CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN LITERATURE II

SELECTED STORIES

Kahramanmaraş
Büyükşehir Belediyesi

Concessionaire
On behalf of the Metropolitan Municipality
Hayrettin Güngör

Editor-in-chief
Duran Doğan

Managing Editor
Mesut Serdar

Kahramanmaraş Metropolitan Municipality Culture Publications Series: ...

Publication Date
Aralık 2023

Editor
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Selim Somuncu

Content Preparation
Tuğçe Gök
Hatice Çınar

Proofreader
Yasemin Boğaz

Cover Design By
Sinem Yüzgül Dinçel

Layout
Salih Koca

ISBN
978-625-99010-6-0

Contact:
Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism
Akçakoyunlu Mah. Şekerdere Blv.
Onikişubat / Kahramanmaraş
Tel: 0 (344) 215 40 40

Printed By
Akbaba Matbaa Basım Yayın Hizmetleri.
Şazibey Mah. 2. Sk.
Hisar Apt. No: 10 / A
Gsm: 0532 517 62 24
Onikişubat / Kahramanmaraş
Certificate No: 49187

This work has been published by Kahramanmaraş Metropolitan Municipality as a cultural service. All rights belong to Kahramanmaraş Metropolitan Municipality. It can be quoted by citing the source. The responsibility for all information and interpretations written in the book belongs to the author.

This work is a cultural service of Kahramanmaraş Metropolitan Municipality.

CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN LITERATURE II

SELECTED STORIES

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Selim SOMUNCU

CONTENTS

FOREWORD 7
PREFACE OR A PANORAMIC OVERVIEW OF THE MODERN AMERICAN SHORT STORY 9
A MAN OF PEACE, Lawrence Williams.....................................15
TOP MAN, James Ramsey Ullman 41
THE SCARLET LETTER, Jean Stafford.......................................63
MATEO FALCONE, Prosper Merimee 87
THE TELL TALE HEART, Edgar Allan Poe................................91
DR. HEIDEGGER'S EXPERIMENT, Nathaniel Hawthorne 97
THE LADY, OR THE TIGER, Frank R. Stockton......................109
TO BUILD A FIRE, Jack London...117
THE PARSLEY GARDEN, William Saroyan.............................135
A CHRISTMAS MEMORY, Truman Capote.............................144
THE FLYING MACHINE, Ray Bradbury 160
CHILDREN OF THE HARVEST, Lois Phillips Hudson 168
THE RANSOM OF RED CHIEF, O. Henry 182

FOREWORD

Many civilizations have passed through Anatolian lands, and many of them have left permanent traces. Kahramanmaraş is a rare city that has hosted these civilizations in every aspect. The history of Kahramanmaraş dates back to the Kingdom of Gurgum, one of the late Hittite city-states, and was the capital of this kingdom. Afterwards, it came under the domination of Assyrian, Persian and Roman rule. After the Roman Empire was divided into two, it remained under the rule of Byzantium. The Islamic army under Khalid Bin Walid took Maraş from Byzantium in 637. Although Maraş came under the control of Byzantium during the Umayyad and Abbasid periods, it came under the control of the Turkish people with the conquest of the region by the Turkish people in 1085.

Turkish people, one of the oldest nations in world history, have existed in different geographical regions and different periods, sometimes as a tribe, sometimes as a community, sometimes as a state and sometimes by establishing an empire that had existed for centuries, in every period of history. As with every deep-rooted civilization, Turkish people also have their unique art style and understanding from the past to the present. Interaction with various cultures and civilizations took place in a wide geography from Central Asia to Anatolia, and the local elements of each region affected this tradition and culture. These interactions were undoubtedly not only positive contributions but also made Turkish civilization the main embracing element in a wide geography.

In history, the city, which took the name Maraş as a consequence of the Turkish domination, especially Markasi, Germanicia, and Kayseria Germanicia, has also been a renowned settlement for its heroism, and as a result of this heroism, it was immortalized with the name Kahramanmaraş given by the Turkish Grand National Assembly in 1973. Anatolia and Kahramanmaraş maintain their unique position as a complete cultural mosaic that hosts many differences in their journey from the past to the future.

In the process of becoming a City of Literature, included in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, Kahramanmaraş is interested not only in national literary works but also in international literary works. With the Modern American Short Story Selection for the literature of different nations, Kahramanmaraş continues to capture the universal timbre of art and literature with the inspiration and legacy of its past. We are happy to share with you the good news that our works on foreign literary works will continue.

I believe that we should tell at every opportunity that our city, known as the capital of poetry and literature, also has a deep-rooted history that has been a cradle to cultures. I hope that our citizens, especially our young people and children, who read these works will learn great examples of foreign kinds of literature as well as the literary accumulation of our city and will achieve much greater things in the future by being inspired by the works of both their own and different cultures.

As Kahramanmaraş Metropolitan Municipality, I would like it to be known that we will strive to deliver such selections to a wider readership and I hope that this and subsequent works to be useful.

Hayrettin GÜNGÖR
Mayor of Kahramanmaraş Metropolitan Municipality

PREFACE OR A PANORAMIC OVERVIEW OF THE MODERN AMERICAN SHORT STORY

American literature, whose foundations were laid by the British who colonized America in the 1600s, continued its existence with didactic works with religious content until the end of the 1750s.The works, which are called "Puritan literature" and devoid of aesthetic concerns, were followed by works that prioritized reason and logic over dogmatism, which came to the fore under the influence of the Enlightenment in the first quarter of the 19th century. Benjamin Franklin became one of the most resonant writers of this century with his "rationalist" works that centered on freedom of expression and religious toleration. The period between 1830 and 1865 witnessed the rise of two world-renowned writers who left their mark on American literature: Nathaniel Hawthorne and Edgar Allan Poe. Hawthorne and Poe, two pioneers of the "American Gothic" style characterized by dark, supernatural themes, allegorical and detective fiction, also produced successful examples of the modern short story genre. The global process leading up to the First World War and the harsh consequences of the war that shook human history forced people to face the realities of life. Realism, which is the reflection of this confrontation in the artistic field, also showed its influence in American literature. Names such as Mark Twain (Samuel Langhorne Clemens) with his unique style that appeals to children and adults at the same time, John Steinbeck, who reflects social problems and the life of the working class in his works, and Ernest

Hemingway, who deals with world wars in the background of his works and draws attention with his simple style, became among the leading names of American realism. Modernism, which began as an extension of realism, continued its influence until the depression years when the Second World War broke out. The writers of this period stood out with their bold and experimental styles. William Faulkner and J.D. Salinger were among the successful writers of American modernist literature. In the same years, with the adaptation of the African-American approach, which emerged as a different vein in American culture, to literature, it is seen that everyday language and slang use came to the fore in the works. The most famous writer of African-American literature was Langston Hughes. The period from the 1950s to the 1990s bears traces of the mental depression, contradictory views and multiculturalism that affected societies after the Second World War. "Beat Generation" writers Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, and William S. Burroughs; postmodernist writers Toni Morrison, Margaret Atwood, and Thomas Pynchon drew the general outlines of American literature.

Outside of this general framework, the genre of the "short story" brought American literature a serious character. In the Oxford English Dictionary, the first time the genre 'short story' was used as a definition was in 1877. In 1883, Anthony Trollope wrote about writing "short stories" in his Autobiography, and in another context, he made the following statement about this genre: "It was a short story, about a chapter long."[1] However, there was no clear consensus on the length of the short story genre. Superficial limitations such as

1 *Erel MEZ, "Short Story Genre and Gothic in Early Nineteenth Century American Literature", Ege University American Culture and Literature Department Master's Thesis, Izmir 2021.*

between five thousand and fifteen thousand words or between one and forty book pages were set. In addition to formal definition efforts, it can be said that the short story is a literary genre that focuses on the event and fiction rather than the character and does not give much space to details. The short story, which adapts to the American lifestyle with its superficial appearance and fast-moving plot, appeared with quality works from the 1830s to the early 1990s.

Charles Brockden Brown, who lived in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, is generally considered to be the first author to work in the short story genre in American literature.[2] Like Brown, Washington Irving also wrote short stories with elements of horror, suspense and mystery. In the 1840s, two American writers produced the first professional examples of the genre. While Nathaniel Hawthorne combined horror and suspense with allegory, Edgar Allan Poe brought the first theoretical approach to the short story genre with his personally developed "single-effect theory". The golden age of the American Gothic style was also experienced with the short stories "The Hollow of Three Hills", "Roger Malvin's Burial", "Rappaccini's Daughter" (Hawthorne); "The Fall of the House of Usher", "The Murders in the Rue Morgue", "The Masque of the Red Death", "The Well and the Pendulum". Jack London, who is mostly known for his novels and who frequently deals with animal rights, workers' rights and socialism in his works, also wrote ideal examples of the American short story. "To Build a Fire" is the best known of his short stories.

After London, from the early 20th century to the present day, the "short story" genre has developed with different perspectives and interpretations, and the works of qualified writers in the genre have been award-

---

2 *Erel MEZ, a. g. e.*

ed cult prizes such as the Pulitzer Prize, the O. Henry Prize and the Nobel Prize.

James Ramsey Ullman, Jean Stafford, C.D.B. Bryan, Truman Capote, Wallace Stegner, Ray Bradbury, Daniel Keyes, Lois Phillips Hudson, M.J. Amft, William Saroyan, Ellis Credle and Frank Stockton, Harper Lee are among the successful writers of contemporary American literature. Some of their works inspired cinema or were adapted directly to the screen.

James Ramsey Ullman, who was interested in mountaineering as well as writing and became the first American to reach the summit of Everest in 1963, was known for his short story “Top Man” about mountaineers climbing K3, a mountain in India. Jean Stafford, who gained popularity with her novel “The Mountain Lion”, won the first prize in the O. Henry Awards in 1955 for her story “In the Zoo”, and was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1970 for “Collected Stories”. The first short story of C.D.B. Bryan who won the Harper Prize in 1965 for his first novel “P.S. Wilkinson”, was published in 1961 in The New Yorker, the popular newspaper of the time. Truman Capote was widely recognized and gained considerable fame from his early works. Capote, most of whose novels were adapted to the screen, gained popularity, especially with his works “Breakfast at Tiffany’s”, “In Cold Blood”, and “Jug of Silver”. Harper Lee, who was close friends with Capote, won the Pulitzer Prize for her novel “To Kill a Mockingbird”, first published in 1960. Thanks to the fame it gained in a short time, the novel managed to become one of the classics of modern American literature. The author’s second and final book, “Go Set a Watchman”, also a novel, was published in 2015. Wallace Stegner, who was also an environmentalist and historian, won the Pulitzer Prize in 1972 for his novel “Angle of Repose” and the US National Book Award for his novel “The Spectator Bird” in 1977.

“Fahrenheit 451”, which attracted attention with its dystopian fiction about totalitarianism and was adapted to the screen, is the work of Ray Bradbury, one of the qualified writers of contemporary American literature. Daniel Keyes, who passed away in 2014, reached a wide audience with his novels “Flowers for Algernon” (1959) and “The Minds of Billy Milligan” (1981). L.P. Hudson was known for his short story “The King’s Birthday”. Armenian-American writer William Saroyan focused on the concept of ethnic identity. He won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1940 and the Oscar Award in 1943 for “The Human Comedy”. The screenplay of the movie was later published as a novel with the same title. Ellis Credle became a bestseller with his photographic stories about the lives of black children.

Although American literature may seem shallow compared to the literature of countries which have a deep-rooted history and reached cultural saturation, it is one of the noteworthy fields of research that has trained many qualified writers and poets from the beginning to the present day. Modern American literature continues to exist as a vibrant vein today with the “short story”, which maintains its privileged place in the modern story genre, and the authors who provide competent examples of the genre.

This book has been prepared as an anthology of stories from Modern American literature. I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this work, especially the staff of Kahramanmaraş Metropolitan Municipality Culture, Tourism and Sports Department, which includes almost all of the stories of the authors mentioned above.

Assoc. Prof. Dr.

Selim SOMUNCU

A MAN OF PEACE
Lawrence Williams

I read in the paper the other day about the death of a man I used to know not on the obituary page on among the peaceful ends, but on the front page, where deaths of violence are reported. This man, Ramon de Parma, had been assassinated during an abortive three-day revolution in his native Latin American country a country which had better not have a name, because this story isn't meant to grind any political axes.

De Parma, it said in the newspaper story, had been a colonel in the army in his country. The army, I gathered, together with an aristocratic, strongly antidemocratic clique, had a good deal to do with running things down there, and not everybody liked it that way. One man in particular who didn't like it had shot Colonel de Parma through the head while he was having breakfast on the terrace of his home overlooking a beautiful day. The piece said De Parma was thirty-six. I would have thought he was a couple of years older than that, but it doesn't make any difference.

The point is, I used to know this De Parma, and the story got me to thinking about him again. Right away I remembered swords and a sort of duel De Parma had been involved in. The memory, together with the news item, made me think of what used to be called "poetic justice" in stories. Poetic justice is out of fashion in stories these days but it seemed to me, all the same, that it would have been more "poetic" if De Parma had been run through with a saber down there in his revolution instead of being shot. I'll try to show you what I mean by telling you what I remembered about him.

Back in the years before the war, the parents of American schoolboys used to send for a circular from the Ecole Internationale, a boys' boarding school in Lake Geneva in Switzerland. In the circular, listed under the school's curriculum, they used to read: Escrime (optional) Maitre d'escrime, M. Claude Lafleur. After they had got out their French-English dictionaries and learned that escrime meant "fencing," the parents, and particularly the mothers, were apt to look vaguely upset. The word struck an unfamiliar, sort of medieval, note. Americans can find dozens of ways to fight and dozens of weapons to fight with, but a rapier rests uneasily in our hands.

The mothers needn't have worried. Monsieur Claude Lafleur, the fencing master, had about as sinister designs on the wholesome natures of their sons as a flower has on a bee.I saw Lafleur for the first time after I'd been at the school about a week. He was striding across the gravel courtyard of the old chateau which was now the school. I didn't know who he was -I was one of those unlucky ones protected from the alien notion of swordplay- but I don't think anybody could have seen him once without looking again.

He was in his early fifties then, I suppose, lean and wiry and about middle sized. He wore a little pointed dark imperial and a waxed mustache, and there was a genially diabolical upcurve to his eyebrows. He had on a black Homburg hat, buff linen spats, and a slightly seedy black overcoat with a white rose in the button-hole. He wore the coat thrown across his shoulders like a cape and he carried a Malacca cane, which rumor later assured me was a sword cane.

He strode across the courtyard toward the gymnasium, jauntily swinging his stick, and disappeared around a corner. I sneaked into the gym that day to see what went on there, and afterward rushed off to my room to explain to my mother in a let-

ter all about why fencing was an absolutely indispensable part of my education.

I was twelve, and while I didn't know anything about anything useful, I knew all about the everyday advantages of bang-up swordsmanship from reading all the Dumas and Sabatini books I could get hold of. In my mind I had already been the fourth musketeer for some time, and Lafleur looked like an answer to a dream.

I must have done quite a selling job in my letter home because I managed to get back a kind of dubious okay -wedged in between wistful panegyrics to tennis and soccer.

The school provided the equipment, and there I was in the gymnasium a half hour ahead of time the next Friday. Lafleur made his entrance exactly on the hour, dressed in slim black trousers and a spotless white canvas fencing jacket with a scarlet heart embroidered on it. His mask was tucked under his left arm, his foil held loosely in his right hand.

"Messieurs," he said, and snapped his foil up in front of his face, then let it swing gracefully downward and outward toward his right side as he bowed from the waist.

We were a polyglot crew he was addressing so elegantly. There were about fifteen of us, ranging in age between eleven and nineteen, from everywhere under the sun. Three or four of us were Americans, the others were French, Spanish, Dutch, Czech, South American, Greek, English, Cuban, everything there was even one Egyptian kid. Language wasn't -or wasn't supposed to be- any barrier between us. French was the language of the school and we were meant to speak it twenty-four hours a day under threat of fairly severe punishment.

A few of us, myself included, made a stab at returning Lafleur's fancy salute, but even I know most

of us loused it up pretty much. Only one of us didn't. He was a boy I'd never seen before, a tall, athletically built young Latin of eighteen or nineteen, with a startlingly handsome dark face and beautiful teeth. He imitated Lafleur's salute exactly, or almost exactly. It had equal precision and equal grace but it contained an element of mockery in the depth of the bow, in the almost girlish delicacy with which the weapon was handled, which subtly changed the courtesy to a discourtesy.

Lafleur seemed to see only the signs of a practiced hand. He smiled appreciatively and went up to the young man, who apparently was a newcomer to the class, too, because Lafleur asked him his name.

"De Parma, monsieur," he said. He stood very straight, speaking distinctly. "Don Ramon Jesus Sebastian Miguel de Parma y Malaga."

"You seem to have some knowledge of your weapon, Monsieur de Parma."

"On my eighth birthday my father engaged a private fencing master for me, monsieur," De Parma said. "I have studied with him ever since." De Parma's French was very good, almost completely unaccented by his native tongue.

Lafleur's eyes brightened with pleasure. "When you were eight," he said. "Ah, that's the time to begin when the foil is heavy. Your fencing master, was he a Frenchman?"

"French, monsieur, like yourself."

"They are certainly among the finest," Lafleur said, smiling, "butyou mistake me. I am Swiss."

De Parma bowed his head slightly in acknowledgment, and Lafleur returned to the front of his class.

"Your attention, messieurs," he said. "I must run the risk of wearying our friend De Parma by speaking

about fundamental things to those of you who are less experienced than he. First of all, we should agree about why you are here. A sword is a weapon. Yet in these days, you will say, surely men no longer need to defend themselves with a sword. Just so. You are right. Then why, you will ask me, should modern young men waste several hours a week learning skill in the art of swordsmanship?

"Lafleur paused and looked at each of us as though somebody had really asked his question. Nobody said anything. De Parma stood listening silently with the trace of a smile on his face.

"You will perhaps see that I have answered my own question," Lafleur continued. "I have said the art of swordsmanship. If you will permit the prejudiced declaration of a man who has studied it humbly for fifty years, it is the noblest in the noble company of arts."

As he talked, his face gradually grew solemn, his voice more intense, and you could see that it was his heart talking making a statement of his own faith…

"I would be the last man alive," he went on, "to speak meanly of the art of Mozart or of Michelangelo or of Shakespeare or of Pavlova.' I cannot presume to speak of them at all with any authority because I am too ignorant. I can only be awed into reverent silence by their greatness. But of the art of swordsmanship I know the very little a lifetime can teach. And, for me, because I have learned just enough to understand how little I know, it is capable of being the most profound art that civilization has yet produced. Why, you ask, should young men study this thing? Ask instead why a man should train his voice to sing or his fingers to play on a violin. But, in the end, is the mastery of a fine art worth the trouble? I can only say to you that I deeply believe that it is. To understand with humility how near to perfection human beings dare to reach is worth any trouble.

I believe that a man who understands this will be a better man than he was. And surely, messieurs, that is the object of life."

His creed stated, Lafleur began to act on it. It was amazing to watch the enthusiasm and concentrated care he put into teaching a bunch of kids, not one in a hundred of whom, he must have known, would ever become even a competent swordsman. He put us in an en garde position, then walked down the line. He finally got to me. It was perfectly clear that I didn't know my foil from my elbow, but he had an additional jolt in store for me.

He looked down at me for a while, thoughtfully. I was gripping my foil like a life line and glaring threateningly at the opposite wall. Finally he touched his imperial with the hilt of his foil and said, "I see you are left-handed, young man. That can be an advantage to a skilled swordsman

"Yes, monsieur."

"Although a disadvantage to a beginner." He looked at my stance, and then, rather apologetically: "I would not say you seem to be cut out for ah, you should perhaps consider, my young friend being left-handed in fencing is sometimes considered a serious disadvantage. There are many fine sports provided here at the school tennis, rowing, soccer…

He sounded just like my mother. I guess my face must have shown he had cut my heart out and stamped on it. I couldn't answer. If you're left - handed, you're left-handed. I'm afraid I couldn't keep my lip still, looking back at him.

He didn't even hesitate. "Well, well," he said briskly, "no need to decide at once. We will see. Perhaps hard work can turn your left-handedness into an advantage."

After he had pulled me back to life again, he examined my stance gravely. Finally, in a gentle voice, he

said, “You do not mean to chop wood, I suppose?”

“No, monsieur.”

“Then grasp your foil lightly so that you may use it. Like this.” He demonstrated. “Hold your weapon always as you would hold a captive bird,” he said, “so that it cannot escape you, but so you will not crush it.”

Lafleur moved on till he got to De Parma. “And you, monsieur, I need not tell you how to hold your weapon,” he said, smiling. “Perhaps you would care to show me some parries. Shall we try *seconde, tierce,quarte,* and *septime*? In that order, eh?”De Parma nodded slightly and put himself on guard. “Thrust, monsieur.”

Then I saw Lafleur in action for the first time, and in that instant he became my hero, superseding all my cape and buskin braves at one swoop. I would have died for him. He had whatever it is the few people have who can do something better than most people. Authority, I guess, sureness, poise, confidence. Anyway, Lafleur had it.

The moment he raised his foil, you could tell. Each movement had a purpose, and there were no move ments without purpose. If you don’t know much about fencing, maybe all good fencers look pretty much alike. But they’re not. There can be as many different styles as there are men, and Lafleur’s was perfect.

“*Seconde*, monsieur,” Lafleur said, and made the thrust. De Parma executed the second parry expertly. “Excellent, excellent, your hand is strong. Now, *tierce*.

“Together they went through the four commonest thrusts and parries, Lafleur commenting with pleasure as they went. “Nice, very nice. Finger nails down, elbow close to the body, Up, up a little. *Quarte*. The wrist bent exactly so. Ah, lovely!”

De Parma was good. He lacked some of Lafleur’s grace, but he was extremely skillful and young and

strong and agile as a cat. He was absolutely out of the class of anybody else in the room, even the few good ones. As he parried Lafleur's thrusts, I noticed that he was smiling a little, smiling with the faintest edge of condescension, as though he were doing what he was doing to humor a clever child. With the final thrust, Lafleur said, "No riposte, if you please. I congratulate you." He started to drop his foil to his side. But De Parma did riposte. He returned with a quick lunge, darted his foil under Lafleur's from the side (called technically a flanconade), snapped his wrist hard, and sent the fencing master's foil clattering across the wooden floor of the gymnasium. Then he touched Lafleur's heart carefully with the end of his blade.

"Your bird has flown away, monsieur," he said.

Somebody snickered.

"I asked you not to riposte," Lafleur said, looking at him. "I dropped my guard."

"I must have misunderstood. I offer a hundred pardons, monsieur." De Parma still had the half smile on his face. Hewalked over and picked up Lafleur's foil and returned it to him with his mocking, too elegant bow. "The fencing master's sword," he said.

Lafleur took it, silently, a mixture of bewilderment and chagrin on his face, and a few moments later dismissed the class.

As the weeks went on, it became more obvious that I was a hopeless prospect as a fencer. The harder I worked, the worse I got. And I did work desperately hard. Lafleur never gave up. He seemed to respect my devotion to his art left-handedness, ineptness, and all. Given that, he could embrace a hopeless cause with enthusiasm. His patience was unbelievable. The worse I got, the more I loved him. For me, there was nothing he couldn't do.

I took to following him around, lying in wait for him behind trees. One day, after class, he caught me peering at him. He beckoned to me.

"You would like to walk a little, Mitchell?" he said.

I fell in beside him blissfully, and we walked on toward the village of Brisac. I wanted to tell him I was going to work harder to overcome being such a terrible parrier, but he asked me a question. He asked me what part of the United States I was from. I told him New Jersey. Then he asked a lot of questions, like what political party did my parents belong to and did we have a good senator. He knew a lot about America.

I was trying to get the conversation around to fencing again, when he said "I think we have found the best way to live in this world, have we not, Mitchell in our two republics, our two democracies, yours and mine? Your new one and my old one."

"Oh, ours isn't new," I said. "It's old since 1776."

"Well, yes. I only meant relatively new," Lafleur said pleasantly. Then he added, with a touch of quiet pride in his voice. "Switzerland, you see, is the oldest democracy on the earth. We Swiss chose to rule ourselves in 1499. It's not perfect, of course, but the principle seems to be the one that works the best. In Switzerland, for example, we have not been involved in a war for almost a hundred and fifty years." He made a flourish with his sword cane and pointed to a little stone cottage. "My home," he said. "I hope you will want to have a cup of tea with us, Mitchell.

I said that I would like to.

When we got inside, it struck me for the first time that perhaps Lafleur didn't have an easy time making ends meet as a fencing master. While he was officially a member of the school faculty, he held only two classes a week there and was no doubt paid accordingly less. He had two other classes in the middle of the week at a girls' school up the lake at Lausanne, and that was it. I don't mean that there was anything dilapidated about the Lafleurs' place. It was immensely, almost frighteningly, clean, the way a lot of Swiss houses are,

but it was very small, and there were the little signs of worn things made to stretch beyond their normal life span.

Madame Lafleur, a short, jolly, healthy-looking woman, met us at the door, and led us into her parlor.

"I have brought a young man, my dear," Lafleur said, "One of my pupils, who will have tea with us. His name is Mitchell."

"Mitchell," repeated Madame Lafleur, beaming at me interestedly, as though she didn't have many visitors. "I know that you are an American. My husband likes very much to collect Americans." She went after the tea.

"My wife, too, is a democrat," Lafleur said, smiling after her. He motioned me to a chair. "And my daughter but here is my daughter."

A girl had come into the parlor and stood just inside the door. Lafleur's face lighted up with wonder and love, although he tried not to let it show so much. The girl was about sixteen, the most beautiful girl I'd ever seen. She had a lovely oval face with great big dark eyes and unbelievable skin. Her rich, chestnut colored hair fell to her shoulders.

"Come in, Claudine," Lafleur said, "and meet my young friend, Mitchell. Perhaps he will let you practice your English on him.

"She came up to me and held out her hand, smiling a little shyly. "Ow deu you deu, Meetchelle?" she said. "Ow air yeu?"

"Fine, thank you," I said. I started to tremble. I'd never seen anything like Claudine, and so I fell in love with her.

She sat down with us and we talked for a while rather Lafleur talked most, Claudine a little, and I sat in dumb contentment. It didn't make much

difference what they talked about; I was content. Out of politeness, Lafleur slipped into English too -a lot better English than his daughters- and showed me the little prizes of his domestic life. He let me handle an épée and a light saber which had been given to him years before by a famous French fencing master, and he took me to the window and showed me the best points of his little garden, neat and bright as a Persian carpet.

Claudine sat there, smiling at us. Whenever she said anything, Lafleur tried desperately to look as though what she'd said wasn't the cleverest thing he'd ever heard. He loved her as much as I did. It was a peaceful scene, and I must say Lafleur -this gentle, middle aged man who made his living with a sword- seemed a man of peace, sitting there in his home, waiting for his tea. I must say, too, that this picture of Lafleur was vaguely disappointing to me.

This artist business was all very well up to a point, but for my hero who, I was convinced, could match rapiers with anybody on earth, to be primarily a man of peace struck me as an awful waste. I didn't admire him less; I just thought he was misguided.

Presently Lafleur got up. "Entertain our guest for a few moments, Claudine," he said. "I'll help your mother in the kitchen. You should speak English. Mitchell will help you.

"He went out, and Claudine prepared to be a hostess. "My Eenglees ees so-so formidable," she said, smiling across at me.

"Oh, no. It's as good as my French," I said. It wasn't true, but love will make you say anything.

"Yeu air a great fencair, I suppose?" I took a quick look at the kitchen door. "Well, naturally, I'm not as good as your father," I said. No one could deny that that was true.

Claudine looked at the door, then back at me with a new expression. She lowered her voice, not much, but

enough to show me she was going to say something particular. She spoke casually, but in French again. “Tell me, do you know a student named De Parma?”

I nodded, badly disappointed.

“You like him, Meetchelle?”

“He’s all right, I guess, I don’t know him very well. He’s a senior.”

“I know.” Claudine’s face flushed suddenly, and for a moment she looked flustered and very young. “Do the others like him, do you think?”

“I guess some of them like him and some don’t. He’s a pretty good fencer,” I said dismally.

“And my father, does he like him?”

“Who am I to like?” Lafleur asked with a smile, coming back into the room. He was carrying a tea tray. “Some friend of ours, Mitchell?”

I wasn’t exactly sure why I hesitated, but I didn’t answer him. It was Claudine who came out with it.

“Meetchelle was just telling me about a pupil of yours, Papa,” she said, phrasing things pretty loosely it seemed to me. “His name is De Parma -a good fencer, Meetchelle says.

Lafleur stiffened. “De Parma,” he repeated quietly. “Yes, he is a good fencer, a very expert fencer for so young a man.” He looked suddenly at his daughter. “Claudine, you do not know De Parma?”

“I’ve only happened to meet him a few times in the village with the other boys, Papa,” she said. “On Saturdays sometimes, when the boys come to town.”

“But -but you do not know him- especially?”

Claudine didn’t look quite at her father. “Oh, we have only spoken once or twice on the street, Papa. He asked me once, I think, to show him the way to the boat

landing, nothing more."

Lafleur looked at her, just stood looking at her for a long time, as though he'd forgotten where he was. There was in his face something which I couldn't come close to really understanding then. I could only recognize it and wonder at it. It was fear plain, naked, and paralyzing.

After a while Lafleur set down the tray, and his wife came in, and although nobody said any more about De Parma, the afternoon was no good any more....

The school term hadn't got very far along before De Parma's personality made itself felt around the place in an increasingly wide range. Some how, nobody could just feel neutral about him. It was characteristic of De-Parma that he made absolutely no effort to make friends; yet there gath ered about him a clique of passionate par-tisans. It wasn't a big clique numerically -maybe ten or twelve boys- and it didn't seem to have any particular national aspects. There were a couple of De Parma's countrymen in it, but then there were also a boy from Michigan and an Albanian and a German baron.

Whatever they all had in common seemed to crystallize in a devotion to De Parma's attitude toward the world in general. They followed him around like a sovereign's court, eager for his favor and apparently immune to his insult. Most of them joined Lafleur's fencing class in order to watch their idol where he so plainly excelled.

On the other side were the rest of us, numerically superior but with no rallying point other than a shared opinion that De Parma was an impossible, arrogant louse who regarded us all as scum. It's funny, but when you know somebody regards you as an inferior, you can hate him and wish he were dead and all that, but you somehow partake of a little of his belief yourself. Maybe you don't actually believe you're his inferior, but you wish he would hate you actively so you could hate him back on an equal footing. As it was, a lot of us went around

hating De Parma rather unsatisfactorily because we knew all our best hate was beneath his contempt.

Then at fencing class one day, I knew right away that Lafleur had found out that Claudine was seeing De Parma. I suppose they'd had a scene about it at home. Lafleur was absent-minded and distracted as I'd never seen him, and to De Parma he was cold, ice cold.

He went through the motions of teaching, but you could tell in everything he did that he was sick with worry and behind it was fear. That's what got me, that he should be afraid. What was there to be afraid of? To me it was simple. Challenge De Parma to a duel and maybe not kill him exactly but show him up in front of everyone for the louse he was. I couldn't understand Lafleur at all; how he could love his daughter so, and freedom and decency, and let somebody like De Parma walk all over him? I ached with the courage I feared he didn't have.

Lafleur left immediately after class, forgetting his customary fancy salute. Some of us hung around the gymnasium afterward, including most of the De Parma clique. They often held a sort of extra session with De Parma in charge. He'd let them slash away at him for a while, playing with them, only parrying their uncompli cated lunges, then suddenly let them have it and hard, too. A quick riposte to the heart, the button of his foil exactly on its target, the foil itself bent halfway back on itself from the force of the lunge. That can hurt, you know. Then he'd laugh at them. They seemed to love it.

But this time, De Parma, as he polished off one after the other of his clique, was doing what was meant to be an imitation of Lafleur. It was a vicious parody, and the clique delighted in it. As he danced expertly around one boy, he was saying, "No, no, monsieur, you must not thrust so hard! Remember that the thing you hold in your hand is not a sword.

It only looks like a sword to you. It is really a little bird. You are not practicing fighting, monsieur. No! This is a peaceful nation. You are practicing ornithology." As a sort of accent on the last syllable, he lunged through to the boy's heart.

He minced up to another one and made a deep court bow. "Shall we dance, monsieur?" he said. "I mean fence. Ah, well, to me it's all one; dancing, fencing what's the difference? Art, art." He parried a couple of thrusts, pointing out his toes as though he were doing a minuet.

"You know, my daughter dances," he went on. "She has been dancing lately with a fellow named De Parma, a bad, bad fellow. I've forbidden her to see him, you know. Of course, if she should see him anyhow, I don't know what I'll do because, the truth is, I'm scared to death of this fellow De Parma. If I should make him angry, he might try to hurt me or even take my sword away from me like this." In a movement so quick your eye could hardly follow it, De Parma's foil darted in from the side and out again, and the other fellow stood there with nothing in his hand.

After the clique's laughter haddied down, I managed to make myself heard. "That's a lie, De Parma!" I hollered at him. "He's not afraid of you and he could beat you fencing left-handed if he wanted to!"

De Parma spun around when I first called him a liar; then he saw it was me and he started walking slowly toward me, his foil still in his hand.

I got set to run, but he said, "Wait a minute, you. I'm not going to hurt you. I just want you to deliver a message for me, little trained American. Listen."

He turned back to his clique for a second, and they quieted down at once.

"Tell the fencing master," he said slowly, so that nobody would miss it, "that De Parma would like to

meet him in a match, a match without time limit -to a finish. Tell him I suggest next Friday afternoon, here in the gymnasium. If he refuses, we will all understand, won't we?" He turned around to the clique again, looking at them significantly. They grinned back at him.

I went right to Lafleur's, half elated and half worried over what I'd started, but he wasn't there. His wife told me he'd already left on the train for Lausanne for his classes the next day. So I didn't see him until Thursday evening. By that time everybody in the place knew about De Parma's challenge. I found Lafleur down on his hands and knees in his little garden, fussing absently with some bulbs. He couldn't believe I was serious.

"But, Mitchell, a challenge?" he said. "It's too absurd. I am an instructor; De Parma is my pupil. We cannot fight, fight a match. It would be ridiculous. The school doesn't want its instructors fighting matches with the boys. No, no."

"But everybody expects it now, monsieur," I said. "They'll all think-"

Why should they expect it?" Lafleur demanded hotly. "I have told you all a hundred times that I am a fencing master, an artist, not a duelist. I am a peaceful man, not a warrior. Fighting is stupid; it solves nothing."

After he'd said this, Lafleur bent down at once to his flower bed with out looking at me. A new idea - really a brand new idea- occurred to me.

"You could beat De Parma, all right," I said. "You could beat him without any trouble, couldn't you?" He jabbed into the flower bed with a trowel. The back of his neck and the one cheek I could see turned red. "That has nothing to do with it!" "How should he said irritably. "It is a matter of principle."

I began to have a tight, sick feeling in my stomach

He poked apologetically in the dirt for a while. Then he said quietly, staring into the bed, "I think you should try to understand -if you are not still too young to understand- that my living, my family's food and their safety depend upon my being a fencing master. I'm not such a young man, Mitchell. I must try to earn to keep the respect of my students and of the school. I cannot afford to risk, for something that is against my principles... He let the sentence dangle and looked up at me, his face pitifully eager.

I couldn't make myself look right at him. "But they'll say you're afraid of him!" I shouted. "If I tell them you won't fight De Parma, they'll say he won, they'll say he's better! He'll say if he wants to see Claudine you won't dare stop him!"

"Mitchell!" He rapped out my name like an explosion, but he still couldn't entirely wipe the confusion off his face. He started shouting back,letting the trowel shake out of his hand, "Let them say I'm afraid! I don't care what they say, you understand? You should never have started this, never, never! You don't know what you're doing. You don't have to tell them anything. I'll tell them myself. Do you understand me?"

I could feel the hot, bitter choking in my throat, and I knew I was going to cry, so I just ran out of the yard.

The De Parma clique sent a delegation to my room in the dormitory that night to get Lafleur's answer. The spokesman was the boy from Michigan, I remember, and he spoke to me in English, which was forbidden. For some reason, that seemed to make it more serious to both of us.

I know what he's going to do?" I said nastily. "Why should he tell me? He's going to answer De Parma himself in class tomorrow." They didn't think that was a very good answer, but there wasn't anything much they could do about it. I felt cheated and deserted I had

made Lafleur invincible, and he was invincible. It was an exquisitely bitter lesson that taught me absolutely nothing.

At five minutes before two the next afternoon, Lafleur strode across the gravel courtyard toward the gymnasium, as usual. There was a fresh white rose in the buttonhole of his seedy looking black overcoat, and he swung his sword cane as jauntily as ever. This was to be, his manner said to us all, just any old day like a hundred others. Nothing special about today.

He changed promptly into his immaculate fencing clothes and came into the gym on the dot of two. On three sides of the gymnasium were shallow banks of seats. Usually during fencing class they were empty.

Today about fifty kids were jammed into them, looking sheepish and expectant, and very quiet for fifty kids. There was no possible way for Lafleur to ignore them.

He saluted us as usual. "Messieurs," he said, with the stylish flourish of his foil. We flourished back. "For some reason, our little class seems unusually popular today. Although I don't understand it, I confess I'm flattered by it." He turned toward the mob, speaking lightly. "I think, all the same, it's only fair to warn our fencing enthusiasts that practicing the art of fencing, like practicing scales on a piano, can be tiresome for the observer. But, of course, you are all welcome to watch if it amuses you."

The boys in the bleachers only gawked at him, as though they hadn't quite understood what he'd said. Lafleur turned back to us busily. "Now, then, in a line, if you please. Just as usual. A straight line, here in front of me. Quickly, please."

He planned to bluff it out. I couldn't believe it, couldn't believe that even he thought he would get away with it. He made a gallant try. He walked down the line, where we all stood in the second position,

criticizing, complimenting. I took a quick look around for De Parma. He had stationed himself at the extreme end of the line, where he stood erect, with the point of his foil on the floor in front of him, both hands resting on its hilt. He waited with an expression of infinite patience.

Lafleur reached him at last, as he had to. “Now, Monsieur de Parma,” he said briskly, “in *seconde*, if you please.”

De Parma didn’t move. “I have asked you a question, monsieur,” he said. He looked directly into Lafleur’s face with his beautiful, sadist’s eyes.”Will you be good enough to answer it?”

“A question?” Lafleur tinkered busily with his foil. “Oh, you mean that nonsense about some sort of match? It’s out of the question, of course. In *seconde*, if you- ”

“You refuse my offer, then?”

“It’s not a question of refusing or accepting an offer, as you call it,” Lafleur said steadily. “This is a class. I am an instructor, you are my pupil. I- ”

De Parma’s voice cut in like steel cutting butter. “But you do refuse?”Lafleur got very red in the face. For the first time in all the months I had watched him so closely, he looked awkward, standing there facing De Parma.

“You’re putting me in a very unfair position,” he said finally. From the De Parma clique, and even from some of the seats, there came a quiet sound as he said this, a muttering, miscellaneous sound of derision that swelled and died in a moment.

Lafleur’s face grew tight. He didn’t turn around to where the sound had come from. “You have created a ludicrous situation, Monsieur de Parma,” he said, trying to keep his voice calm. “You had no right to lead others to expect that I would- ”

"I took it to be my right," De Parma interrupted him, watching him, smiling with careful insolence, "as a gentleman and as the son of a gentleman. Perhaps I was wrong in assuming that you would recognize- "

"I am your instructor!" Lafleur shouted. The fact that he had to shout it seemed to make the statement irrelevant.

De Parma still stood like a statue, with his hands resting on the hilt of his foil. "Then you want me to accept your refusal?" he said softly, gently.

Lafleur looked quickly around the room with the expression of a man trapped in a burning building. "Anything of the sort would be would be against my principles."

"Ah yes, your principles," De Parma repeated solemnly, but with his mocking laugh behind his voice.

The derisive sound started to grow again, and Lafleur leaped desperately in to stop it.

"However," he said quickly, "however, if you think it would instruct our visitors to watch us exchange a few conventional exercises, I have no objection. Just as you choose. Parry in *seconde*, if you will."

De Parma smiled with the barest flicker of a glance toward his clique, and said nothing. They put on their masks and assumed their positions. Lafleur thrust methodically; De Parma parried.

"Once again," said Lafleur, in his businesslike, instructor's voice. "Your blade a little higher, if you please. That's better. Again. Much better. Your left arm is well placed now. Again.

"Suddenly De Parma returned in a different position. Lafleur just managed to deflect the thrust from his heart.

He swallowed. "And that we call *quarte*, or the fourth position," he said, trying to make his voice sound

like a man giving a lecture. “It is useful- ”

De Parma switched again. His foil ticked Lafleur’s sleeve.

“*Octave*, or the eighth position, which you have just seen, is less common,” Lafleur said, clinging to his crum-bling ledge. “For purposes of assault, octave is- ”

“Octave seems also more difficult to parry among the Swiss,” De Parma interrupted, an open taunt in his voice now. “Perhaps the same is true of *sixte.*” He lunged viciously as he spoke. Lafleur barely turned the lunge aside.

“Your wrist bent a trifle more, monsieur. Your - your left palm- ”

“It may be that the cows and the cheese in this country,” De Parma continued, talking louder, pressing in more quickly, “keep the people too full to fight. Or is it that so much peace has made them forget how to fight? Does too much peace take away courage, or does it make fear?”

Lafleur only clamped his jaws tight together. A couple of stifled, unpleasant sniggers came out of the quiet.

Then, as Lafleur defended himself, I could see that his harassed eyes behind his wire mask were flicking hurriedly from face to face around the gymnasium. I didn’t understand what he was about, but mechanically my glance darted after his.

Every face in the room was a tense mask of concentration. But, beyond the common excitement, some faces -some few faces even outside of De Parma’s clique- had in them an overlay of cruelty, a kind of merciless blood-cry for conquest of the weak by the strong. The faces were like a reproduction of De Parma’s own an insidiously spreading reproduction. They gave me an icy, wet feeling on my back, the faces watching Lafleur.

Then, very suddenly, everything changed. Lafleur jerked his eyes away from the faces and took two long fast strides backward out of range and dropped his foil. He took off his mask, and his face was deathly white. He stood stiff as a ramrod, his black eyes staring like gleaming lumps of coal. The foil in his right hand quivered just a little.

"We hold our foils for very different reasons, Monsieur de Parma," he said, very quietly, "I do not like your reason. I don't like it when I find it in you or in things larger than you. I am an artist and a peaceful man, but you despise peace. Fighting is against my principles, which makes it necessary for me to fight you. Unmask, if you please."

De Parma snapped off his mask and spun it across the gymnasium floor. He had a wild look, a craily cunning look about him now. He grinned around at his clique for a second and then fell on guard. "At the fencing master's convenience," he said.

Lafleur raised his foil with precision. Its tip, still quivering slightly, was the only outward sign of what he was feeling, but he was an entirely different man from the one I had known. Somehow he'd thrown every thing out of himself but one thing. There wasn't an ounce of fear in him now. I gloried in him and was aware of a jarring sense of danger for him. "Begin," he said.

Their blades reaped and hissed together. The sound, with the stamp of their feet and their heavy breathing, filled the gymnasium. Nearly half a minute passed, in which they felt their way, feinting, groping, testing, each weighing the other's anger through the touch of his hand.

I'd expected De Parma to charge in with the brazenness he showed in everything else. But he was holding back, circling round and round Lafleur, const-

antly changing his guard and his ground, never advancing. It was Lafleur's face that finally told me. what De Parma was up to. He knew Lafleur was spotting him thirty years and he meant to make use of every one of them. He had counted on those years, as I had not.

After three minutes, anybody could see that his tactics were working. Lafleur's face was already washed with sweat. His shoulders heaved very rapidly. But there was no change in the perfect rhythm of his style. He was the fencing master still, a part of him still conscious of the beauty of his art. Watching him, holding in my breath, it occurred to me suddenly that Lafleur had probably never before in his life really thought of a fencing foil as a weapon of combat.

At least he seemed to realize that he must carry the fight to De Parma, or beat himself. He realized it late, and as though the discovery surprised him. He was the better fencer and he knew it, but he had let precious minutes pare away his advantage.

Now he opened his guard, almost carelessly, it seemed, offering a tempt ing target. De Parma bit, lunged forward violently and nearly lost his balance when his foil touched nothing. Lafluer's riposte came like lightning in two thrusts one a feint, the other meant to go home but De Parma was back on his left foot in time to judge the second one for what it was. He slashed out at it with the edge of his blade and touched it in time to move it a few inches before it landed. It caught the top of his shoulder and licked over it.

An expectant gasp went up in the place.

But instead of rushing in for a kill, Lafleur began to give ground. I couldn't understand what had happened to him. It was infuriating. He was letting himself be forced back and back, half step by half step. De Parma pushed forward eagerly now, trying by sheer speed and

energy to get past Lafleur's expert guard. There was a tremendous waste of motion in De Parma's attacks and a lack of economy in his recoveries, but you could see that his stamina would allow him these luxuries.

Together they moved halfway across the gymnasium, Lafleur backing, DeParma advancing. They reached the wall. Lafleur felt for it and touched it with his heel. Then, suddenly, he made three dazzling flank attacks from the right. De Parma side stepped each one, and when they had passed, he saw that he and Lafleur had changed places. Instead of pursuing, De Parma saw now that he had been led. He stood with his back to the wall, and Lafleur stood in front of him, his feet planted in a peculiarly stationary position.

De Parma's face tightened with rage, and he burst out at Lafleur with a furious assault, attacking from all sides, agile and swift, breathing through his mouth, his lips drawn back away from his teeth.

Lafleur stood his ground, the air around him full of the darting tongues of De Parma's foil, parrying thrust after thrust. He worked like a machine. There was certainly not much left of him as a man, as the dapper, gentle fencing master. It made you want to cry. He looked a hundred years old. He couldn't breathe any more, but only panted like an exhausted dog, making a little gasping sound as he gulped in each mouthful of precious air. His imperial and his jaunty mustache had drooped, and the sweat that dropped from them splotched and smeared across his canvas jacket. His face was the color of putty.

And still he fought on, twisting, darting, plunging, the experience of a devoted lifetime making him the master of his weapon. From first to last he made no movement, half dead as he was, that hadn't in it the memory of the expert's grace. No matter where or how fast or how often or in what sequence De Parma thrust,

Lafleur's foil seemed always to be there an instant before, parrying. parrying. De Parma was like a maniac, slashing, charging, near the edge of control. His temper snapped, with a kind of guttural, growling sound in his throat, and he began to make mistakes.

You could tell it was nearly over then.

The more wildly De Parma lunged, the more easily Lafleur deflected his foil. With a sudden rush, De Parma, trying to finish it, made a huge thrust, lunging far forward from the waist, grunting with the effort. Like a striking snake, Lafleur's blade whipped under, parrying in *prime,* and, while De Parma was trying to get on guard again, darted upward and bent into a semicircle on De Parma's scarlet heart.

Seven minutes had passed since they had begun.

De Parma threw his foil down on the floor. We all began to shout like crazy people.

Lafleur turned and marched unsteadily off the floor toward his dressing room, using his foil every third step, the way an old man uses a cane.

On Tuesday Lafleur came to hisfencing class on the dot of two. I don't know what we expected, but he looked no different from the way he had always looked neither better nor worse, but exactly the same. He had a fresh flower in his buttonhole; his mustache and imperial were spruce and jaunty again; his walk was springy. When he saw that the size of his class had almost doubled since the last one, he only smiled his grave smile. De Parma wasn't there, norwere many of his clique.

Lafleur formed us in a line as he always did. It took a minute to realize that everything was to be just as it had always been. He had fought for a moment like an inspired demon because he had felt he had to fight, but nothing had changed him. He was the same man before, the same man after. He would always be Lafleur the fencing master, instructor in a classic art.

He moved slowly down the line of his pupils, going about his real business in the world, smiling a little, his head cocked critically, his voice encouraging, warm with interest. "Elbow in, close to the waist. Better, that's better. Now, again. Excellent. Lightly, Mitchell, always lightly. Don't crush it. Hold your weapon always as you would hold a captive bird…

That's about all, I guess. Except that De Parma never came back to the class, and after Christmas we heard he had transferred to another school.

The last time I saw Lafleur was at the very end of the spring term the next year. He asked me to come to his house one afternoon, and it turned out to be a sort of engagement party for Claudine. She looked wonderfully beautiful and happy. She was going to marry a nice looking young fellow, a Swiss, a chemist I think he was, at one of the chocolate factories near Vevey.

Lafleur was having a great time at the party, passing around plates of cakes and listening to people praise his daughter, and taking me, and everybody who would go, out to the garden. He was anxious to see that everybody was having a good time.

De Parma, as I told you I saw in the newspaper, was shot through the head by a democratic revolutionary while he was having breakfast on his terrace the other day. It would have been more poetic if it had been a sword, but I suppose you can't expect everything to come out just so, even in a story.

TOP MAN
James Ramsey Ullman

THE GORGE BENT. The walls fell suddenly away and we came out on the edge of a bleak, boulder strewn valley. And there it was.

Osborn saw it first. He had been leading the column, threading his way slowly among the huge rock masses of the gorge's mouth. Then he came to the first flat, bare place and stopped. He neither pointed nor cried out, but every man behind him knew instantly what it was. The long file sprang taut, like a jerked rope. As swiftly as we could, but in complete silence, we came out into the open ground where Osborn stood, and raised our eyes with his. In the records of the Indian Topographical Survey it says:

Kalpurtha: a mountain in the Himalayas, altitude 28,900 ft. The highest peak in British India and fourth highest in the world. Also known as K3. A Tertiary formation of sedimentary limestone.

There were men among us who had spent months of their lives in some cases, years reading, thinking, planning about what now lay before us, but at that moment statistics and geology, knowledge, thought and plans, were as remote and forgotten as the far away western cities from which we had come. We were men bereft of everything but eyes, every thing but the single, electric perception: There it was!

Before us the valley stretched away into miles of rocky desolation. To right and left it was bounded by low ridges which, as the eye followed them, slowly mounted and drew closer together until the valley was no longer a valley at all, but a narrowing, rising corridor between the cliffs. What happened then I can describe only as a single, stupendous crash of music. At the end of the corridor and above it so far above it that it shut out half the sky hung the blinding white mass of K3.

It was like the many pictures I had seen, and at the same time utterly unlike them. The shape was there, and the familiar distinguishing features the sweeping skirt of glaciers; the monstrous vertical precipices of the face and the jagged ice line of the east ridge; finally the symmetrical summit pyramid that transfixed the sky. But whereas in the pictures the mountain had always seemed unreal a dream image of cloud, snow and crystal it was now no longer an image at all. It was a mass, solid, imminent, appalling. We were still too far away to see the windy whipping of its snow plumes or to hear the cannonading of its avalanches, but in that sudden silent moment every man of us was for the first time aware of it, not as a picture in his mind but as a thing, an antagonist. For all its twenty-eight thousand feet of lofty grandeur, it seemed, somehow, less to tower than to crouch a White hooded giant, secret and remote, but living. Living and on guard.

I turned my eyes from the dazzling glare and looked at my companions. Osborn still stood a little in front of the others. He was absolutely motionless, his young face tense and shining, his eyes devouring the mountain as a lover's might devour the face of his beloved. One could feel in the very set of his body the overwhelming desire that swelled in him to act, to come to grips, to conquer. A little behind him were ranged the other white men of the expedition: Randolph, our leader, Wittmer and Johns, Doctor Schlapp and Bixler. All were still, their eyes cast upward. Off to one side a little stood Nace, the English-

man, the only one among us who was not staring at K3 for the first time. He had been the last to come up out of the gorge and stood now with arms folded on his chest, squinting at the great peak he had known so long and fought so tirelessly and fiercely. His lean British face, under its mask of stubble and windburn, was expressionless. His lips were a colorless line, and his eyes seemed almost shut. Behind the sahibs ranged the porters, bent over their staffs, their brown, seamed faces straining upward from beneath their loads.

For a long while no one spoke or moved. The only sounds between earth and sky were the soft hiss of our breathing and the pounding of our hearts.

Through the long afternoon we wound slowly between the great boulders of the valley and at sundown pitched camp in the bed of a dried-up stream. The porters ate their rations in silence, wrapped themselves in their blankets and fell asleep under the stars. The rest of us, as was our custom, sat close about the fire that blazed in the circle of tents, discussing the events of the day and the plans for the next. It was a flawlessly clear Himalayan night and K3 tiered up into the blackness like a monstrous sentinel lighted from within. There was no wind, but a great tide of cold air crept down the valley from the ice fields above, penetrating our clothing, pressing gently against the canvas of the tents.

"Another night or two and we'll be needing the sleeping bags,"commented Randolph.

Osborn nodded. "We could use them tonight, would be my guess."

Randolph turned to Nace. "What do you say, Martin?"

The Englishman puffed at his pipe a moment. "Rather think it might be better to wait," he said at last.

"Wait? Why?" Osborn jerked hishead up."Well, it

gets pretty nippy high up,you know. I've seen it thirty below at twenty-five thousand on the east ridge. Longer we wait for the bags,better acclimated we'll get."

Osborn snorted. "A lot of good being acclimated will do if we have frozen feet."

"Easy, Paul, easy," cautioned Randolph. "It seems to me Martin's right."

Osborn bit his lip, but said nothing. The other men entered the conversation, and soon it had veered to other matters: the weather, the porters and pack animals, routes, camps and strategy the inevitable, inexhaustible topics of the climber's world.

There were all kinds of men among the eight of us, men with a great diversity of background and interest. Sayre Randolph, whom the Alpine Club had named leader of our expedition, had for years been a well-known explorer and lecturer. Now in his middle fifties, he was no longer equal to the grueling physical demands of high climbing, but served as planner and organizer of the enterprise. Wittmer was a Seattle lawyer, who had recently made a name for himself by a series of difficult ascents in the Coast Range of British-Columbia. Johns was an Alaskan, a fantastically strong, able sourdough, who had been a ranger in the U.S. Forest Service and had accompanied many famous Alaskan expeditions. Schlapp was a practicing physician from Milwaukee, Bixler a government meteorologist with a talent for photography. I, at the time, was an assistant professor of geology at an eastern university.

Finally, and preeminently, there were Osborn and Nace. I say "preeminently," because even at this time, when we had been together as a party for little more than a month, I believe all of us realized that these were the two key men of our venture. None, to my knowledge, ever expressed it in words, but the conviction was there, nevertheless, that if any of us

were eventually to stand on the hitherto unconquered summit of K3, it would be one of them, or both. They were utterly dissimilar men. Osborn was twenty-three and a year out of college, a compact, buoyant mass of energy and high spirits. He seemed to be wholly unaffected by either the physical or mental hazards of mountaineering and had already, by virtue of many spectacular ascents in the Alps and Rockies, won a reputation as the most skilled and audacious of younger American climbers. Nace was in his forties lean, taciturn, introspective. An official in the Indian Civil Service, he had explored and climbed in the Himalayas for twenty years. He had been a member of all five of the unsuccessful British expeditions to K3, and in his last attempt had attained to within five hundred feet of the summit, the highest point which any man had reached on the unconquered giant. This had been the famous tragic attempt in which his fellow climber and life-long friend, Captain Furness, had slipped and fallen ten thousand feet to his death. Nace rarely mentioned his name, but on the steel head of his ice ax were engraved the words: To MARTIN FROM JOHN. If fate were to grant that the ax of any one of us should be planted upon the summit of K3, I hoped it would be his.

Such were the men who huddled about the fire in the deep, still cold of that Himalayan night. There were many differences among us, in temperament as well as in background. In one or two cases, notably that of Osborn and Nace, there had already been a certain amount of friction, and as the venture continued and the struggles and hardships of the actual ascent began, it would, I knew, increase. But differences were unimportant. What mattered- all that mattered- was that our purpose was one- to conquer the monster of rock and ice that now loomed above us in the night; to stand for a moment where no man, no living thing, had ever stood before. To that end we had come from half a world away, across oceans and continents to the

fastnesses of inner Asia. To that end we were prepared to endure cold, exhaustion and danger, even to the very last extremity of human endurance. Why? There is no answer, and at the same time every man among us knew the answer; every man who has ever looked upon a great mountain and felt the fever in his blood to climb and conquer, knows the answer. George Leigh Mallory, greatest of mountaineers, expressed it once and for all when he was asked why he wanted to climb unconquered Everest. “I want to climb it,” said Mallory, “because it’s there.”

Day after day we crept on and upward. The naked desolation of the valley was unrelieved by any motion, color or sound, and, as we progressed, it was like being trapped at the bottom of a deep well or in a sealed court between great skyscrapers. Soon we were thinking of the ascent of the shining mountain not only as an end in itself but as an escape.

In our nightly discussions around the fire, our conversation narrowed more and more to the immediate problems confronting us, and during them I began to realize that the tension between Osborn and Nace went deeper than I had at first surmised. There was rarely any outright argument between them they were both far too able mountain men to disagree on fundamentals but I saw that at almost every turn they were rubbing each other the wrong way. It was a matter of personalities chiefly. Osborn was talkative, enthusiastic, optimistic, always chafing to be up and at it, always wanting to take the short, straight line to the given point. Nace, on the other hand, was matter-of-fact, cautious, slow. He was the apostle of trial-and-error and watchful waiting. Because of his far greater experience and intimate knowledge of K3, Randolph almost invariably followed his advice, rather than Osborn’s, when a difference of opinion arose. The younger man usually capitulated with good grace, but I could tell that he was irked.

During the days in the valley I had few occasions to talk privately with either of them, and only once did either mention the other in any but the most casual manner. Even then, the remarks they made seemed unimportant, and I remember them only in view of what happened later.

My conversation with Osborn occurred first. It was while we were on the march, and Osborn, who was directly behind me, came up suddenly to my side.

"You're a geologist, Frank," he began without preamble. "What do you think of Nace's theory about the ridge?"

"What theory?" I asked.

"He believes we should traverse under it from the glacier up. Says the ridge itself is too exposed."

"It looks pretty mean through the telescope."

"But it's been done before. He's done it himself. All right, it's tough I'll admit that. But a decent climber could make it in half the time the traverse will take."

"Nace knows the traverse is longer," I said. "but he seems certainit will be much easier for us."

"Easier for him is what he means."

Osborn paused, looking moodily at the ground. "He was a great climber in his day. It's a damn shame a man can't be honest enough with himself to know when he's through." He fell silent and a moment later dropped back into his place in line.

It was that same night, I think, that I awoke to find Nace sitting up in his blanket and staring at the mountain.

"How clear it is," I whispered.

The Englishman pointed. "See the ridge?"

I nodded, my eyes fixed on the great, twisting spine of ice that climbed into the sky. I could see now, more clearly than in the blinding sunlight, its huge indentations and jagged, wind-swept pitches.

It looks impossible," I said.

"No, it can be done. Trouble is, when you've made it, you're too done in for the summit."

"Osborn seems to think its shortness would make up for its difficulty."

Nace was silent a long moment before answering. Then for the first and only time I heard him speak the name of his dead companion. "That's what Furness thought," he said quietly. Then he lay down and wrapped himself in his blanket.

For the next two weeks the upper most point of the valley was our home and workshop. We established our base camp as close to the mountain as we could, less than half a mile from the tongue of its lowest glacier, and plunged into the arduous tasks of preparation for the ascent. Our food and equipment were unpacked, inspected and sorted, and finally repacked in lighter loads for transportation to more advanced camps. Hours on end were spent poring over maps and charts and study ing the monstrous heights above us through telescope and binoculars. Under Nace's supervision, a thorough reconnaissance of the glacier was made and the route across it laid out; then began the backbreaking labor of moving up supplies and establishing the advance stations.

Camps I and II were set up on the glacier itself, in the most sheltered sites we could find. Camp III we built at its upper end, as near as possible to the point where the great rock spine of K3 thrust itself free of ice and began its precipitous ascent. According to our plans, this would be the advance base of operations during the climb; the camps to be established higher up, on the mountain proper, would be too small and too exposed to serve as anything more than one or two nights' shelter. The total distance between the base camp and Camp III was only fifteen miles, but the utmost daily progress

of our porters was five miles, and it was essential that we should never be more than twelve hours' march from food and shelter. Hour after hour, day after day, the long file of men wound up and down among the hummocks and crevasses of the glacier, and finally the time arrived when we were ready to advance.

Leaving Doctor Schlapp in command of eight porters at the base camp, we proceeded easily and on schedule, reaching Camp I the first night, Camp II the second and the advance base the third. No men were left at Camps I and II, inasmuch as they were designed simply as caches for food and equipment; and, furthermore, we knew we would need all the man power available for the establishment of the higher camps on the mountain proper.

For more than three weeks now the weather had held perfectly, but on our first night at the advance base, as if by malignant prearrangement of Nature, we had our first taste of the supernatural fury of a high Himalayan storm. It began with great streamers of lightning that flashed about the mountain like a halo; then heavily through the weird glare snow began to fall. The wind howled about the tents with hurricane frenzy, and the wild flapping of the canvas dinned in our ears like machine gun fire.

There was no sleep for us that night or the next. For thirty-six hours the storm raged without lull, while we huddled in the icy gloom of the tents. At last, on the third morning, it was over, and we came out into a world transformed by a twelve foot cloak of snow. No single land mark remained as it had been before, and our supplies and equipment were in the wildest confusion. Fortunately, there had not been a single serious injury, but it was another three days before we had regained our strength and put the camp in order.

Then we waited. The storm did not return, and the sky beyond the ridges gleamed flawlessly clear, but night and day we could hear the roaring thunder of

avalanches on the mountain above us. To have ventured so much as one step into that savage, vertical wilderness before the new fallen snow froze tight would have been suicidal. We chafed or waited patiently, according to our individual temperaments. while the days dragged by.

It was late one afternoon that Osborn returned from a short reconnaissance up the ridge. His eyes were shining and his voice jubilant.

"It's tight!" he cried. "Tight as a drum! We can go!" All of us stopped whatever we were doing. His excitement leaped like an electric spark from one to another. "I went about a thousand feet, and it's sound all the way. What do you say, Sayre? Tomorrow?"

Randolph hesitated a moment, then looked at Nace.

"Better give it another day or two," said the Englishman.

Osborn glared at him. "Why?" he challenged.

"It's generally safer to wait until- "

"Wait! Wait!" Osborn exploded. "Don't you ever think of anything but waiting? The snow's firm, I tell you!""It's firm down here," Nace replied quietly, "because the sun hits it only two hours a day. Up above it gets the sun twelve hours. It may not have frozen yet."

"The avalanches have stopped."

"That doesn't necessarily mean it will hold a man's weight."

"It seems to me, Martin's point" Randolph began.

Osborn wheeled on him. "Sure," he snapped. "I know. Martin's right. The cautious bloody English are always right. Let him have his way, and we'll be sitting here twiddling our thumbs until the mountain falls down on us." His eyes flashed to Nace. "Maybe with a little less of that bloody cautiousness, you English wouldn't have made such a mess of Everest. Maybe your pals Mallory and Furness wouldn't be dead."

“Osborn!” commanded Randolph sharply.

The youngster stared at Nace for another moment, breathing heavily. Then, abruptly, he turned away.

The next two days were clear and windless, but we still waited, following Nace’s advice. There were no further brushes between him and Osborn, but an unpleasant air of restlessness and tension hung over the camp. I found myself chafing almost as impatiently as Osborn himself for the moment when we would break out of that maddening inactivity and begin the assault.

At last the day came. With the first paling of the sky, a roped file of men, bent almost double beneath heavy loads, began slowly to climb the ice slope just beneath the jagged line of the great east ridge. In accordance with prearranged plan, we proceeded in relays; this first group consisting of Nace, Johns, myself and eight porters. It was our job to ascend approximately two thousand feet in a day’s climbing and establish Camp IV at the most level and sheltered site we could find. We would spend the night there and return to the advance base next day, while the second relay, consisting of Osborn, Wittmer and eight more porters, went up with their loads. This process was to continue until all necessary supplies were at Camp IV, and then the whole. thing would be repeated between Camps IV and V, and V and VI. From VI, at an altitude of about 26,000 feet, the ablest and fittest men presumably Nace and Osborn would make the direct assault on the summit. Randolph and Bixler were to remain at the advance base through out the operations, acting as directors and coördinators. We were under the strictest orders that any man, sahib or porter, who suffered illness or injury should be brought down immediately.

How shall I describe those next two weeks beneath the great ice ridge of K3? In a sense, there was no occurrence of importance, and at the same time everything happened that could possibly happen, short of actual di-

saster. We established Camp IV, came down again, went up again, came down again. Then we crept laboriously higher. The wind in creased, and the air grew steadily colder and more difficult to breathe. One morning two of the porters awoke with their feet frozen black; they had to be sent down. A short while later Johns developed an uncontrollable nosebleed and was forced to descend to a lower camp. Wittmer was suffering from splitting headaches and I from a continually dry throat. But providentially, the one enemy we feared the most in that icy, gale-lashed hell did not again attack us no snow fell. And day by day, foot by foot, we ascended.

It is during ordeals like this that the surface trappings of a man are shed and his secret mettle laid bare. There were no shirkers or quitters among us I had known that from the beginning but now, with each passing day, it became more manifest which were the strongest and ablest among us. Beyond all argument, these were Osborn and Nace.

Osborn was magnificent. All the boyish impatience and moodiness which he had exhibited earlier were gone, and, now that he was at last at work in his natural element, he emerged as the peerless mountaineer he was. His energy was inexhaustible, and his speed, both on rock and ice, almost twice that of any other man in the party. He was always discovering new routes and short cuts; and there was such vigor, buoyancy and youth in everything he did that it gave heart to all the rest of us.

In contrast, Nace was slow, methodical, unspectacular. Since he and I worked in the same relay, I was with him almost constantly, and to this day I carry in my mind the clear image of the man his tall body bent almost double against endless, shimmering slopes of ice; his lean brown face bent in utter concentration on the problem in hand, then raised searchingly to the next; the bright prong of his ax rising, falling, rising, falling with tireless rhythm,

until the steps in the glassy incline were so wide and deep that the most clumsy of the porters could not have slipped from them had he tried. Osborn attacked the mountain, head on Nace studied it, sparred with it, wore it down. His spirit did not flap from his sleeve like a pennon; it was deep inside him, patient, indomitable.

The day came soon when I learned from him what it is to be a great mountaineer. We were making the ascent from Camp IV to V, and an almost perpendicular ice wall had made it necessary for us to come out for a few yards on the exposed crest of the ridge. There were six of us in the party, roped together, with Nace leading, myself second, and four porters bringing up the rear. The ridge at this particular point was free of snow, but razor-thin, and the rocks were covered with a smooth glaze of ice. On either side the mountain dropped away in sheer precipices of five thousand feet.

Suddenly the last porter slipped. In what seemed to be the same instant I heard the ominous scraping of boot nails and, turning, saw a wildly gesticulating figure plunge sideways into the abyss. There was a scream as the next porter followed him. I remember trying frantically to dig into the ridge with my ax, realizing at the same time it would no more hold against the weight of the falling men than a pin stuck in a wall. Then I heard Nace shout, “Jump!” As he said it, the rope went tight about my waist, and I went hurtling after him into space on the opposite side of the ridge. After me came the nearest porter.

What happened then must have happened in five yards and a fifth of a second. I heard myself cry out, and the glacier, a mile below, rushed up at me, spinning. Then both were blotted out in a violent spasm, as the rope jerked taut. I hung for a moment, an inert mass, feeling that my body had been cut in two; then I swung in slowly to the side of the mountain. Above me the rope lay tight and motionless

across the crest of the ridge, our weight exactly counter balancing that of the men who had fallen on the far slope.

Nace's voice came up from below. "You chaps on the other side!" he shouted. "Start climbing slowly! We're climbing too!

"In five minutes we had all regained the ridge. The porters and I crouched panting on the jagged rocks, our eyes closed, the sweat beading our faces in frozen drops. Nace carefully examined the rope that again hung loosely between us.

"All right, men," he said presently. "Let's get on to camp for a cup of tea."

Above Camp V the whole aspect of the ascent changed. The angle of the ridge eased off, and the ice, which lower down had covered the mountain like a sheath, lay only in scattered patches between the rocks. Fresh enemies, however, instantly appeared to take the place of the old. We were now laboring at an altitude of more than 25,000 feet well above the summits of the highest surrounding peaks and day and night, without protection or respite, we were buffeted by the savage fury of the wind. Worse than this was that the atmosphere had become so rarefied it could scarcely support life. Breathing itself was a major physical effort, and our progress upward consisted of two or three painful steps, followed by a long period of rest in which our hearts pounded wildly and our burning lungs gasped for air. Each of us carried a small cylinder of oxygen in our pack, but we used it only in emergencies, and found that, though its immediate effect was salutary, it left us later even worse off than before.

But the great struggle was now mental rather than physical. The lack of air induced a lethargy of mind and spirit; confidence and the powers of thought and decision waned. The mountain, to all of us, was no longer a mere giant of rock and ice; it had become a liv-

ing thing, an enemy, watching us, waiting for us, hostile, relentless.

On the fifteenth day after we had first left the advance base, we pitched Camp VI at an altitude of 26,500 feet. It was located near the uppermost extremity of the great east ridge, directly beneath the so called shoulder of the mountain. On the far side of the shoulder the stupendous north face of K3 fell sheer to the glaciers, two miles below. Above it and to the left rose the symmetrical bulk of the summit pyramid. The top most rocks of its highest pinnacle were clearly visible from the shoulder, and the intervening fifteen hundred feet seemed to offer no insuperable obstacles.

Camp VI, which was in reality no camp at all but a single tent, was large enough to accommodate only three men. Osborn established it with the aid of Wittmer and one porter; then, the following morning, Wittmer and the porter descended to Camp V, and Nace and I went up. It was our plan that Osborn and Nace should launch the final assault the next day, if the weather held with myself in support, following their progress through binoculars and going to their aid or summoning help from below if anything went wrong. As the three of us lay in the tent that night, the summit seemed already within arm's reach, victory securely in our grasp.

And then the blow fell. With fiendishly malignant timing, which no power on earth could have made us believe was a simple accident of nature, the mountain hurled at us its last line of defense. It snowed.

For a day and a night the great flakes drove down upon us, swirling and swooping in the wind, blotting out the summit, the shoulder, every thing beyond the tiny white-walled radius of our tent. At last, during the morning of the following day, it cleared. The sun came out in a thin blue sky, and the summit pyramid again appeared above us, now whit-

ely robed in fresh snow. But still we waited. Until the snow either froze or was blown away by the wind, it would have been the rashest courting of destruction for us to have ascended a foot beyond the camp. Another day passed. And another.

By the third nightfall our nerves were at the breaking point. For hours on end we had scarcely moved or spoken, and the only sounds in all the world were the endless moaning of the wind outside and the harsh, sucking noise of our breathing. I knew that, one way or another, the end had come. Our meager food supply was running out; even with careful rationing, there was enough left for only two more days.

Presently Nace stirred in his sleeping bag and sat up.

"We'll have to go down tomorrow," he said quietly.

For a moment there was silence in the tent. Then Osborn struggled to a sitting position and faced him.

"No," he said.

"There's still too much loose snow above. We can't make it."

"But it's clear. As long as we can see- "

Nace shook his head. "Too dangerous. We'll go down tomorrow and lay in a fresh supply. Then we'll try again. "

"Once we go down we're licked. You know it."

Nace shrugged. "Better to be licked than- " The strain of speech was suddenly too much for him and he fell into a violent paroxysm of coughing. When it had passed, there was a long silence.

Then, suddenly, Osborn spoke again. "Look, Nace," he said, "I'm going up tomorrow."

The Englishman shook his head.

"I'm going understand?"

For the first time since I had known him, I saw Nace's eyes flash in anger. "I'm the senior member of

this group," he said. "I forbid you to go!"

With a tremendous effort, Osborn jerked himself to his feet. "You forbid me? This may be your sixth time on this mountain, and all that, but you don't own it! I know what you're up to. You haven't got it in you to make the top yourself, so you don't want anyone else to get the glory. That's it, isn't it? Isn't it?" He sat down again suddenly, gasping for breath.

Nace looked at him with level eyes. "This mountain has licked me five times," he said softly. "It killed my best friend. It means more to me to lick it than anything else in the world. Maybe I'll make it and maybe I won't. But if I do, it will be as a rational, intelligent human being, not as a damned fool throwing my life away- "

He collapsed into another fit of coughing and fell back in his sleeping bag. Osborn, too, was still. They lay there inert, panting, too exhausted for speech.

It was hours later that I awoke from dull, uneasy sleep. In the faint light I saw Nace fumblig with the flap of the tent.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Osborn. He's gone."

The words cut like a blade through my lethargy. I struggled to my feet and followed Nace from the tent.

Outside, the dawn was seeping up the eastern sky. It was very cold, but the wind had fallen and the mountain seemed to hang suspended in a vast stillness. Above us the summit pyramid climbed bleakly into space, like the last outpost of a spent lifeless planet. Raising my binoculars, I swept them over the gray waste. At first I saw nothing but rock and ice; then, suddenly, something moved.

"I've got him," I whispered. As I spoke, the figure of Osborn sprang into clear focus against a patch of ice. He took three or four slow upward steps, stopped, went on again. I handed the glasses to Nace.

The Englishman squinted through them a moment,

returned them to me and re-entered the tent. When I followed, he had already laced his boots and was pulling on his outer gloves.

"He's not far," he said. "Can't have been gone more than half an hour." He seized his ice ax and started out again.

"Wait," I said. "I'm going with you."

Nace shook his head. "Better stay here."

"I'm going with you," I said.

He said nothing further, but waited while I made ready. In a few moments we left the tent, roped up and started off.

Almost immediately we were on the shoulder and confronted with the paralyzing two- mile drop of the north face, but we negotiated the short exposed stretch without mishap and in ten minutes were working up the base of the summit pyramid. Our progress was creepingly slow. There seemed to be literally no air at all to breathe, and after almost every step we were forced to rest.The minutes crawled into hours, and still we climbed. Presently the sun came up. Its level rays streamed across the clouds far below, and glinted from the summits of distant peaks. But, although the pinnacle of K3 soared a full five thousand feet above anything in the surrounding world, we had scarcely any sense of height. The stupendous wilderness of mountains and glaciers that spread beneath us to the horizon was flattened and remote, an unreal, insubstantial landscape seen in a dream. We had no connection with it, or it with us. All living, all awareness, purpose and will, was concentrated in the last step and the next to put one foot before the other; to breathe; to ascend. We struggled on in silence.

I do not know how long it was since we had left the camp it might have been two hours, it might have been six when we suddenly sighted Osborn. We had not been able to find him again since our first glimpse through the binoculars, but now, unexpectedly and

abruptly, as we came up over a jagged outcropping of rock, there he was. He was at a point, only a few yards above us, where the mountain steepened into an almost vertical wall. The smooth surface directly in front of him was obviously unclimbable, but two alternate routes were presented. To the left, a chimney cut obliquely across the wall, forbiddingly steep, but seeming to offer adequate holds. To the right was a gentle slope of snow that curved upward and out of sight behind the rocks. As we watched, Osborn ascended to the edge of the snow, stopped and tested it with his foot; then, apparently satisfied that it would bear his weight, he stepped out on the slope.

I felt Nace's body tense. "Paul!" he cried out.

His voice was too weak and hoarse to carry. Osborn continued his ascent.

Nace cupped his hands and called his name again, and this time Osborn turned. "Wait!" cried the Englishman.

Osborn stood still, watching us, as we struggled up the few yards to the edge of the snow slope. Nace's breath came in shuddering gasps, but he climbed faster than I had ever seen him climb before.

"Come back!" he called. "Come off the snow!"

"It's all right! The crust is firm!"Osborn called back.

"But it's melting! There's"-Nace paused, fighting for air-"there's nothing underneath!"

In a sudden, horrifying flash I saw what he meant. Looked at from directly below, at the point where Osborn had come to it, the slope on which he stood appeared as a harmless covering of snow over the rocks. From where we were now, however, a little to one side, it could be seen that it was in reality no covering at all, but merely a cornice or unsupported platform clinging to the side of the mountain. Below it was not rock, but ten thousand feet of blue air.

"Come back!" I cried. "Come back!"

Osborn hesitated, then took a downward step. But he never took the next. For in that same instant the snow directly in front of him disappeared. It did not seem to fall or to break away. It was just soundlessly and magically no longer there. In the spot where Osborn had been about to set his foot there was now revealed the abysmal drop of the north face of K3.

I shut my eyes, but only for a second, and when I reopened them Osborn was still, miraculously, there.

Nace was shouting, "Don't move! Don't move an inch!"

"The rope," I heard myself saying.

The Englishman shook his head. "We'd have to throw it, and the impact would be too much. Brace your self and play it out." As he spoke, his eyes were traveling over the rocks that bordered the snow bridge. Then he moved forward.

I wedged myself into a cleft in the wall and let out the rope which extended between us. A few yards away, Osborn stood in the snow, transfixed, one foot a little in front of the other. But my eyes now were on Nace. Cautiously, but with astonishing rapidity, he edged along the rocks beside the cornice. There was a moment when his only support was an inch-wide ledge beneath his feet, another where there was nothing under his feet at all and he supported himself wholly by his elbows and hands. But he advanced steadily, and at last reached a shelf wide enough for him to turn around on. At this point he was perhaps six feet away from Osborn.

"It's wide enough here to hold both of us," he said in a quiet voice. "I'm going to reach out my ax. Don't move until you're sure you have a grip on it. When I pull, jump.

"He searched the wall behind him and found a hold for his left hand. Then he slowly extended his ice ax, head foremost, until it was within two feet of

Osborn's shoulder.

"Grip it!" he cried suddenly. Osborn's hands shot out and seized the ax. "Jump!"

There was a flash of steel in the sunlight and a hunched figure hurtled inward from the snow to the ledge. Simultaneously another figure hurtled out. The haft of the ax jerked suddenly from Nace's hand, and he lurched forward and downward. A violent, sickening spasm convulsed my body as the rope went taut. Then it was gone. Nace did not seem to hit the snow; he simply disappeared through it, soundlessly. In the same instant the snow itself was gone. The frayed, yellow end of broken rope spun lazily in space.

Somehow my eyes went to Osborn. He was crouched on the ledge where Nace had been a moment before, staring dully at the ax he held in his hands. Beyond his head, not two hundred feet above, the white, untrodden pinnacle of K3 stabbed the sky.

Perhaps ten minutes passed, perhaps a half hour. I closed my eyes and leaned forward motionless against the rock, my face against my arm. I neither thought nor felt; my body and mind alike were enveloped in a suffocating numbness. Through it at last came the sound of Osborn moving. Looking up, I saw he was standing beside me.

"I'm going to try to make the top," he said tonelessly.

I merely stared at him.

"Will you come?"

I shook my head slowly. Osborn hesitated a moment, then turned and began slowly climbing the steep chimney above us. Halfway up he paused, struggling for breath. Then he resumed his laborious upward. progress and presently disappeared beyond the crest.

I stayed where I was, and the hours passed. The sun

reached its zenith above the peak and sloped away behind it. And at last I heard above me the sound of Osborn returning. As I looked up, his figure appeared at the top of the chimney and began the descent. His clothing was in tatters, and I could tell from his movements that only the thin flame of his will stood between him and collapse. In another few minutes he was standing beside me.

"Did you get there?" I asked. He shook his head slowly. "I couldn't make it," he answered. "I didn't have what it takes.

"We roped together silently and began the descent to the camp. There is nothing more to be told of the sixth assault on K3 at least not from the experiences of the men who made it. Osborn and I reached Camp V in safety, and three days later the entire expedition gathered at the advance base. It was decided, in view of the appalling tragedy that had occurred, to make no further attempt on the summit, and we began the evacuation of the mountain.

It remained for another year and other men to reveal the epilogue.

The summer following our attempt a combined English Swiss expedition stormed the peak successfully. After weeks of hardship and struggle, they attained the topmost pinnacle of the giant, only to find that what should have been their great moment of triumph was, instead, a moment of the bitterest disappointment. For when they came out at last upon the summit, they saw that they were not the first. An ax stood there. Its haft was embedded in rock and ice, and on its steel head were the engraved words: TO MARTIN FROM JOHN.

They were sporting men. On their return to civilization they told their story, and the name of the conqueror of K3 was made known to the world.

THE SCARLET LETTER
Jean Stafford

I knew from the beginning that Virgil Meade was crazy, but I didn't know he was a crook until it was too late and he had got me into a fine how do you do that might have altered the whole course of my life. I mean I might have killed him and either gone to the gallows or spent the rest of my natural days in the pen.

Virgil unofficially became my fellow when he put a big valentine in the box for me. At first I was sorely affronted because it was a very insulting comic one he had made himself when you opened it up, there was the outline of a huge foot on each page and underneath it said, "All policemen have big feet but Emily Vanderpool's got them beat" Moreover, he had signed it so there would be no doubt in my mind who was trying to hurt my feelings. I couldn't decide whether to write him a poison pen letter beginning "Dear (oh yeah?) Four Eyes" or to beat him on the head with an Indian club But then I discovered that he had written "s.W.A.K." on the back of the envelope and I knew what that stood for because my sister Stella, who was popular and was therefore up on codes and alang, had told me, "Sealed With a Kiss." Ordinarily such mushiness would have made me go ahead and write the letter or take out after him with the Indian club; but it so happened that at that particular time I didn't have a friend to my name, having fought with everyone I knew and the painful truth was that Virgil's valentine was positively the

only one I got that year except for a dinky little paper daily thingall bumpy with homemade paste, from my baby sister, Tess. And besides being all alone in the world, I was a good deal impressed by Virgil because he was as clever as a monkey on the parallel bars (the way he skinned the cat was something) and I had heard that at the age of eleven he already had a wisdom tooth, a rumor that seemed somehow the more likely because his father was a dentist. And so, on second thought, although he had insulted me and although he wore glasses (a stigma far more damning than the biggest clodhoppers in the world) I decided that he was better than nobody and I looked across the room at him-He was staring moodily out the window at the icicles, cracking his knuckles to the tune of "Shave and a Haircut." To attract his attention I cracked mine in harmony, and he turned around and smiled at me. He had a nice smile, rather crooked and wry, and I liked his pert pug nose and the way his shiny black hair came to a neat widow's peak in the exact middle of his forehead. We kept up our antiphony for about a minute and then Miss Holderness heard us and looked up from the valentine box she had been grubbing in. Her snappish brown eyes went darting around the room as, in her ever irascible voice, she cried, "Valentine's Day or no Valentine's Day, I decidedly will not tolerate any levity in this class. Who is making that barbarous noise?" She pushed up the paper cuffs that protected the sleeves of her tan challis dress and glared. There was one of those weighty, stifling silences in which everyone held his breath, everyone feeling accused and everyone feeling guilty. Finally, unable to single out any faces that looked more blame worthy than any others, she had to give up with the threat, "If there is ever again any knuckle cracking in this class, the miscreant will go straight to Mr. Colby for his or her punishment. I have reiterated ad infinitum' that levity is out of place in the sixth grade." (Miss Holderness abhorred children and

horred children and making me sing a scale by myself, she put her fingers in her ears and she said, “I have never heard such cacophony. Try it again, Emily, and this time endeavor not to agonize my Eustachian tube.” To get even with her I read the dictionary that night and the next day asked her what “palimpsest” meant, but she outsmarted me by congratulating me on my intellectual curiosity and asking me to go to the Unabridged and read the definition out loud to the class. Everyone, including Miss Holderness, was baffled.) Virgil and I looked at each other again and grinned, and when Miss Holderness had bent her head once more to the valentine box he stuck out his tongue and thumbed his nose. This demoralized everybody in his immediate vicinity and a general giggle began like a gale Luckily, all the valentines had been handed out and the bell rang and Miss Holderness dismissed us with a look of hatred. A humorist, especially an anti-teacher one, enjoys great prestige in grammar school, and the more I thought about it, the moreI was sure I would realize considerable benefit in being associated with Virgil My own status was at present so low, by reason of my many quarrels, that I could not possibly elevate it by myself and very quickly I began to look on Virgil as the savior who would raise me from my ignominy. Little did I dream that that wily boy had a long range plan to Ruin me.

As we were putting on our galoshes, Virgil asked if he could walk me home, thereby proving that his intentions were serious. I shrugged my shoulders and said, “Suit yourself. It’s a free country.” I may have sounded nonchalant, but actually I was already afire with that puzzling, unnamable feeling that had preceded each of my betrothals since the age of five (I was a roughneck, fond of Indian wrestling and addicted to swearing, but I was vulnerable to love and the lacunae between my romances were melancholy); my throat and eyes were hot, my stom-

ach was uneasy, my brains tick tocked like an Ingersoll and some of my bones felt as if they were coming loose. As we were leaving the schoolyard, a two legged rat, a former friend of mine in fact, he was Virgil's predecessor, with whom once upon a time I had planned to grow old gracefully Dicky Scott, saw us and yelled, "Red and yella, kiss your fella! You'll be sorry-Spees! Vanderloop the loop's a dizzy old doughhead!" Virgil put his books and his lunch box down on the stone wall and before you could say "Knife" he had made a good hard snowball and caught Dicky on the chin, surprising him so that he just stood there gaping and making no attempt to retaliate. Several other children who had witnessed the episode called"Atta boy, Meade!" and "You tell em, partner!" Nobody had anything against Dicky it was simply that in our savage society it was de rigueur to applaud whoever cast the first stoneI was gratified that my honor had been so swiftly and brilliantly defended and I seemed to sense that my stock was going up among the spectators. Indeed, Ruby Miller, who had not spoken to me for two weeks after an altercation over the ownership of a roller skate key (it belonged to her but I was too proud to admit it when I found that out), came up and said, "Will you come to my birthday party on the twenty first of July? I'm going to wear silk stockings."

Virgil and I walked home in total silence. Sometimes, in unspoken agreement, we walked stiff legged; sometimes we left the cleared path and scuffed through the snow up to our kneesIn the last block we broad jumped from crack to crack in the sidewalk. Nobody was home at my house and I was glad of that because I wanted our first interview to be conducted without any interference from Mother (who had some crazy ideathat kids liked to be asked such questions as "Have your folks taken up the new contract bridge that's all the rage?" or "What does your mother think about taking off the interurban and

running buses to Denver T") or from Jack and Stella, who loved to tease me about my suitorsI made some sandwiches for Virgil and me of peanut butter and piccalilli and may onnaise and Virgil said it was better than eating a fried chicken dinner. I told him to go on this was the standart after school sandwich in every house in Adams I'd ever been in but he said he'd never eaten one before and he asked if he could have an other "Pardon me for living, girl, but can I have seconds?" He used this expression, "Pardon me for living," to precede almost everything he said, and although I didn't know exactly what it meant, it sounded sporty and I filed it away to spring on my family as soon as I could When we had eaten we went into the living room and Virgil told me some riddles and jokes he had learned from his father, who was in great demand as the end man for minstrel shows at the B.P.O.E. One riddle was "What's black and white and red all over?" and the answer was not "A newspaper" but "A blushing sebra." Another was "Why is the Statue of Liberty's hand eleven inches long?" The answer was that if it were twelve inches it would be a foot. He taught me several Mr. Tambo Mr. Bones dialogues and we decided that when it got warmer we would put on a show in his father's garage. His father, he said, had the latest thing in make up kits grease paint, false noses, funny whiskers.

Then we talked about what we were going to do when we grew up; it was a romantic coincidence that I was going to be an organist in a movie house and Virgil was going to be an usher, and we both planned to follow our calling in a big city, Omaha, perhaps, or Chicago Virgil and I had a great deal in common; we both walked in our sleep and had often waked up just before we fell out of the window or down the stairs; both of us loved puzzles and card games and the two things in the world we really detested were Sunday school (Virgil said in so many words that he didn't believe in God) and geography

homework."Down with the blankety blank principal exports of the Malay Archipelago," said this articulate and forth right boy. "Gutta percha don't make me laugh."

"Tell the class all you know about the Hottentots," I said, imitating Miss Holderness, and Virgil got up and stood on his head, putting his feet against the wall. Upside down he said, "The Hottentots eat gutta percha out of the gutta percha nose bags and they teach their grandmothers how to suck eggs.

Reddie, the dog, came padding in and looked at Virgil for a long time and then he yawned and padded out again. After that, Muff, the cat, came in to give Virgil the once over Virgil righted himself and waved his hands madly at Muffwho walked out of the room slowly, twitching her tail with disgust. Virgil said, "If there's one thing I can't stand it's to have an animal rubberneck at me. Especially cows Pardon me for living if a cow rubbernecks at me, I sock it right on the snoot," and he went on to tell me how he showed who was boss when hewent to visit at his uncle's ranch on the western slope. There was a cow named Hildy that he had pasted in the beezer more than once and there was also a gawking billy goat that he had given a good lesson toI was thrilled to think of this brave gladiator striding through pastures wallop ing cows that gave him the eye and when he said, "I'm about the only man in this town that can make those mangy old burros of Mr Hodge's turn off their headlights," I was bowled over with admiration and I exclaimed, "Boy you're the only man I ever heard of that can do it" Virgil promised that some day soon he would take me up to Mr. Hodge's ratty shack on the mesa and show me how he could make the little donkeys "see stars instead of yours truly." The fact was that I dearly loved those little animals, Pearl and Princess, and whenever Jack and I got a quarter saved up we hired them from Mr. Hodge and rode them all over town.

And here, out of blinding rapture, I was accepting an invitation to watch Virgil mistreat them.

He made a general survey of the living room. He picked the Bible up off the library table and said"Phooey," and then he began to examine the Civil War saber that had belonged to a bounty jumping relative" on my mother's side. He unsheathed it and hefted it and he said thoughtfully"This may come in handy sometime."

After a pause he said, "Pardon me for living, girl, can I have another one of those keen sandwiches?" While he ate it Reddie came out to the kitchen to watch him with his big heart broken hungry eyes and Virgil alapped him on the nose"You heard me, you good for nothing scalawag." he said. "Don't you look at me and my sandwich with your googly googly eyes." Reddie, the meekest thing in the world, looked as if he were going to cry, and when I, disloyal to my nice old dog because I was in love with this blood thirsty swashbuckler, laughed, he cringed and slunk out of the room, and for the rest of the afternoon he lay under the china closet in the dining room with his head between his paws.

Virgil pardoned himself for living again and again asked for a sandwich. When he was finally satisfied and we went back to the living room he told me a sad story that explained why he was so hungry. He said that at home they had nothing to eat but doughnuts. His mother made about a million of them on Sunday, enough to last a week, and every day they had doughnuts with maple sirup for breakfast. These she called "doughnut waffles"; for supper she put ketchup on them and called them "doughnut meatballs" or "doughnut roast." "Doughnut surprise" had canned salmon and peas in the doughnut hole and it was awful. At one of the sanitariums in our town the food was all made of cereal; the cranky old valetudinarians ate things like "Grape Nut cutlet" and "Corn Flake loaf," a bill of fare that

never ceased to amaze and sadden my mother, who occasionally had lunch there with a friend of my grandmother's. So I got the idea that Mrs. Meade was some sort of invalid and I thought it was cruelly unfair that everybody in her family willy nilly had to follow her diet. But after a while I realized that Virgil was only telling lies because he went on to say that the reason they only had dough nuts was that his mother had bats in the belfry and spent all her time, when she should have been cooking for her growing children, collectingcold cream jars in the alleys and on the dump. She caught the bats in her belfry in the cold cream jars, screwed the lids down tight and sent them by post to her nutty twin sister in Boise who was named Aunt Dandelion. Aunt Dandelion! Did he really think I was dumb enough to believe a name like that?

This is what I mean about Virgil being crazy. One time he told me that he had been kidnaped by a runaway convict from Canon City named Ben the Red Beard. The desperado, who had murdered hundreds and permanently crippled many more with his six shooter, handcuffed Virgil and took him up to a shack in the mountains and kept him there for three days. On the third night, after the man was asleep, Virgil managed to crawl over to the grocery supplies and he ate three big onions; then he crawled back to the cot where Ben the Red Beard was snoring away and breathed into his face until the kidnaper, undone by the fumes, took off the handcuffs and Virgil was free. He had walked all the way home in the dark, a distance of twenty-two miles, and it was seventeen below zero. When I asked him why his family hadn't sent out a posse for him, he said, "I go away for three or four days at a time by myself without telling them and they don't mind I mean, if they did mind, I'd tell them where to get off. I go deer hunting, you see. Last year, I got an eight point buck up by the glacier but I gave it away to some bootleggers I knowAnd now and then I hop a rattler and go down to

Denver and hang around Larimer Street playing pool for two or three days."

Virgil left long before anyone came home, but there were traces of him everywhere. When he had stood on his head he had left two precise footprints on the white wall; his voracity had done away with most of the bread and all of the peanut butter; Reddie was still grieving and Mother, thinking he was sick, wanted to call the vet. Naturally I couldn't take the blame for all these things and had to let the cat out of the bag. When I told Mother why Reddie was so woebegone, she was at first too shocked to speak and then she said, "Emily, no good will ever come of this friendshipyou mark my words." Would that I had! I tried to make up with Reddie but Jack snarled, "You stay away from him," and Stella, weeping, implored Mother to send me away, any where, so that she would never again have to lay eyes on a dastardly tormentor of man's best friendI was chastened, but I had no intention of giving up Virgil and thereafter we had our sandwiches at his house. They were usually made of peanut butter, mayonnaise and piccalilli I never saw a single doughnut in his house and the smells in his mother's kitchen were perfectly delicious. I had been right about one thing: though my family might deplore my new alliance, the other kids looked on it with envy because

Virgil and I were always whispering and passing notes in school and we refused to play or even talk with any one else. Dicky Scott one day offered me an arrowhead and I haughtily refused I might have accepted it but I happened to know, because Dicky himself had one time unwisely told me, that it was spurious.Virgil and I were together every afternoon except on ballet day. Sometimes we coasted and sometimes we made lists (of kinds of automobiles, of three letter words, of the movies we had seen)but usually we just sat in his father's den and talked I loved this dark and crowded

room that smelled of cigars and furniture polish, and I wished that my own father had a room of his ownThe walls were hung with all sorts of documents in frames, diplomas, certificates of membership in dental and social and religious societies; there was a serape with a bird and a snake on it; there was a tomahawk, a collection of minerals, an Indian headdress that Virgil said had once belonged to King Philip." On the roll top desk, whose pigeon holes were so stuffed that nothing could ever be inserted in any of them, there was an enormous typewriter that had eight banks, three for the uppercase letters, three for the lower and two for the charactersWhen we used it, as we often did (wrote our names, wrote "Down with Miss Holderness"), it sounded like a small tractor and its bell was like one on a trolley car. Here, seated in leather armchairs, we were continually eyed by Virgil's dog, a His Master's Voice dog, who lay on a deerskin rug. We discussed our many projects. For one thing, we planned to make a trip in the summer with a wagon and horses up to a mine where Virgil knew that a lot of pieces of eight" were buried; this involved making lists of what we would take and we wrote out a long order to Montgomery Ward Virgil said the money would turn up some how. Then there was the minstrel show we were going to put on and wehad to rehearse our acts.

More immediately, though, what we talked about was a plan we had to draw up a petition against geography homework, which was really ruining our lives and the lives of everybody else in the sixth grade. At least three thousand years ago Miss Holderness had gone around the world with some other old maids and she never stopped bragging about rice paddies and rickshas and the Yangtze and Big Ben. She was forever passing around pale brown picture post cards that showed camels, Norwegian fish eries and the Victoria and Albert Museum; she showed us a little bottle with water from the Jordan and an ordinary pebble she had picked up in the neigh-

borhood of the Taj Mahal". Every blessed night of the world we had to get something by heart the chief rivers of Asia, the capitals of the Isles of Greece, European mountain ranges, famous monuments in Rome and the next day she would either give us a paper test or would single out some poor kid to recite, and it seemed to Virgil and me that the poor kid was always one of us. We had to make relief maps with salt and flour and each. Friday afternoon during the last period, when we were all wild with fidgets, she made us draw a map of the United States from memory; to this day I don't know whether Delaware is on the left hand side of Maryland or the right, and I can never find room for Vermont. Talk about a one track mind.

One friday afternoon she told us that by Monday we would have to know all the counties of England, and Virgil and I decided that this was the limit and the time had come for us to act. I had intended to depart from custom that afternoon and go straight home, because that morning at Assembly I had won a school letter for collateral reading and I wanted to sew it on the sleeve of my middy right away, but Virgil said, "Pardon me for living, girl, haven't you got any class spirit? Do you know that this geography junk may keep us in the sixth-grade for eighty nine years?" He said we had no time to lose, that everybody was now so mad at Holderness (hadn't I heard the whole room groan?) that we'd have no trouble getting signatures for our petition. We must draw it up this afternoon and then spend tomorrow going from door to door getting people to sign. "In ink," said Virgil. "This has gotta be official with no ifs and buts about it". And so, ever his slave, I went along home with him

I want to say something about that afternoon that isn't related to the Mutiny of the Sixth Grade of Carlyle Hill but will show you the kind of looniness Virgil was capable of. His mother wasn't home that day so Virgil

made the sandwiches. He couldn't find the peanut butter but he said for me not to look and he would make a surprise. I'll say he made a surprise. He made those sandwiches of Camp bell's vegetable soup and I'm not kidding. I was eating this stuff and I couldn't tell for the life of me what it was; it didn't taste bad but it felt funny, so I surreptitiously turned my back and lifted up the top slice of bread and there I saw a lima bean. And then I saw the empty can on the drainboard.

After the soup sandwiches and after one game of Shasta Sam, we got down to work in the den. Among Dr. Meade's framed testimonials there was a bounty land grant awarded to Virgil's Great Uncle Harry, who had fought at Murfreesboro" It was signed by Abraham Lincoln, and Virgil, taking it down and handing it to me, said it was worth several million dollars. (If all the things in the Meades' house had had the value Virgil assigned to them, Dr. Meade could have retired and bought the Teapot Dome.") We would use it, said Virgil, as the model for our petition because it had a high and mighty tone and high and mighty was what we were going to be from now on. Virgil typed while I dictated, paraphrasing the land grant. It was uphill work because every key stuck and the s wouldn't budge at all so that had to be filled in later with ink. But when we were finished we were pleased with the results, although there were mistakes abounding. The petition (more properly, the declaration) read:

HTE SIXTH GRADEO%F CRa

LYLE HILL

SCHOOL OF ADAMSTO?

ALLTTO

ALL TI WHOM THESE

PRESENTS SHALL COME 1/4 GREETING WHEREAS, in persuace of the act of Ggeography Ha Enemys,

approved March 2, 1926, entitled
an Act to Stop Geography
Homewoork, the undersigned
people will not do any more
Geograph HomeWork because it
is not fair to give t so much of it.

We left a space for the signatures and then:

NOW NOW YE, that there is
therefore granted by the
Surveyor General of this class
unto the said undersigned the
privelege tto have and to hold, of
NO MORE Geography
HOMEWORK AND TO their
heirs the privelege above
described with the
apuurtenances therefo.
WHEREOF 1,have caused
these letters to be made patent
and affixed my signature thereto.

Abraham Lincoln's name was after the "WHEREOF 1" and we debated what to write there. We thought it would look wrong to say "WHEREOF WE" and sign both our names and at last Virgil gallantly said that my name should be there because I now had a school letter and this gave me a status he didn't have. He said I should be the one, too, to hand it to Miss Holderness and he suggested that on Monday morning I carry Mother's Civil War saber to school, not to intimidate Miss Holderness but to carry out the motif of the Civil War. He rather regretfully rejected King Philip's headdress as an anachronism.

He said, “Boy, oh, boy, can I see old Prune Face when you march intothe room with the sword and say, ‘Madam, allow me to present these presents,’ and you hand her this!”

A flicker of trepidation entered my infatuated mind and I said, “What if she sends me to Mr. Colby and I get expelled?” “She’d have to send the whole class everybody’s name will be there. Pardon me for living, girl, you’re not by any chance getting cold feet? Because if you are well, you know how I feel about cowards. I wouldn’t be seen at a dog fight with a coward.”I blushed and hastily said that of course I wasn’t getting cold feet, what was there to get cold feet about as he had said, if anybody had to go to Mr. Colby, we’d all have to go. Any how, Holderness wouldn’t have any right to punish us since we were protected by freedom of speech. Reassured that I was stout hearted, Virgil smiled his crooked smile and began to tinker with the petition, putting in the absent s’s and filling in the o’s. When he had finished he handed me the scratchy pen and said, “Here, put your John Hancock here on the dotted line.” When I had signed the pen went through the paper a couple of times and a big blob of ink floated like a rain cloud over my surname I was both scared and proud and had a stomach sensation that was half pleasant and half terrible. I was by no means sure that freedom of speech would cover our action; I was by no means sure that a petition of this sort was not against the law, and to distract my thought from the possible consequences of our daring I took my red felt C out of my book bag and held it up to my sleeve.

Virgil said, “Listen, Emily, you know what? Why don’t you sew it on some place else? Some place different? So you’ll be different from the common herd?”

“Like on my back?” I asked. “You mean like an athlete?”

"No, I was thinking of like on your sock."

"My sock!" I yelled. "Have you gone cuckoo?" But I rather liked the idea and I placed the letter experimentally on the outside of my right leg about in the middle of my shank. The bright red looked very striking against my navy blue knee length sock, sort of like a cattle brand.

"Higher," said Virgil critically. "Yeah, right there. Hey, that's the pig's wings."

Well, I don' know..." I began doubtfully, for on reconsideration it seemed to me that the letter would be more conspicuous on my sleeve. But Virgil said, "I double dare you," and that, of course, was that; I went home and blanket stitched the scarlet letter on my sock. That eveningwhen I went into the dining room and my family saw what I had done, they all began to fuss at me. My mother, who was active in the P.T.A., said, "Why, Emily, do you think that's a nice thing to do when Miss Holderness was so nice to give you that letter?"

"Miss Holderness was so nice! What did that dopey old goop have to do with it?" I demanded. "I suppose she read all those books and wrote all those reports. I'll have you know I earned this letter. And anyhow the school gave it to me."

"Well, then, the school was nice," said mother, missing the point as usual. "Oh, Emily, why must you forever and a day be so contrary?"

"Because she's a scurvy rap scallion black sheep," said Jack, who had barely spoken to me since Virgil had upset Reddie.

"Baa, baa, black sheep, Emily's a black sheep," chanted copycat Tess and began to bubble her milk.

"Shut up, you little wart hog," I said to her and she did, terrified.

"Miss Holderness is not a dopey old goop," said Stella, who was sanctimonious and stood up for author-

ity of all kinds. "She's a lady which is something you're never going to be in a thousand million years."

"Lady! Who wants to be a lady?" I said. "You make me sick." I made a sound of intense nausea and then I said, "Hasten, Jason, bring the basin. Ulp! Too late! Bring the mop!"

My father put down his napkin and faced me with his chin out thrust. "Now you listen to me, Emily Vanderpool. I've had just about enough of your shenanigans. I will not have bad language at my supper table and I will not have wrangling, do you hear me? I'm a hard working man and when I come home at night, I'm tired and I want peace and quiet instead of this eternal confounded trouble you're always stirring up."

The unfairness of his attack brought tears to my eyes. Had anyone in the history of the world ever been so lamentably misunderstood? My voice was quivery as I said, "I didn't start it. Everybody started picking on me about my own personal property, damn it to hell!"

"What did I say about bad language?" he shouted, rising men achingly from his chair.

The devil at that moment made a conquest of my tongue and, blue in the face with fury, my eyes screwed shut, my fists clenched, I delivered a malediction in the roughest billings gate imaginable, vilifying everyone at the table, all the teachers at Car lyle Hill, my uncles and aunts and cousins, my father's best friend, Judge Bay. The reaction was the same as it always was to one of my tantrums: appalled, fascinated, dead silence. When I was finished Jack, awed, said, "Yippikiyi! That was a humdinger of a one!" I threw my glass of water in his face and stamped out of the room.

That was the last that was said at home about my school letter and when Stella came into the room we shared, she was at pains not to cross the chalk line I

had drawn down the middle of the floor and not to speak to me; if she had uttered one word, on any subject whatsoever, I would have beaten the hide off her.

The next day a blizzard somewhat hampered Virgil and me in our house to house canvass. Most people were at home because the wind made it uncomfortable coasting weather, and though this meant that they were easy to find (and so bored that they were delighted to see us), it also meant that there were a lot of nosy mothers around, asking questions and trying to distract us from our mission by inviting us to make popcorn or taffy. We had very little respect for the intelligence of these snoops, but we didn't want to run the risk of hav ing some one of them call up Miss Holderness and spill the beans, and so we had to dally in a number of houses and pretend we had just come to pay a social call. We got stuck in Valerie Bemis' house for nearly an hour while her mother showed views of Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon through a stereop ticon.

To our considerable surprise and disappointment, we found that several of our classmates were partisans of Miss Holderness (Estelle Powell, for instance, said she loved our teacher because she smelled so wonderful), and we found, furthermore, that the phobia for geography homework was not, after all, universal. Indeed, six or seven stick in the muds said they liked it better than anything else and they refused to sign the petition. Ruby Miller admitted that she agreed with us, but she had already learned the English counties and didn't want them to go to waste, so she too refused to sign. This schism disturbed us, but all the same, at the end of the day, we had a majority of seventeen names. It was dark by the time we left the last house and the street lights had come on. Under a light beside a mailbox we paused in the whirling snow and Virgil solemnly put the petition in

a long envelope, solemnly handed it to me and solemnly said, "Pardon me for living, girl, but this will probably get us into the Hall of Fame. Good luck." And with this he started off in the direction of his house, his dramatic shadow long and lean beside him.

When the sixth grade got into line on Monday morning there was an undercurrent of great excitement and everybody was looking at me; there were gasps from those who caught sight of the honor badge on my leg; there were uneasy whispers about my Civil War saber, which was imperfectly hidden under my coat. Someone murmured in my ear, "Scratch out my name, Emily, please?" and someone else said, "Looky, if you're going to kill her, I don't want to have anything to do with it." I glared fiercely but I didn't feel fierce; I felt foolish and scared because Virgil Meade was nowhere to be seen.

The soft exclamations of incredulity and fear continued as we marched into the building and hung up our wraps, and even after we had said, "Good morning, Miss Holderness," and had sat down, there was still a faint buzzing and thrumming like noises in the grass on a summer day.

"Quiet, please!" said Miss Holderness and clapped her hands smartly. "What is the meaning of this deafening pandemonium?"

There was immediate silence and then Johnny Thatcher, who had not. signed the petition, held up his hand and giggled and said, "Emily has something to show you, teacher."

"I see Emily's sword," said Miss Holderness. I had tried to put it under my desk but it stuck out into the aisles on each side. "And I think we will simply ignore it. We do not know why she brought it to school and we do not care to know."

Johnny Thatcher said, "No, I don't mean that. She's got something else to show you. Something about

geography homework."

"Very well, Emily," said the teacher, snapping her fingers andsnapping her eyes. "Show me what it is. We cannot spend the entire day on the subject of Emily Vanderpool's tricks to attract attention to herself. Come along, Emily, quickly, quickly!"

"I haven't got anything," I stammered.

"You have too," said Johnny.

Everyone began to babble at once and Miss Holderness angrily rapped her desk with her ruler. "I have a good mind to punish everyone in this class," she said. "Emily, I want you to show me whatever this is at once."

Reluctant, furious, I stumbled up to the desk andput the petition down in front of her. She gave me a black look and then she opened the envelope; as she read, moving her lips, her color rose until she looked like an apple.

"So!" she cried. "So Miss Emily Vanderpool is now known as 'the surveyor general of this class.' I was not aware that elections had been held and she had been voted into office."

Everyone tittered.

"I…" I began, but Miss Holder ness held up her hand for silence.

"Now let me see," she said and began checking the names on the petition against those in the class book. There was a pause and every heart beat wildly. Then she said, "Ruby, Estelle, Homer, Johnny, Marjorie and Virgil these are the children who are still loyal to Carlyle Hill Grade School and have not kow towed to this self-styled surveyor general. Children, I congratulate you."

"Virgil!" I cried. "But Virgil..." Then, because I did not want to be a tattletale, even against that foxy four-flusher, I held my peace.

"What about Virgil?" asked Miss Holderness. "I am

sorry that Virgil is absent today, for I would like him to know how deeply I appreciate his refusing to affix his signature to this outrageous scrap of paper. Shame on you, Emily Vanderpool, shame on you!"

She looked me up and down with revulsion as if I were a reptile or a skunk and suddenly she saw the school letter on my sock. She gaped, speechless, and then said, "Ruby, I shall leave you in charge of the class. Emily and I have some business to transact in Mr. Colby's office."

That was a long last mile[17] I walked. I thought sadly and enviously of all the children behind the closed doors who would continue their lives of ease and respectability while I was working on a mason gang at the reform school. All my sensations were intense: the smell of cedar shavings was stronger than ever and the smell of wet Mackinaws and overshoes (overshoes are made of guttapercha, I thought sorrowfully, homesick for the principal exports of the Malay Archipelago, and the sounds of teachers' voices and the thud of feet and balls in the gym below and the piping squeals from the kindergarten room were like a loud song of farewell to me. Miss Holder ness' hand, grasping my arm, was a cruel metal claw.

Mr. Colby was an asthmatic old man with a purple veined nose and a sorrel toupee. He had very short legs but he had strong, broad shoul ders and sitting behind his magis terial desk he looked like a giant. His two bluebell blue eyes were on quite different levels, giving him a quizzical and half amused look as if he were trying to figure out a joke he didn't entirely understand. He was playing with a sharp letter opener when we came into his office, flicking the point with his index finger as he made half revolutions in his swivel chair. He invited Miss Holderness to sit down and with the letter opener indicated the place where I was to stand, directly in front of his desk. Several times in the course

of my teacher's indignant recital of my felonies he swiveled himself completely around so that his back was to us and he coughed and wheeze dit sounded like strangled laughter. When he leaned over his desk to look at my shameful leg he had such a seizure that he had to bury his face in his handkerchief, and when he read the petition I thought he was going to explode. After the case against me had been stated, Mr. Colby told Miss Holderness to go back to her class and said that he would deal with me himself.

"Now, Emily," he said when she was gone, "there is no doubt about the gravity of your misdemeanors ... incidentally, why did you bring a sword to school?"

"Well, it's a Civil War one and Vir… I mean it's a Civil War one and since the petition was a Civil War thing..."

"A Civil War thing? What sort of thing?"

"Just a thing. I don't know what you call it. But where my name is is really Abraham Lincoln's name."

He wheeled his chair around again and he wheezed for quite some time. "The name of Emily Vanderpool has been substituted for that of Honest Abe," he said at length. "The case grows stranger. I confess to a certain amount of confusion. I can't seem to see the tiein with the sword, the petition, and your putting your school letter on your stocking, a gesture tantamount, as Miss Holderness so aptly put it, to dragging the Star Spangled Banner in the dirt. Can you help me out? "Mr. Colby's voice, though firm, was kind and his funny eyes were sweet and though my legs were buckling and my heart thundered, I longed to tell him the whole truth. But naturally I could not without involving Virgil and I said only, as mad murderers often do, "I don't know why I did it."He picked up the petition again and this time I thought he was really going to fly apart. He threw back his head so far I thought his toupee would surely fall off

and he coughed and wheezed and gurgled fearsomely. "You'll be the death of me!" he howled and I thought I really would be. He groped, blinded with tears, for a bottle of pills and a carafe of water, and when he had dosed himself and straightened his vest and put on a pair of severe spectacles he gave me & sober lecture on the value of geography and the sin of insubordination, the inadvisability of carrying arms, the folly of arrogating power, the extreme impropriety of wearing an honor badge on the leg. Finally he told me to go back to my room and apologize to Miss Holderness and then to go home for the rest of the day and explain to my mother exactly why I was in disgrace. When I had closed the door behind me I heard him having another attack and I knew that it would be the gallows for me if he died. For the next two weeks I was in double dishonor. Miss Holderness made me stay after school every day and write lists of rivers and cities and principal exports. I had to go home immediately thereafter and stay in my room with the door closed until suppertime. Jack and Stella did not speak one word to me. During those weeks I was not allowed to wear my letter even in its proper place. The sixth grade got more geography homework than ever and consequently I was sent to Coventry by all my classmates 18. I crept around like a sick dog and wished I were dead. At first the namby pamby boobs in my grade took Virgil's side against me even though they knew good and well that I could have got him in Dutch too if I had snitched. They all knew, of course, that he had been just as responsible for the petition as I, but they did not know that he had put me up to sewing the C on my sock and it was this act of insolence to dear old Carlyle Hill that they regarded as my cardinal crime. For the two weeks of my quarantine Virgil enjoyed an immense, ill gotten popularity, and I heard, with mixed feelings, that he was practically engaged to Ruby Miller. I did not deign to recognize his existence. And then, on the very day I was first all-

owed to wear my letter, silly Virgil tipped his hand. Ruby Miller told me during lunch hour. At morning recess she and he had been swapping bird cards out of Arm and Hammer Baking Soda boxes as I passed by. Ruby saw that I was wearing my letter again and asked Virgil why he thought I had done that awful thing. Ruby said, "Who would think of doing a thing like that?" and Virgil had said, "I'll tell you somebody who wouldn't and that's Vanderloop the loop she's too dumb. I told her to sew it on her leg."The news spread rapidly, whispered during Palmer Method," written on notes in Current Events, and by the end of the afternoon session I was in and Virgil was out. People came up to me singly and in groups to congratulate me on my nobility; some of them shook my hand. I accepted their acclaim with a wan and martyred smile, thanked them for their many invitations to visit their houses but said that I had to go home because I was reading the Bible. I remained aloof only that one day and the next day plunged into a social whirl. Virgil, as it was fitting, was totally ostracized. In time I took pity on him; indeed, some months later, we again became boon companions, but I saw to it that he never hood winked me again: I ruled him with an iron glove and after he had made one slip he never made another. The slip was this. We were walking home one day in the spring and he picked a leaf off a lilac bush. He said to me, "If you can divide this exactly in half, I'll give you a quarter." What could be easier than dividing a lilac leaf? The midrib is clear and the flesh is crisp, and I accomplished the feat in a second. "O.K., where's my quarter?" I said, and Virgil, tearing one of the halves of the leaf in two, handed me a piece. "Here's your quarter," he said and doubled up with laughter. I simply looked at him and then I turned and walked away. He came running after me, begging for mercy, reminding me of all the good times we'd had together. I marched on for two blocks, ignoring him, but then, at

a vacant lot, I stopped, climbed up on top of a boulder and told him to kneel on the ground. Then, like Moses on Mount Sinai, 20 I laid down the law, and ever after that Virgil Meade was the most tractable boon companion I had.

MATEO FALCONE
Prosper Merimee

On leaving Porto Vecchio from the northwest and directing his steps towards the interior of the island, the traveller will notice that the land rises rapidly, and after three hours' walking over tortuous paths obstructed by great masses of rock and sometimes cut by ravines, hewill find himself on the border of a great mâquis. The mâquis is the domain of the Corsican shepherds and of those who are at variance with justice. It must be known that, in order to save himself the trouble of manuring his field, the Corsican husbandman sets fire to a piece of woodland. If the flame spread farther than is necessary, so much the worse! In any case he is certain of a good crop from the land fertilized by the ashes of the trees which grow upon it. He gathers only the heads of his grain, leaving the straw, which it would be unnecessary labor to cut. In the following spring the roots that have remained in the earth without being destroyed send up their tufts of sprouts, which in a few years reach a height of seven or eight feet. It is this kind of tangled thicket thatis called a maquis. They are made up of different kinds of trees and shrubs, so crowded and mingled together at thecaprice of nature that only with an axe in hand can a man open a passage through them, and mâquis are frequently seen so thick and bushy that the wild sheep themselves cannot penetrate them.

If you have killed a man, go into the maquis of Porto Vecchio. With a good gun and plenty of powder and balls, you can live there in safety. Do not forget a Brown cloak furnished with a hood, which will serve you for both cover and mattress. The shepherds will give you chestnuts, milk and cheese, and you will have nothing to fear from justice nor the relatives of the dead except when it is necessary for you to descend to the city to replenish your ammunition.

When I was in Corsica in 18-, Mateo Falcone had his house half a league from this maquis. He was rich enough for that country, living in noble style that is to say, doing nothing on the income from his flocks, which the shepherds, who are a kind of nomads, lead to pasture here and there on the mountains. When I saw him, two years after the event that I am about to relate, he appeared to me to be about fifty years old or more. Picture to yourself a man, small but robust, with curly hair, black as jet, aquiline nose, thin lips, large, restless eyes, and a complexion the color of tanned leather. His skill as a marks man was considered extraordinary even in his country, where good shots are so common. For example, Mateo would never fire at a sheep with buckshot; but at a hundred and twenty paces, he would drop it with a ball in the head or shoulder, as he chose. He used his arms as easily at night as during the day. I was told this feat of his skill, which will, perhaps, seem impossible to those who have not travelled in Corsica. A lighted candle was placed at eighty paces, behind a paper transparency about the size of a plate. He would take aim, then the candle would be extinguished, and, at the end of a moment, in the most complete darkness, he would fire and hit the paper three times out of four.

With such a transcendent accomplishment, Mateo Falcone had acquired a great reputation. He was

said to be as good a friend as he was a dangerous enemy; accommodating and charitable, he lived at peace with all the world in the district of Porto Vecchio. But it is said of him that in Corte, where he had married his wife, he haddisembarrassed himself very vigorously of a rival who was considered as redoubtable in war as in love; at least,a certain gunshot which surprised this rival as he was shaving before a little mirror hung in his window was attributed to Mateo. The affair was smoothed over and Mateo was married. His wife Giuseppa ha…

THE TELL TALE HEART
Edgar Allan Poe

True! nervous-very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses- not destroyed- not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell. How, then, am I mad? Hearken! and observe how healthily how calmly I can tell you the whole story.

It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain; but once conceived, it haunted me day and night. Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! Yes, it was this! One of his eyes resembled that of a vulture a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees very gradually I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever.

Now this is the point. You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing. But you should have seen me. You should have seen how wisely I proceeded with what caution with what fore sight with what dissimulation I went to work! I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him. And every night, about midnight, I turned the latch of his door and opened it oh, so gently! And

then, when I had made an opening sufficient for my head, I put in a dark lantern, all closed, closed, so that no light shone out, and then I thrust in my head. Oh, you would have laughed to see how cunningly I thrust it in! I moved it slowly-very, very slowly, so that I might not disturb the old man's sleep. It took me an hour to place my whole head within the opening so far that I could see him as he lay upon his bed. Ha! would a madman have been so wise as this? And then, when my head was well in the room, I undid the lantern cautiously oh, so cautiously cautiously (for the hinges creaked) I undid it just so much that a single thin ray fell upon the vulture eye. And this I did for seven long nights -every night just at mid night- but I found the eye always closed; and so it was impossible to do the work; for it was not the old man who vexed me, but his Evil Eye. And every morning, when the day broke, I went boldly into the chamber, and spoke courageously to him, calling him by name in a hearty tone, and inquiring how he had passed the night. So you see he would have been a very profound old man, indeed, to suspect that every night, just at twelve, I looked in upon him while he slept.

Upon the eighth night I was more than usually cautious in opening the door. A watch's minute hand moves more quickly than did mine. Never before that night had I felt the extent of my own Powers of my sagacity. I could scarcely contain my feelings of triumph. To think that there I was, opening the door, little by little, and he not even to dream of my secret deeds or thoughts. I fairly chuckled at the idea; and perhaps he heard me; for he moved on the bed suddenly, as if startled. Now you may think that I drew back but no. His room was as black as pitch with the thick darkness (for the shutters were close fastened, through fear of robbers), and so I knew that he could not see the opening of the door, and I kept pushing it on steadily, steadily.

I had my head in, and was about to open the lantern, when my thumb slipped upon the tin fastening, and the old man sprang up in the bed, crying out "Who's there?"

I kept quite still and said nothing. For a whole hour I did not move a muscle, and in the meantime I did not hear him lie down. He was still sitting up in the bed listening just as I have done, night after night, hearkening to the death watches in the wall.

Presently I heard a slight groan, and I knew it was the groan of mortal terror. It was not a groan of pain or of grief -oh, no!- it was the low stifled sound that arises from the bottom of the soul when overcharged with awe. I knew the sound well. Many a night, just at midnight, when all the world slept, it has welled up from my own bosom, deepening, with its dreadful echo, the terrors that distracted me. I say I knew it well. I knew what the old man felt, and pitied him, although I chuckled at heart. I knew that he had been lying awake ever since the first slight noise, when he had turned in the bed. His fears had been ever since growing upon him. He had been trying to fancy them causeless, but could not. He had been saying to himself: "It is nothing but the wind in the chimney it is only a mouse crossing the floor," or "It is merely a cricket which has made a single chirp." Yes, he had been trying to comfort himself with these suppositions; but he had found all in vain. All in vain; because Death, in approaching him, had stalked with his black shadow before him, and enveloped the victim. And it was the mournful influence of the unperceived shadow that caused him to feel although he neither saw nor heard to feel the presence of my head within the room.

When I had waited a long time, very patiently, without hearing him lie down, I resolved to open a little a very, very little crevice in the lantern. So I opened it you cannot imagine how stealthily, stealthily

until, at length, a single dim ray, like the thread of the spider, shot from out the crevice and full upon the vulture eye. It was open wide, wide open and I grew furious as I gazed upon it. I saw it with perfect distinctness all a dull blue, with a hideous veil over it that chilled the very marrow in my bones; but I could see nothing else of the old man's face or person, for I had directed the ray as if by instinct, precisely upon the damned spot.

And now have I not told you that what you mistake for madness is but over-acuteness of the senses? now, I say, there came to my ears a low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I knew that sound well too. It was the beating of the old man's heart. It increased my fury, as the beating of a drum stimulates the soldier into courage.

But even yet I refrained and kept still. I scarcely breathed. I held the lantern motionless. I tried how steadily I could maintain the ray upon the eye. Meantime the hellish tattoo of the heart increased. It grew quicker and quicker, and louder and louder every instant. The old man's terror must have been extreme! It grew louder, I say, louder every moment! -do you mark me well? I have told you that I am nervous: so I am. And now at the dead hour of the night, amid the dreadful silence of that old house, so strange a noise as this excited me to uncontrollable terror. Yet, for some minutes longer I refrained and stood still. But the beating grew louder, louder! I thought the heart must burst. And now a new anxiety seized me the sound would be heard by a neighbor! The old man's hour had come! With a loud yell, I threw open the lantern and leaped into the room. He shrieked once - once only. In an instant I dragged him to the floor, and pulled the heavy bed over him. I then smiled gaily, to find the deed so far done. But, for many minutes, the heart beat on with a muffled sound. This, however, did not vex me; it would not be heard through the wall. At length it ceased. The old man was

dead. I removed the bed and examined the corpse. Yes, he was stone, stone dead. I placed my hand upon the heart and held it there many minutes. There was no pulsation. He was stone dead. His eye would trouble me no more.

If still you think me mad, you will think so no longer when I describe the wise precautions I took for the concealment of the body. The night waned, and I worked hastily, but in silence. First of all I dismembered the corpse. I cut off the head and the arms and the legs.

I then took up three planks from the flooring of the chamber, and deposited all between the scantlings. I then replaced the boards so cleverly, so cunningly, that no human eye -not even his- could have detected anything wrong. There was nothing to wash out no stain of any kind no blood-spot whatever. I had been too wary for that. A tub had caught all -ha! ha!

When I had made an end of these labors, it was four o'clock still dark as midnight. As the bell sounded the hour, there came a knocking at the street door. I went down to open it with a light heart for what had now to fear? There entered three men, who introduced themselves, with perfect suavity, as officers of the police. A shriek had been heard by a neighbor during the night; suspicion of foul play had been aroused; information had been lodged at the police office, and they (the officers) had been deputed to search the premises.

I smiled for what had I to fear? I bade the gentlemen welcome. The shriek, I said, was my own in a dream. The old man, I mentioned, was absent in the country. I took my visitors all over the house. I bade them search -search well. I led them, at length,to his chamber. I showed them his treasures, secure, undisturbed. In the enthusiasm of my confidence, I brought chairs into the room, and desired them here to rest from their fatigues, while I myself, in the wild audacity of my perfect triumph, placed my own seat

upon the very spot beneath which reposed the corpse of the victim. The officers were satisfied. My manner had convinced them. I was singularly at ease. They sat, and while I answered cheerily, they chatted of familiar things. But, ere long, I felt myself getting pale and wished them gone. My head ached, and I fancied a ringing in my ears: but still they sat and still chatted. The ringing became more distinct; it continued and became more distinct; I talked more freely to get rid of the feeling; but it continued and gained definitiveness until, at length, I found that the noise was not within my ears.

No doubt I now grew very pale but I talked more fluently, and with a heightened voice. Yet the sound increased and what could I do? It was a low, dull, quick sound much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I gasped for breath I and yet the officers heard it not. I talked more quickly more vehemently; but the noise steadily increased. I arose and argued about trifles, in a high key and with violent gesticulations, but the noise steadily increased. Why would they not be gone? I paced the floor to and fro with heavy strides, as if excited to fury by the observation of the men but the noise steadily increased. Oh, what could I do? I foamed I raved I swore! I swung the chair upon which I had been sitting, and grated it upon the boards, but the noise arose over all and continually increased. It grew louder louder louder! And still the men chatted pleasantly, and smiled. Was it possible they heard not? Almighty God! No, no! They heard! they suspected! they knew! they were making a mockery of my horror! this I thought, and this I think. But any thing was better than this agony! Anything was more tolerable than this derision! I could bear those hypocritical smiles no longer! I felt that I must scream or die! -and now again!- hark! louder! louder! louder! louder!

”Villains!” I shrieked, “dissemble no more! I admit the deed! tear up the planks! here, here! it is the beating of his hideous heart!”

DR. HEIDEGGER'S EXPERIMENT
Nathaniel Hawthorne

That very singular man, old Dr. Heidegger, once invited four venerable friends to meet him in his study. There were three White bearded-gentlemen, Mr. Medbourne, Colonel Killigrew, and Mr. Gascoigne, and a withered gentlewoman, whose name was the Widow Wycherly. They were all melancholy old creatures, who had been unfortunate in life, and whose greatest misfortune it was that they were not long ago in their graves. Mr. Medbourne, in the vigor of his age, had been a prosperous merchant, but had lost his all by a frantic speculation, and was now little better than a mendicant. Colonel Killigrew had wasted his best years, and his health and substance, in the pursuit of sinful pleasures, which had given birth to abrood of pains, such as the gout, and divers other torments of soul and body. Mr. Gascoigne was a ruined politician, a man of evil fame, or at least had been so till time had buried him from the knowledge of the present generation, and made him obscure instead of infamous. As for the Widow Wycherly, tradition tells us that she was a great beauty in her day; but, for a long while past, she had lived in deep seclusion, on account of certain scandalous stories which had prejudiced the gentry of the town against her. It is a circumstance worth mentioning that each of these three old gentlemen, Mr. Medbourne, Colonel Killigrew, and Mr. Gascoigne, were early lovers of the Widow

Wycherly, and had once been on the point of cutting each other's throats for her sake. And, before proceeding further, I will merely hint that Dr. Heidegger and all his four guests were sometimes thought to be a little beside themselves as is not unfrequently the case with old people, when worried either by present troubles or woeful recollections.

"My dear old friends," said Dr. Heidegger, motioning them to be seated, "I am desirous of your assistance in one of those little experiments with which I amuse myself here in my study.

"If all stories were true, Dr. Heidegger's study must have been a very curious place. It was a dim, old fashioned chamber, festooned with cobwebs, and besprinkled with antique dust. Around the walls stood several oaken bookcases, the lower shelves of which were filled with rows of gigantic folios and black letter quartos, and the upper with little parchment covered duodecimos. Over the central bookcase was a bronze bust of Hippocrates, with which according to some authorities, Dr. Heidegger was accustomed to hold consultations in all difficult cases of his practice. In the obscurest corner of the room stood a tall and narrow oaken closet, with its door ajar, within which doubtfully appeared a skeleton. Between two of the bookcases hung a looking glass, presenting its high and dusty plate within a tarnished gilt frame. Among many wonderful stories related of this mirror, it was fabled that the spirits of all the doctor's deceased patients dwelt within its verge, and would stare him in the face whenever he looked thitherward. The opposite side of the chamber was ornamented with the full-length portrait of a young lady, arrayed in the faded magnificence of silk, satin, and brocade, and with a visage as faded as her dress. Above half a century ago, Dr. Heidegger had been on the point of marriage with this young lady; but, being affected with some slight disorder, she had swallowed one of

her lover's prescriptions, and died on the bridal evening. The greatest curiosity of the study remains to be mentioned; it was a ponderous folio volume, bound in black leather, with massive silver clasps. There were no letters on the back, and nobody could tell the title of the book. But it was well known to be a book of magic; and once, when a chambermaid had lifted it, merely to brush away the dust, the skeleton had rattled in its closet, the picture of the young lady had stepped one foot upon the floor, and several ghastly faces had peeped forth from the mirror; while the brazen head of Hippocrates frowned, and said, "Forbear!"

Such was Dr. Heidegger's study. On the summer afternoon of our tale a small round table, as black as ebony, stood in the center of the room, sustaining a cut glass vase of beautiful form and elaborate workmanship. The sunshine came through the window between the heavy festoons of two faded damask curtains, and fell directly across this vase; so that a mild splendor was reflected from it on the ashen visages of the five old people who sat around. Four champagne glasses were also on the table.

"My dear old friends," repeated Dr. Heidegger, "may I reckon on your aid in performing an exceedingly curious experiment?"

Now Dr. Heidegger was a very strange old gentleman, whose eccentricity had become the nucleus for a thousand fantastic stories. Some of these fables, to my shame be it spoken, might possibly be traced back to my own veracious self; and if any passages of the present tale should startle the reader's faith, I must be content to bear the stigma of a fiction monger.

When the doctor's four guests heard him talk of his proposed experiment, they anticipated nothing more wonderful than the murder of a mouse in an air pump, or the examination of a cobweb by the microscope,

or some similar nonsense, with which he was constantly in the habit of pestering his intimates. But without waiting for a reply, Dr. Heidegger hobbled across the chamber, and retuned with the same ponderous folio, bound in black leather, which common report affirmed to be a book of magic. Undoing the silver clasps, he opened the volume, and took from among its black-letter pages a rose, or what was once a rose, though now the green leaves and crimson petals had assumed one brownish hue, and the ancient flower seemed ready to crumble to dust in the doctor's hands.

"This rose," said Dr. Heidegger, with a sigh, "this same withered and crumbling flower, blossomed five and fifty years ago. It was given me by Sylvia Ward, whose portrait hangs yonder; and I meant to wear it in my bosom at our wedding. Five and fifty years it has been treasured between the leaves of this old volume. Now, would you deem it possible that this rose of half a century could ever bloom again?"

"Nonsense!" said the Widow Wycherly, with a peevish toss of her head. "You might as well ask whether an old woman's wrinkled face could ever bloom again."

"See!" answered Dr. Heidegger. He uncovered the vase, and threw the faded rose into the water which it contained. At first, it lay lightly on the surface of the fluid, appearing to imbibe none of its moisture. Soon, however, a singular change began to be visible. The crushed and dried petals stirred, and assumed a deepening tinge of crimson, as if the flower were reviving from a death-like slumber; the slender stalk and twigs of foliage became green; and there was the rose of half a century, looking as fresh as when Sylvia Ward had first given it to her lover. It was scarcely full blown; for some of its delicate red leaves curled modestly around its moist bosom, within which two or three dewdrops were sparkling. "That is certainly a very pretty deception," said the doctor's friends; carelessly, however, for they had witnessed greater mi-

racles at a conjurer's show. "Pray, how was it effected?"

"Did you never hear of the Fountain of Youth," asked Dr. Heidegger, "which Ponce de Leon, the Spanish adventurer, went in search of two or three centuries ago?"

"But did Ponce de León ever find it?" said the Widow Wycherly."No," answered Dr. Heidegger, "for he never sought it in the right place. The famous Fountain of Youth, if I am rightly informed, is situated in the southern part of the Floridian peninsula, not far from Lake Macaco. Its source is overshadowed by several gigantic magnolias, which, though numberless centuries old, have been kept as fresh as violets by the virtues of this wonderful water. An acquaintance of mine, knowing my curiosity in such matters, has sent me what you see in the vase."

"Ahem!" said Colonel Killigrew, who believed not a word of the doctor's story. "And what may be the effect of this fluid on the human frame?"

"You shall judge for yourself, my dear colonel," replied Dr. Heidegger, "and all of you, my respected friends, are welcome to so much of this admirable fluid as may restore to you the bloom of youth. For my own part, having had much trouble in growing old, I am in no hurry to grow young again. With your permission, there fore, I will merely watch the progress of the experiment.

"While he spoke, Dr. Heidegger had been filling the four champagne glasses with the water of the Fountain of Youth. It was apparently impregnated with an effervescent gas, for little bubbles were continually ascending from the depths of the glasses, and bursting in silvery spray at the surface. As the liquor diffused a pleasant perfume, the old people doubted not that it possessed cordial and comfortable properties; and though utter sceptics as to its rejuvenescent power, they were inclined to swallow it

at once. But Dr. Heidegger besought them to stay a moment.

"Before you drink, my respectable old friends," said he, "it would be well that, with the experience of a lifetime to direct you, you should draw up a few general rules for your guidance, in passing a second time through the perils of youth. Think what a sin and shame it would be, if, with your peculiar advantages, you should not become patterns of virtue and wisdom to all the young people of the age!"

The doctor's four venerable friends made him no answer, except by a feeble and tremulous laugh; so very ridiculous was the idea that, knowing how closely repentance treads behind the steps of error, they should ever go astray again.

"Drink, then," said the doctor, bowing. "I rejoice that I have so well selected the subjects of my experiment."

With palsied hands, they raised the glasses to their lips. The liquor, if it really possessed such virtues as Dr. Heidegger imputed to it, could not have been bestowed on four human beings who needed it more woefully. They looked as if they had never known what youth or pleasure was, but had been the offspring of Nature's dotage, and always the gray, decrepit, sapless, miserable creatures, who now sat stooping round the doctor's table, without life enough in their souls or bodies to be animated even by the prospect of growing young again. They drank off the water, and replaced their glasses on the table.

Assuredly there was an almost immediate improvement in the aspect of the party, not unlike what might have been produced by a glass of generous wine, together with a sudden glow of cheerful sunshine brightening over all their visages at once. There was a healthful suffusion on their cheeks, instead of the ashen hue that had made them look so corpse-li

ke. They gazed at one another, and fancied that some magic power had really begun to smooth away the deep and sad inscriptions which Father Time had been so long engraving on their brows. The Widow adjusted her cap, for she felt almost like a woman again.

"Give us more of this wondrous water!" cried they, eagerly. "We are younger but we are still too old! Quick give us more!"

"Patience, patience!" quoth Dr. Heidegger, who sat watching the experiment with philosophic coolness. "You have been a long time growing old. Surely, you might be content to grow young in half an hour! But the water is at your service."

Again he filled their glasses with the liquor of youth, enough of which still remained in the vase to turn half the old people in the city to the age of their own grand-children. While the bubbles were yet sparkling on the brim, the doctor's four guests snatched their glasses from the table, and swallowed the contents at a single gulp. Was it delusion? Even while the draught was passing down their throats, it seemed to have wrought a change in their whole systems. Their eyes grew clear and bright; a dark shade deepened among their silvery locks; they sat around the table, three gentlemen of middle age, and a woman, hardly beyond her buxom prime.

"My dear widow, you are charming!" cried Colonel Killigrew, whose eyes had been fixed upon her face, while the shadows of age were flitting from it like darkness from the crimson daybreak.

The fair widow knew, of old, that Colonel Killigrew's compliments were not always measured by sober truth; so she started up and ran to the mirror, still dreading that the ugly visage of an old woman would meet her gaze. Meanwhile, the three gentlemen behaved in such a manner as proved that the water of the Fountain of Youth possessed some intoxicating qualities;

unless, indeed, their exhilaration of spirits was merely a light some dizziness caused by the sudden removal of the weight of years. Mr. Gascoigne's mind seemed to run on political topics, but whether relating to the past, present, or future, could not easily be determined, since the same ideas and phrases have been in vogue these fifty years. Now he rattled forth full-throated sentences about patriotism, national glory, and people's right; now he muttered some perilous stuff or other, in a sly and doubtful whisper, so cautiously that even his own conscience could scarcely catch the secret; and now, again, he spoke in measured ac cents, and a deeply deferential tone, as if a royal ear were listening to his well turned periods. Colonel Killigrew all this time had been trolling forth a jolly bottle song, and ringing his glass in symphony with the chorus, while his eyes wandered toward the buxom figure of the Widow Wycherly. On the other side of the table, Mr. Medbourne was involved in a calculation of dollars and cents, with which was strangely intermingled a project for supplying the East Indies with ice, by harnessing a team of whales to the polar icebergs.

As for the Widow Wycherly, she stood before the mirror courtesying and simpering to her own image, and greeting it as the friend whom she loved better than all the world beside. She thrust her face close to the glass, to see whether some long remembered wrinkle or crow's foot had indeed vanished. She examined whether the snow had so entirely melted from her hair that the venrable cap could be safely thrown aside. At last, turning briskly away, she came with a sort of dancing step to the table.

"My dear old doctor." cried she, "pray favor me with another glass!"

"Certainly, my dear madam, certainly!" replied the complaisant doctor. "See! I have already filled the glasses."

There, in fact, stood the four glasses, brimful of this wonderful water, the delicate spray of which, as it effervesced from the surface, resembled the tremulous glitter of diamonds. It was now so nearly sunset that the chamber had grown duskier than ever; but a mild and moonlike splendor gleamed from within the vase, and rested alike on the four guests and on the doctor's venerable figure. He sat in a high-backed, elaborately carved, oaken armchair, with a gray dignity of aspect that might have well befitted that very Father Time, whose power had never been disputed, save by this fortunate company. Even while quaffing the third draught of the Fountain of Youth, they were almost awed by the expression of his mysterious visage.

But, the next moment, the exhilarating gush of young life shot through their veins. They were now in the happy prime of youth. Age, with its miserable train of cares and sorrows and diseases, was remembered only as the trouble of a dream, from which they had joyously awoke. The fresh gloss of the soul, so early lost, and without which the world's "Dance with me, Clara!" cried successive scenes had been but a gallery of faded pictures, again threw its enchantment over all their prospects. They felt like new- created beings in a new-created universe.

"We are young! We are young!" they cried exultingly.

Youth, like the extremity of age, had effaced the strongly marked characteristics of middle life, and mutually assimilated them all. They were a group of merry youngsters, almost maddened with the exuberant frolicsomeness of their years. The most singular effect of their gaiety was an impulse to mock the infirmity and decrepitude of which they had so lately been the victims. They laughed loudly at their old- fashioned attire, the wide-skirted coats and flapped waistcoats of the young men, and the ancient cap and gown of the blooming girl. One limped across the floor like a gouty grandfather; one set a pair of spectacles astride of his

nose, and pretended to pore over the blackletter pages of the book of magic; a third sented himself in an armchair, and strove to imitate the venerable dignity of Dr. Heidegger. Then all shouted mirthfully, and leaped about the room. The Widow Wycherly -if so fresh a damsel could be called a widow- tripped up to the doctor's chair, with a mischievous merriment in her rosy face.

"Doctor, you dear old soul," cried she, "get up and dance with me!" And then the four young people laughed louder than ever, to think what a queer figure the poor old doctor would cut.

"Pray excuse me," answered the doctor quietly. "I am old and rheumatic, and my dancing days were over long ago. But either of these gay young gentlemen will be glad of so pretty a partner.

"Dance with me, Clara!" cried Colonel Killigrew. "No, no, I will be her partner!"shouted Mr. Gascoigne. "She promised me her hand, fifty years ago!" exclaimed Mr. Medbourne.

They all gathered round her. One caught both her hands in his passionate grasp another threw his arm about her waist the third buried his hands among the glossy curls that clustered beneath the widow's cap. Blushing, panting, struggling, chiding, laughing, her warm breath fanning each of their faces by turns, she strove to disengage herself, yet still remained in their triple embrace. Never was there a livelier picture of youthful rivalship, with bewitching beauty for the prize. Yet, by a strange deception, owing to the duskiness of the chamber and the antique dresses which they still wore, the tall mirror is said to have reflected the figures of the three old, gray, withered grandsires, ridiculously contending for the skinny ugliness of a shriveled grandam.

But they were young; their burning passions proved them so. Inflamed to madness by the coquetry of the girl-widow, who neither granted nor quite withheld her favors, the three rivals began to interchange threatening glances. Still keeping hold of the fair prize, they grappled fiercely at one another's throats. As they struggled to and fro, the table was overturned, and the vase dashed into a thousand fragments. The precious Water of Youth flowed in a bright stream across the floor, moistening the wings of a butterfly, which, grown old in the decline of summer, had alighted there to die. The insect fluttered lightly through the chamber, and settled on the snowy head of Dr. Heidegger.

"Come, come, gentlemen! Come, Madam Wycherly," exclaimed the doctor, "I really must protest against this riot."

They stood still and shivered, for it seemed as if gray Time were calling them back from their sunny youth, far down into the chill and darksome vale of years. They looked at old Dr. Heidegger, who sat in his carved armchair, holding the rose of half a century, which he had rescued from among the fragments of the shattered vase. At the motion of his hand, the four rioters resumed their seats, the more readily, because their violent exertions had wearied them, youthful though they were.

"My poor Sylvia's rose!" ejaculated Dr. Heidegger, holding it in the light of the sunset clouds. "It appears to be fading again."

And so it was. Even while the party were looking at it, the flower continued to shrivel up, till it became as dry and fragile as when the doctor had first thrown it into the vase. He shook off the few drops of moisture which clung to its petals.

“I love it as well thus as in its dewy freshness,” observed he, pressing the withered rose to his withered lips. While he spoke, the butterfly fluttered down from the doctor’s snowy head, and fell upon the floor.

His guests shivered again. A strange chillness, whether of the body or spirit they could not tell, was creeping gradually over them all. They gazed at one another, and fancied that each fleeting moment snatched away a charm, and left a deepening furrow where none had been before. Was it an illusion? Had the changes of a lifetime been crowded into so brief a space, and were they now four aged people, sitting with their old friend, Dr. Heidegger?

“Are we grown old again, so soon?” cried they, dolefully.

In truth they had. The Water of Youth possessed merely a virtue more transient than that of wine. The delirium which it created had effervesced away. Yes! They were old again. With a shuddering impulse, that showed her a woman still, the widow clasped her skinny hands before her face, and wished that the coffin lid were over it, since it could be no longer beautiful.

”Yes, friends, ye are old again,” said Dr. Heidegger, “and lo! the Water of Youth is all lavished on the ground. Well -I bemoan it not; for if the fountain gushed at my very doorstep, I would not stoop to bathe my lips in it no, though its delirium were for years instead of moments. Such is the lesson ye have taught me!!!

But the doctor’s four friends had taught no such lesson to themselves. They resolved forthwith to make a pilgrimage to Florida, and quaff at morning, noon, and night, from the Fountain of Youth.

THE LADY, OR THE TIGER
Frank R. Stockton

In the very old time, there lived a semibarbaric king, whose ideas, though somewhat polished and sharpened by the progressiveness of distant Latin neighbors, were still large, florid, and untrammeled, as became the half of him which was barbaric. He was a man of exuberant fancy, and, withal, of an authority so irresistible that, at his will, he turned his varied fancies into facts. He was greatly given to self-communing; and, when he and himself agreed upon anything, the thing was done. When every member of his domestic and political systems moved smoothly in its appointed course, his nature was bland and genial; but whenever there was a little hitch, and some of his orbs got out of their orbits, he was blander and more genial still, for nothing pleased him so much as to make the crooked straight, and crush down uneven places.

Among the borrowed notions by which his barbarism had become semifixed was that of the public arena, in which, by exhibitions of manly and beastly valor, the minds of his subjects were refined and cultured.

But even here the exuberant and barbaric fancy asserted itself. The arena of the king was built, not to give the people an opportunity of hearing the rhapsodies of dying gladiators, nor to enable them to view the inevitable conclusion of a conflict between religious opinions and hungry jaws, but for purposes far better adapted to widen and develop the mental energ-

ies of the people. This vast amphitheater, with its encircling galleries, its mysterious vaults, and its unseen passages, was an agent of poetic justice, in which crime was punished, or virtue rewarded, by the decrees of an impartial and incorruptible chance.

When a subject was accused of a crime of sufficient importance to interest the king, public notice was given that on an appointed day the fate of the accused person would be decided in the king's arena, a structure which well deserved its name; for, although its form and plan were borrowed from afar, its purpose emanated solely from the brain of this man, who, every barleycorn a king, knew no tradition to which he owed more allegiance than pleased his fancy, and who ingrafted on every adopted form of human thought and action the rich growth of his barbaric idealism.

When all the people had assembled in the galleries, and the king, surrounded by his court, sat high up on his throne of royal state on one side of the arena, he gave a signal, a door beneath him opened, and the accused subject stepped out into the amphitheater. Directly opposite him, on the other side of the enclosed space, were two doors, exactly alike and side by side. It was the duty and the privilege of the person on trial to walk directly to these doors and open one of them. He could open either door he pleased; he was subject to no guidance or influence but that of the aforementioned impartial and incorruptible chance. If he opened the one, there came out of it a hungry tiger, the fiercest and most cruel that could be procured, which immediately sprang upon him and tore him to pieces, as a punishment for his guilt. The moment that the case of the criminal was thus decided, doleful iron bells were clanged, great wails went up from the hired mourners posted on the outer rim of the arena, and the vast audience, with bowed heads and downcast hearts, wended slowly their homeward way,

mourning greatly that one so young and fair, or so old and respected, should have merited so dire a fate.

But if the accused person opened the other door, there came forth from it a lady, the most suitable to his years and station that his majesty could select among his fair subjects; and to this lady he was immediately married, as a reward for his innocence. It mattered not that he might already possess a wife and family or that his affections might be engaged upon an object of his own selection; the king allowed no such subordinate arrangements to interfere with his great scheme of retribution and reward. The exercises, as in the other instance, took place immediately, and in the arena. Another door opened beneath the king, and a priest, followed by a band of choristers and dancing maidens blowing joyous airs on golden horns and treading an epithalamic measure, advanced to where the pair stood, side by side, and the wedding was promptly and cheerily solemnized. Then the gay brass bells rang forth their merry peals, the people shouted glad hurrahs, and the innocent man, preceded by children strewing flowers on his path, led his bride to his home.

This was the king's semi-barbaric method of administering justice. Its perfect fairness is obvious. The criminal could not know out of which door would come the lady; he opened either he pleased, without having the slightest idea whether, in the next instant, he was to be devoured or married. On some occasions the tiger came out of one door, and on some out of the other. The decisions of this tribunal were not only fair, they were positively determinate; the accused person was instantly punished if he found himself guilty, and, if innocent, he was rewarded on the spot, whether he liked it or not. There was no escape from the judgments of the king's arena.

The institution was a very popular one. When the people gathered together on one of the great trial days,

they never knew whether they were to witness a bloody slaughter or a hilarious wedding. This element of uncertainty lent an interest to the occasion which it could not otherwise have attained. Thus, the masses were entertained and pleased, and the thinking part of the community could bring no charge of unfairness against this plan; for did not the accused person have the whole matter in his own hands?

This semi-barbaric king had a daughter as blooming as his most florid fancies and with a soul as fervent and imperious as his own. As is usual in such cases, she was the apple of his eye and was loved by him above all humanity. Among his courtiers was a young man of that fineness of blood and lowness of station common to the conventional heroes of romance who love royal maidens. This royal maiden was well satisfied with her lover, for he was handsome and brave to a degree unsurpassed in all this kingdom, and she loved him with an ardor that had enough of barbarism in it to make it exceedingly warm and strong. This love affair moved on happily for many months, until one day the king happened to discover its existence. He did not hesitate nor waver in regard to his duty in the premises. The youth was immediately cast into prison, and a day was appointed for his trial in the king's arena. This, of course, was an especially important occasion, and his majesty, as well as all the people, was greatly interested in the workings and development of this trial. Never before had such a case occurred; never before had a subject dared to love the daughter of a king. In after years such things became common place enough, but then they were, in no slight degree, novel and startling.

The tiger cages of the kingdom were searched for the most savage and relentless beasts, from which the fiercest monster might be selected for the arena, and the ranks of maiden youth and beauty throughout

the land were carefully surveyed by competent judges, in order that the young man might have a fitting bride in case fate did not determine for him a different destiny. Of course, everybody knew that the deed with which the accused was charged had been done. He had loved the princess, and nei ther he, she, nor anyone else thought of denying the fact, but the king would not think of allowing any fact of this kind to interfere with the workings of the tribunal, in which he took such great delight and satisfaction. No matter how the affair turned out, the youth would be disposed of, and the king would take an aesthetic pleasure in watching the course of events, which would determine whether ornot the young man had done wrong in allowing himself tolove the princess.

The appointed day arrived. From far and near the people gathered and thronged the great galleries of the arena, and crowds, unable to gain admittance, massed themselves against its outside walls. The king and his court were in their places opposite the twin doors those fateful portals so terrible in their similarity.

All was ready. The signal was given. A door beneath the royal party opened, and the lover of the princess walked into the arena. Tall, beautiful, fair, his appearance was greeted with a low hum of admiration and anxiety. Half the audience had not known so grand a youth had lived among them. No wonder the princess loved him! What a terrible thing for him to be there!

As the youth advanced into the arena, he turned, as the custom was, to bow to the king, but he did not think at all of that royal personage; his eyes were fixed upon the princess who sat to the right of her father. Had it not been for the moiety of barbarism in her nature, it is probable that lady would not have been there, but her intense and fervid soul would not allow her to be absent on an ocasion in which she was so terribly interested.

From the moment that the decree had gone forth, that her lover should decide his fate in the king's arena, she had thought of nothing, night or day, but this great event and the various subjects connected with it. Possessed of more power, influence, and force of character than anyone who had ever before been interested in such a case, she had done what no other person had done she had possessed herself of the secret of the doors. She knew in which of the two rooms that lay behind those doors stood the cage of the tiger, with its open front, and in which waited the lady. Through these thick doors, heavily curtained with skins on the inside, it was impossible that any noise or suggestion should comefrom within to the person who should approach to raise the latch of one of them, but gold and the power of a woman's will had brought the secret to the princess.

And not only did she know in which room stood the lady ready to emerge, all blushing and radiant, should her door be opened, but she knew who the lady was. It was one of the fairest and loveliest of the damsels of the court who had been selected as the reward of the accused youth should he be proved innocent of the crime of aspiring to one so far above him, and the princess hated her. Often had she seen, or imagined that she had seen, this fair creature. throwing glances of admiration upon the person of her lover, and sometimes she thought these glances were perceived and even returned. Now and then she had seen them talking together; it was but for a moment or two, but much can be said in a brief space; it may have been on most unimportant topics, but how could she know that? The girl was lovely, but she had dared to raise her eyes to the loved one of the princess, and, with all the intensity of the savage blood transmitted to her through long lines of wholly barbaric ancestors, she hated the woman who blushed and trembled behind that silent door.

When her lover turned and looked at her, and his eye met hers as she sat there paler and whiter than any-

one in the vast ocean of anxious faces about her, he saw, by that power of quick perception which is given to those whose souls are one, that she knew behind which door crouched the tiger and behind which stood the lady. He had expected her to know it. He understood her nature, and his soul was assured that she would never rest until she had made plain to herself this thing, hidden to all other lookers on, even to the king. The only hope for the youth in which there was any element of certainty was based upon the success of the princess in discovering this mystery, and the moment he looked upon her, he saw she had succeeded, as in his soul he knew she would succeed.

Then it was that his quick and anxious glance asked the question: "Which?" It was as plain to her as if he shouted it from where he stood. There was not an instant to be lost. The question was asked in a flash; it must be answered in another.

Her right arm lay on the cushioned parapet before her. She raised her hand, and made a slight, quick movement toward the right. No one but her lover saw her. Every eye but his was fixed on the man in the arena.

He turned, and with a firm and rapid step he walked across the empty space. Every heart stopped beating, every breath was held, every eye was fixed immovably upon that man. Without the slightest hesitation, he went to the door on the right and opened it.

Now, the point of the story is this: Did the tiger come out of that door, or did the lady?

The more we reflect upon this question, the harder it is to answer. It involves a study of the human heart which leads through devious mazes of passion, out of which it is difficult to find our way. Think of it, fair reader, not as if the decision of the question depended upon yourself, but upon that hot-blooded, semi-bar baric princess, her soul at a white heat beneath the

combined fires of despair and jealousy. She had lost him, but who should have him?

How often, in her waking hours and in her dreams, had she started in wild horror and covered her face with her hands as she thought of her lover opening the door on the other side of which waited the cruel fangs of the tiger!

But how much oftener had she seen him at the other door! How in her grievous reveries had she gnashed her teeth and torn her hair, when she saw his start of rapturous delight as he opened the door of the lady! How her soul had burned in agony when she had seen him rush to meet that woman, with her flushing cheek and sparkling eye of triumph; when she had seen him lead her forth, his whole frame kindled with the joy of recovered life; when she had heard the glad shouts from the multitude, and the wild ringing of the happy bells; when she had seen the priest, with his joyous followers, advance to the couple and make them man and wife before her very eyes; and when she had seen them walk away together upon their path of flowers, followed by the tremendous shouts of the hilarious multitude, in which her one despairing shriek was lost and drowned!

Would it not be better for him to die at once, and go to wait for her in the blessed regions of semi-barbaric futurity? And yet, that awful tiger, those shrieks, that blood!

Her decision had been indicated in an instant, but it had been made after days and nights of anguished deliberation. She had known she would be asked, she had decided what she would answer, and, without the slightest hesitation, she had moved her hand to the right.

The question of her decision is one not to be lightly considered, and it is not for me to presume to set myself up as the one personable to answer it. And so I leave it with all of you: Which came out of the opened door, - the lady, or the tiger?

TO BUILD A FIRE
Jack London

Day had broken cold and gray, exceedingly cold and gray, when the man turned aside from the main Yukon trail' and climbed the high earth bank, where a dim and little traveled trail led eastward through the fat spruce timberland. It was a steep bank, and he paused for breath at the top, excusing the act to himself by looking at his watch. It was nine o'clock. There was no sun or hint of sun, though there was not a cloud in the sky. It was a clear day, and yet there seemed an intangible pall over the face of things, a subtle gloom that made the day dark and that was due to the absence of sun. This fact did not worry the man. He was used to the lack of sun. It had been days since he had seen the sun, and he knew that a few more days must pass before that cheerful orb, due south, would just peep above the skyline and dip immediately from view.

The man flung a look back along the way he had come. The Yukon lay a mile wide and hidden under three feet of ice. On top of this ice were as many feet of snow. It was all pure white, rolling in gentle undulations where the ice jams of the freeze up had formed. North and south, as far as his eye could see, it was unbroken white, save for a dark hairline that curved and twisted from around the spruce covered island to the south and that curved and twisted away into the north, where it disappeared behind another spruce covered island. This dark hairline was the trail -the main trail- that led

south five hundred miles to the Chilcoot Pass, Dyea, and salt water, and that led north seventy miles to Dawson, and still on to the north a thousand miles to Nulato, and finally to St. Michael on the Bering Sea," a thousand miles and half a thousand more.

But all this the mysterious, far-reaching hairline trail, the absence of sun from the sky, the tremendous cold, and the strangeness and weird ness of it all made no impression on the man. It was not because he was long used to it. He was a newcomer in the land, a chechaquo, and this was his first winter. The trouble with him was that he was without imagination. He was quick and alert in the things of life, but only in the things, not in the significances. Fifty degrees below zero meant eighty odd degrees of frost. Such a fact impressed him as being cold and uncomfortable, and that was all. It did not lead him to meditate upon his frailty as a creature of temperature, and upon man's frailty in general, able only to live within certain narrow limits of heat and cold; and, from there on, it did not lead him to the conjectural field of immortality and man's place in the universe. Fifty degrees below zero stood for a bite of frost that hurt and that must be guarded against by the use of mittens, ear flaps, warm moccasins, and thick socks. Fifty degrees below zero was to him just precisely fifty degrees below zero. That there should be anything more to it than that was a thought that never entered his head.

As he turned to go on, he spat speculatively. There was a sharp, explosive crackle that startled him. He spat again. And again, in the air, before it could fall to the snow, the spittle crackled. He knew that at fifty below spittle cracked on the snow, but this spittle had crackled in the air. Undoubtedly it was colder than fifty below how much colder he did not know. But the temperature did not matter. He was bound for the old claim on the left fork of Henderson Creek where the boys were already. They had come over across the di-

vide from the Indian Creek country, while he had come the roundabout way to take a look at the possibilities of getting out logs in the spring from the islands in the Yukon. He would be in to camp by six o'clock; a bit after dark, it was true, but the boys would be there, a fire would be going, and a hot supper would be ready. As for lunch, he pressed his hand against the protruding bundle under his jacket. It was also under his shirt, wrapped up in a handkerchief and lying against the naked skin. It was the only way to keep the biscuits from freezing. He smiled agreeably to himself as he thought of those biscuits, each cut open and sopped in bacon grease, and each enclosing a generous slice of fried bacon.

He plunged in among the big spruce trees. The trail was faint. A foot of snow had fallen since the last sled had passed over, and he was glad he was without a sled, traveling light. In fact, he carried nothing but the lunch wrapped in the handkerchief. He was surprised, however, at the cold. It certainly was cold, he concluded, as he rubbed his numb nose and cheekbones with his mittened hand. He was a warm whiskered man, but the hair on his face did not protect the high cheekbones and the eager nose that thrust itself aggressively into the frosty air.

At the man's heels trotted a dog, a big native husky, the proper wolf dog, gray-coated and without any visible or temperamental difference from its brother, the wild wolf. The animal was depressed by the tremendous cold. It knew that it was no time for traveling. Its instinct told it a truer tale than was told to the man by the man's judgment. In reality, it was not merely colder than fifty below zero; it was colder than sixty below, than seventy below. It was seventy-five below zero. Since the freezing point is thirty-two above zero, it meant that one hundred and seven degrees of frost obtained. The dog did not know anything about thermometers. Possibly in its brain there was no sharp consciousness of a condition

of very cold such as was in the man’s brain. But the brute had its instinct. It experienced a vague but menacing apprehension that subdued it and made it slink along at the man’s heels, and that made it question eagerly every unwonted movement of the man as if expecting him to go into camp or to seek shelter somewhere and build a fire. The dog had learned fire, and it wanted fire, or else to burrow under the snow and cuddle its warmth away from the air.

The frozen moisture of its breathing had settled on its fur in a fine powder of frost, and especially were its jowls, muzzle, and eyelashes whitened by its crystalled breath. The man’s red beard and mustache were likewise frosted, but more solidly, the deposit taking the form of ice and increasing with every warm, moist breath he exhaled. Also, the man was chewing tobacco, and the muzzle of ice held his lips so rigidly that he wasunable to clear his chin when he expelled the juice. The result was that a crystal beard of the color and solidity of amber was increasing its length on his chin. If he fell down it would shatter itself, like glass, into brittle fragments. But he did not mind the appendage. It was the penalty all tobacco-chewers paid in that country, and he had been out before in two cold snaps. They had not been so cold as this, he knew, but by the spirit thermometer at Sixty Mile’ he knew they had been registered at fifty below and at fifty-five.

He held on through the level stretch of woods for several miles, crossed a wide flat of nigger heads, and dropped down a bank to the frozen bed of a small stream. This was Henderson Creek, and he knew he was ten miles from the forks. He looked at his watch. It was ten o’clock. He was making four miles an hour, and he calculated that he would arrive at the forks at halfpast twelve. He decided to celebrate that event by eating his lunch there.

The dog dropped in again at his heels, with a tail

drooping discouragement, as the man swung along the creek bed. The furrow of the old sled-trail was plainly visible, but a dozen inches of snow covered the marks of the last runners. In a month no man had come up or down that silent creek. The man held steadily on. He was not much given to thinking, and just then, particularly, he had nothing to think about save that he would eat lunch at the forks and that at six o'clock he would be in camp with the boys. There was nobody to talk to, and, had there been, speech would have been impossible because of the ice-muzzle on his mouth. So he continued monotonously to chew tobacco and to increase the length of his amber beard.

Once in a while the thought reiterated itself that it was very cold and that he had never experienced such cold. As he walked along he rubbed his cheekbones and nose with the back of his mittened hand. He did this automatically, now and again changing hands. But, rub as he would, the instant he stopped his cheekbones went numb and the following instant the end of his nose went numb. He was sure to frost his cheeks; he knew that, and experienced a pang of regret that he had not devised a nose strap of the sort Bud wore in cold snaps. Such a strap passed across the cheeks as well and saved them. But it didn't matter much, after all. What were frosted cheeks? A bit painful, that was all; they were never serious.

Empty as the man's mind was of thoughts, he was keenly observant, and he noticed the changes in the creek, the curves and bends and timber jams, and always he sharply noted where he placed his feet. Once, coming around a bend, he shied abruptly, like a startled horse, curved away from the place where he had been walking, and retreated several paces back along the trail. The creek he knew was frozen clear to the bottomno creek could contain water in that arctic winter but he knew also that there were springs that bubbled

out from the hillsides and ran along under the snow and on top of the ice of the creek. He knew that the coldest snaps never froze these springs, and he knew likewise their danger. They were traps. They hid pools of water under the snow that might be three inches deep, or three feet. Sometimes a skin of ice half an inch thick covered them, and in turn was covered by the snow. Sometimes therewere alternate layers of water and ice skin, so that when one broke through, he kept on breaking through for a while, sometimes wetting himself to the waist.

That was why he had shied in such panic. He had felt the give under his feet and heard the crackle of a snow hidden ice-skin. And to get his feet wet in such a temperature meant trouble and danger. At the very least it meant delay, for he would be forced to stop and build a fire, and, under its protection, to bare his feet while he dried his socks and moccasins. He stood and studied the creek bed and its banks and decided that the flow of water came from the right. He reflected awhile, rubbing his nose and cheeks, then skirted to the left, stepping gingerly and testing the footing for each step. Once clear of the danger, he took a fresh chew of tobacco and swung along at his four-mile gait.

In the course of the next two hours he came upon several similar traps. Usually the snow above the hidden pools had a sunken, candied appearance that advertised the danger. Once again, however, he had a close call, and once, suspecting danger, he compelled the dog to go on in front. The dog did not want to go. It hung back until the man shoved it forward, and then it went quickly across the white, unbroken surface. Suddenly it broke through, floundered to one side, and got away to firmer footing. It had wet its forefeet and legs, and almost immediately the water that clung to it turned to ice. It made quick efforts to lick the ice off its legs, then dropped down in the snow and began to bite out the ice that had formed between the toes. This was a matter of

instinct. To permit the ice to remain would mean sore feet. It did not know this. It merely obeyed the mysterious prompting that arose from the deep crypts of its being. But the man knew, having achieved a judgment on the subject, and he removed the mitten from his right hand and helped tear out the ice particles. He did not expose his fingers more than a minute, and was as tonished at the swift numbness that smote them. It certainly was cold. He pulled on the mitten hastily, and beat the hand savagely across his chest.

At twelve o'clock the day was at its brightest. Yet the sun was too far south on its winter journey to clear the horizon. The bulge of the earth intervened between it and Henderson Creek, where the man walked under a clear sky at noon and cast no shadow. At half past twelve, to the minute, he arrived at the forks of the creek. He was pleased at the speed he had made. If he kept it up, he would certainly be with the boys by six. He un buttoned his jacket and shirt and drew forth his lunch. The action consumed no more than a quarter of a minute, yet in that brief moment the numbness laid hold of the exposed fingers. He did not put the mitten on, but, instead, struck the fingers a dozen sharp smashes against his leg. Then he sat down on a snow-covered log to eat. The sting that followed upon the striking of his fingers against his leg ceased so quickly that he was startled. He had no chance to take a bite of biscuit. He struck the fingers repeatedly and returned them to the mitten, baring the other hand for the purpose of eating. He tried to take a mouthful but the ice muzzle prevented. He had forgotten to build a fire and thaw out. He chuckled at his foolishness, and as he chuckled he noted the numbness creeping into the exposed fingers. Also, he noted that the stinging which had first come to his toes when he sat down was already passing away. He wondered whether the toes were warm or numb. He moved them inside the moccasins and decided that they were numb.

He pulled the mitten on hurriedly and stood up. He was a bit frightened. He stamped up and down until the stinging returned into the feet. It certainly was cold, was his thought. That man from Sulphur Creek had spoken the truth when telling how cold it sometimes got in the country. And he had laughed at him at the time! That showed one must not be too sure of things. There was no mistake about it, it was cold. He strode up and down, stamping his feet and threshing his arms, until reassured by the returning warmth. Then he got out matches and proceeded to make a fire. From the under growth, where high water of the previous spring had lodged a supply of seasoned twigs, he got his fire-wood. Working carefully from a small beginning, he soon had a roaring fire, over which he thawed the ice from his face and in the protection of which he ate his biscuits. For the moment the cold of space was outwitted. The dog took satisfaction in the fire, stretching out close enough for warmth and far enough nway to escape being singed.

When the man had finished, he filled his pipe and took his comfortable time over a smoke. Then he pulled on his mittens, settled the ear-flaps of his cap firmly about his ears, and took the creek trail up the left fork. The dog was disappointed and yearned back toward the fire. This man did not know cold. Possibly all the generations of his ancestry had been ignorant of cold, of real cold, of cold one hundred and seven degrees below freezing point. But the dog knew; all its ancestry knew, and it had inherited the knowledge. And it knew that it was not good to walk abroad in such fearful cold. It was the time to lie snug in a hole in the snow and wait for a curtain of cloud to be drawn across the face of outer space whence this cold came. On the other hand, there was no keen intimacy be tween the dog and the man. The one was the toil slave of the other, and the only caresses it had ever received were the caresses of the whiplash and of harsh and menacing throat sounds that threatened

the whiplash. So the dog made no effort to communicate its apprehension to the man. It was not concerned in the welfare of the man; it was for its own sake that it yearned back toward the fire. But the man whistled and spoke to it with the sound of whiplashes, and the dog swung in at the man's heels and followed after.

The man took a chew of tobacco and proceeded to start a new amber beard. Also, his moist breath quickly powdered with white his mustache, eyebrows, and lashes. There did not seem to be so many springs on the left fork of the Henderson, and for half an hour the man saw no signs of any. And then it happened. At a place where there were no signs, where the soft, unbroken snow seemed to advertise solidity beneath, the man broke through. It was not deep. He wet himself halfway to the knees before he floundered out to the firm crust.

He was angry and cursed his luck aloud. He had hoped to get into camp with the boys at six o'clock, and this would delay him an hour, for he would have to build a fire and dry out his footgear. This was imperative at that low temperaturehe knew that much; and he turned aside to the bank which he climbed. On top, tangled in the underbrush about the trunks of several small spruce trees, was a high water deposit of dry firewood sticks and twigs, principally, but also larger portions of seasonedbranches and fine, dry, last year's grasses. He threw down several large pieces on top of the snow. This served for a foundation and prevented the young flame from drowning itself in the snow it otherwise would melt. The flame he got by touching a match to a small shred of birch bark that he took from his pocket. This burned even more readily than paper. Placing it on the foundation, he fed the young flame with wisps of dry grass and with the tiniest dry twigs.

He worked slowly and carefully, keenly aware of his danger. Gradually, as the flame grew stronger, he in-

creased the size of the twigs with which he fed it. He squatted in the snow, pulling the twigs out from their entanglement in the brush and feeding directly to the flame. He knew there must be no failure. When it is seventy-five below zero, a man must not fail in his first attempt to build a fire that is, if his feet are wet. If his feet are dry, and he fails, he can run along the trail for half a mile and restore his circulation. But the circulation of wet and freezing feet cannot be restored by running when it is seventy-five below. No matter how fast he runs, the wet feet will freeze the harder.

All this the man knew. The old timer on Sulphur Creek had told him about it the previous fall, and now he was appreciating the advice. Already all sensation had gone out of his feet. To build a fire he had been forced to remove his mittens, and the fingers had quickly gone numb. His pace of four miles an hour had kept his heart pumping blood to the surface of his body and to all the extremities. But the instant he stopped, the action of the pump eased down. The cold of space smote the unprotected tip of the planet, and he, being of that unprotected tip, received the full force of the blow.

For a moment he sat and stared at the spot where the fire had been. Then he grew very calm. Perhaps the old timer on Sulphur Creek was right. If he had only had a trail-mate he would have been in no danger now. The trail mate could have built the fire. Well, it was up to him to build the fire over again, and this second time there must be no failure. Even if he succeeded, he would most likely lose some toes. His feet must be badly frozen by now, and there would be some time before the second fire was ready.

Such were his thoughts, but he did not sit and think them. He was busy all the time they were passing through his mind. He made a new foundation for a fire, this time in the open, where no treacherous tree could blot it out. Next he gathered dry grasses and tiny twigs from the high water flotsam. He could not

bring his fingers together to pull them out, but he was able to gather them by the handful. In this way he got many rotten twigs and bits of green moss that were undesirable, but it was the best he could do. He worked methodically, even collecting an armful of the larger branches to be used later when the fire gathered strength. And all the while the dog sat and watched him, a certain yearning wistfulness in its eyes, for it looked upon him as the fire provider, and the fire was slow in coming.

When all was ready, the man reached in his pocket for a second piece of birch bark. He knew the bark was there, and, though he could not feel it with his fingers, he could hear its crisp rustling as he fumbled for it. Try as he would, he could not clutch hold of it. And all the time, in his consciousness, was the knowledge that each instant his feet were freezing. This thought tended to put him in a panic, but he fought against it andkept calm. He pulled on his mittens with his teeth, and threshed his arms back and forth, beating his hands with all his might against his sides. He did this sitting down, and he stood up to do it; and all the while the dog sat in the snow, its wolf brush of a tail curled around warmly over its forefeet, its sharp wolf ears pricked forward intently as it watched the man. And the man, as he beat and threshed with his arms and hands, felt a great surge of envy as he regarded the creature that was warm and secure in its natural covering.

After a time he was aware of the first faraway signals of sensation in his beaten fingers. The faint tingling grew stronger till it evolved into a stinging ache that was excruciating but which the man hailed with satisfaction. He stripped the mitten from his right hand and fetched forth the birch bark. The exposed fingers were quickly going numb again. Next he brought out his bunch of sulphur matches. But the tremendous cold had already driven the life out of his fingers. In his effort to separate one match from the

others, the whole bunch fell in the snow. He tried to pick it out of the snow, but failed. The dead fingers could neither touch nor clutch. He was very careful. He drove the thought of his freezing feet, and nose, and cheeks, out of his mind, de voting his whole soul to the matches. He watched, using the sense of vision in place of that of touch, and when he saw his fingers on each side of the bunch, he closed them that is, he willed to close them, for the wires were down, and the fingers did not obey. He pulled the mitten on the right hand, and beat it fiercely against his knee. Then, with both mittened hands, he scooped the bunch of matches, along with much snow, into his lap. Yet he was no better off.

After some manipulation he managed to get the bunch between the heels of his mittened hands. In this fashion he carried it to his mouth. The ice crackled and snapped when, by a violent effort, he opened his mouth. He drew the lower jaw in, curled the upper lip out of the way, and scraped the bunch with his upper teeth in order to separate a match. He succeeded in getting one, which he dropped on his lap. He was no better off. He could not pick it up. Then he devised a way. He picked it up in his teeth and scratched it on his leg. Twenty times he scratched before he succeeded in lighting it. As it flamed he held it with his teeth to the birch bark. But the burning brimstone went up his nostrils and into his lungs, causing him to cough spasmodically. The match fell into the snow and went out.

The old timer on Sulphur Creek was right, he thought in the moment of controlled despair that ensued: after fifty below, a man should travel with a partner. He beat his hands but failed in exciting any sensation. Suddenly he bared both hands, removing the mittens with his teeth. He caught the whole bunch between the heels of his hands. His arm muscles not being frozen enabled him to press the hand heels tightly against the matches. Then he scratched the

bunch along his leg. It flared into flame, seventy sulphur matches at once! There was no wind to blow them out. He kept his head to one side to escape the strangling fumes, and held the blazing bunch to the birch bark. As he so held it, he became aware of sensation in his hand. His flesh was burning. He could smell it. Deep down below the surface he could feel it. The sensation developed into pain that grew acute. And still he endured it, holding the flame of thematches clumsily to the bark that would not light readily because his own burning hands were in the way, absorbing most of the flame.

At last, when he could endure no more, he jerked his hands apart. The blazing matches fell sizzling into the snow, but the birch bark was alight. He began laying dry grasses and the tiniest twigs on the flame. He could not pick and choose, for he had to lift the fuel between the heels of his hands. Small pieces of rotten wood and green moss clung to the twigs, and he bit them off as well as he could with his teeth. He cherished the flame carefully and awkwardly. It meant life, and it must not perish. The withdrawal of blood from the surface of his body now made him begin to shiver, and he grew more awkward. A large piece of green moss fell squarely on the little fire. He tried to poke it out with his fingers, but his shivering frame made him poke too far, and he disrupted the nucleus of the little fire, the burning grasses and tiny twigs. separating and scattering. He tried to poke them together again, but in spite of the tenseness of the effort, his shivering got away with him, and the twigs were hopelessly scattered. Each twig gushed a puff of smoke and went out. The fire provider had failed. As he looked apathetically about him, his eyes chanced on the dog, sitting across the ruins of the fire from him, in the snow, making restless, hunching movements, slightly lifting one forefoot and then the other, shifting its weight back and forth on them with wistful eagerness.

The sight of the dog put a wild. idea into his head. He remembered the tale of the man, caught in a blizzard, who killed a steer and crawled inside the carcass and so was saved. He would kill the dog and bury his hands in the warm body until the numbness went out of them. Then he could build another fire. He spoke to the dog, calling it to him, but in his voice was a strange note of fear that frightened the animal, who had never known the man to speak in such a way before. Something was the matter, and its suspicious nature sensed danger it knew not what danger, but some where, somehow, in its brain arose an apprehension of the man. It flattened its ears down at the sound of the man's voice, and its restless, hunch ing movements and the liftings and shiftings of its forefeet became more pronounced; but it would not come to the man. He got on his hands and knees and crawled toward the dog. This unusual posture again excited suspicion, and the animal sidled mincingly away.

The man sat up in the snow for a moment and struggled for calmness. Then he pulled on his mittens, by means of his teeth, and got up on his feet. He glanced down at first in order to assure himself that he was really standing up, for the absence of sensa tion in his feet left him unrelated to the earth. His erect position in itself started to drive the webs of suspicion from the dog's mind, and when he spoke peremptorily, with the sound of whip lashes in his voice, the dog rendered its customary allegiance and came to him. As it came within reaching distance, the man lost his control. His arms flashed out to the dog, and he experienced genuine surprise when he discovered that his hands could not clutch, that there was neither bend nor feeling in the fingers. He had forgotten for the moment that they were frozen and that they were freezing more and more. All this happened quickly, and before the animal could get away, he encircled its body with his arms. He sat down in the snow and in this fashion held the dog, while it snarled and whined and struggled.

But it was all he could do, hold its body encircled in his arms and sit there. He realized that he could not kill the dog. There was no way to do it. With his helpless hands he could neither draw nor hold his shenth knife nor throttle the animal. He released it, and it plunged wildly away, with tail between its legs and still snarling. It halted forty feet away and surveyed him curiously, with ears sharply pricked forward.

The man looked down at his hands in order to locate them, and found them hanging on the ends of his arms. It struck him as curious that one should have to use his eyes in order to find out where his hands were. He began threshing his arms back and forth, beating the mittened hands against his sides. He did this for five minutes, violently, and his heart pumped enough blood up to the surface to put a stop to his shivering. But no sensation was aroused in the hands. He had an impression that they hung like weights on the ends of his arms, but when he tried to run the impression down, he could not find it.

A certain fear of death, dull and oppressive, came to him. This fear quickly became poignant as he realized that it was no longer a mere matter of freezing his fingers and toes, or of losing his hands and feet, but that it was a matter of life and death with the chances against him. This threw him into a panic, and he turned and ran up the creek bed along the old, dim trail. The dog joined in behind and kept up with him. He ran blindly, without intention, in fear such as he had never known in his life. Slowly, as he ploughed and floundered through the snow, he began to see things again the banks of the creek, the old timber jams, the leafless aspens, and the sky. The running made him feel better. He did not shiver. Maybe, if he ran on, his feet would thaw out, and, anyway, if he ran far enough, he would reach camp and the boys. Without doubt he would lose some fing-

ers and toes and some of his face, but the boys would take care of him, and save the rest of him when he got there. And at the same time there was another thought in his mind that said he would never get to the camp and the boys, that it was too many miles away, that the freezing had too great a start on him, and thathe would soon be stiff and dead. This thought he kept in the background and refused to consider. Sometimes it pushed itself forward and demanded to be heard, but he thrust it back and strove to think of other things.

It struck him as curious that he could run at all on feet so frozen that he could not feel them when they struck the earth and took the weight of his body. He seemed to himself to skim along above the surface and to have no connection with the earth. Somewhere he had once seen a winged Mercury, and he wondered if Mercury felt as he felt when skimming over the earth.

His theory of running until he reached camp and the boys had one flaw in it: he lacked the endurance. Several times he stumbled, and finally he tottered, crumpled up, and fell. When he tried to rise, he failed. He must sit and rest, he decided, and next time he would merely walk and keep on going. As he sat and regained his breath, he noted that he was feeling quite warm and comfortable. He was not shivering, and it even seemed that a warm glow had come to his chest and trunk. And yet, when he touched his nose or cheeks, there was no sensation. Running would not thaw them out. Nor would it thaw out his hands and feet. Then the thought came to him that the frozen portions of his body must be extending. He tried to keep this thought down, to forget it, to think of something else; he was aware of the panicky feeling that it caused, and he was afraid of the panic. But the thought asserted itself and persisted, until it produced a vision of his body totally frozen. This was too much, and he made another wild run along the trail. Once he

slowed down to a walk, but the thought of the freezing extending it self made him run again.

And all the time the dog ran with him, at his heels. When he fell down a second time, it curled its tail over its forefeet and sat in front of him, facing him, curiously eager and intent. The warmth and security of the animal angered him, and he cursed it till it flattened down its ears appeasingly. This time the shivering came more quickly upon the man. He was losing in his battle with the frost. It was creeping into his body from all sides. The thought of it drove him on, but he ran no more than a hundred feet when he staggered and pitched headlong. It was his last panic. When he had recovered his breath and control, he sat up and entertained in his mind the conception of meeting death with dignity. However, the conception did not come to him in such terms. His idea of it was that he had been making a fool of himself, running around like a chicken with its head cut off such was the simile that occurred to him. Well, he was bound to freeze anyway, and he might as well take it decently. With this new found peace of mind came the first glimmerings of drowsiness. A good idea, he thought, to sleep off to death. It was like taking an anesthetic. Freezing was not so bad as people thought. There were lots worse ways to die.

He pictured the boys finding his body next day. Suddenly he found himself with them, coming along the trail and looking for himself. And, still with them, he came around a turn in the trail and found himself lying in the snow. He did not belong with himself any more, for even then he was out of himself, standing with the boys and looking at himself in the snow. It certainly was cold, was his thought. When he got back to the States he could tell the folks what real cold was. He drifted on from this to a vision of the old-timer on Sulphur Creek. He could see him quite clearly, warm and comfortable, and smoking a pipe.

“You were right, old hoss; you were right,” the man mumbled to the old-timer of Sulphur Creek.

Then the man drowsed off into what seemed to him the most comfortable and satisfying sleep he had ever known. The dog sat facing him and waiting. The brief day drew to a close in a long, slow twilight. There were no signs of a fire to be made, and, besides, never in the dog’s experience had it known a man to sit like that in the snow and make no fire. As the twilight drew on, its enger yearning for the fire mastered it, and with a great lifting and shifting of forefeet, it whined softly, then flattened its ears down in anticipation of being chidden by the man. But the man remained silent. Later the dog whined loudly. And still later it crept close to the man and caught the scent of death. This made the animal bristle and back away. A little longer it delayed, howling under the stars that leaped and danced and shone brightly in the cold sky. Then it turned and trotted up the trail in the direction of the camp it knew, where were the other food providers and fire providers.

THE PARSLEY GARDEN
William Saroyan

One day in August Al Condraj was wandering through Woolworth's without a penny to spend when he saw a small hammer that was not a toy but a real hammer and he was possessed with a longing to have it. He believed it was just what he needed by which to break the monotony and with which to make something. He gathered some first class nails from Foley's Packing House where the box makers worked and where they had carelessly dropped at least fifteen cents' worth. He had gladly gone to the trouble of gathering then together because it had seemed to him that a nail, as such, was not something to be wasted. He had the nails, perhaps a half a pouf of them, at least two hundred of them, in a paper bag in the apple box in which he kept his junk at home.

Now, with the ten-cent hammer he believed he could make something out of box wood and the nails, although he had no idea what. Some sort of a table perhaps, or a small bench.

At any rate he took the hammer and slipped it into the pocket of his overalls, but just as he did do a man took him firmly by the arm without a word and pushed him to the back of the store into a small office. Another man, an older one, was seated behind a desk in the office, working on papers. The younger man, the one who had captured him, was excited and his forehead was covered with sweat.

“Well,” he said, “here’s one more of them.”

The man behind the desk got to his feet and looked at Al Condraj up and down.

“What’s he swiped?”

“A hammer.” The young man looked at Al with hatred. “Hand it over,” he said.

The boy brought the hammer out of his pocket and handed it to the young man, who said, “I ought to hit you over the head with it, that’s what I ought to do.”

He turned to the older man, the boss, the manager of the store, and he said, “What do you want me to do with him?”

“Leave him with me,” the older man said.

The younger man stepped out of the office, and the older man sat down and went back to work. Al Condraj stood in the office fifteen minutes before the older man looked at him again.

“Well,” he said.

Al didn’t know what to say. The man wasn’t looking at him, he was looking at the door.

Finally Al said, “I didn’t mean to steal it. I just needed it and I haven’t got any money.” “Just because you haven’t got any money doesn’t mean you’ve got a right to steal things,” the man said. “Now, does it?”

“No, sir.”

“Well, what am I going to do with you? Turn you over to the police?”

All didn’t say anything, but he certainly didn’t want to be turned over to the police. He hated the man, but at the same time he realized somebody else could be a lot tougher than he was being.

“If I let you go, will you promise never to steal from this store again?”

“Yes, sir.”

“All right,” the man said. “Go out this way and don’t come back to this store until you’ve got some money to spend.”

He opened a door to the hall that led to the alley, and Al Condraj hurried down the hall and out into the alley.

The first thing he did when he was free was laugh, but he knew he had been humiliated, and he was deeply ashamed. It was not in his nature to take things that did not belong to him. He hated the young man who had caught him and he hated the manager of the store who had made him stand in silence in the office so long. He hadn’t liked it at all when the young man had said he ought to hit him over the head with the hammer.

He should have had the courage to look him straight in the eye and say, “You and who else?”

Of course he had stolen the hammer and he had been caught, but it seemed to him he oughtn’t to have been humiliated.

After he had walked three blocks he decided he didn’t want to go home just yet, so he turned around and started walking back to town. He almost believed he meant to go back and say something to the young man who had caught him. And then he wasn’t sure he didn’t mean to go back and steal the hammer again, and this time not get caught. As long as he had been made to feel like a thief anyway, the least he ought to get out of it was the hammer.

Outside the store he lost his nerve, though. He stood in the street, looking in, for at least ten minutes.

Then, crushed and confused and now bitterly ashamed of himself, first for having stolen something, then for having been caught, then for having been humiliated, then for not having guts enough to go back and do the job right, he

began walking home again, his mind so troubled that he didn't greet his pal Pete Wawchek when they came face to face outside Graf's Hardware.

When he got home he was too ashamed to go inside and examine his junk, so he had a long drink of water from the faucet in the back yard. The faucet was used by his mother to water the stuff she planted every year: okra, bell peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, garlic, mint, eggplants and parsley.

His mother called the whole business the parsley garden, and every night in the summer she would bring chairs out of the house and put them around the table she had had Ondro, the neighborhood handyman, make for her for fifteen cents, and she would sit at the table and enjoy the cool of the garden and the smell of the things she had planted and tended.

Sometimes she would even make a salad and moisten the flat old country bread and slice some white cheese, and she and he would have supper in the parsley garden. After supper she would attach the water hose to the faucet and water her plants and the place would be cooler than ever and it would smell real good, real fresh and cool and green, all the different growing things making a green garden smell out of themselves and the air and the water.

After the long drink of water he sat down where the parsley itself was growing and he pulled a handful of it out and slowly ate it. Then he went inside and told his mother what had happened. He even told her what he had thought of doing after he had been turned loose: to go back and steal the hammer again.

"I don't want you to steal," his mother said in broken English. "Here is ten cents. You go back to that man and you give him this money and you bring it home, that hammer."

"No," Al Condraj said. "I won't take your money for something I don't really need. I just thought I ought to have a hammer, so I could make something if I felt like it. I've got a lot of nails and some box wood, but I haven't got a hammer."

"Go buy it, that hammer," his mother said.

"No," Al said.

"All right," his mother said. "Shut up."

That's what she always said when she didn't know what else to say.

Al went out and sat on the steps. His humiliation was beginning to really hurt now. He decided to wander off along the railroad tracks to Foley's because he needed to think about it some more. At Foley's he watched Johnny Gale nailing boxes for ten minutes, but Johnny was too busy to notice him or talk to him, although one day at Sunday school, two or three years ago, Johnny had greeted him and said, "How's the boy?" Johnny worked with the box maker's hatchet and everybody in Fresno said he was the fastest box maker in town. He was the closet thing to a machine any packing house ever saw. Foley himself was proud of Johnny Gale.

Al Condraj finally set out for home because he didn't want to get in the way. He didn't want somebody working hard to notice that he was being watched and maybe say to him, "Go on, beat it." He didn't want Johnny Gale to do something like that. He didn't want to invite another humiliation.

On the way home he looked for money but all he found was the usual pieces of broken glass and rusty nails, the things that were always cutting his bare feet every summer.

When he got home his mother had made a salad and set the table, so he sat down to eat, but when he put the food in his mouth he just didn't care for it. He got up

and went into the three room house and got his apple box out of the corner of his room and went through his junk. It was all there, the same as yesterday.

He wandered off back to town and stood in front of the closed store, hating the young man who had caught him, and then he went along to the Hippodrome and looked at the display photographs from the two movies that were being shown that day.

Then he went along to the public library to have a look at all the books again, but he didn't like any of them, so he wandered around town some more, and then around half past eight he went home and went to bed.

His mother had already gone to bed because she had to be up at five to go to work at Inderrieden's, packing figs. Some days there would be only half a day of it, but hatever his mother earned during the summer had to keep them through the whole year.

He didn't sleep much that night because he couldn't get over what had happened, and he went over six or seven ways by which to adjust the matter. He went so far as to believe it would be necessary for him to steal systematically and successfully the rest of his life. It was a hot night and he couldn't sleep.

Finally, his mother got up and walked barefooted to the kitchen for a drink of water and on the way back she said to him softly, "Shut up."

When she got up at five in the morning he was out of the house, but that had happened many times before. He was a restless boy, and he kept moving all the time every summer. He was making mistakes and paying for them, and he just tried stealing and had been caught at it and he was troubled. She fixed her breakfast, packed her lunch and hurried off to work, hoping it would be a full day.

It was a full day, and then there was overtime, and

although she had no more lunch she decided to work on for the extra money, anyway. Almost all the other packers were staying on, too, and her neighbor across the alley, Leeza Ahboot, who worked beside her, said, “Let us work until the work stops, then we’ll go home and fix a supper between us and eat it in your parsley garden where it’s so cool. It’s a hot day and there’s no sense not making an extra fifty or sixty cents.”

When the two women reached the garden it was almost nine o’clock, but still daylight, and she saw her son nailing pieces of box wood together, making something with a hammer. It looked like a bench. He had already watered the garden and tidied up the rest of the yard, and the place seemed very nice, and her son seemed very serious and busy. She and Leeza went straight to work for their supper, picking bell peppers and tomatoes and cucumbers and a great deal of parsley for the salad.

Then Leeza went to her house for some bread which she had baked the night before, and some white cheese, and in a few minutes they were having supper together and talking pleasantly about the successful day they had had. After supper, they made Turkish coffee over an open fire in the yard. They drank the coffee and smoked a cigarette apiece, and told one another stories about their experiences in the old country and here in Fresno, and then they looked into their cups at the grounds to see if any food fortune was indicated, and there was: health and work and supper out of doors in the summer and enough money for the rest of the year.

Al Condraj worked and overheard some of the things they said, and then Leeza went home to go to bed, and his mother said, “Where you get it, that hammer, Al?”

“I got it at the store.”

“How you get it? You steal it?”

Al Condraj finished the bench and sat on it. “No,” he said. “I didn’t steal it.”

“How you get it?”

“I worked at the store for it,” Al said.

“The store where you steal it yesterday?”

“Yes.”

“Who give you job?”

“The boss.”

“What you do?”

“I carried different stuff to the different counters.”

“Well, that’s good,” the woman said. “How long you work for that little hammer?”

“I worked all day,” Al said. “Mr. Clemmer gave me the hammer after I’d worked for one hour, but I went right on working. The fellow who caught me yesterday and showed me what to do, and we worked together. We didn’t talk, but at the end of the day he took me to Mr. Clemmer’s office and he told Mr. Clemmer that I’d worked hard all day ought to be paid at least a dollar.”

“That’s good,” the woman said.

“So Mr. Clemmer put a silver dollar on his desk for me, and then the fellow who caught me yesterday told him the store needed a boy like me every day, for a dollar a day, and Mr. Clemmer said I could have the job.”

“That’s good,” the woman said. “You can make a little money for yourself.”

“I left the dollar on Mr. Clemmer’s desk,” Al Condraj said, “and I told them both I didn’t want the job.”

“Why you say that?” the woman said: “Dollar a day for eleven year old boy good money. Why you not take job?”

“Because I hate the both of then,” the boy said. “I would never work for people like that. I just looked at them and picked up my hammer and walked out. I came home and I made this bench.”

“All right,” his mother said. “Shut up.”

His mother went inside and went to bed, but Al Condraj sat on the bench he had made and smelled the parsley garden and didn’t feel humiliated any more.

But nothing could stop him from hating the two men, even though he knew they hadn’t done anything they shouldn’t have done.

A CHRISTMAS MEMORY
Truman Capote

Imagine a morning in late November. A coming of winter morning more than twenty years ago. Consider the kitchen of a spreading old house in a country town. A great black stove is its main feature; but there is also a big round table and a fireplace with two rocking chairs placed in front of it. Just today the fireplace commenced its seasonal roar.

A woman with shorn white hair is standing at the kitchen window. She is wearing tennis shoes and a shapeless gray sweater over a summery calico dress. She is small and sprightly, like a bantam hen; but, due to a long youthful illness, her shoulders are pitifully hunched. Her face is remarkable not unlike Lincoln's, craggy like that, and tinted by sun and wind; but it is delicate too, finely boned, and her eyes are sherry colored and timid. "Oh my," she exclaims, her breath smoking the windowpane, "it's fruitcake weather!"

The person to whom she is speaking is myself. I am seven; she is sixtysomething. We are cousins, very distant ones, and we have lived together— well, as long as I can remember. Other people inhabit the house, relatives; and though they have power over us, and frequently make us cry, we are not, on the whole, too much aware of them. We are each other's best friend. She calls me Buddy, in memory of a boy who was formerly her

best friend. The other Buddy died in the 1880's, when she was still a child. She is still a child.

"I knew it before I got out of bed," she says, turning away from the window with a purposeful excitement in her eyes. "The courthouse bell sounded so cold and clear. And there were no birds singing; they've gone to warmer country, yes indeed. Oh, Buddy, stop stuffing biscuit and fetch our buggy. Help me find my hat. We've thirty cakes to bake."

It's always the same: a morning arrives in November, and my friend, as though officially inaugurating the Christmas time of year that exhilarates her imagination and fuels the blaze of her heart, announces: "It's fruitcake weather! Fetch our buggy. Help me find my hat."

The hat is found, a straw cartwheel corsaged with velvet roses out-of-doors has faded: it once belonged to a more fashionable relative. Together, we guide our buggy, a dilapidated baby carriage, out to the garden and into a grove of pecan trees. The buggy is mine; that is, it was bought for me when I was born. It is made of wicker, rather unraveled, and the wheelswobble like a drunkard's legs. But it is a faithful object; springtimes, we take it to the woods and fill it with flowers, herbs, wild fern for our porch pots; in the summer, we pile it with picnic paraphernalia and sugar cane fishing poles and roll it down to the edge of a creek; it has its winter uses, too: as a truck for hauling firewood from the yard to the kitchen, as a warm bed for Queenie, our tough little orange and white rat terrier who has survived distemper and two rattlesnake bites. Queenie is trotting beside it now.

Three hours later we are back in the kitchen hulling a heaping buggyload of windfall pecans. Our backs hurt from gathering them: how hard they were to find (the main crop having been shaken off the trees and sold by the orchards owners, who are not us)

among the concealing leaves, the frosted, deceiving grass. Caarackle! A cheery crunch, scraps of miniature thunder sound as the shells collapse and the golden mound of sweet oily ivory meat mounts in the milk glass bowl. Queenie begs to taste, and now and again my friend sneaks her a mite, though insisting we deprive ourselves. “We mustn’t, Buddy. If we start, we won’t stop. And there’s scarcely enough as there is. For thirty cakes.” The kitchen is growing dark. Dusk turns the window into a mirror: our reflections mingle with the rising moon as we work by the fireside in the firelight. At last, when the moon is quite high we toss the final hull into the fire and, with joined sighs, watch it catchflame. The buggy is empty, the bowl is brimful.

We eat our supper (cold biscuits, bacon, blackberry jam) and discuss tomorrow. Tomorrow the kind of work I like best begins: buying. Cherries and citron, ginger and vanilla and canned Hawaiian pineapple, rinds and raisins and walnuts and whiskey and oh, so much flour, butter, so many eggs, spices, flavorings: why, we’ll need a pony to pull the buggy home.

But before these purchases can be made, there is the question of money. Neither of us has any. Except for skinflint sums persons in the house occasionally provide (a dime is considered very big money); or what we earn ourselves from various activities: holding rummage sales, selling buckets of hand picked blackberries, jars of homemade jam and apple jelly and peach preserves, rounding up flowers for funerals and weddings. Once we won seventy-ninth prize, five dollars, in a national football contest. Not that we know a fool thing about football. It’s just that we enter any contest we hear about: at the moment our hopes are centered on the fifty-thousand-dollar Grand Prize being offered to name a new brand of coffee (we suggested “A.M.;” and, after some hesitation, for my friend thought it perhaps sacrilegious, the slogan

"A.M.! Amen!"). To tell the truth, our only really profitable enterprise was the Fun and Freak Museum we conducted in a back yard woodshed two summers ago. The Fun was a stereopticon withslide views of Washington and New York lent us by a relative who had been to those places (she was furious when she discovered why we'd borrowed it); the Freak was a three legged biddy chicken hatched by one of our own hens. Everybody hereabouts wanted to see that biddy: we charged grownups a nickel, kids two cents. And took in a good twenty dollars before the museum shut down due to the decease of the main attraction.

But one way and another we do each year accumulate Christmas savings, a Fruitcake Fund. These moneys we keep hidden in an ancient bead pürse under a loose board under the floor under a chamber pot under my friend's bed. The purse is seldom removed from this safe location except to make a deposit, or, as happens every Saturday, a withdrawal; for on Saturdays I am allowed ten cents to go to the picture show. My friend has never been to a picture show, nor does she intend to: "I'd rather hear you tell the story, Buddy. That way I can imagine it more. Besides, a person my age shouldn't squander their eyes. When the Lord comes, let me see him clear." In addition to never having seen a movie, she has never: eaten in a restaurant, traveled more than five miles from home, received or sent a telegram, read anything except funny papers and the Bible, worn cosmetics, cursed, wished someone harm, told a lie on purpose, let a hungry dog go hungry. Here are a few things she has done, does do: killed with a hoe the biggest rattlesnake ever seen in this county (sixteen rattles), dip snuff (secretly), tame hummingbirds (just try it) till they balance on her finger, tell ghost stories (we both believe in ghosts) so tingling they chill you in July, talk to herself, take walks in the rain, grow the prettiest japonicas in town, know the recipe for every sort of old-time Indian cure, including a magical wartremover.

Now, with supper finished, we retire to the room in a faraway part of the house where my friend sleeps in a scrap-quilt-covered iron bed painted rose pink, her favorite color. Silently, wallowing in the pleasures of conspiracy, we take the bead purse from its secret place and spill its contents on the scrap quilt. Dollar bills, tightly rolled and green as May buds. Somber fifty-cent pieces, heavy enough to weight a dead man's eyes. Lovely dimes, the liveliest coin, the one that really jingles. Nickels and quarters, worn smooth as creek pebbles. But mostly a hateful heap of bitter odored pennies. Last summer others in the house contracted to pay us a penny for every twenty-five flies we killed. Oh, the carnage of August: the flies that flew to heaven! Yet it was not work in which we took pride. And, as we sit counting pennies, it is as though we were back tabulating dead flies. Neither of us had a head for figures; we count slowly, lose track, start again. According to her calculations, we have $12.73. According to mine, exactly $13. "I do hope you're wrong, Buddy. We can't mess around with thirteen. The cakes will fall. Or put somebody in the cemetery. Why, I wouldn't dream of getting out of bed on the thirteenth." This is true: she always spends thirteenths in bed. So, to be on the safe side, we subtract a penny and toss it out the window.

Of the ingredients that go into our fruitcakes, whiskey is the most expensive, as well as the hardest to obtain: State laws forbid its sale. But everybody knows you can buy a bottle from Mr. Haha Jones. And the next day, having completed our more prosaic shopping, we set out for Mr. Haha's business address, a "sinful" (to quote public opinion) fish fry and dancing café down by the river. We've been there before, and on the same errand; but in previous years our dealings have been with Haha's wife, an iodine - dark Indian woman with brassy peroxided hair and a dead- tired disposition. Actually, we've never laid

eyes on her husband, though we've heard that he's an Indian too. A giant with razor scars across his cheeks. They call him Haha because he's so gloomy, a man who never laughs. As we approach his café (a large log cabin festooned inside and out with chains of garish gay naked light bulbs and standing by the river's muddy edge under the shade of river trees where moss drifts through the branches like gray mist) our steps slow down. Even Queenie stops prancing and sticks close by. People have been murdered in Haha's café. Cut to pieces. Hit on the head. There's a case coming up in court next month. Naturally these goings on happen at night when the colored lights cast crazy patterns and the victrola wails. In the daytime Haha's is shabby and deserted. I knock at the door, Queenie barks, my friend calls: "Mrs. Haha, ma'am? Anyone to home?"

Footsteps. The door opens. Our hearts overturn. It's Mr. Haha Jones himself! And he is a giant; he does have scars; he doesn't smile. No, he glowers at us through Satan-tilted eyes and demands to know: "What you want with Haha?"

For a moment we are too paralyzed to tell. Presently my friend half-finds her voice, a whispery voice at best: "If you please, Mr. Haha, we'd like a quart of your finest whiskey."

His eyes tilt more. Would you believe it? Haha is smiling! Laughing, too. "Which one of you is a drinkin' man?"

"It's for making fruitcakes, Mr. Haha. Cooking."

This sobers him. He frowns. "That's no way to waste good whiskey." Nevertheless, he retreats into the shadowed café and seconds later appears carrying a bottle of daisy yellow unlabeled liquor. He demonstrates its sparkle in the sunlight and says: "Two dollars."

We pay him with nickels and dimes and pennies.

Suddenly, jangling the coins in his hand like a fistful of dice, his face softens. "Tell you what," he proposes, pouring the money back into our bead purse, "just send me one of them fruitcakes instead."

"Well," my friend remarks on our way home, "there's a lovely man. We'll put an extra cup of raisins in his cake."

The black stove, stoked with coal and firewood, glows like a lighted pumpkin. Eggbeaters whirl, spoons spin round in bowls of butter and sugar, vanilla sweetens the air, ginger spices it; melting, nose tingling odors saturate the kitchen, suffuse the house, drift out to the world on puffs of chimney smoke. In four days our work is done. Thirty-one cakes, dampened with whiskey, bask on window sills and shelves.

Who are they for?

Friends. Not necessarily neighbor friends: indeed, the larger share are intended for persons we've met maybe once, perhaps not at all. People who've struck our fancy. Like President Roosevelt. Like the Reverend and Mrs. J. C. Lucey, Baptist missionaries to Borneo who lectured here last winter. Or the little knife grinder who comes through town twice a year. Or Abner Packer, the driver of the six o'clock bus from Mobile, who exchanges waves with us every day as he passes in a dust cloud whoosh. Or the young Wistons, a California couple whose car one afternoon broke down outside the house and who spent a pleasant hour chatting with us on the porch (young Mr. Wiston snapped our picture, the only one we've everhad taken). Is it because my friend is shy with everyone except strangers that these strangers, and merest acquaintances, seem to us our tru-est friends? I think yes. Also, the scrapbooks we keep of thank you's on White House stationery, time-to-time communications from California and Borneo, the knife

grinder's penny post cards, make us feel connected to eventful worlds beyond the kitchen with its view of a sky that stops.

Now a nude December fig branch grates against the window. The kitchen is empty, the cakes are gone; yesterday we carted the last of them to the post office, where the cost of stamps turned our purse inside out. We're broke. That rather depresses me, but my friend insists on celebrating—with two inches of whiskey left in Haha's bottle. Queenie has a spoonful in a bowl of coffee (she likes her coffee chicory flavored and strong). The rest we divide between a pair of jelly glasses. We're both quite awed at the prospect of drinking straight whiskey; the taste of it brings screwed up expressions and sour shudders. But by and by we begin to sing, the two of us singing different songs simultaneously. I don't know the words to mine, just: Come on along, come on along, to the dark town strutters' ball. But I can dance: that's what I mean to be, a tap dancer in the movies. My dancing shadow rollicks on the walls; our voices rock the chinaware; we giggle: as if unseen hands were tickling us. Queenie rolls on her back, her paws plow the air, something like a grin stretches her black lips. Inside myself, I feel warm and sparky as those crumbling logs, carefree as the wind in the chimney. My friend waltzes round the stove, the hem of her poor calico skirt pinched between her fingers as though it were a party dress: Show me the way to go home, she sings, her tennis shoes squeaking on the floor. Show me the way to go home.

Enter: two relatives. Very angry. Potent with eyes that scold, tongues that scald. Listen to what they have to say, the words tumbling together into a wrathful tune: "A child of seven! whiskey on his breath! are you out of your mind? feeding a child of seven! must be loony! road to ruination! Remember Cousin Kate? Uncle Charlie? Uncle Charlie's brother-in-law? shame! scandal! humiliation! kneel, pray, beg the Lord!"

Queenie sneaks under the stove. My friend gazes at her shoes, her chin quivers, she lifts her skirt and blows her nose and runs to her room. Long after the town has gone to sleep and the house is silent except for the chimings of clocks and the sputter of fading fires, she is weeping into a pillow already as wet as a widows handkerchief.

"Don't cry," I say, sitting at the bottom of her bed and shivering despite my flannel nightgown that smells of last winter's cough syrup, "don't cry," I beg, teasing her toes, tickling her feet, "you're too old for that."

"It's because," she hiccups, "I am too old. Old and funny."

"Not funny. Fun. More fun than anybody. Listen. If you don't stop crying you'll be so tired tomorrow we can't go cut a tree."

She straightens up. Queenie jumps on the bed (where Queenie is not allowed) to lick her cheeks. "I know where we'll find real pretty trees, Buddy. And holly, too. With berries big as your eyes. It's way off in the woods. Farther than we've ever been. Papa used to bring us Christmas trees from there: carry them on his shoulder. That's fifty years ago. Well, now: I can't wait for morning."

Morning. Frozen rime lusters the grass; the sun, round as an orange and orange as hot weather moons, balances on the horizon, burnishes the silvered winter woods. A wild turkey calls. A renegade hog grunts in the undergrowth. Soon, by the edge of knee-deep, rapid-running water, we have to abandon the buggy. Queenie wades the stream first, paddles across barking complaints at the swiftness of the current, the pneumonia making coldness of it. We follow, holding our shoes and equipment (a hatchet, a burlap sack) above our heads. A mile more: of chastising thorns, burs and briers that catch at our clothes; of rusty pine needles brilliant with gaudy fungus and molted feathers. Here, there, a flash,

a flutter, an ecstasy of shrillings remind us that not all the birds have flown south. Always, the path unwinds through lemony sun pools and pitch vine tunnels. Another creek to cross: a disturbed armada of speckled trout froths the water roun us, and frogs the size of plates practice belly flops; beaver workmen are building a dam. On the farther shore, Queenie shakes herself and trembles. My friend shivers, too: not with cold but enthusiasm. One of her hat's ragged roses sheds a petal as she lifts her head and inhales the pine-heavy air. "We're almost there, can you smell it, Buddy?" she says, as though we were approaching an ocean.

And, indeed, it is a kind of ocean. Scented acres of holiday trees, prickly-leafed holly. Red berries shiny as Chinese bells: black crows swoop upon them screaming. Having stuffed our burlap sacks with enough greenery and crimson to garland a dozen windows, we set about choosing a tree. "It should be," muses my friend, "twice as tall as a boy. So a boy can't steal the star." The one we pick is twice as tall as me. A brave handsome brute thatsurvives thirty hatchet strokes before it keels with a creaking rending cry. Lugging it like a kill, we commence the long trek out. Every few yards we abandon the struggle, sit down and pant. But we have the strength of triumphant huntsmen; that and the tree's virile, icy perfume revive us, goad us on. Many compliments accompany our sunset return along the red clay road to town; but my friend is sly and noncommittal when passers by praise the treasure perched in our buggy: what a fine tree and where did it come from? "Yonderways," she murmurs vaguely Once a car stops and the rich mill owner's lazy wife leans out and whines: "Giveya two-bits cash for that ol tree." Ordinarily my friend is afraid of saying no; but on this occasion she promptly shakes her head: "We wouldn't take a dollar." The mill owner's wife persists. "A dollar, my foot! Fifty cents. That's my last offer. Goodness, woman, you can get another one."

In answer, my friend gently reflects: "I doubt it. There's never two of anything."

Home: Queenie slumps by the fire and sleeps till tomorrow, snoring loud as a human.

A trunk in the attic contains: a shoebox of ermine tails (off the opera cape of a curious lady who once rented a room in the house, coils of frazzled tinsel gone gold with age, one silver star, a brief rope of dilapidated, undoubtedly dangerous candy like light bulbs. Excellent decorations, as far as they go, which isn't far enough: my friend wants our tree to blaze "like a Baptist window," droop with weighty snows of ornament. But we can't afford the made-in-Japan splendors at the five-and-dime. So we do what we've always done: sit for days at the kitchen table with scissors and crayons and stacks of colored paper. I make sketches and my friend cuts them out: lots of cats, fish too (because they're easy to draw), some apples, some watermelons, a few winged angels devised from saved-up sheets of Hershey bar tin foil. We use safety pins to attach these creations to the tree;as a final touch, we sprinkle the branches with shredded cotton (picked in August for this purpose). My friend, surveying the effect, clasps her hands together. "Now honest, Buddy. Doesn't it look good enough to eat?" Queenie tries to eat an angel.

After weaving and ribboning holly wreaths for all the front windows, our next project is the fashioning of family gifts. Tie-dye scarves for the ladies, for the men a home brewed lemon and licorice and aspirin syrup to be taken"at the first Symptoms of a Cold and after Hunting." But when it comes time for making each other's gift, my friend and I separate to work secretly. I would like to buy her a pearl-handled knife, a radio, a whole pound of chocolate-covered cherries (we tasted some once and she always swears: "I could live on them, Buddy, Lord yes I could—and that's not taking His name in vain").

Instead, I am building her a kite. She would like to give me a bicycle (she's said so on several million occasions: "If only I could, Buddy. It's bad enough in life to do without something you want; but confound it, what gets my goat is not being able to give somebody something you want them to have. Only one of these days I will, Buddy. Locate you a bike. Don't ask how. Steal it, maybe". Instead, I'm fairly certain that she is building me a kite—the same as last year, and the year before: the year before that we exchanged slingshots. All of which is fine by me. For we are champion kite fliers who study the wind like sailors; my friend, more accomplished than I, can get a kite aloft when there isn't enough breeze to carry clouds.

Christmas Eve afternoon we scrape together a nickel and go to the butcher's to buy Queenie's traditional gift, a good gnawable beef bone. The bone, wrapped in funny paper, is placed high in the tree near the silver star. Queenie knows it's there. She squats at the foot of the tree staring up in a trance of greed: when bedtime arrives she refuses to budge. Her excitement is equaled by my own. I kick the covers and turn my pillow as though it were a scorching summer's night. Somewhere a rooster crows: falsely, for the sun is still on the other side of the world.

"Buddy, are you awake?" It is my friend, calling from her room, which is next to mine; and an instant later she is sitting on my bed holding a candle. "Well, I can't sleep a hoot," she declares. "My mind's jumping like a jack rabbit. Buddy, do you think Mrs. Roosevelt will serve our cake at dinner?" We huddle in the bed, and she squeezes my hand I love you. "Seems like your hand used to be so much smaller. I guess I hate to see you grow up. When you're grown up, will we still be friends?" I say always. "But I feel so bad, Buddy. I wanted so bad to give you a bike. I tried to sell my cameo Papa gave me. Buddy—" she hesitates, as though em-

barrassed—"I made you another kite." Then I confess that I made her one, too; and we laugh. The candle burns too short to hold. Out it goes, exposing the starlight, the stars spinning at the window like a visible caroling that slowly, slowly daybreak silences. Possibly we doze; but the beginnings of dawn splash uslike cold water: we're up, wide eyed and wandering while we wait for others to waken. Quite deliberately my friend drops a kettle on the kitchen floor. I tap dance in front of closed doors. One by one the household emerges, looking as though they'd like to kill us both; but its Christmas, so they can't. First, a gorgeous breakfast: just everything you can imagine— from flapjacks and fried squirrel to hominy grits and honey in the comb. Which puts everyone in a good humor except my friend and I. Frankly, we're so impatient to get at the presents we can't eat a mouthful.

Well, I'm disappointed. Who wouldn't be? With socks, a Sunday school shirt, some handkerchiefs, a hand me down sweater and a year's subscription to a religious magazine for children. *The Little Shepherd*. It makes me boil. It really does.

My friend has a better haul. A sack of Satsumas, that's her best present. She is proudest, however, of a white wool shawl knitted by her married sister. But she says her favorite gift is the kite I built her. And it is very beautiful, though not as beautiful as the one she made me, which is blue and scattered with gold and green Good Conduct stars; moreover, my name is painted on it, "Buddy."

"Buddy, the wind is blowing."

The wind is blowing, and nothing will do till we've run to a pasture below the house where Queenie has scooted to bury her bone (and where, a winter hence, Queenie will be buried, too). There, plunging through the healthy waist high grass, we unreel our kites, feel them twitching at the string like sky fish as they swim

into the wind. Satisfied, sun warmed, we sprawl in the grass and peel Satsumas and watch our kites cavort. Soon I forget the socks and hand me down sweater. I'm as happy as if we'd already won the fifty-thousand-dollar Grand Prize in that coffee naming contest.

"My, how foolish I am!" my friend cries, suddenly alert, like a woman remembering too late she has biscuits in the oven. "You know what I've always thought?" she asks in a tone of discovery, and not smiling at me but a point beyond. "I've always thought a body would have to be sick and dying before they saw the Lord. And I imagined that when He came it would be like looking at the Baptist window: pretty as colored glass with the sun pouring through, such a shine you don't know it's getting dark. And it's been a comfort: to think of that shine taking away all the spooky feeling. But I'll wager it never happens. I'll wager at the very end a body realizes the Lord has already shown Himself. That things as they are"—her hand circles in a gesture that gathers clouds and kites and grass and Queenie pawing earth over her bone—"just what they've always seen, was seeing Him. As for me, I could leave the world with today in my eyes."

This is our last Christmas together.

Life separates us. Those who Know Best decide that I belong in a military school.

And so follows a miserable succession of bugle blowing prisons, grim reveille-ridden summer camps. I have a new home too. But it doesn't count. Home is where my friend is, and there I never go.

And there she remains, puttering around the kitchen. Alone with Queenie. Then alone. ("Buddy dear," she writes in her wild hard to read script, "yesterday Jim Macy's horse kicked Queenie bad. Be thankful she didn't feel much. I wrapped her in a Fine Linen sheet and rode her in the buggy down to Simpson's pasture where she

can be with all her Bones …"). For a few Novembers she continues to bake her fruitcakes single-handed; not as many, but some: and, of course, she always sends me "the best of the batch." Also, in every letter she encloses a dime wadded in toilet paper: "See a picture show and write me the story." But gradually in her letters she tends to confuse me with her other friend, the Buddy who died in the 1880's; more and more thirteenths are not the only days she stays in bed: a morning arrives in November, a leafless birdless coming of winter morning, when she cannot rouse herself to exclaim: "Oh my, it's fruitcake weather!"

And when that happens, I know it. A message saying so merely confirms a piece of news some secret vein had already received, severing from me a irreplaceable part of myself, letting it loose like a kite on a broken string. That is why, walking across a school campus on this particular December morning, I keep searching the sky. As if I expected to see, rather like hearts, a lost pair of kites hurrying toward heaven.

THE FLYING MACHINE
Ray Bradbury

In the year A.D. 400, the Emperor Yuan held his throne by the Great Wall of China, and the land was green with rain, readying itself toward the harvest, at peace, the people in his dominion neither too happy nor too sad.

Early on the morning of the first day of the first week of the second month of the new year, the Emperor Yuan was sipping tea and fanning himself against a warm breeze when a servant ran across the scarlet and blue garden tiles, calling, “Oh, Emperor, Emperor, a miracle!”

“Yes,” said the Emperor, “the air is sweet this morning.”

“No, no, a miracle!” said the servant, bowing quickly.

“And this tea is good in my mouth, surely that is a miracle.”

“No, no, Your Excellency.”

“Let me guess then the sun has risen and a new day is upon us. Or the sea is blue. That now is the finest of all miracles.”

“Excellency, a man is flying!”

“What?” The Emperor stopped his fan.

“I saw him in the air, a man flying with wings. I

heard a Voice call out of the sky, and when I looked up, there he was, a dragon in the heavens with a man in its mouth, a dragon of paper and bamboo, coloured like the sun and the grass."

"It is early," said the Emperor, "and you have just wakened from a dream."

"It is early, but I have seen what I have seen! Come, and you will see it too."

"Sit down with me here," said the Emperor. "Drink some tea. It must be a strange thing, if it is true, to see a man fly. You must have time to think of it, even as I must have time to prepare myself for the sight."

They drank tea.

"Please," said the servant at last, "or he will be gone."

The Emperor rose thoughtfully. "Now you may show me what you have seen."

They walked into a garden, across a meadow of grass, over a small bridge, through a grove of trees, and up a tiny hill.

"There!" said the servant.

The Emperor looked into the sky.

And in the sky, laughing so high that you could hardly hear him laugh, was a man; and the man was clothed in bright papers and reeds to make wings and a beautiful yellow tail, and he was soaring all about like the largest bird in a universe of birds, like a new dragon in a land of ancient dragons.

The man called down to them from high in the cool winds of morning. "I fly, I fly!"

The servant waved to him. "Yes, yes!"

The Emperor Yuan did not move. Instead he looked at the Great Wall of China now taking shape out of the farthest mist in the green hills, that splendid snake of

stones which writhed with majesty across the entire land. That wonderful wall which had protected them for a timeless time from enemy hordes and preserved peace for years without number. He saw the town, nestled to itself by a river and a road and a hill, beginning to waken. “Tell me,” he said to his servant, “has anyone else seen this flying man?” “I am the only one, Excellency,” said the servant, smiling at the sky, waving. The Emperor watched the heavens another minute and then said, “Call him down to me.”

“Ho, come down, come down! The Emperor wishes to see you!” called the servant, hands cupped to his shouting mouth.

The Emperor glanced in all directions while the flying man soared down the morning wind. He saw a farmer, early in his fields, watchihg the sky, and he noted where the farmer stood.

The flying man alit with a rustle of paper and a creak of bamboo reeds. He came proudly to the Emperor, clumsy in his rig, at last bowing before the old man.

“What have you done?” demanded the Emperor.

“I have flown in the sky, Your Excellency,” replied the man.

“What have you done?” said the Emperor again.

“I have just told you!” cried the flier.

“You have told me nothing at all.” The Emperor reached out a thin hand to touch the pretty paper and the birdlike keel of the apparatus. It smelled cool, of the wind.

“Is it not beautiful, Excellency?”

“Yes, too beautiful.”

“It is the only one in the world!” smiled the man. “And I am the inventor.”

“The only one in the world?”

"I swear it!"

"Who else knows of this?"

"No one. Not even my wife, who would think me mad with the son. She thought I was making a kite. I rose in the night and walked to the cliffs far away. And when the morning breezes blew and the sun rose, I gathered my courage, Excellency, and leaped from the cliff. I flew! But my wife does not know of it."

"Well for her, then," said the Emperor. "Come along."

They walked back to the great house. The sun was full in the sky now, and the smell of the grass was refreshing. The Emperor, the servant, and the flier paused within the huge garden.

The Emperor clapped his hands. "Ho, guards!"

The guards came running.

"Hold this man."

The guards seized the flier.

"Call the executioner," said the Emperor.

"What's this!" cried the flier, bewildered. "What have I done?" He began to weep, so that the beautiful paper apparatus rustled.

"Here is the man who has made a certain machine," said the Emperor, "and yet asks us what he has created. He does not know himself. It is only necessary that he create, without knowing why he has done so, or what this thing will do."

The executioner came running with a sharp silver ax. He stood with his naked, large muscled arms ready, his face covered with a serene white mask.

"One moment," said the Emperor. He turned to a nearby table upon which sat a machine that he himself had created. The Emperor took a tiny golden key from

his own neck. He fitted his key to the tiny, delicate machine and wound it up. Then he set the machine going.

The machine was a garden of metal and jewels. Set in motion, the birds sangs in tiny metal trees, wolves walked through miniature forests, and tiny people ran in and out of sun and shadow, fanning themselves with miniature fans, listening to tiny emerald birds, and standing by impossibly small but tinkling fountains.

"Is It not beautiful?" said the Emperor. "If you asked me what I have done here, I could answer you well. I have made birds sing, I have made forests murmur, I have set people to walking in this woodland, enjoying the leaves and shadows and songs. That is what I have done."

"But, oh, Emperor!" pleaded the flier, on his knees, the tears pouring down his face. "I have done a similar thing! I have found beauty. I have flown on the morning wind. I have looked down on all the sleeping houses and gardens. I have smelled the sea and even seen it, beyond the hills, from my high place. And I have soared like a bird; oh, I cannot say how beautiful it is up there, in the sky, with the wind about me, the wind blowing me here like a feather, there like a fan, the way the sky smells in the morning! And how free one feels! That is beautiful, Emperor, that is beautiful too!"

"Yes," said the Emperor sadly, "I know it must be true. For I felt my heart move with you in the air and I wondered: What is it like? How does it feel? How do the distant pools look from so high? And how my houses and servants? Like ants? And how the distant towns not yet awake?"

"Then spare me!"

"But there are times," said the Emperor, more sadly still, "when one must lose a little beauty if one is to keep what little beauty one already has. I do not fear

you, yourself, but I fear another man."

"What man?"

"Some other man who, seeing you, will build a thing of bright papers and bamboo like this. But the other man will have an evil face and an evil heart, and the beauty will be gone. It is this man I fear."

"Why? Why?"

"Who is to say that someday just such a man, in just such an apparatus of paper and reed, might not fly in the sky and drop huge stones upon the Great Wall of China?" said the Emperor.

No one moved or said a word.

"Off with his head," said the Emperor.

The executioner whirled his silver ax.

"Burn the kite and the inventor's body and bury their ashes together," said the Emperor.

The servants retreated to obey.

The Emperor turned to his hand-servant, who had seen the man flying. "Hold your tongue. It was all a dream, a most sorrowful and beautiful dream. And that farmer in the distant field who also saw, tell him it would pay him to consider it only a vision. If ever the word passes around, you and the farmer die within the hour."

"You are merciful, Emperor."

"No, not merciful," said the old man. Beyond the garden wall he saw the guards burning the beautiful machine of paper and reeds that smelled of the morning wind. He saw he dark smoke climb into the sky. "No, only very much bewildered and afraid." He saw the guards digging a tiny pit wherein to bury the ashes. "What is the life of one man against those of a million others? I must take solace from that thought."

He took the key from its chain about his neck and once more wound up the beautiful miniature garden. He stood looking out across the land at the Great Wall, the peaceful town, the green fields, the rivers and streams. He sighed. The tiny garden whirred its hidden and delicate machinery an set itself in motion; tiny people walked in forests, tiny faces loped through sun speckled glades in beautiful shining pelts, and among the tiny trees flew little bits of high song and bright blue and yellow colour, flying, flying, flying in that small sky.

"Oh," said the Emperor, closing his eyes, "look at the birds, look at the birds!"

From Golden Apples of the Sun Doubleday, 1953

CHILDREN OF THE HARVEST
Lois Phillips Hudson

On a suffocating summer day in 1937, the thirteenth year of drought and the seventh year of depression, with our mouths, nostrils, and eyes full of the dust blowing from our bare fields, my family sold to our neighbors at auction most of the accouterments of our existence. Then we loaded what was left in to a trailer my father had made and drove West to find water and survival on the Washington coast.

During the auction the two classmates with whom I had just finished the fourth grade hung about the desultory bidders giving me looks of respect and undisguised envy. They envied me not so much for the things they could imagine as for the things they couldn't—the unimaginable distance I was going and the unimaginable things along it and at the end of it.

And though we all could have imagined most of Montana well enough, how could any of us have imagined an end to the prairie's limitless sky and the giddy encroachments rising higher and higher against that sky that were the Rocky Mountains? How could we have imagined how in burning summer the forested profiles of the Cascades could echo everywhere the shouts of white falls above us and green rivers below? Who could have imagined, once confronted with their gray expanse, that the waters of Puget Sound were not actually

the Pacific, but only a minute stray squiggle of it? Who, finally, could have imagined that there were so many people in the world or that the world could offer them so hospitable a habitation?

There were so many things I could scarcely believe even when I was doing them or looking at them or eating them. We lived in a cabin on an island for a few weeks after we arrived, and it always seemed impossible to me that we could be surrounded by so much water. I spent every moment of the hour long ferry trip from the mainland hanging over the rail gazing down at the exhilarating wake of my first boat ride. The island was exactly what any island should be—lavish green acres covered with woods and orchards and fields of berries, ringed by glistening sandy beaches richly stocked with driftwood. Once in North Dakota my aunt had brought a very small basket of black cherries to my grandfather's house, and I had made the four or five that were my share last all afternoon. I would take tiny bites of each cherry, then suck the pit and roll it around with my tongue to get the faint remaining taste, till it came out as clean and smooth as a brook-bottom pebble. But on the island I would climb into the trees with my five year old sister and have contests with her, seeing which of us could get the most cherries in our mouths at once. Then we would shoot the wet pits, no longer hungrily scoured of their slipperiness, at each other and at the robins who perched above us. Sometimes I would go into the fields with my mother and father and spend an hour helping pick raspberries or loganberries or any of the other things they worked in, but there were really only two important things to do—play on the beaches and eat fruit.

It didn't occur to me that things would ever be different again, but one day early in August the last berry was picked and we took the ferry into Seattle, where we bought a big brown tent and a camp stove. We added

them to our trailer load and drove back over the green and white Cascades, beneath the glacial sunrise face of Mount Rainier, and down into the sweaty outdoor factory that is the Yakima Valley. There the Yakima River is bled for transfusions to the millions of rows of roots, its depleted currents finally dragging themselves muddily to their relieved merger with the undiminishable Columbia. One can follow the Yakima for miles and miles and see nothing but irrigated fields and orchards—and the gaunt camps of transient laborers.

The workers come like a horde of salvaging locusts, stripping a field, moving to the next, filling their boxes or crates or sacks, weighing in, collecting the bonuses offered to entice them to stay till the end of the season, and disappearing again. They spend their repetitive days in rows of things to be picked and their sweltering nights in rows of tents and trailers. We pitched our tents beside the others, far from our pleasant island where the owners of the fields were neighbors who invited my sister and me among their cherry trees. Here the sauntering owners and their bristling foreman never smiled at those children who ran through the fields playing games, and only occasionally at those who worked beside their parents.

In North Dakota I had worked on our farm—tramping hay, driving a team of horses, fetching cows, feeding calves and chickens—but of course that had all been only my duty as a member of the family, not a way to earn money. Now I was surrounded by grownups who wanted to pay me for working, and by children my own age who were stepping up to the pay window every night with weighing tags in their hands and collecting money. I saw that the time had come for me to assume a place of adult independence in the world.

I made up my mind I was going to earn a dollar all in one day. We were picking hops then, and of all the

rows I have toiled my way up and down, I remember hop rows the most vividly. Trained up on their wires fifteen feet overhead, the giant vines resemble monster grape arbors hung with bunches of weird unripe fruit. A man who does not pick things for a living comes and cuts them down with a knife tied to a ten foot pole so the people below can strip them off into sacks. Hops don't really look like any other growing thing but instead like something artificially constructed—pine cones, perhaps, with segments cleverly cut from the soft, limp, clinging leaves that lie next to the kernels of an ear of corn. A hop in your hand is like a feather, and it will almost float on a puff of air. Hops are good only for making beer, so you can't even get healthily sick of them by eating them all day long, the way you can berries or peas. Pickers are paid by the pound, and picking is a messy business. Sometimes you run into a whole cluster that is gummy with the honeydew of hop aphids, and gray and musty with the mildew growing on the sticky stuff. Tiny red spiders rush from the green petals and flow up your arms, like more of the spots the heat makes you see.

The professionals could earn up to six dollars a day. One toothless grandmother discouraged us all by making as much as anybody in the row and at the same time never getting out of her rocking chair except to drag it behind her from vine to vine. My father and mother each made over three dollars a day, but I tried to work almost as long hours as they did, my pay at the end of the day would usually be somewhere between eighty and ninety cents.

Then one day in the second week of picking, when the hops were good and I stayed grimly sweating over my long gray sack hung on a child-sized frame, I knew that this was going to be the day. As the afternoon waned and I added the figures on my weight tags over and over again in my head, I could feel the excitement begin to make spasms in my stomach.

That night the man at the pay window handed me a silver dollar and three pennies. He must have seen that this was a day not for paper, but for silver. The big coin, so neatly and brightly stamped, was coolly distant from the blurred mélange of piled vines and melting heat that had put it into my hand. Only its solid heaviness connected it in a businesslike way with the work it represented. For the first time in my life I truly comprehended the relationship between toil and media of exchange, and I saw how exacting and yet how satisfying were the terms of the world. Perhaps because of this insight, I did not want the significance of my dollar dimmed by the common touch of copper pettiness. I gave the vulgar pennies to my little sister, who was amazed but grateful. Then I felt even more grownup than before, because not everybody my age was in a position to give pennies to kids. That night I hardly slept, lying uncovered beside my sister on our mattress on the ground, sticking my hand out under the bottom of the tent to lay it on the cooling earth between the clumps of grass. Tired as I was, I had written post cards to three people in North Dakota before going to bed. I had told my grandmother, my aunt, and my friend Doris that I had earned a dollar in one day. Then, because I did not want to sound impolitely proud of myself, and to fill up the card, I added on each one, "I'm fine and I plan to pick again tomorrow. How are you?"

I couldn't wait to get to the field the next day and earn another dollar. Back home none of my friends would have dreamed of being able to earn so much in one day. The only thing to do back there for money was to trap gophers for the bounty; and even the big kids, who ran a fairly long trap line and had the nerve to cut the longest tails in half, couldn't make more than twenty cents on a good day, with tails at two cents apiece. I earned a dollar and forty cents the next day and the day after that, and at least a dollar every day for anoth-

er week, until we moved to another place of picking—a pear orchard.

By that time it was September, and most of us children from the rows of tents stood out at the gateway of the camp and waited each day for the long yellow school bus. I had never seen a school bus before, and my sister and I were shy about how to act in such a grand vehicle. We sat together, holding our lunch buckets on our knees, looking out at the trees beside the roads, trying to catch a glimpse of our mother and father on the ladders.

The school had about three times as many pupils in it as there were people in the town back in North Dakota where we used to go to buy coal and groceries. The pupils who were planning to attend this school all year were separated from those who, like me, did not know how many days or weeks we would be in that one spot. In our special classes we did a great deal of drawing and saw a number of movies. School was so luxurious in comparison with the hard work I had done in North Dakota the previous year that I wrote another post card to Doris, telling her that we never had to do fractions and that we got colored construction paper to play with almost every day. I copied a picture of a donkey with such accuracy that my teacher thought I had traced it until she held the two to the window and saw that the lines were indisputably my own. After that I got extra drawing periods and became very good at copying, which always excited more praise than my few original compositions.

I was understandably sad when we left that school after two weeks and went to Wenatchee. For the first time, we were not in a regular camp. The previous year my father, recognizing that the crops had not brought in enough to get us through the winter, had taken the train to Wenatchee after the sparse harvest was in and picked apples for a man named Jim Baumann. Baumann want-

ed him back, so he let us pitch our tent on his land not far from his house. We made camp, and after supper Baumann came down to talk about the next day's arrangements. The school was not so large as the other one, and there was no school bus for us because we were only a half mile away from it. Baumann was shorthanded in the packing shed and needed my mother early in the morning. Besides, there was no reason why she should have to take us to school, because he had a daughter in my grade who could walk with us and take us to our respective rooms.

"Why, isn't that lovely!" my mother exclaimed with unwonted enthusiasm. "Now you'll have a nice little girl to play with right here and to be your friend at school."

Her excitement was rather remarkable, considering the dubious reaction she had had to everybody else I had played with since we started camping. It hadn't seemed to me that she had liked even the boy who made me a pair of stilts and taught me to walk them. Now here she was favorably predisposed toward somebody I didn't even know. I agreed that it would be nice to have a nice little girl to play with.

The next morning my sister and I sat on the steps of the Baumanns' front porch, where Barbara's mother had told us to make ourselves at home, waiting for her to finish her breakfast. We had already been up so long that it seemed to me we must surely be late for school; I began picturing the humiliating tardy entrance into a roomful of strange faces.

Two of Barbara's friends came down the driveway to wait for her. They both wore the kind of plaid skirts I had been wondering if I could ask my mother about buying—after all, she had said all my dresses were too short this fall because of all the inches I'd grown in the summer. The two girls looked at us for a moment, then uncoiled shiny handled jump ropes and commenced

loudly shouting two different rhymes to accompany their jumping.

Barbara came out on the porch, greeted her friends with a disconcerting assurance, jumped down the steps past us, insinuated herself between them and clasped their hands. "I have to show these kids where the school is," she told them. Turning her head slightly she called, "Well, come if you're coming. We're going to be late." Swinging their arms together, they began to skip down the driveway.

A couple of times on the way to school they stopped and waited until we got near them; I yanked irritably on my little sister's arm and thought about how her shorter legs had been holding me back ever since she was born. I always seemed to be the one who had to drag a little kid along.

The teacher kept me standing at her desk while she called the roll and started the class on a reading assignment. When she looked up at me, I got the irrational impression that I had already managed to do something wrong. She asked where I had come from and I said "North Dakota," thinking it would be simpler than trying to tell all the places I had been in the last three months. She gave me the last seat in a row behind a boy in dirty clothes. As she passed by him she made the faintest sound of exhalation, as though she was ridding her nostrils of a disagreeable smell.

At recess a boy in a bright shirt and new cream colored corduroy pants yelled "North Dakota, North Dakota" in a funny way as he ran past me to the ball field. The boy who sat ahead of me came up and said confidentially, "We been out all around here for two years. We come from Oklahoma. We're Okies. That's what you are too, even if you didn't come from Oklahoma." I knew I could never be anything that sounded so crummy as "Okie," and I said so. "Oh, yeah!" he rejoined stiffly. I walked

away before he could argue any more and went to find my sister, but the primary grades had recess at a different time, so I went and stood by the door until the period was over. That afternoon I stayed in my seat reading a history book, but the teacher, who seemed to want to go outdoors herself, said, "It's better for the room if everybody goes outside for recess." So I went out and stood around the fringes of two or three games and wondered what was funny about North Dakota. Somehow I had the feeling that it would hurt my mother if I asked her.

The last part of the day was given to a discussion period, when each of us who wanted to was given a chance to tell about an important day in his life. The important days of my classmates, all about having a part in a play or learning to ride a bike, seemed so pathetically juvenile that I was impelled to speak. I stood at my seat and told about how before we had gone to the pear orchard, which was before we had come here, I had earned a dollar all in one day in the hopfields.

From two sides of the room Barbara's friends turned to send her looks which I intercepted but found inscrutable. I had been looking at her too, watching for her reaction. A boy near me poked another and whispered in mocking awe, "A whole dollar!"

The boy ahead of me jumped suddenly to his feet, banging his leg against the desk so hard that the entire row shook. "Heck," he cried, "we just come from there, too, and I made more'n a buck and a half every day." He gave me a triumphant smile and sat down. Then I knew I hated that boy. That night I told my mother about how there was a mean boy just like those other mean boys at the camps and how the teacher would have to put me right behind him. "Well," she sighed, "just try not to pay any attention to him."

By the time I had found my sister after school, Barbara and her friends had gone. The next morning when

we went to the big house she was gone, too.

After that, my sister and I walked together. Sometimes we would be close enough to hear Barbara's friends, who were always with her, laugh and call her "Bobby." I had never known any Barbaras before, and the name seemed full of unapproachable prestige and sophistication; it was the kind of name that could belong only to a girl who had as many dresses as Barbara Baumann had. "Bobby" was yet more awesome, as if she were as consequential as a boy. At school, if I recited in class, she acted queerly self conscious, as though she were responsible for me—the way I often felt around my sister when she said something stupid to kids my age.

For various reasons I had that same embarrassed feeling of an enforced distasteful relationship with the boy who sat ahead of me. Once in a while somebody in the class would tease me about him or would say something about "the hop pickers." I was bitterly determined to dissociate myself from the boy, and whenever he turned around to talk to me I would pretend he was trying to copy my paper. I would put my hand over it while I kept my eyes glued to the desk and felt my face grow hot.

There were some things about the school I liked very much. We were allowed to use the library a great deal; and for the first time in my life I had access to numbers of books I hadn't already read. By reading at noon and recess I could finish a book at school every two days. I would also have a book at home that I would read in a couple of nights. One of the nice things about living in a tent was that there were hardly any household chores to do and I could read as much as I wanted.

Frosty mornings came with October, and my sister and I would try to dress under the quilts before we got up to eat our oatmeal. Leaves began to blow across the road, apples grew redder with each cold night, pickers

hurried from tree to tree, filling the orchards with the soft thunder of hard round fruit rolling out of picking sacks into boxes, and packers worked faster and faster, trying to get the apples twisted up in fancy tissue and into boxes before they jammed up too thickly on the perpetually moving belts. After school my sister and I would go to the box shed behind the big house where Harry, Barbara's big brother, would be nailing boxes together for a nickel apiece. He was always glad to have company, and would let us stand at a respectful distance and watch him pound in nail after nail with two strokes—a tap to set it, then a mighty clout to send it in—three to an end, six to a side.

One afternoon, with the chill blue sky brilliant behind the orange and black Halloween cutouts on the windows, I was sitting at my desk dreamily drawing a witch in a moon when the teacher called my name. She told me that she wanted me to take all my books out of my desk and take them to the front of the room. Then she told everybody in my row to pack up his books and move one seat back. My heart banged alarmingly up in my throat and I nearly gagged from the sudden acute sensations in my viscera. In North Dakota such drastic action was taken only when an offender, after repeated warnings, had proved too incorrigible to sit anywhere except right in front of the teacher's desk. The fact that I had no idea of why I was now classified as such an incorrigible only augmented my anguish. While books, papers, and pencils fell to the floor and boys jostled each other in the aisle, I managed to sidle numbly up to the front. I sat down in my new seat, trying not to notice how shamefully close it was to the big desk facing it, and I was careful not to raise my eyes higher than the vase of zinnias standing on the corner nearest me.

When school was out I hurried to find my sister and get out of the schoolyard before anybody in my class. But Barbara and her friends had beaten us to the play-

ground entrance and they seemed to be waiting for us. Barbara said, “So now you’re in the A class.” She sounded impressed.

“What’s the A class?” I asked.

Everybody made superior yet faintly envious giggling sounds. “Well, why did you think the teacher moved you to the front of the room, dopey? Didn’t you know you were in the C class before? Way in the back of the room?”

Of course I hadn’t known. The Wenatchee fifth grade was bigger than my whole school had been in North Dakota, and the idea of subdivisions within a grade had never occurred to me. The subdividing for the first marking period had been done before I came to the school, and I had never, in the six weeks I’d been there, talked to anyone long enough to find out about the A, B, and C classes.

I still could not understand why that had made such a difference to Barbara and her friends. I didn’t yet know that it was disgraceful and dirty to be a transient laborer and ridiculous to be from North Dakota. I thought living in a tent was more fun than living in a house. I didn’t know that we were gypsies, really (how that thought would have thrilled me then!), and that we were regarded with the suspicion felt by those who plant toward those who do not plant. It didn’t occur to me that we were all looked upon as one more of the untrustworthy natural phenomena, drifting here and there like mists or winds, that farmers of certain crops are resentfully forced to rely on. I didn’t know that I was the only child who had camped on the Baumanns’ land ever to get out of the C class. I did not know that school administrators and civic leaders held conferences to talk about the problem of transient laborers.

I only knew that for two happy days I walked to school with Barbara and her friends, played hopscotch

and jump rope with them at recess, and was even invited into the house for some ginger ale—an exotic drink I had never tasted before.

Then we took down our tent and packed it in the trailer with our mattresses and stove and drove on, because the last apples were picked and sorted and boxed and shipped to the people all over the world, whoever they were, who could afford to buy them in 1937. My teacher wrote a letter for me to take to my next school. In it, she told me, she had informed my next teacher that I should be put into the A class immediately. But there wasn't any A class in my room, the new teacher explained.

By then I was traveled enough to realize that it was another special class for transients. The teacher showed us movies almost every day.

THE RANSOM OF RED CHIEF
O. Henry

It looked like a good thing: but wait till I tell you. We were down South, in Alabama—Bill Driscoll and myself—when this kidnapping idea struck us. It was, as Bill afterward expressed it, "during a moment of temporary mental apparition"; but we didn't find that out till later.

There was a town down there, as flat as a flannel cake, and called Summit, of course. It contained inhabitants of as undeleterious and self satisfied a class of peasantry as ever clustered around a Maypole.

Bill and me had a joint capital of about six hundred dollars, and we needed just two thousand dollars more to pull off a fraudulent town lot scheme in Western Illinois with. We talked it over on the front steps of the hotel. Philoprogenitiveness, says we, is strong in semi-rural communities; therefore, and for other reasons, a kidnapping project ought to do better there than in the radius of newspapers that send reporters out in plain clothes to stir up talk about such things. We knew that Summit couldn't get after us with anything stronger than constables and, maybe, some lackadaisical bloodhounds and a diatribe or two in the Weekly Farmers' Budget. So, it looked good.

We selected for our victim the only child of a prominent citizen named Ebenezer Dorset. The father was re-

spectable and tight, a mortgage fancier and a stern, upright collection plate passer and forecloser. The kid was a boy of ten, with bas-relief freckles, and hair the colour of the cover of the magazine you buy at the news stand when you want to catch a train. Bill and me figured that Ebenezer would melt down for a ransom of two thousand dollars to a cent. But wait till I tell you.

About two miles from Summit was a little mountain, covered with a dense cedar brake. On the rear elevation of this mountain was a cave. There we stored provisions.

One evening after sundown, we drove in a buggy past old Dorset's house. The kid was in the street, throwing rocks at a kitten on the opposite fence.

"Hey, little boy!" says Bill, "would you like to have a bag of candy and a nice ride?"

The boy catches Bill neatly in the eye with a piece of brick.

"That will cost the old man an extra five hundred dollars," says Bill, climbing over the wheel.

That boy put up a fight like a welter weight cinnamon bear; but, at last, we got him down in the bottom of the buggy and drove away. We took him up to the cave, and Ihitched the horse in the cedar brake. After dark I drove the buggy to the little village, three miles away, where we had hired it, and walked back to the mountain.

Bill was pasting court plaster over the scratches and bruises on his features. There was a fire burning behind the big rock at the entrance of the cave, and the boy was watching a pot of boiling coffee, with two buzzard tail feathers stuck in his red hair. He points a stick at me when I come up, and says:

"Ha! cursed paleface, do you dare to enter the camp of Red Chief, the terror of the plains?"

"He's all right now," says Bill, rolling up his trousers and examining some bruises on his shins. "We're playing Indian. We're making Buffalo Bill's show look like magic lantern views of Palestine in the town hall. I'm Old Hank, the Trapper, Red Chief's captive, and I'm to be scalped at daybreak. By Geronimo! that kid can kick hard."

Yes, sir, that boy seemed to be having the time of his life. The fun of camping out in a cave had made him forget that he was a captive himself. He immediately christened me Snake eye, the Spy, and announced that, when his braves returned from the warpath, I was to be broiled at the stake at the rising of the sun.

Then we had supper; and he filled his mouth full of bacon and bread and gravy, and began to talk. He made a during dinner speech something like this:

"I like this fine. I never camped out before; but I had a pet 'possum once, and I was nine last birthday. I hate to go to school. Rats ate up sixteen of Jimmy Talbot's aunt's speckled hen's eggs. Are there any real Indians in these woods? I want some more gravy. Does the trees moving make the wind blow? We had five puppies. What makes your nose so red, Hank? My father has lots of money. Are the stars hot? I whipped Ed Walker twice, Saturday. I don't like girls. You dassent catch toads unless with a string. Do oxen make any noise? Why are oranges round? Have you got beds to sleep on in this cave? Amos Murray has got six toes. A parrot can talk, but a monkey or a fish can't. How many does it take to make twelve?"

Every few minutes he would remember that he was a pesky redskin, and pick up his stick rifle and tiptoe to the mouth of the cave to rubber for the scouts of the hated paleface. Now and then he would let out a war whoop that made Old Hank the Trapper, shiver. That boy had Bill terrorized from the start.

"Red Chief," says I to the kid, "would you like to go home?"

"Aw, what for?" says he. "I don't have any fun at home. I hate to go to school. I like to camp out. You won't take me back home again, Snake-eye, will you?"

"Not right away," says I. "We'll stay here in the cave a while."

"All right!" says he. "That'll be fine. I never had such fun in all my life."

We went to bed about eleven o'clock. We spread down some wide blankets and quilts and put Red Chief between us. We weren't afraid he'd run away. He kept us awake for three hours, jumping up and reaching for his rifle and screeching: "Hist! pard," in mine and Bill's ears, as the fancied crackle of a twig or the rustle of a leaf revealed to his young imagination the stealthy approach of the outlaw band. At last, I fell into a troubled sleep, and dreamed that I had been kidnapped and chained to a tree by a ferocious pirate with red hair.

Just at daybreak, I was awakened by a series of awful screams from Bill. They weren't yells, or howls, or shouts, or whoops, or yawps, such as you'd expect from a manly set of vocal organs—they were simply indecent, terrifying, humiliating screams, such as women emit when they see ghosts or caterpillars. It's an awful thing to hear a strong, desperate, fat man scream incontinently in a cave at daybreak.

I jumped up to see what the matter was. Red Chief was sitting on Bill's chest, with one hand twined in Bill's hair. In the other he had the sharp case knife we used for slicing bacon; and he was industriously and realistically trying to take Bill's scalp, according to the sentence that had been pronounced upon him the evening before.

I got the knife away from the kid and made him lie down again. But, from that moment, Bill's spirit was

broken. He laid down on his side of the bed, but he never closed an eye again in sleep as long as that boy was with us. I dozed off for a while, but along toward sun up I remembered that Red Chief had said I was to be burned at the stake at the rising of the sun. I wasn't nervous or afraid; but I sat up and lit my pipe and leaned against a rock.

"What you getting up so soon for, Sam?" asked Bill.

"Me?" says I. "Oh, I got a kind of a pain in my shoulder. I thought sitting up would rest it."

"You're a liar!" says Bill. "You're afraid. You was to be burned at sunrise, and you was afraid he'd do it. And he would, too, if he could find a match. Ain't it awful, Sam? Do you think anybody will pay out money to get a little imp like that back home?"

"Sure," said I. "A rowdy kid like that is just the kind that parents dote on. Now, you and the Chief get up and cook breakfast, while I go up on the top of this mountain and reconnoitre."

I went up on the peak of the little mountain and ran my eye over the contiguous vicinity. Over toward Summit I expected to see the sturdy yeomanry of the village armed with scythes and pitchforks beating the countryside for the dastardly kidnappers. But what I saw was a peaceful landscape dotted with one man ploughing with a dun mule. Nobody was dragging the creek; no couriers dashed hither and yon, bringing tidings of no news to the distracted parents. There was a sylvan attitude of somnolent sleepiness pervading that section of the external outward surface of Alabama that lay exposed to my view. "Perhaps," says I to myself, "it has not yet been discovered that the wolves have borne away the tender lambkin from the fold. Heaven help the wolves!" says I, and I went down the mountain to breakfast.

When I got to the cave I found Bill backed up against

the side of it, breathing hard, and the boy threatening to smash him with a rock half as big as a coconut.

"He put a red-hot boiled potato down my back," explained Bill, "and then mashed it with his foot; and I boxed his ears. Have you got a gun about you, Sam?"

I took the rock away from the boy and kind of patched up the argument. "I'll fix you," says the kid to Bill. "No man ever yet struck the Red Chief but what he got paid for it. You better beware!"

After breakfast the kid takes a piece of leather with strings wrapped around it out of his pocket and goes outside the cave unwinding it.

"What's he up to now?" says Bill, anxiously. "You don't think he'll run away, do you, Sam?"

"No fear of it," says I. "He don't seem to be much of a home body. But we've got to fix up some plan about the ransom. There don't seem to be much excitement around Summit on account of his disappearance; but maybe they haven't realized yet that he's gone. His folks may think he's spending the night with Aunt Jane or one of the neighbours. Anyhow, he'll be missed today. Tonight we must get a message to his father demanding the two thousand dollars for his return."

Just then we heard a kind of war whoop, such as David might have emitted when he knocked out the champion Goliath. It was a sling that Red Chief had pulled out of his pocket, and he was whirling it around his head.

I dodged, and heard a heavy thud and a kind of a sigh from Bill, like a horse gives out when you take his saddle off. A niggerhead rock the size of an egg had caught Bill just behind his left ear. He loosened himself all over and fell in the fire across the frying pan of hot water for washing the dishes. I dragged him out and poured cold water on his head for half an hour.

By and by, Bill sits up and feels behind his ear and says: "Sam, do you know who my favourite Biblical character is?"

"Take it easy," says I. "You'll come to your senses presently."

"King Herod," says he. "You won't go away and leave me here alone, will you, Sam?"

I went out and caught that boy and shook him until his freckles rattled.

"If you don't behave," says I, "I'll take you straight home. Now, are you going to be good, or not?"

"I was only funning," says he sullenly. "I didn't mean to hurt Old Hank. But what did he hit me for? I'll behave, Snake eye, if you won't send me home, and if you'll let me play the Black Scout today."

"I don't know the game," says I. "That's for you and Mr. Bill to decide. He's your playmate for the day. I'm going away for a while, on business. Now, you come in and make friends with him and say you are sorry for hurting him, or home you go, at once."

I made him and Bill shake hands, and then I took Bill aside and told him I was going to Poplar Cove, a little village three miles from the cave, and find out what I could about how the kidnapping had been regarded in Summit. Also, I thought it best to send a peremptory letter to old man Dorset that day, demanding the ransom and dictating how it should be paid.

"You know, Sam," says Bill, "I've stood by you withoutbatting an eye in earthquakes, fire and flood— in poker games, dynamite outrages, police raids, train robberies and cyclones. I never lost my nerve yet till we kidnapped that two legged skyrocket of a kid. He's got me going. You won't leave me long with him, will you, Sam?"

"I'll be back some time this afternoon," says I. "You

must keep the boy amused and quiet till I return. And now we'll write the letter to old Dorset."

Bill and I got paper and pencil and worked on the letter while Red Chief, with a blanket wrapped around him, strutted up and down, guarding the mouth of the cave. Bill begged me tearfully to make the ransom fifteen hundred dollars instead of two thousand. "I ain't attempting," says he, "to decry the celebrated moral aspect of parental affection, but we're dealing with humans, and it ain't human for anybody to give up two thousand dollars for that forty pound chunk of freckled wildcat. I'm willing to take a chance at fifteen hundred dollars. You can charge the difference up to me."

So, to relieve Bill, I acceded, and we collaborated a letter that ran this way:

Ebenezer Dorset, Esq.:

We have your boy concealed in a place far from Summit. It is useless for you or the most skilful detectives to attempt to find him. Absolutely, the only terms on which you can have him restored to you are these: We demand fifteen hundred dollars in large bills for his return; the money to be left at midnight tonight at the same spot and in the same box as your reply—as hereinafter described. If you agree to these terms, send your answer in writingby a solitary messenger tonight at half past eight o'clock. After crossing Owl Creek, on the road to Poplar Cove, there are three large trees about a hundred yards apart, close to the fence of the wheat field on the right hand side. At the bottom of the fence post, opposite the third tree, will be found a small pasteboard box.

The messenger will place the answer in this box and return immediately to Summit.

If you attempt any treachery or fail to comply with our demand as stated, you will never see your boy again.

If you pay the money as demanded, he will be returned to you safe and well within three hours. These terms are final, and if you do not accede to them no further communication will be attempted.

Two Desperate Men

I addressed this letter to Dorset, and put it in my pocket. As I was about to start, the kid comes up to me and says:

"Aw, Snake eye, you said I could play the Black Scout while you was gone."

"Play it, of course," says I. "Mr. Bill will play with you. What kind of a game is it?" "I'm the Black Scout," says Red Chief, "and I have to ride to the stockade to warn the settlers that the Indians are coming. I'm tired of playing Indian myself. I want to be the Black Scout."

"All right," says I. "It sounds harmless to me. I guess Mr. Bill will help you foil the pesky savages."

"What am I to do?" asks Bill, looking at the kid suspiciously.

"You are the hoss," says Black Scout. "Get down on your hands and knees. How can I ride to the stockade without a hoss?"

"You'd better keep him interested," said I, "till we get the scheme going. Loosen up."

Bill gets down on his all fours, and a look comes in his eye like a rabbit's when you catch it in a trap.

"How far is it to the stockade, kid?" he asks, in a husky manner of voice.

"Ninety miles," says the Black Scout. "And you have to hurry to get there on time. Whoa, now!"

The Black Scout jumps on Bill's back and digs his heels in his side.

"For Heaven's sake," says Bill, "hurry back, Sam, as soon as you can. I wish we hadn't made the

ransom more than a thousand. Say, you quit kicking me or I'll get up and warm you good."

I walked over to Poplar Grove and sat around the post office and store, talking with the chaw-bacons that came in to trade. One whiskerando says that he hears Summit is all upset on account of Elder Ebenezer Dorset's boy having been lost or stolen. That was all I wanted to know. I bought some smoking tobacco, referred casually to the price of black eyed peas, posted my letter surreptitiously and came away. The postmaster said the mail carrier would come by in an hour to take the mail on to Summit.

When I got back to the cave Bill and the boy were not to be found. I explored the vicinity of the cave, and risked a yodel or two, but there was no response.

So I lighted my pipe and sat down on a mossy bank to await developments.

In about half an hour I heard the bushes rustle, and Bill wabbled out into the little glade in front of the cave. Behind him was the kid, stepping softly like a scout, with a broad grin on his face. Bill stopped, took off his hat and wiped his face with a red handkerchief. The kid stopped about eight feet behind him.

"Sam," says Bill, "I suppose you'll think I'm a renegade, but I couldn't help it. I'm a grown person with masculine proclivities and habits of self-defense, but there is a time when all systems of egotism and predominance fail. The boy is gone. I have sent him home. All is off. There was martyrs in old times," goes on Bill, "that suffered death rather than give up the particular graft they enjoyed. None of 'em ever was subjugated to such supernatural tortures as I have been. I tried to be faithful to our articles of depredation; but there came a limit."

"What's the trouble, Bill?" I asks him.

"I was rode," says Bill, "the ninety miles to the stockade, not barring an inch. Then, when the settlers was rescued, I was given oats. Sand ain't a palatable substitute. And then, for an hour I had to try to explain to him why there was nothin' in holes, how a road can run both ways and what makes the grass green. I tell you, Sam, a human can only stand so much. I takes him by the neck of his clothes and drags him down the mountain. On the way he kicks my legs black and blue from the knees down; and I've got to have two or three bites on my thumb and hand cauterized.

"But he's gone"—continues Bill—"gone home. I showed him the road to Summit and kicked him about eight feet nearer there at one kick. I'm sorry we lose the ransom; but it was either that or Bill Driscoll to the madhouse."

Bill is puffing and blowing, but there is a look of ineffable peace and growing content on his rose pink features

"Bill," says I, "there isn't any heart disease in your family, is there?"

"No," says Bill, "nothing chronic except malaria and accidents. Why?"

"Then you might turn around," says I, "and have a look behind you."

Bill turns and sees the boy, and loses his complexion and sits down plump on the ground and begins to pluck aimlessly at grass and little sticks. For an hour I was afraid for his mind. And then I told him that my scheme was to put the whole job through immediately and that we would get the ransom and be off with it by midnight if old Dorset fell in with our proposition. So Bill braced up enough to give the kid a weak sort of a smile and a promise to play the Russian in a Japanese war with him as soon as he felt a little better.

I had a scheme for collecting that ransom without danger of being caught by counterplots that ought to commend itself to professional kidnappers. The tree under which the answer was to be left—and the money later on—was close to the road fence with big, bare fields on all sides. If a gang of constables should be watching for any one to come for the note they could see him a long way off crossing the fields or in the road. But no, sirree! At half past eight I was up in thattree as well hidden as a tree toad, waiting for the messenger to arrive.

Exactly on time, a half-grown boy rides up the road on a bicycle, locates the pasteboard box at the foot of the fence post, slips a folded piece of paper into it and pedals away again back toward Summit.

I waited an hour and then concluded the thing was square. I slid down the tree, got the note, slipped along the fence till I struck the woods, and was back at the cave in another half an hour. I opened the note, got near the lantern and read it to Bill. It was written with a pen in a crabbed hand, and the sum and substance of it was this:

Two Desperate Men:

Gentlemen: I received your letter today by post, in regard to the ransom you ask for the return of my son. I think you are a little high in your demands, and I hereby make you a counterproposition, which I am inclined to believe you will accept. You bring Johnny home and pay me two hundred and fifty dollars in cash, and I agree to take him off your hands. You had better come at night, for the neighbors believe he is lost, and I couldn't be responsible for what they would do to anybody they saw bringing him back. Very respectfully,

Ebenezer Dorset

"Great pirates of Penzance!" says I; "of all the impudent—"

But I glanced at Bill, and hesitated. He had the mo-

stappealing look in his eyes I ever saw on the face ofa dumb or a talking brute.

"Sam," says he, "what's two hundred and fifty dollars, after all? We've got the money. One more night of this kid will send me to a bed in Bedlam. Besides being a thorough gentleman, I think Mr. Dorset is a spendthrift for making us such a liberal offer. You ain't going to let the chance go, are you?"

"Tell you the truth, Bill," says I, "this little he ewe lamb has somewhat got on my nerves too. We'll take him home, pay the ransom and make our get away."

We took him home that night. We got him to go by telling him that his father had bought a silver mounted rifle and a pair of moccasins for him, and we were going to hunt bears the next day.

It was just twelve o'clock when we knocked at Ebenezer's front door. Just at the moment when I should have been abstracting the fifteen hundred dollars from the box under the tree, according to the original proposition, Bill was counting out two hundred and fifty dollars into Dorset's hand.

When the kid found out we were going to leave him at home he started up a howl like a calliope and fastened himself as tight as a leech to Bill's leg. His father peeled him away gradually, like a porous plaster.

"How long can you hold him?" asks Bill.

"I'm not as strong as I used to be," says old Dorset, "but I think I can promise you ten minutes."

"Enough," says Bill. "In ten minutes I shall cross the Central, Southern and Middle Western States, and be legging it trippingly for the Canadian border."

And, as dark as it was, and as fat as Bill was, and as good a runner as I am, he was a good mile and a half out of Summit before I could catch up with him.