but Gorvsky leaned forward, inspected the book, and stepped back a pace. At sight of him, Erminger also took a look, and I over his shoulder. Words sprang at us, marked as if by a bright finger dipped in his blood . . . "*and . . . as he sat at meat with them . . . their eyes were opened, and they knew him.*"



Far Cry



THEY abandoned the raft, without remorse, to the suck of the undertow, and, beaten forward by the surf, stumbled towards those inviting level sands where a man might fling himself full length and sleep. That was all they asked. They staggered like drunken men, knowing only that the sand was real beneath them, and rejoicing in security. Their senses were furred by the immediacy of this desire to sleep. Lane felt it attack the nape of his neck like an opiate that reaches up compelling fingers to erase all feeling. Only a wish to put their enemy, the sea, far behind them kept them in motion across the vast, level floor of sand until they were well under the shadow of the cliff. There they flung themselves down, outstretched, bone-weary. Miller's triumphant grin said clearly that if you let things take their course something will turn up. Marks' eyes were hard, his mouth tight. Of them all, only Lane stared about him as if this were a shining miracle.

Lane had a young wife at home, a wife he had thought he would never see again. Now, in anticipation, he could hold her in his arms and feel her lips tight against his. He knew he would always remember in vivid detail how, when the fog lifted, Miller—still clinging belly-flat to the raft—had cried, “My God, it's land! We're close to the shore, boys.” And there, teetering in opposition to the crazy instability of the raft, he saw bold headlands, a rugged cliff-face straight ahead, the immense level stretch of sand, a fisherman's cottage white on a high green slope above the cliff, and, against the evening skyline, the figure of a child—a living symbol of the things to which he had come back. All this now blurred in a single desire, to sleep. And then the sound came, shrill as a scream in the evening stillness.

“What was that?” said Lane.

“What does it matter?” grunted Marks. “Hell, I want to sleep.”

“Me, too,” said Miller.

Lane was uneasy. “I saw a kid up there on the cliff,” he told them.

"To hell with it," Marks said, and in a moment he was asleep, his bulk stretched on the hard sand.

The cry came again; muted by distance it had an eerie quality, but there was in it a note of human fear. "Sure does sound like a kid screaming," Miller admitted, "but maybe it ain't. Maybe it's wind up there. Or a sea-bird. That's what it is, like enough." He glanced at Lane. "Don't be a damn fool," he warned. "You couldn't climb up there, if that's what's on your mind; not in your condition, you couldn't. Do you want to die now you're saved?" He cocked an ear again, then relaxed. "I can't hear it now," he said. "Lie down and forget it." Lane obeyed, stretching out his cramped limbs in a movement that was at once ecstasy and pain. He pillowed his face on his elbow where the rags of his shirt blew in the breeze, and a fine filter of sand caressed the blonde hairs of his forearm. "I wish I knew," he said.

Miller murmured, "Go to sleep, you young fool. See you in the morning. D'ye figure that cottage up on the cliff'll give us breakfast?" In a moment he, too, was deep asleep.

Lane edged up. He looked at Miller, at Marks. You could shake them, he thought, or shout in their ears, and there would be no waking. He doubted if they were even dreaming; they had done their share of that, in fitful dozes, as they clung to the instability of the raft—a numbed but persistent instinct for self-preservation compelling them—while the big seas ran in aftermath of a storm whose chaos was soon hidden under a fog that denied hope of rescue. Except for their stertorous breathing, the only sounds now were the mewing of gulls and the distant beat of surf. Slashed with sunset, the sea lay far out, the surf itself diminishing in the slack tide. And still he listened. Maybe it was only his mind that gave this haunting sense of urgency, a mind so blurred by long endurance that it had no perspective and a child seen for a moment against the skyline could loom too large, linked with a scream, a far cry—now unheard. So small a thing to set against the compelling fingers that pressed against his nape, the fingers of that sleep which promised immediate oblivion, an inviting and wholly desirable blackness.



They would call him a fool, Marks and Miller would. Perhaps he was. On the lower rocks were barnacles with cutting edges cruel as razors; and then the hazard of height. Dusk was falling quickly, but a cloud still hung above the summit like a pillar of fire. Towards it he climbed. He climbed as a man might in a nightmare, leaden-limbed yet with desperation; in his ears a night wind blowing stronger from the sea, in his ears the mockery of

Miller's warning, "Do you want to die, now you're saved?" He looked below and saw there was no going back. He looked above, and saw what appeared to be his only goal: a ledge, a kind of cavern in the rocks; above it, a thin trickle of path leading to the summit—a path down which it was conceivable small, reckless feet might go. He inched towards it, clawing for handholds, feeling for footholds, his breath painful in him. He got his fingers on the promising ledge, and beneath him the cliff gave. He could feel it crumble under his feet, a rain of rocks and gravel dropping far below. In an agony he hung on, thinking now of the girl whose happiness as well as his own life was in jeopardy. As he hung there, from the cavern above came a beat of wings. He was no ornithologist to judge what dweller of the cliff flew out in the dusky light, beat for a homicidal moment against him, attacking with beak and claw, then, with wide wings, launched above the abyss. But as it flew it mocked him with its cry—a cry so human that it was like a child screaming in pain or fear. A fool, he thought bitterly. To risk life, everything, for this. Miller had been right. The cliff was giving under him again, but in the fierce anger of that moment he found strength for the impossible: made the ledge, and crawled, pulling with bleeding hands at the tufts of strongly-rooted grass, until he reached the top and flung himself exhausted on the level land. Now at last he could relax. Now, with the sweet smell of the wind-blown grass in his nostrils, a land smell he had thought never to know again, he could forget everything but this one desire. Not even the bitter irony of his foolish climbing went with him into dreamless sleep.



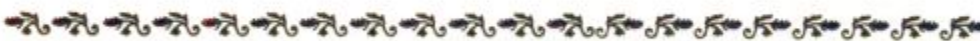
The fisherman and his wife came from their cottage under the noon sun. "Yes," said the man, answering Lane's first eager query, "you could send a telegram from the lighthouse yonder. We saw you here first thing this morning," he explained, "but there was no waking you at all. You're in from the sea?"

Lane could smile now as he told them of his folly.

"It might very well be our small boy you saw," said the woman, "even though—" Her eyes rewarded him. He was glad he had not mentioned Marks or Miller, lest she think them less humane. But the fisherman laughed shortly.

"My God, you're lucky," he said. "Sleep down there on the beach, sound like you did up here? Say, the tide comes in so fast over them sands a man needs to run for the cliffs or he'd be trapped. Awful vicious tide, that. If

you'd slept down there, God help you, you'd be a drowned man now, and not sending any telegram home this bright morning."



The Dancing Bear



FLORIA had just telephoned him at the Club to remind him about to-night. Into the instrument he had mumbled his apologies that he should have forgotten. He always dined with his sister on her birthday. "I'll be in for dinner, then," he assured her. "Happy birthday, old girl!" He crossed the deep-piled rug, stopped for a moment by the window embrasure to watch the July heat radiating up from the sun-baked pavements of Drummond Street, and found his chair again, where there was a slight stirring of air. Fancy Floria being as old as that. Forty-nine. Ridiculous! "Well, Lyall," she had protested, "you're within three years of it yourself." So he was, when you came to count it up. Quite a long time to look back on. Singularly, the birthday he could best remember was Floria's eighth. That was—let him see—that was back in eighteen-ninety-six. Hackney cabs flourished in the streets then. Suburbs now residentially crowded were sunning themselves as cabbage fields. Things in South Africa probably were beginning to shape up towards the South African war. Grandmother—he saw her always in bonnet and dolman, her chin firm but her smile sweet—had not yet got out her maps and her dispatches and felt obliged to decry Buller and Gatacre for British losses. The Great War was still undreamed of, though forming in the womb of the world. Queen Victoria had not yet celebrated her diamond jubilee. Floria's eighth birthday, July eighteen-ninety-six . . .



They came early to the party, because when you are young you believe, despite the reluctances of parents and nursemaids, that four o'clock means just that. Long ago Floria had been up at the gate watching, to the distress of Mam'selle, who argued that a canary-yellow dress with ruffles and sash does not improve by swinging on transverse wooden bars from which the paint is flecking. Lyall, in his white sailor suit with broad blue collar down the back

and wide-bottomed trousers, saw her come tearing up the curving avenue of gravel under the young maples, the cornflowers on her floppy yellow hat in a state of agitation. Her dark eyes glowed, her lips shrilled the news, "The Wakefields are here. I saw the pony cart turn off from the Main Road."

She got Lyall by the hand and he had to go. The strain threatened his arm, but he kept pace somehow, down past the snowball and syringa bushes that Grandmother had planted in the intervals between the regularly-spaced young maples. And there, outside the gate, were the Wakefields; Gyp the pony—brown, with a long, dirty yellow mane—refusing to go farther until she had cropped some of the succulent grass that straggled out under the red fencing from the south meadow, which was almost ready to cut—a great occasion every summer because you could sit and eat the sourish plums from the trees by the Main Road fence, and watch the processes of the hay-making, and be allowed at last to ride, half-fearfully, on the swaying top of the load. Lyall supposed that Mr. Hurst, the farmer who contracted for the hay each year in terms of butter and eggs, wouldn't object to Gyp munching this little bit. There were thistles in it, but Gyp didn't seem to mind, though Lyall felt prickles all the way down his own throat and into his stomach. Rhoda Wakefield, who had the seat of honour, kept jerking the reins ineffectually, and Carolyn, who was years older and at times terrifyingly grown up, reached out authoritatively to add her strength.

"No, Carol," protested Rhoda, "I'm driving." Her round face, under the waxen fair curls, puckered stubbornly. She called to Floria, "Open the gate, she might take it into her head to start!"

Lawrence, viewing proceedings with masculine scorn from the back seat, leaned over and snatched the whip from its bamboo holder. Just in time Floria dragged Lyall out of the way. Then, with Jordan, the dog, barking and snapping at the hub of the off wheel, they swept up the driveway towards the house. Floria yelled back to Lyall, who was left rooted in his place of safety, to shut the gate. It sagged a bit, and took all his strength to click into place, so that the pony cart was already almost out of sight around the gravel bend, and he had to master a sick, angry despair. With a shout, "I'm coming!" he took to his heels, his bell-bottomed trousers flapping, his white-sheathed legs twinkling as he sped up the avenue to join the others.



The verandah ran on three sides of the house, wide enough for tricycles to operate when it rained; there were parts where the rain blew in and one could splash boldly through to leave the exciting marks of tires on the dry

boards beyond; on the river side, after you passed the front door with its stained glass panels, you came to what was always known as the Round. It supported a large open balcony above, leading out of Mother-and-Father's big room, and in house-cleaning times much used. Here, at the Round, the verandah widened into a great circle, and was partly latticed, creeper-grown and full, even on sunny days, of mysterious shadows. It nursed a damp, earthy, viney smell. But to-day it was transformed. Lyall, open-mouthed and expectant, had watched the preparations, but even his hopes had fallen short of this fairyland. A large table had been set here, bearing every suggestion of a feast; the French doors from the dining-room were flung open wide, through which there were great comings and goings. But, as yet, curtains specially hung for the occasion reinforced the rule against premature peeking.

Then, the first games having been run off successfully, at a signal from Aunt Francie—the banging of a brass gong—the curtains fell away; and the children, two by two, marched in, halting round-eyed. Other delights might in time reveal themselves, but three held and rivetted immediate interest: Floria's flower-decked chair; Floria's huge birthday cake with its eight candles alight; and, in the mysterious green gloom of the latticed end, a score of lanterns each aglow. Lyall had seen paper lanterns before, notably at the annual garden-party on the parsonage lawn in aid of the local church, but these were different, because now there was no actual darkness to make them credible. They were like fireflies lighting their tiny lamps above moist grass and bushes while yet the twilight lingered. They were like creatures from some borderland, half faëry.

Lyall cried at last, "Oh, Floria, look! Look!"—because it was her birthday, and she mustn't miss anything.

"What? Where?"

"The lanterns."

"Of course, silly. Didn't I help to hang them there? And you saw them all before. Hurry up, everybody, and get your places before I blow the candles out."

Already she was leaning forward over the great frosted cake. As Floria blew, Lyall's own cheeks filled and emptied in sympathy. He always itched to have a blow at them himself; it took gallant restraint to wait a whole six months until his own birthday. But to-day he nearly missed Floria's first devastating breath. The lanterns, so brave and unexpected with the sunshine not yet gone, had taken his heart captive. He felt almost as he had one winter day when he had found an exciting new yellow in his box of paints, not pale like so many of them were, but, even when your brush was watery, a pure,

butter yellow. Aunt Francie had to remind him of the food she had set in front of him.



It was because Rhoda had spilt fruit punch on her frock, and had to be led away for the ministrations of Mam'selle, that she saw it first. She was standing quite placidly letting Mam'selle—with many “tut-tuts”—retrieve the situation, when she gave a shrill little scream. For there was the gypsy coming up the driveway from the gate, leading a bear. Jordan, barking furiously, shot like a shaggy-coated black-and-tan streak towards the intruders, but kept his distance when he discovered the nature of them. The bear paid no attention to the vociferous challenge. It came lumbering behind, with the clumsy grace of its kind. Lyall heard the commotion, and ran. Mam'selle called something shrill, in French and quite naughty, because afterwards Lyall heard Mother talking to her about it in a stern whisper.

Rhoda was jumping up and down, Mam'selle still clinging to her dress.

“A bear!” she was shouting, in a half-frightened ecstasy. “A real live bear! A real live bear!”

The creature came on at a rolling, lurching pace, following its master. There was a great studded collar about his neck, to which a chain was attached, and the man held the end of the chain. Lyall, while thrilled, secretly hoped the man would keep on holding tight to that chain. Everybody left the tables then and ran out.

“Dear me,” said Grandmother, “it looks as if it had the mange, and as if the man had caught it, too.” She nodded towards the gypsy, who mistook her meaning and smiled and took off his hat, showing his white teeth.

Aunt Francie stood with Captain Agnew, who had come out from the city, driving his fastest horse that now, with the very smart dog-cart, was tethered near the great pine tree at the back of the house where the outbuildings straggled towards the ash-pit and garbage dump—a place sourish sweet because bramble roses grew all about it. Lyall, who liked Captain Agnew and hoped Aunt Francie would always have him come around, went and took his place right beside, looking up as if for leadership in a cause that had suddenly stirred him. But Captain Agnew's face revealed nothing. With the rest of them he was watching the antics of the bear.

Something caught hard inside Lyall, rose to his throat, and choked him.

“Why, what's got into the child?” cried Grandmother.

“Oh, the poor bear!” sobbed Lyall. “The poor bear!”

“Silly!” sniffed Floria. “Can’t you see it’s dancing? Do you dance when you’re feeling bad about anything?”

That was unanswerable, like most of Floria’s sweeping affirmatives. He felt better about it, yet wasn’t sure he could trust Floria to be right. She had a way of talking anything around to her wishes. Still, the bear *was* funny, the way it lifted its shaggy paws, first on all fours, then on its hind legs and hugging itself as it rocked in time to the music the gypsy drew from an accordion.



The ice cream was melting at its abandoned edges when they got back to the table. Lyall spooned up the liquid about his remaining island, and consumed the balance thoughtfully. It was good to the last bit, but none was ever as good as the sample he had beforehand, when Mother helped cook remove the dasher from the freezer—at whose handle everybody had taken turns—and what stuck to the wood and metal was presented on a plate, with two spoons, to Floria and himself. There was always a suspicion of salt about it that added a flavour of first things.

Soon the children were excused from the table, and trooped out to the wide lawns, the more reckless spirits warned not to go alone to the beach that lay beyond the choke-cherry hedge. Aunt Francie and Mother and Captain Agnew supervised the games; and the sun began to slant in long lines across the grass; and you could hear the roar of the rapids, away up by the power-dam, more clearly, even against the happy shoutings of the children.

It was almost dusk before they went; the pony cart creaking at a better pace down the driveway because the pony knew it was a homeward passage; the Wakefields all shouting back gaily and waving; Floria for a moment holding Lyall’s hand, her eyes shining with the excitement of it all. Then she dashed away, shouting, “Now we can go and play with my new things!” But Lyall moved more slowly. He liked to savour things; and always there was a little pang inside him when they were over, as if he were saying farewell to something that couldn’t ever come back. So he walked by himself, until the dog Jordan came running up, and dropped sympathetically into his mood, returning quietly at heel. Already the grown-ups were clearing away the remnants of the feast. But the lanterns in the Round were still flickering bravely, and in the dusk insects hummed against them, and a moth or two flew foolishly against the paper sides with a beating of grey wings.

One grew sleepy quickly after a party. But Lyall didn't want to go to bed to-night. Floria slept in quite another part of the house upstairs on birthday nights; on the couch in Father-and-Mother's room, instead of in the small room next to Lyall's. It was part of an old tradition—oh, several years old, like Floria. He wouldn't for worlds protest against it, but it was on nights like this that the Tree grew troublesome. It seemed queer that a lovable, familiar old tree like the big pine, that was always the first thing they saw when they came from the city in the spring, and the last thing to wave them good-bye in the autumn, should take such menacing shape in the darkness. Its arms could grow twisted and horrible against a paling, darkening sky.

So it was to-night. He fought against the terror but it was useless. Aunt Francie's laughter floated up from downstairs, gay as could be, but it was a mere echo, without body to comfort him. Lyall pretended he wasn't up here at all, that he was really down there with them. Sometimes, on special occasions, he had been allowed to go back down in his cream-coloured 'bear pants'—a name for the sleeping suits with their shaped feet that was Floria's glib invention. Then he would curl up on the soft sofa under the stair alcove, and listen to them all chatting: Mother and Grandma and his Father, and usually Aunt Francie and Captain Agnew, when they hadn't gone for a walk together as they liked to do. Aunt Francie always looked very pretty over her sewing, sitting close to the lamp with the big flowered globe so that she could see to put in the small stitches right. It was comfortable to lie there so near them all, snuggled down into the delicious feel of upholstery and cushions, and the smell of the pine-needle cushion that a cousin had once sent from a holiday in the Maine woods. There was such a sense of well-being and security; then, out of oblivion, he would be lifted and carried, half awakened only, up, up, past the windows on the stairs with their yellow and blue and red glass and the moonlight coming through the clear pebbled panes in the centre; then his mother's kiss, and the feel of clean, cool sheets soon warmed by his body as he drifted into sleep once more, secure in the knowledge that everybody else was coming upstairs to bed. Now, for an instant, he was down with them there; but his body, rigid, terror-stricken, wouldn't let him stay; it chained him to his bed. The knots in the stained wooden walls, still dimly visible, were eyes staring at him. The tree was at its very ugliest outside the window.

He wouldn't be a coward and cry out; just lie still and at the worst pull the sheets up a little over his head.

A new panic seized him.

There was a sound of stealthy footsteps. A pause. He waited in an agony. Then a cough.

He was saved.

“Father!”

The footsteps came nearer.

“Not asleep, old fellow?”

“I can’t get asleep.”

But it was all right now. His father’s hand, a firm, kindly hand that had long fair hairs on the back of it, straightened the rumpled bedclothes.

“Nothing wrong?”

“N-no.”

“Well, good-night, old chap. Off to sleep now. You’ve had a big day.”

He was going.

“Daddy—the tree!”

But Lyall didn’t say it; wouldn’t for worlds admit the terror that could vanish at the touch of a hand. The footsteps died away. Lyall sat bolt upright in bed, facing his enemy. When you looked right at it you felt better. You saw it was just the old pine tree. He lay back, still daring it to do its worst.

It was a bit blurred now, swaying a little in the darkness, sending, when the wind blew, a pleasant aromatic smell. It became presently not a tree at all, but a dancing bear; it became nothing at all but a prelude to sleep . . .



A club steward was standing by his elbow. “You called, sir?” Had he? “Something you wanted, sir?”

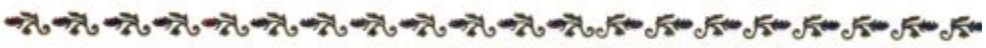
“Yes, Mack. Can you tell me where I could buy a dancing bear?”

“A which, sir?”

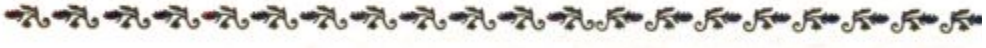
“A dancing bear. Never mind. I’ll go down and have a look in the stores.”

He got up and went out. It was an idea. He would hunt until he found one: a dancing bear that raised its feet and hugged itself when you wound it up. A sudden nostalgia struck deeply into him. When you wound it up! If only you could wind up your yesterdays, make them, even tinnily, repeat themselves. Suppose this stuff they talked nowadays were true—that Time was one, that even now a bear was dancing in the July sunlight, and a little boy named Lyall watching, moved to some vague pity, yet amused; while in the background stood all those ghosts: Grandmother, his parents, Aunt

Francie and Captain Agnew. Dear ghosts—in the body or out, did it matter? Here, in the July heat of a midsummer's day, one might have them, if one believed enough. Someone jogged his arm. He opened his eyes, shrugged and went on. He would find that dancing bear and buy it. He hoped Floria would like it.



As a Man Walks



HE was a haunt. He was a ghost of the waterfront. Once he had walked like a man but now he shuffled, he went crabwise out of people's way, knowing he was superfluous, knowing his day was done, that he was rotted inside, all except one place. If you love, if you truly love, that place is clean; there is something that keeps it, as salt keeps things. Mac's love was the sea. Down in him, deep in the depths of him, was the sea. The sea and ships. But, even in days when few questions were asked except, "Do you want a ship, sailor?" nobody would take Mac. Everybody knew, he himself knew—when he was sober—that he would never put foot on a sloping deck, he would never again feel the lift and lurch of welcoming seas or face the menace of salt water coming over wet bows.

Ashore, too, he was a trouble to have around. They knew that only too well down at Dunphy's Tavern. From Dunphy's you could see the masts of ships, the slant of funnels, the tangle of rigging; and the street outside echoed with mariners' oaths in more than one language. Mac was a solitary, he rarely spoke, and when he did it was like a ghost at your elbow, suddenly, disturbingly vocal. He would sit listening to men talking sensible talk and then he would say something not at all sensible. Sometimes he was drunk and sometimes he was not so drunk, but even when he was sober it was the same. Goofy talk, but it meant something to him. They would be talking about this and that, about legitimate things like horses or women or next Friday night's boxing at Madison Square Garden, and he would suddenly say, "There is also the sea." Or they would be talking about money—profits, wages, how much a man should get for doing this or that and to hell with the open shop—straight, sensible talk, and he would smile his secret smile and say, "I can see the gulls flying."

Crazy things like that. Creepy, crazy things.

Other times he would just sit and mutter names. Listen closely, and the maps of both hemispheres came alive. "You've been those places, Mac?"

you might say, and Mac would stare at you with rheumy eyes, rub the stubble of his chin with the back of his hand, and nod.

They turned Mac away from a hundred gangplanks, and from less obvious ways of getting from dockside to shipboard. He never quite made it. He would get a duffel-bag and stuff it with all manner of strange treasures, varying as his fortunes varied when he got the odd job to do; but always there was one keepsake, getting more and more faded—a framed picture of a woman. Nobody knew who she was. You could ask Mac, but he just shook his head, and if you were quick you might see his secret smile. It was a smile that belonged to yesterday, and it could break your heart if you had any imagination. “Mac’s woman,” they called her. She must have had a lot of charm; even the fading photograph in the battered frame, with a bit of cellophane in lieu of glass, couldn’t cancel out the beauty that once flourished there. Maybe that was why Mac took to drink, why he was a solitary, why he gave his heart to the sea. Maybe the sea had been kinder, more faithful to him. God knows. Nobody else ever found out. Anyway, Mac took her everywhere; whatever else he jettisoned or retained, or exchanged, or begged, or borrowed, or stole, or otherwise trafficked in—there she was. He would take his duffel-bag and spruce himself up in some foul-smelling lavatory back of a sailors’ dive, and head off when a ship ran up the Blue Peter, and always at the gangplank they caught him, telling him gently or curtly to get the hell out of there.



Some of Dunphy’s regulars were sitting one afternoon at a couple of Dunphy’s mug-ringed tables, talking about sensible things like horses and women and wages, when Mac said suddenly, “There is also the sea,” and someone said, “Oh, go stow yourself away, Mac!”—and an idea was born. They were drunk when they did it, as drunk as Mac ever got himself, but when you are young the rot hasn’t got into you yet; wait, that will come but don’t think of it now. They doctored Mac’s booze, bribed three longshoremen to carry him aboard rolled up like something shipped with a destination label. When it was all over, it was forgotten, or at best a muzzy memory. The hangover was gone and so was Mac, but nobody particularly noticed his absence. If anyone wondered, “Where has that guy Mac got himself to?” there were more important things than finding an answer.

The answer was far at sea. There was more also at sea. There the gulls flew high, flew low, perching on the masts, replacing each other like children rotating in a game, following the ship’s wake—a lovely motion above the cream, the peacock blue, the dark wave flecked with foam. There, too, were

the horizons you never overtook; they marched with you, at times in a defined circle, at times ragged with mist, with fog, with mirage and the variable magic of cloud formations, static or processional. There was the clean sun on the decks and a slow lift to the ocean floor; there was the slant of rain and a staggering impulse and bows shaking up from a green burial in white cascades, and salt spray like bullets flung aft. There was storm, and calm, and deep fathoms to bury you. There was death that did not await the shock of great seas nor the lament of wind in the rigging; for man had strewn mechanized death, and it did not tarry for weather; in the calm, in the sharp stillness of the night, with the turbines throbbing low and the stars gently rocking, it could strike. Another ship has gone down.

That is no longer news; there are too many. Still, here is a story. Human interest stuff. The stuff that sells newsprint, that keeps the presses turning, the composing rooms busy, the paper mills processing, the pulpmills crushing, the lumberjacks felling green forests where the wild life runs to cover. But you read so much in the papers.

At Dunphy's the paper was cleared from the stinking floor with other litter; it went to wrap up a fish the bartender took home with him, and so with the garbage to the tin, to the city dump where men like ants on a foul hill picked and carried, and the harbour gulls flew screaming above. It is hard to escape the sea, of which it is the promise in Scripture—if your mind is literal—there will one day be no more.



There came a day, of course, when Dunphy's windows were just pale oblongs and dusk lay heavily in the street outside; when men drew closer about Dunphy's tables, talking stridently, casually, and the doors swung back and a man came in, like a shadow at their elbows. "By the Lord Harry," they said, "it's old Mac. Where you been," they said, "where the hell you been?"—not stopping for Mac to draw together an answer, because it didn't matter anyway. Mac stood for a moment on the edge of their apathy; when he went out the bartender came over, fumbling with his apron.

"You seen that?" he said. "What's come over that guy?"

He went to the door and looked out and, suddenly curious, the others came and looked with him.

"Maybe it's a woman," someone said.

"Could be," the bartender said, but he blinked, watching the phenomenon of old Mac walking away. Vaguely he remembered something he had heard or seen, but he could not remember, it would not come clear;

something that might fit the case. Something in a newspaper, perhaps. He shook his head, and someone else spoke. He grinned as he said it. "There is also the sea," he said. But they all looked at him. There is a crazy thing to say when shadows creep over the waterfront and a fog is coming in. Goofy talk, that. Goofy as old Mac. You might get thinking of all manner of nonsense, of the sea giving up its dead, of twilight and evening bell, or new heavens and a new earth, and a time when there shall be no more sea. It is better to talk of sensible things, like horses or women or the wages a man gets, or next Friday night's boxing at Madison Square Garden. They all stared after old Mac.

He was a haunt. He was a ghost of the waterfront. But now he no longer shuffled or went crabwise out of people's way, knowing he was superfluous, knowing his day was done. It did not matter to him what men said or thought or read, or did not read. It did not matter that the bartender could not remember a clue to this, in a newspaper picked from the litter of the tavern floor, that wrapped up a fish for his supper, and went at last to the garbage and the city dump, above which the gulls still screamed in the twilight, where printed words were disintegrating into sodden unintelligibility, ephemeral recordings in black and white . . . unknown stowaway taking charge of crewless lifeboat . . . bringing survivors safely to shore after many days. One more epic of the sea; but there are so many epics these days, and the long tale of them will never be told. The record does not so much matter. We are compassed about by a cloud of witnesses.

Mac walked as a man walks, in whom, perhaps, a woman might take pride. Mac walked as a sailor walks, with the sea in his gait, his shoulders up a little and a secret smile on his lips.

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.

[The end of *So Near is Grandeur*, by Leslie Gordon Barnard.]