STUDYING THE SHORT-STORY

J. BERG ESENWEIN

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In the plain text version text in italics is enclosed by underscores (_italics_), and small capitals are represented in upper case as in SMALL CAPS.

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A number of words in this book have both hyphenated and non-hyphenated variants. For the words with both variants present the one more used has been kept.

Obvious punctuation and other printing errors have been corrected.

Studying the Short-Story

SIXTEEN SHORT-STORY CLASSICS
WITH INTRODUCTIONS, NOTES AND
A NEW LABORATORY STUDY METHOD
FOR INDIVIDUAL READING AND
USE IN COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS

BY

J. BERG ESENWEIN, A.M., LIT.D.

EDITOR OF THE WRITER'S MONTHLY

REVISED EDITION

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EDITED BY J. BERG ESENWEIN

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TO
MOTHER

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TO TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

Growing out of my former volume, *Writing the Short-Story*, appeared the use for a new book that should contain a large number of short-stories arranged and annotated in form suitable for school or private study. Accordingly, the unique marginal arrangement for notes, which was first used in the study of Maupassant's "The Necklace," in the earlier work, was also adopted in this, with the addition of exhaustive critical introductions and comments. Further study, whether by classes or by individuals, has been facilitated by the reading references upon the authors represented, and—arranged under each of the eight type-groups—the explicit lists of ten representative short-stories available for reading and analysis.

Five points were had in mind as a basis for the selection of the stories included in this collection: First, the real merit of the story, as illustrating the short-story structurally perfect, or as nearly perfect as could be found in combination with the other points desired; second, the typical qualities of the story, as standing for the class it was to represent; third, its intrinsic literary interest for the general reader; fourth, its representative quality as illustrating the author's tone and style; fifth, its suitability for class and private study and analysis.

Other stories are equally brilliant and equally representative, but some are too long to fit into such a selection; others are not available because of publishers' rules; still others are morally unsuitable for the uses of mixed classes of young people; while many capital stories are the work of authors who have not produced consistently good work.

The tone of many of the stories included is sad, and their endings tragic; this is accidental and has not at all governed the selection from my belief that stories of tragic quality are necessarily the greatest; though the tragic phases of life, being the most intense, are the most likely to offer attractive themes to authors who prefer to deal with strong and subtle situations. The same is true of stories dealing with sex problems, but these have been excluded for obvious reasons. Livelier and more cheerful stories either were not as representative of the types I desired to exhibit, or were rejected from other motives. Those who study these selections with a view to writing the short-story will do well to bear in mind that fiction of gloomy tone must be very well written and on themes of unusual power to atone for their depressing qualities.

For the use of teachers and their pupils, a series of general questions has been prepared (p. xxxi), besides questions at the end of each section. Of course these will be regarded as suggestive rather than exhaustive.

The margins left blank in the stories marked "For Analysis" may be used for pencil notes, at the option of the teacher. For further study, strips of writing paper may be attached to the margins of stories cut from the magazines and full notes added by the pupil. *Writing the Short-Story* will be found an

especially practical adjunct in making the marginal analyses and notes, as that work gives much space to the general structure of the short-story and an analysis of its parts. The nomenclature of *Writing the Short-Story* has been observed in this volume, as well as the typographical arrangement, where practicable —especially the practise of indicating short-stories by quotation marks, while printing book-titles in italics.

I venture to hope that the present work may prove helpful in disclosing to lovers of the short-story, as well as to those who wish merely to study its technique, the means by which authors of international distinction have secured their effects.

J. BERG ESENWEIN

Philadelphia, June 8, 1912.

NOTE TO REVISED EDITION

The only changes made in the original text are such typographical corrections as were needed and a considerable addition to the bibliography.

J. B. E.

Springfield, Mass., May 1, 1918.

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

The wide usefulness of *Writing the Short-Story*, by the author of this volume, as evidenced by its adoption for class use in the foremost American universities, colleges, and schools, and by the many thousands of well-known writers and younger aspirants who have found it so helpful in their craft, has encouraged the author to undertake the present work. Mere collections of short-stories are not lacking, but no other volume presents an authoritative international selection, with comprehensive classifications under leading short-story types, critical and biographical introductions, illuminating marginal notes, and opportunities for original study afforded by margins for the student's notes, together with questions and lists of stories for examination and study. Whether used singly or as a companion volume with *Writing the Short-Story*, it is confidently believed that the present work will prove a notable contribution to the literature of this most popular and significant literary form.

THE PUBLISHERS

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF THE SHORT-STORY

Fiction as an art has made more progress during the last hundred years than any other literary type. The first half of the nineteenth century especially developed a consciousness of subject matter and form in both the novel and the short-story which has created an epoch as notable in the history of fiction as was the age of Shakespeare in the progress of the drama. In Great Britain, France, Russia, Germany, and America arose fictional artists of distinguished ability, while in other nations writers of scarcely less merit soon followed.

The novel demands a special study, so even for its relation to our theme—the short-story—the reader must be referred to such works as specialize on the longer form.[1]

A comprehensive treatment of the short-story would include an inquiry into the origins of all short fictional forms, for every story that is short is popularly known as a short story. The fullest and best guide for such a study is Henry Seidel Canby's historical and critical treatise, *The Short Story in English*.

Naturally, an inquiry into origins would prove to be

measurably profitless and certainly dry for the general student were it not supplemented by the reading of a great many stories—preferably in the original—which illustrate the steps in short-story development from earliest times.[2]

A further field for a comprehensive survey would be a critical comparison of the modern form with its several ancestral and contributory forms, from original sources.

A third examen would be devoted to the characteristics and tendencies of the present-day short-story as presented in volume form and, particularly, in the modern magazine.

A fourth, would undertake to study the rhetoric of the form.[3]

None of these sorts of study can be exhaustively presented in this volume, yet all are touched upon so suggestively and with such full references that the reader may himself pursue the themes with what fullness he elects. The special field herein covered will be, I believe, sufficiently apparent as the reader proceeds.

Let it be understood from the outstart that throughout this volume the term short-story is used rather loosely to cover a wide variety of short fiction; yet presently it will be necessary to show precisely how the modern form differs from its fictive ancestors, and that distinction will assume some importance to those who care about recognizing the several short fictional forms and who enjoy calling things by their exact names.

The first story-teller was that primitive man who in his wanderings afield met some strange adventure and returned to his fellows to narrate it. His narration was a true story. The first fictionist—perhaps it was the same hairy savage—was he who, having chosen to tell his adventure, also resolved to add to it some details wrought of his own fancy. That was fiction, because while the story was compounded of truth it was worked out by the aid of imagination, and so was close kin to the story born entirely of fancy which merely uses true-seeming things, or veritable contributory facts, to make the story "real."

Egyptian tales, recorded on papyrus sheets, date back six thousand years. Adventure was their theme, while gods and heroes, beasts and wonders, furnished their incidents. When love was introduced, obscenities often followed, so that the ancient tales of pure adventure are best suited to present-day reading.

What is true of Egypt 4000 B. C. is equally true of Greece many centuries later. The Homeric stories will serve as specimens of adventure narrative; and the Milesian tales furnish the erotic type.

As for the literary art of these early fictions, we need only refer to ancient poetry to see how perfect was its development two thousand and more years ago; therefore—for the poets were story-tellers—we need not marvel at the majestic diction, poetic ideas, and dramatic simplicity of such short-stories as the Egyptian "Tales of the Magicians,"[4] fully six thousand years old; the Homeric legends, told possibly twenty-five hundred years ago;[5] "The Book of Esther,"[6] written more than twenty-one hundred years ago; and the stories by Lucius Apuleius, in *The*

Golden Ass,[7] quite two thousand years old.

In form these ancient stories were of three types: the anecdote (often expanded beyond the normal limits of anecdote); the scenario, or outline of what might well have been told as a longer story; and the tale, or straightforward chain of incidents with no real complicating plot.

Story-telling maintained much the same pace until the early middle ages, when the sway of religious ideas was felt in every department of life. Superstition had always vested the forces of nature with more than natural attributes, so that the wonder tale was normally the companion of the war or adventure story. But now the power of the Christian religion was laying hold upon all minds, and the French *conte dévot*, or miracle story, recited the wonderful doings of the saints in human behalf, or told how some pious mystic had encountered heavenly forces, triumphed over demons and monsters of evil, and performed prodigies of piety.

These tales were loosely hung together, and exhibited none of the compression and sense of orderly climax characteristic of the short-story to-day. In style the early medieval stories fell far below classic models, naturally enough, for language was feeling the corrupting influences of that inrush of barbarian peoples which at length brought Rome to the dust, while culture was conserved only in out-of-the-way places. In form these narratives were chiefly the tale, the anecdote, and the episode, by which I mean a fragmentary part of a longer tale with which it had little or no organic connection.

The *conte dévot* in England was even more crude, for Old English was less polished than the speech of France and its people more heroic than literary.

When we come to the middle of the fourteenth century we find in two great writers a marked advancement: Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and Boccaccio's *Decameron*—the former superior to the latter in story-telling art—opened up rich mines of legend, adventure, humor, and human interest. All subsequent narrators modeled their tales after these patterns. Chaucer's "The Pardoner's Tale" has many points in common with the modern short-story, and so has Boccaccio's *novella*, "Rinaldo," but these approaches to what we now recognize as the short-story type were not so much by conscious intention as by a groping after an ideal which was only dimly existent in their minds—so dimly, indeed, that even when once attained it seems not to have been pursued. For the most part the *fabliaux*[8] of Chaucer and the *novelle*[9] of Boccaccio were rambling, loosely knit, anecdotal, lacking in the firmly fleshed contours of the modern short-story. Even the *Gesta Romanorum*, or *Deeds of the Romans*—181 short legends and stories first printed about 1473—show the same ear marks.

About the middle of the sixteenth century appeared *The Arabian Nights*, that magic carpet which has carried us all to the regions of breathless delight. The story of "Ali Baba and The Forty Thieves," for one, is as near an approach to our present-day short-story as was Irving's "Rip Van Winkle," and quite unsurpassed in all the literature of wonder-tales.

Thus for two thousand years—yes, for six thousand years—the essentials of short story narration were unchanged. What progress had been made was toward truth-seeming, clearer characterization, and a finer human interest, yet so surpassing in these very respects are some of the ancient stories that they

remain models to-day. Chiefly, then, the short fiction of the eighteenth century showed progress over that of earlier centuries in that it was much more consistently produced by a much greater number of writers—so far as our records show.

Separately interesting studies of the eighteenth-century essay-stories of Addison, Steele, Johnson and others in the English periodicals, the *Spectator*, *Tatler*, *Rambler*, *Idler*, and *Guardian* might well be made, for these forms lead us directly to Hawthorne and Irving in America. Of almost equal value would be a study of Defoe's ghost stories (1727) and Voltaire's development of the protean French detective-story, in his "Zadig," twenty years later.

With the opening of the nineteenth century the marks of progress are more decided. The first thirty years brought out a score of the most brilliant story-tellers imaginable, who differ from Poe and his followers only in this particular—they were still perfecting the tale, the sketch, the expanded anecdote, the episode, and the scenario, for they had neither for themselves nor for their literary posterity set up a new standard, as Poe was to do so very soon.

Of this fecund era were born the German weird tales of Ernst Amadeus Hoffmann and J. L. Tieck; the *Moral Tales* of Maria Edgeworth, and the fictional episodes of Sir Walter Scott in Scotland; the anecdotal tales and the novelettes of Prosper Mérimée and Charles Nodier in France; the tales of Pushkin, the father of Russian literature; and the tale-short-stories of Washington Irving and Nathaniel Hawthorne in America. Here too lies a fascinating field of study, over which to trace the approach towards that final form, so to call it, which was both demonstrated and expounded by Poe. It must suffice

here to observe that Irving preferred the easy-flowing essay-sketch, and the delightful, leisurely tale (with certain well-marked tendencies toward a compact plot), rather than the closely organized plot which we nowadays recognize as the special possession of the short-story.

In France, from 1830 to 1832, Honoré de Balzac produced a series of notable short-stories which, while marvels of narration, tend to be condensed novels in plot, novelettes in length, or expanded anecdotes. However, together with the stories of Prosper Mérimée, they furnish evidence for a tolerably strong claim that the modern short-story was developed as a fixed form in France before it was discovered in America—a claim, however, which lacks the elements of entire solidity, as a more critical study would show.

From 1830 on, it would require a catalogue to name, and volumes to discuss, the array of European and American writers who have produced fictional narratives which have more or less closely approached the short-story form. Until 1835, when Edgar Allan Poe wrote “Berenice” and “The Assignation,” the approaches to the present form were sporadic and unsustained and even unconscious, so far as we may argue from the absence of any critical standard. After that year both Poe and others seemed to strive more definitely for the close plot, the repression of detail, the measurable unity of action, and the singleness of effect which Poe clearly defined and expounded in 1842.

Since Poe’s notable pronouncement, the place of the short-story as a distinctive literary form has been attested by the rise and growth of a body of

criticism, in the form of newspaper and magazine articles, volumes given broadly to the consideration of fiction, and books devoted entirely to the short-story. Many of these contributions to the literature of criticism are particularly important because their authors were the first to announce conclusions regarding the form which have since been accepted as standard; others have traced with a nice sense of comparison the origin and development of those earlier forms of story-telling which marked the more or less definite stages of progress toward the short-story type as at present recognized; while still others are valuable as characterizing effectively the stories of well-known writers and comparing the progress which each showed as the short-story moved on toward its present high place.

Some detailed mention of these writings, among other critical and historical productions, may be of value here, without at all attempting a bibliography, but merely naming chronologically the work of those critics who have developed one or more phases of the subject with particular effectiveness.[10]

Interesting and informing as all such historical and comparative research work certainly is, it must prove to be of greater value to the student than to the fiction writer. True, the latter may profit by a profound knowledge of critical distinctions, but he is more likely, for a time at least, to find his freedom embarrassed by attempting to adhere too closely to form, whereas in fiction a chief virtue is that spontaneity which expresses *itself*.

But there would seem to be some safe middle-ground between a flouting of all canons of art, arising from an utter ignorance and contempt of the history of any artistic form, and a timid and tied-up

unwillingness to do anything in fiction without first inquiring, “Am I obeying the laws as set forth by the critics?” The short-story writer should be no less unhampered because he has learned the origin and traced the growth of the ancient fiction-forms and learned to say of his own work, or that of others, “Here is a fictional sketch, here a tale, and here a short-story”—if, indeed, he does not recognize in it a delightful hybrid.

By far the most important contribution to the subject of short-story criticism was made by Edgar Allan Poe, when in May, 1842, he published in *Graham’s Magazine* a review of Hawthorne’s *Tales*, in which he announced his theory of the short-story—a theory which is regarded to-day as the soundest of any yet laid down.

In 1876, Friedrich Spielhagen pointed out in his *Novelle oder Roman* the essential distinction between the novel and the short-story.[11]

In 1884, Professor Brander Matthews published in the *Saturday Review*, London, and in 1885 published in *Lippincott’s Magazine*, “The Philosophy of the Short-story,” in which, independently of Spielhagen, he announced the essential distinction between the novel and the short-story, and pointed out its peculiarly individual characteristics. In a later book-edition, he added greatly to the original essay by a series of quotations from other critics and essayists, and many original comparisons between the writings of master short-story tellers.

In March 11, 1892, T. W. Higginson contributed to *The Independent* an article on “The Local Short-Story,” which was the first known discussion of that important type.

In 1895, Sherwin Cody published anonymously in London the first technical treatise on the rhetoric of the short-story, “The Art of Story Writing.”

In 1896, Professor E. H. Lewis instituted in Chicago University the first course of instruction in the art of story-writing.

In 1898, Charles Raymond Barrett published the first large work on *Short Story Writing*, with a complete analysis of Hawthorne’s “The Ambitious Guest,” and many important suggestions for writers.

In the same year Charity Dye first applied pedagogical principles to the study of the short story, in *The Story-Teller’s Art.*

In 1902, Professor Lewis W. Smith published a brochure, *The Writing of the Short Story*, in which psychological principles were for the first time applied to the study and the writing of the short-story.

In 1902, Professor H. S. Canby issued *The Short Story*, in which the theory of impressionism was for the first time developed. In 1903, this essay was included in *The Book of the Short Story*, Alexander Jessup collaborating, together with specimens of stories from the earliest times and lists of tales and short-stories arranged by periods.

In 1904, Professor Charles S. Baldwin developed a criticism of *American Short Stories* which has been largely followed by later writers.

In 1909, Professor H. S. Canby produced *The Short Story in English*, the first voluminous historical and critical study of the origins, forms, and content of the short-story.

I have dwelt upon the history of the short-story thus in outline because we often meet the inquiry—sometimes put ignorantly, sometimes skeptically—What is a short-story? Is it anything more than a story that is short?

The passion for naming and classifying all classes of literature may easily run to extreme, and yet there are some very great values to be secured by both the reader and the writer in arriving at some understanding of what literary terms mean. To establish distinctions among short fictive forms is by no means to assert that types which differ from the technical short-story are therefore of a lower order of merit. Many specimens of cognate forms possess an interest which surpasses that of short-stories typically perfect.

Ever since Poe differentiated the short-story from the mere short narrative we have come to a clearer apprehension of what this form really means. I suppose that no one would insist upon the standards of the short-story as being the criterion of merit for short fiction—certainly I should commit no such folly in attempting to establish an understanding, not to say a definition, of the form. More than that: some short-stories which in one or more points come short of *technical* perfection doubtless possess a human interest and a charm quite lacking in others which are technically perfect—just as may be the case with pictures.

Some things, however, the little fiction must contain to come technically within the class of perfect short-stories. It must be centralized about one predominating incident—which may be supported by various minor incidents. This incident must intimately concern one central character—and other

supporting characters, it may be. The story must move with a certain degree of directness—that is, there must be a thorough exclusion of such detail as is needless. This central situation or episode or incident constitutes, in its working out, the plot; for the plot must not only have a crisis growing out of a tie-up or crossroads or complication, but the very essence of the plot will consist in the resolution or untying or denouement of the complication.

Naturally, the word plot will suggest to many a high degree of complexity; but this is by no means necessary in order to establish the claims of a fictitious narrative to being a short-story. Indeed, some of the best short-stories are based upon a very slender complication; in other words, their plots are not complex.

Elsewhere[12] I have defined the short-story, and this statement may serve to crystallize the foregoing. "A short-story is a brief, imaginative narrative, unfolding a single predominating incident and a single chief character; it contains a plot, the details of which are so compressed, and the whole treatment so organized, as to produce a single impression."

But some of these points need to be amplified.

A short-story is brief not merely from the fact that it contains comparatively few words, but in that it is so compressed as to omit non-essential elements. It must be the narration of a single incident, supported, it may be, by other incidents, but none of these minor incidents must rival the central incident in the interest of the reader. A single character must be preëminent, but a pair of characters coördinate in importance may enjoy this single preëminence in the story, yet no minor characters must come to overshadow the central figure. The story will be

imaginative, not in the sense that it must be imaginary, or that the facts in the story may not be real facts, but they must be handled and organized in an imaginative way, else it would be plain fact and not fiction. The story must contain a plot; that is to say, it must exhibit a character or several characters in crisis—for in plot the important word is crisis—and the denouement is the resolution of this crisis. Finally, the whole must be so organized as to leave a unified impression upon the mind of the reader—it must concentrate and not diffuse attention and interest.

All of the same qualities that inhere in the short-story may also be found in the novelette, except that the novelette lacks the compression, unity and simplicity of the short-story and is therefore really a short novel. Both the novel and the novelette admit of sub-plots, a large number of minor incidents, and even of digressions, whereas these are denied to the short-story, which throws a white light on a single crucial instance of life, some character in its hour of crisis, some soul at the crossroads of destiny.

There is a tendency nowadays to give a mere outline of a story—so to condense it, so to make it swift, that the narration amounts to merely an outline without the flesh and blood of the true short-story. In other words, there is a tendency to call a scenario of a much longer story—for instance the outline of a novelette—a short-story. This extreme is as remote from the well-rounded short-story form as the leisurely novelette, padded out with infinite attention to detail.

The tale differs from the short-story in that it is merely a succession of incidents without any real sense of climax other, for example, than might be

given by the close of a man's life, the ending of a journey, or the closing of the day. The tale is a chain; the short-story is a tree. The links of the chain may be extended indefinitely, but there comes a time when the tree can grow no longer and still remain a perfect tree. The tale is practically without organization and without plot—there is little crisis, and the result of the crisis, if any there be, would be of no vital importance to the characters, for no special change in their relations to each other grows out of the crisis in the tale.

A sketch is a lighter, shorter, and more simple form of fiction than the short-story. It exhibits character in a certain stationary situation, but has no plot, nor does it disclose anything like a crisis from which a resolution or denouement is demanded. It might almost be called a picture in still life were it not that the characters are likely to live and to move.

In these introductory pages I have emphasized and reëmphasized these distinctions in various ways, because to me they seem to be important. But after all they are merely historical and technical. A man may be a charming fellow and altogether admirable even if his complexion quarrels with his hair and his hands do not match his feet in relative size.

The present tendency of the British and American short-story is a matter of moment because no other literary form commands the interest of so many writers and readers. All literature is feeling the hand of commerce, but the short-story is chiefly threatened. The magazine is its forum, and the magazine must make money or suspend. Hence the

chief inquiry of the editor is, What stories will make my magazine sell? And this is his attitude because his publisher will no longer pay a salary to an editor whose magazine must be endowed, having no visible means of support.

These conditions force new standards to be set up. The story must have literary merit, it must be true to life, it must deal sincerely with great principles—up to the limit of popularity. Beyond that it must not be literary, truthful, or sincere. Popularity first, then the rest—if possible.

All this is a serious indictment of the average magazine, but it is true. Only a few magazines regard their fiction as literature and not as merely so much merchandise, to be cut to suit the length of pages, furnish situations for pictures, and create subscriptions by readers. Yet somehow this very commercialized standard is working much good in spite of itself. It is demanding the best workmanship, and is paying bright men and women to abandon other pursuits in order to master a good story-telling method. It is directing the attention of our ablest literators to a teeming life all about them when otherwise they might lose themselves in abstractions "up in the air." It is, for business reasons, insisting upon that very compression to which Maupassant attained in the pursuit of art. It is building up a standard of precise English which has already advanced beyond the best work of seventy years ago —though it has lost much of its elegance and dignity.

In a word, the commercialized short-story is a mirror of the times—it compasses movement, often at the expense of fineness, crowds incidents so rapidly that the skeleton has no space in which to wear its flesh, and prints stories mediocre and worse because better

ones will not be received with sufficient applause.

But while the journalized short-story adopts the hasty standards of the newspaper because the public is too busy to be critical, in some other respects it mirrors the times more happily. The lessons of seriousness it utters with the lips of fun. Its favorite implement is a rake, but it does uncover evils that ought not to remain hidden. Finally, it concerns itself with human things, and tosses speculations aside; it carefully records our myriad-form local life as the novel cannot; and it has wonderfully developed in all classes the sense of what is a good story, and that is a question more fundamental to all literature than some critics might admit.

Here then is a new-old form abundantly worth study, for its understanding, its appreciation, and its practise. If there is on one side a danger that form may become too prominent and spirit too little, there are balancing forces to hold things to a level. The problems, projects and sports of the day are, after all, the life of the day, and as such they furnish rightful themes. Really, signs are not wanting that point to the truth of this optimistic assertion: The mass of the people will eventually do the right, and they will at length bring out of the commercialized short-story a vital literary form too human to be dull and too artistic to be bad.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES FOR CLASS

OR INDIVIDUAL STUDY OF A SHORT-STORY

1. Estimating from an average page, how many words has this story?

2. What type of story is it chiefly?

3. Does it subordinately illustrate any other types also? If so, which?

4. Is the title adequate?

5. What is its theme?

6. Write out a brief scenario of the plot.

7. Are the incidents arranged in effective order?

8. How many characters (a) speak, (b) are present but do not speak, (c) are referred to but are not present?

9. Are the characters idealized, or are they quite true to life?

10. Are the characters individualized? Point out how the author accomplishes this result.

11. What is the author's attitude toward his characters?

12. What is the proportion of dialogue to description and comment?

13. What do you think of the dialogue?

14. Do you regard this story as being realistic, romantic, idealistic, or composite?

15. Is the author's purpose apparent? If so, what is it?

16. Are there any weak points in the plot?

17. Is the introduction interesting and clear?

18. Does the story end satisfactorily?

19. Is the conclusion either too long or too short?

20. Would any parts of the story be improved either by shortening or by expanding? Be specific.

21. Does the story arouse in you any particular feeling, or mood?

22. What are the especially strong points of the story?

23. Write a general appreciation, using about two hundred words.

24. What is the final impression the story makes upon you?

NOTE

Nine distinct methods for the study of a novel are outlined in the appendix to *The Study of a Novel*, by Selden L. Whitcomb. Some of these may be applied to the short-story. Some excellent study methods and questions are given in *The Writing of the Short Story*, by Lewis Worthington Smith.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] Excellent and comprehensive works, dealing more especially with the English novel, are: *The English Novel*, Sidney Lanier (*Scribners*, 1883, 1897); *The Development of the English Novel*, Wilbur L. Cross (*Macmillan*, 1899); *The Evolution of the English Novel*, Francis Hovey Stoddard (*Macmillan*, 1900); *A Study of Prose Fiction*, Bliss Perry (Houghton-Mifflin, 1902); *The Study of A Novel*, Selden L. Whitcomb (Heath, 1905); *The Technique of the Novel*, Charles F. Horne (*Harpers*, 1908); *Materials and Methods of Fiction*, Clayton Hamilton (Baker-Taylor, 1908).

[2] Good collections arranged historically are, *The Book of the Short Story*, Alexander Jessup and Henry Seidel Canby; and *The Short-story*, Brander Matthews. The former contains lists of stories short and long grouped by periods.

[3] A full study of this character has been attempted in the present author's *Writing The Short-Story*, Hinds, Hayden and Eldredge. New York, 1909.

[4] *Egyptian Tales*, W. M. Flinders Petrie.

[5] *Stories from Homer*, Church.

[6] *The Bible as English Literature*, J. H. Gardiner.

[7] *A History of Latin Literature*, George A. Simcox.

[8] The *fabliau*, a French form adopted by the English, is an amusing story told in verse, generally of eight-syllable line. Another poetic form of the period is the *lai*, a short metrical romance.

[9] The Italian *novella* was popular in England down to the late Elizabethan period. It is a diverting little story of human interest but told with no moral purpose, even when it is reflective. In purpose it is the direct opposite of the *exemplum*, which is a moral tale told to teach a lesson, and may be compared to the "illustration" which the exhorter repeats in the pulpit to-day.

[10] For a fuller examination of the bibliography of the subject refer to the bibliographical notes in the books by Matthews, Baldwin, Perry, Jessup and Canby, Canby, Dye, C. A. Smith, and the editor of this volume—all referred to in detail elsewhere herein. A supplementary bibliographical note will also be found on p. 433.

[11] For this important record of the discriminations of a critic little known in America, we are indebted to Professor C. Alphonso Smith's work on *The American Short Story*.

[12] *Writing the Short-Story*, p. 30.

I
STORIES OF ACTION AND ADVENTURE

Mateo Falcone.—PROSPER MÉRIMÉE.

A Lodging for the Night.—ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

But the great majority of novels and plays represent human life in nothing more faithfully than in their insistence upon deeds. It is through action—tangible, visible action upon the stage, or, in the novel, action suggested by the medium of words—that the characters of the play and the novel are ordinarily revealed. In proportion as high art is attained in either medium of expression this action is marked by adequacy of motive, by conformity to the character, by progression and unity.—BLISS PERRY, *A Study of Prose Fiction.*

Studying The Short-Story

STORIES OF ACTION AND ADVENTURE

Few words are needed to set forth the meaning of this caption, for the designation is sufficiently explicit. One point, however, it will be well to emphasize: In fiction all action worthy of the name is the outward manifestation of an inward condition. There is a sense, therefore, in which all stories that are not mere pictures of internal states are stories of action; just as it may be said that all stories are stories of thought, feeling, and resolve. The point of distinction lies here: in which direction does the story tend?

In one class, outward action is seen to work profoundly upon the inward life, and the story shows us the workings of this influence in its final effect upon the inward man and his character. In another, an inward state is the basis, the premise, the initial force, in the story, and from that beginning the story goes on to show by a series of outward movements just how this great inward force operates in and upon conduct. In a third class, outward and inward action balance.

Now when the outward or visible action,

prominently displaying physical movement, becomes paramount, whether shown as cause or as effect, we have the action-story, and sometimes the adventure-story. And in proportion as the interest of the reader centers in what the characters *do* instead of in what they *are*, the story departs from the subtler forms, such as the character-study and the psychological-study, and action or adventure becomes the type. Reverse these conditions, and another sort is the result.

Naturally, many variations are possible with these two chief ingredients ready for use. One story may begin with soul action, then proceed to show us bodily action with great vividness, and end by taking us back into the man's inner life. Another may progress on contrary lines; and so on, in wide variety. The final test as to what is the predominating type lies in the appeal to the interest of the reader: is it based chiefly on what the characters are or on what they do? Is it the why, or the how, the motive or the happening, that is most absorbing? The best stories, even the best action and adventure yarns, are likely to show a fair proportion of both.

MÉRIMÉE AND HIS WRITINGS

Prosper Mérimée was born in Paris, September 28, 1803. His father, a Norman, was a professor in the *École des Beaux-Arts*, and his mother, Anne Moreau, who had English blood in her veins, was also an artist. Prosper attended the *Collège Henri IV*, and in the home of his parents met the *literati* of the day. He undertook the study of law, but soon abandoned it, and spent some years in observing life while journeying abroad. He made much of ancient and modern languages, becoming especially proficient in Spanish. Upon his return to Paris he served in public office, and held the post of Inspector General of Public Monuments until declining health compelled him to retire. He was elected to several learned societies and became a commander of the Legion of Honor, and, in 1844, a member of the French Academy. Nine years later he was made a Senator of France, an honor he owed to the friendship of the Empress Eugénie. He died at Cannes on the 23rd of September, 1870, at the age of sixty-seven.

Prosper Mérimée was a successful poet, translator, novelist, and short-story writer. His translations of the Russian novelists have been pronounced excellent. “Colomba” is a romantic novelette of singular power and charm. His most famous short-stories are “The Taking of the Redoubt,” “Tamango,” “Federigo,” “The Etruscan Vase,” “The Vision of Charles XI,” “The Venus of Ille,” “The Pearl of Toledo,” “Carmen” (on which Bizet’s opera is founded), “Arsène Guillot,” and “Mateo Falcone”; which follows, in a translation by the editor of this volume. It was first published in the *Revue de Paris*,

May, 1829.

Among French masters of the short-story, Mérimée easily holds place in the first rank. Both personality and genius are his, and both well repay careful study. He was an alert student of history, to whom its anecdotal side made strongest appeal. The detached, impersonal, unprejudiced attitude of the historian is seen in his short-stories, for he tells his narrative impartially, with a sort of take-it-or-leave-it air, allowing the story to make its own appeal without any special pleading on his part. His story-telling manner is, therefore, one of ironical coldness. He delighted to tell his tales in the matter-of-fact manner of the casual traveller who has picked up a good yarn and passes it on just as it was told him. And this literary attitude was a reflex of his personality. To him, to love deeply was to endure pain, to follow impulse was to court trouble, to cherish enthusiasms was to delude the mind, so he schooled himself to appear impassive. Yet now and then in his lucid and clear-cut stories, as in his urbane life, a certain sweetness is revealed which speaks alluringly of the tender spirit within.

> All my life I have sought to free myself from prejudices, to be a citizen of the world before being a Frenchman, but now all these garments of philosophy are nothing to me. To-day I bleed for the wounds of the foolish French, I mourn for their humiliations, and, however ungrateful and absurd they may be, I love them still.—PROSPER MÉRIMÉE, *letter to Madame de Beaulaincourt* (Marquise de

Castellane), written, ten days before his death, on hearing from his friend Thiers that the disaster of Sedan was irreparable and that the Empire was a thing of the past.

A gallant man and a gentleman, he has had the reward he would have wished. He has been discreetly and intimately enjoyed by delicate tastes.... It was his rare talent to give us those limpid, rapid, full tales, that one reads in an hour, re-reads in a day, which fill the memory and occupy the thoughts forever.—ÉMILE FAGUET, quoted by GRACE KING, in C. D. WARNER'S *Library of the World's Best Literature*.

Colomba, *Mateo Falcone*, *La Double Méprise*, *La Vénus d'Ille*, *L'Enlèvement de la Redoute*, *Lokis*, have equals, but no superiors, either in French prose fiction or in French prose. Grasp of human character, reserved but masterly description of scenery, delicate analysis of motive, ability to represent the supernatural, pathos, grandeur, simple narrative excellence, appear turn by turn in these wonderful pieces, as they appear hardly anywhere else.—GEORGE SAINTSBURY, *A Short History of French Literature*.

While inferior to Stendhal as a psychologist, notwithstanding the keenness of his analysis, he excels him in opening out and developing action, and in composing a work whose parts hang well together. In addition he possesses a "literary" style,—not the style of an algebraist, but that of an exact, self-sustained

writer. He attains the perfection of form in his particular line. Nearly all his stories are masterpieces of that rather dry and hard, though forceful, nervous, and pressing style, which constitutes him one of the most original and most characteristic novelists of the century.—GEORGES PELLISSIER, *The Literary Movement in France*.

I do not scruple to apply the word *great* to Mérimée, a word which is not to be used lightly, but of which he is thoroughly deserving. His style is the purest and clearest of our century; no better model could possibly be found for our present generation. His prose, to my mind, together with that of Musset, Fromentin, and Renan, is the most beautiful modern prose which has ever been written in the French language. Like the great classics of the 17th century, he never wrote a passage merely to please the eye or the ear; his sole aim was to express thought, and the colour of his language, which is so pre-eminently true to nature, is of a rare sobriety; he never studies effect, and, nevertheless, invariably attains it.—EDOUARD GRENIER, *Literary Reminiscences*.

FURTHER REFERENCES FOR READING ON MÉRIMÉE

Miscellaneous Studies, Walter Pater (1895); *Modern French Literature*, Benjamin W. Wells (1896); *Contes et Nouvelles, by Prosper Mérimée*, edited by J. E. Michell (1907); *A Century of French Fiction*, Benjamin W. Wells (1898); *Prosper Mérimée*, Arthur Symonds,

in *A Century of French Romance*, edited by Edmund W. Gosse (1901); *Six Masters in Disillusion*, Algar Therold (1909).

MATEO FALCONE

BY PROSPER MÉRIMÉE

Translation by The Editor

NOTE: The technical terms used in the marginal notes explanatory of the short-stories throughout this work follow the terminology used and treated fully in the present author's *Writing the Short-Story*.

A story of local-color because the Corsican customs determine the destinies of the characters. It is equally a character-study and a psychological study. Note how characters harmonize with setting, throughout.

As one comes out of Porto-Vecchio, and turns northwest toward the center of the island, the ground is seen to rise quite rapidly, and after three hours' walk by tortuous paths, blocked by large masses of rocks, and sometimes cut by ravines, the traveler finds himself on the edge of a very extensive *maquis*. This bush is the home of the Corsican shepherds, and of whomsoever has come into conflict with the law. It is well known that the Corsican laborer, to spare himself the trouble of fertilizing his lands, sets fire to a certain stretch of forest; so much the worse if the flames spread further than is needed;*Setting is minutely given, yet not diffusely.* whatever happens, he is sure to have a good harvest by sowing upon this ground, enriched by the ashes of the very trees which it grows. When the corn is plucked, he leaves the straw, because it is too much trouble to gather it. The roots, which have remained in the

ground without being harmed, sprout in the following spring into very thick shoots, which in a few years attain a height of seven or eight feet. This sort of underwood it is that they call *maquis*. It is composed of different kinds of trees and shrubs, all mixed and tangled, just as they were planted by God. Only with the hatchet in hand can a man open a passage, and there are *maquis* so dense and so tufted that even the wild sheep can not penetrate them.

One of Mérimée's deft personal touches, as though he were telling the story to Corsicans.

2. If you have killed a man, go into the *maquis* of Porto-Vecchio, and with a good gun and powder and ball, you will live there in safety. Do not forget a brown cloak with a *Why "brown"?* hood, which serves as a coverlet and a mattress. The shepherds will give you milk, *The vendetta. See Mérimée's novelette Colomba.* cheese, and chestnuts, and you will have nothing to fear from justice, nor from the relatives of the dead man, unless it be when you have to go down into the town to renew your munitions.

Sense of reality. Setting becomes specific. Begins with social characterization.

3. The house of Mateo Falcone, when I was in Corsica in 18—, was half a league from this *maquis*. He was a comparatively rich man for that country, living nobly, *Note force of "nobly."* that is to say, without doing anything, on the products of his herds, which the shepherds, a species of nomads, led to pasture here and there on the mountains. When I saw him, two years after the event which I am about to relate, he seemed to me about fifty years of age at the most. *Proceeds to physical characterization.* Picture a small, but robust man, with curly hair black as jet, and aquiline nose,

lips thin, large and animated eyes, and a deeply tanned complexion. *Hint of climax.* His skill in shooting was considered extraordinary, even in his country, where there were so many good shots. *Illustrative anecdotes.*For example, Mateo would never fire on a sheep with buckshot, but at a hundred and twenty paces he would bring it down with a bullet in its head, or in the shoulder, as he chose. At night he could use his gun as easily as by day, and they told me the following example of his skill, which will perhaps seem incredible to those who have not traveled in Corsica. At eighty paces, a lighted candle was placed behind a transparent piece of paper as large as a plate. He took aim, then the candle was extinguished, and after a moment in the most complete darkness, he shot and pierced the transparency three times out of four.

Advances to moral characterization.

4. With a talent so surpassing, Mateo Falcone had gained a great reputation. He was said to be as loyal a friend as he was dangerous an enemy. Otherwise obliging and charitable, he lived at peace with everyone in the district of Porto-Vecchio. But they tell of him that when at Corte, where he had gotten a wife, he had very vigorously freed himself of a rival who was reputed to be as redoubtable in war as in love; *Further anecdote.*at all events, people attributed to Mateo a certain gunshot which surprised this rival as he was shaving before a small mirror hung in his window.

Primitive ideals.

5. The affair having been hushed up, Mateo married. His wife Giuseppa had first presented him with three daughters (which enraged him), but finally a son

came, *Central character introduced unobtrusively.* whom he named Fortunato: he was the hope of the family, the inheritor of the name. *Vendetta and clan spirit.* The girls were well married; their father could reckon, in case of need, upon the poniards and rifles of his sons-in-law. *Introduction ends.* The son was only ten years old, but he was already showing signs of a promising disposition.

Action Begins. Foundation for crisis.
First Plot Incident.
(A plot incident is essential to a plot; to change it would be to alter the plot materially.)
An old-style literary device.

6. On a certain day in autumn, Mateo and his wife set out early to visit one of their flocks in a clearing of *maquis*. Little Fortunato wished to accompany them, but the clearing was too far away; besides, someone must stay to guard the house; so the father refused: we shall soon see if he had no occasion to repent.

Setting in contrast with crisis about to appear.

7. He had been gone for some hours, and little Fortunato was tranquilly stretched out in the sunshine, looking at the blue mountains, and thinking that on the next Sunday he would be going to town to dine with his uncle the corporal,[13] *All the footnotes are by Mérimée.* when he was suddenly interrupted in his meditations by the firing of a gun. He got up and turned toward that side of the plain from which the sound had *Action now supersedes setting.* come. Other gunshots followed, fired at irregular intervals, and each time they came nearer and nearer. *Note force of "irregular."* At last on the path which led from the plain to Mateo's house, appeared a man wearing a cap pointed like those worn by the mountaineers. *Dramatic*

*introduction of a leading character, and preparation for first crisis.*He was bearded and covered with rags, and dragged himself along with difficulty by leaning on his gun. *Second Plot Incident.*He had just received a gunshot wound in the thigh.

8. This man was a bandit,[14] who having set out at night to get some powder from the town, had fallen on the way into an ambush of Corsican soldiers.[15] After a vigorous defense he had succeeded in making his retreat, hotly pursued and skirmishing from rock to rock. But he had gained only a little on the soldiers, and his wound made it hopeless for him to reach the *maquis* before being overtaken.

9. He approached Fortunato and said to him:

Crisp dialogue gives feeling of intensity.

10. “You are the son of Mateo Falcone?”

11. “Yes.”

12. “I am Gianetto Sanpiero. I am pursued by the yellow collars.[16] Hide me, for I can go no further.”

13. “And what will my father say if I hide you without his permission?”

14. “He will say that you have done right.”

15. “How do you know?”

16. “Hide me quickly; they are coming.”

17. “Wait till my father comes.”

18. “How can I wait! A curse upon it! They will be here in five minutes. Come, hide me, or I will kill you.”

Note the lad’s constant coolness, and sly calculation.

19. Fortunato answered him with the utmost coolness:

20. “Your gun is empty, and there are no more cartridges in your *carchera*.”[17]

21. “I have my stiletto.”

22. “But could you run as fast as I can?”

23. He gave a leap, and put himself out of reach.

The right of asylum to kin is sacred to primitive peoples.

24. “You are no son of Mateo Falcone! Will you then allow me to be taken in front of your home?”

25. The child seemed to be touched.*Note force of “seemed.”*

26. “What will you give me if I hide you?” he asked him, drawing nearer.

Crisis particularized.
Plot Incident Particularized.

27. The fugitive felt in the leather pouch that hung at his belt, and took out a five-franc piece, which he had reserved, no doubt, for powder. Fortunato smiled at sight of the piece *Shows value of the reward.* of money, and seizing hold of it, he said to Gianetto:

28. “Fear nothing!”*Revelation of character.*

Resolution of first crisis.

29. He quickly made a large hole in a haystack which stood near by the house, Gianetto crouched down in it, and the child covered him up in such a way as to leave a little space for breathing, without making it possible for any one to suspect that the hay concealed a man. He acted, still further, with the cunning of a tricky savage. *Author’s real estimate of the boy.*He

went and brought a cat and her kittens, and set them on top of the haystack to make believe that it had not been recently touched. Then noticing the blood-stains on the path near the house, he carefully covered them with dust. This done, he lay down again in the sun with the utmost calmness.

Third Plot Incident. See ¶12.

30. Some minutes later six men in brown uniforms with yellow collars, commanded by an adjutant, stood before Mateo's door. This adjutant was a distant relative of Falcone—for in Corsica more remote degrees*A deputy in command.* of relationship are recognized than elsewhere. *Note complication by this relationship.*His name was Tidora Gamba; he was an energetic man, greatly feared by the banditti, many of whom he had already hunted down.

Crisis recurs.

31. "Good day, little cousin," he said, coming up to Fortunato. "How you have grown! Have you seen a man passing just now?"

Cunning in character further revealed.

32. "Oh, I am not so tall as you, Cousin," the child replied with a foolish look.

33. "That time's coming. But have you not seen a man pass by?—Tell me."

34. "If I have seen a man pass by?"

35. "Yes, a man with a pointed cap and a waistcoat embroidered in red and yellow?"

36. "A man with a pointed cap and a waistcoat embroidered in red and yellow?"

37. “Yes; answer quickly, and don’t repeat my questions.”

38. “This morning Monsieur le Curé passed our door on his horse Piero. He asked me how papa was, and I told him—”

Suspense.

39. “Ah, you little rascal, you are making game of me! Tell me at once which way Gianetto went, for it is he that we are after, and I am certain he took this path.”

40. “How do you know that?”

41. “How do I know that? I know you have seen him.”

Child’s crafty nature increasingly disclosed.

42. “Does one see passers-by when one is asleep?”

43. “You were not asleep, you little demon; the gunshots would have waked you.”

44. “You think, then, Cousin, that your guns make a great noise? My father’s rifle makes much more.”

45. “May the devil confound you, you young scamp! I am sure enough that you have seen Gianetto. Perhaps you have even hidden him. Here, comrades, go into this house, and see if our man is not there. He could walk only on one foot, and he has too much good sense, the rascal, to have tried to reach the *maquis* limping. Besides, the marks of blood stop here.”

Sly appeal to the fear inspired by Mateo’s reputation.

46. “Whatever will papa say!” asked Fortunato, with

a chuckle; “what will he say when he finds out that his house has been entered while he was away!”

Note use of suspense throughout. The story is one long crisis.

47. “Good-for-nothing!” cried the adjutant Gamba, taking him by the ear, “do you know that I am able to make you change your tune? Perhaps when I have given you a score or more thwacks with the flat of a sword, you will speak at last!”

48. But Fortunato still laughed derisively.

49. “My father is Mateo Falcone!” he said with energy.

50. “Do you know, you little rogue, that I can carry you off to Corte, or to Bastia? I’ll make you sleep in a dungeon, on a pallet of straw, your feet in irons, and I’ll have you guillotined, if you don’t tell me where Gianetto Sanpiero is.”

51. The child burst out laughing at this foolish threat. He only repeated:

52. “My father is Mateo Falcone!”

Compare with ¶4 and ¶49.

53. “Adjutant,” whispered one of the *voltigeurs*, “we’d better not embroil ourselves with Mateo.”

Setting is thus interwoven with the story, though slightly.

54. Gamba seemed evidently embarrassed. He talked in a low voice with his soldiers, who had already been through the house. It was not a lengthy operation, for the cabin of a Corsican consists of only a single square room. The furniture comprises a table, some benches, a few boxes, and utensils for hunting and housekeeping. Meanwhile, little

Fortunato caressed his cat, *Character revelation.* and seemed maliciously to enjoy the embarrassment of the *voltigeurs* and his cousin.

Suspense augmented.

55. One soldier came up to the haystack. He looked at the cat and carelessly gave a dig at the hay with his bayonet, shrugging his shoulders as if he thought the precaution were ridiculous. Nothing stirred, and the face of the child did not betray the least emotion.

More crafty coolness.

56. The adjutant and his troop were in despair; they were looking seriously toward the edge of the plain, as though disposed to return the way they had come; *The turn in the plot.* when their chief—convinced that threats would produce no effect upon the son of Falcone—thought he would make *Foundation for main crisis.* one last effort by trying the power of cajoleries and presents.

57. “Little Cousin,” he said, “you seem to be a wide-awake young fellow enough. You will get on! But you play a mean trick with me; and, if I did not fear to give pain to my cousin Mateo, devil take me, I’d carry you off with me!”

58. “Bah!”

59. “But, when my cousin returns I shall relate to him the whole affair, and for your having gone to the trouble to tell me a lie, he will give you the whip till he draws blood.”

60. “Do you know that?”

61. “You’ll find out! But, see here—be a good lad, and I’ll give you something.”

62. “I, my Cousin, will give you some advice—it is, that if you delay any more Gianetto will reach the *maquis*, then it will take a cleverer fellow to go and hunt for him.”

Main crisis augmented.

63. The adjutant drew from his pocket a silver watch worth quite ten crowns; and seeing how the little Fortunato’s eyes sparkled when he*Plot Incident Particularized.* looked at it, he said, as he held the watch suspended at the end of its steel chain:

Character appeal.

64. “You rogue! you would like very well to have such a watch as this hung round your neck, and to go and promenade the streets of Porto-Vecchio, proud as a peacock; people would ask you, ‘What time is it?’ and you would reply, ‘Look at my watch!’”

65. “When I am grown up, my uncle the corporal will give me a watch.”

66. “Yes; but your uncle’s son has one already—not such a fine one as this, it is true—of course, he is younger than you.”

67. The child sighed.

68. “Well, would you like this watch, little Cousin?”

Suspense.

69. Fortunato, ogling the watch out of the corner of his eyes, looked just as a cat does when they suddenly offer it a chicken. Because it is afraid a joke is being played on it, it dares not pounce upon its prey, and from time to time it turns away its eyes so as not to succumb to the temptation;*Illustration.* but it

constantly licks its chops, as if to say to its master, “But your joke is a cruel one!”

70. However, the adjutant Gamba seemed to be offering the watch in good faith. Fortunato did not hold out his hand, but he said to him with a bitter smile:

71. “Why do you jest with me?”

72. “By Heaven, I am not joking! Only tell me where Gianetto is and this watch is yours.”

Compare with ¶67.

73. Fortunato allowed an incredulous sigh to escape him; and, fixing his black eyes on those of the adjutant, he sought to find in them the faith he wished to have in his words.

A typical Latin protest.

74. “May I lose my epaulets,” cried the adjutant, “if I do not give you the watch on these terms! My comrades are witnesses, and I cannot go back on my word!”

75. So speaking, he held the watch nearer and nearer until it almost touched the pale cheeks of the child, whose face showed plainly the combat going on in his heart between covetousness and his respect for the laws of hospitality. *A key to the plot.* His bare breast heaved violently, and he seemed to be almost stifling. All the time the watch dangled and turned, and sometimes grazed the tip of his nose. *Main Crisis.* At length, little by little, his right hand lifted toward the watch, the ends of his fingers touched it, and it rested wholly on his palm, except that the adjutant still loosely held the end of the chain. The face was blue, the case was newly polished—in the sunshine it

seemed to be all afire. The temptation was too strong.

Crisis resolved and Downward Action Begins. Henceforward we see the Results of crisis, leading to the Climax.

76. So Fortunato raised his left hand and with his thumb pointed over his shoulder to the haystack against which he was standing. The adjutant understood him immediately. He let go the end of the chain; Fortunato felt himself sole possessor of the watch. *Still sly.*He jumped up with the agility of a deer, and moved ten paces away from the stack, which the *voltigeurs* at once began to overturn.

77. It was not long before they saw the hay move, and a bleeding man, poniard in hand, came forth. But when he tried to rise to his feet, his stiffening wound would not permit him to stand. He fell down. The adjutant threw himself upon him and snatched away his stiletto. Speedily, he was securely bound, in spite of his resistance.

78. Gianetto, laid on the ground and tied like a bundle of fagots, turned his head toward Fortunato, who had drawn nearer.

First Contributory Incident. (A contributory incident might be changed or even omitted without vitally changing the plot.)

79. “Son of—,” he said to him with more contempt than anger.

Tardy attempt to appear sincere. His contempt is all for Fortunato.

80. The boy threw to him the silver-piece that he had received from him, feeling conscious that he no longer merited it; but the outlaw seemed not to notice this action. He said to the adjutant in a perfectly cool voice:

Second Contributory Incident.

81. “My dear Gamba, I am not able to walk; you will be obliged to carry me to the town.”

82. “You could run as fast as a kid just now,” retorted his cruel captor. “But be easy, I am so glad to have caught you that I could carry you for a league on my own back without being tired. All the same, my friend, we are going to make a litter for you out of some branches and your cloak, and at the farm at Crespoli we shall find some horses.”

Character revelation.
Let-down in tension.

83. “Good!” said the prisoner. “You had better also put a little straw on your litter that I may travel more easily.”

New and resultant crisis. Fourth Plot Incident.

84. While the *voltigeurs* were occupied, some making a sort of stretcher out of chestnut boughs, and others dressing Gianetto’s wound, Mateo Falcone and his wife suddenly appeared in a bend of the path which led from the *maquis*. *Contrast to tragic spirit of the story.* The wife advanced, bending laboriously under an enormous bag of chestnuts, while her husband came up jauntily, carrying in his hand only a gun, while another was slung over his shoulder, *Local color.* for it is unworthy of a man to carry any other burden than his weapons.

85. At sight of the soldiers, Mateo’s first thought was that they had come to arrest him. But why that idea? Had he any quarrel with the law? No. He bore a good reputation. He was, as they say, particularly well thought of; but he was a Corsican, a mountaineer, and there are but few Corsican

mountaineers who, if they scrutinize their memories well, cannot find some pecadillo—some gunshot, some dagger thrust, or some similar bagatelle. *"Bagatelle" discloses the Corsican attitude.* Mateo, more than most, had a clear conscience, for it was fully ten years since he had pointed his gun against a man; but all the same he was prudent, and he put himself in position to make a good defense, if need be.

To reload his weapons, as appears in ¶87.

86. "Wife," said he to Giuseppa, "put down your sack and keep yourself in readiness."

87. She obeyed on the instant. He gave her the gun that was slung over his shoulder, and which would likely cause him inconvenience. *Suspense.* He cocked the one he had in his hand and advanced slowly toward the house, skirting the trees which bordered the path, and ready at the least hostile demonstration to throw himself behind the largest trunk, whence he could fire from cover. His wife walked close behind him, holding his spare gun and his cartridge box. *Local color.* The duty of a good housewife, in case of conflict, is to reload her husband's weapons.

Development of fourth incident.

88. On the other side, the adjutant was very uneasy at sight of Mateo advancing thus upon them with measured steps, his gun forward and his finger on the trigger.

Key.

89. "If it should chance," thought he, "that Gianetto is related to Mateo, or that he is his friend, and he intends to protect him, the bullets of his two guns will come to two of us *A fight would ensue.* as sure as a

letter to the post, and if he should aim at me, good-bye to our kinship!"

Note force of "alone."

90. In this perplexity, he put on a courageous front and went forward alone toward Mateo to tell him of the matter, while greeting him like an old acquaintance; but the brief space that separated him from Mateo seemed to him terribly long.

Note constraint.

91. "Hello! Ah! my old comrade," he called out. "How are you, old fellow? It's I, Gamba, your cousin."

Resolution of suspense.

92. Mateo, without replying a word, stopped, and while the other was speaking he imperceptibly raised the muzzle of his rifle in such a manner that it was pointing heavenward by the time the adjutant came up to him.

93. "Good day, brother,"[18] said the adjutant, holding out his hand. "It's a very long time since I've seen you."

94. "Good day, brother."

Diminutive for Giuseppa.

95. "I just came in, while passing, to say 'good day' to you and my cousin Pepa. We have had a long journey to-day; but we must not complain of fatigue, *There is something manlike in most of Mérimée's female characters.*for we have taken a famous prize. We have just got hold of Gianetto Sanpiero."

96. "God be praised!" exclaimed Giuseppa. "He stole

one of our milch goats last week."

Character contrast.

97. These words rejoiced Gamba.

98. "Poor devil!" said Mateo. "He was hungry."

New crisis. Preparation for climax.

99. "The fellow defended himself like a lion," pursued the adjutant, slightly mortified. "He killed one of the men, and, not content with that, he broke Corporal Chardon's arm; but that is not such a great disaster, for he is nothing but a Frenchman.... Then he hid himself so cleverly that the devil would not have been able to find him. Without my little cousin Fortunato, I should never have discovered him."

100. "Fortunato!" cried Mateo.

101. "Fortunato!" repeated Giuseppa.

102. "Yes, Gianetto was hidden way down in your haystack; but my little cousin showed me his trick. So I will speak of him to his uncle the corporal, that he may send him a fine present for his trouble. And his name and yours will be in the report which I shall send to *Monsieur l'avocat général*."

103. "Malediction!" said Mateo under his breath.

Misunderstanding adds to complication.

104. They had now rejoined the detachment. Gianetto was already laid on the litter and they were ready to leave. When he saw Mateo in the company of Gamba, he smiled a strange smile; then, turning himself toward the door of the house, he spat on the threshold as he cried out:

105. "House of a traitor!"

106. No one but a man who had made up his mind to die would have dared to utter the word “traitor” as applying to Falcone. *Key to plot. Fifth Plot Incident.* One good stroke of the dagger, which would not need to be repeated, would have immediately repaid the insult. But Mateo made no other gesture than that of putting his hand to his head like a dazed man.

Third Contributory Incident.

107. Fortunato had gone into the house upon seeing his father come up. He reappeared shortly with a jug of milk, which he offered with *Is this repentance, fear, hypocrisy, or an attempt to placate his father?* downcast eyes to Gianetto. “Keep away from me!” cried the outlaw in a voice of thunder.

108. Then turning to one of the *voltigeurs*,

109. “Comrade, give me a drink of water,” he said.

Delineation of mood by suggestion.

110. The soldier placed the gourd in his hands, and the bandit drank the water given him by a man with whom he had just exchanged gunshots. He then asked that they would tie his hands across his breast instead of having them behind his back.

111. “I prefer,” he said, “to lie down at my ease.”

Fourth Contributory Incident.

112. When they had adjusted them to his satisfaction, the adjutant gave the signal to start, said adieu to Mateo—who answered never a word—and went down at a quick pace toward the plain.

Suspense.

113. Some ten minutes passed before Mateo opened

his mouth. The child looked with an uneasy eye first at his mother, then at his father, who, leaning on his gun, was gazing at him with a gaze of concentrated wrath.

Preparation for Climax. Sixth and Final Plot Incident.

114. “You begin well,” said Mateo at last, in a voice calm but terrifying to those who knew the man.

115. “Father!” exclaimed the child with tears in his eyes, drawing near as if to fall upon his knees.

116. But Mateo only cried out:

117. “Away from me!”

118. The child stopped and began to sob, standing motionless a few steps from his father.

119. Giuseppa came near. She had just perceived the chain of the watch dangling about from Fortunato’s blouse.

Contrast with ¶114.

120. “Who gave you that watch?” she asked him severely.

Note the sly use of “cousin.”

121. “My cousin the adjutant.”

Fifth Contributory Incident.

122. Falcone seized the watch, and, throwing it violently against a stone, broke it into a thousand pieces.

123. “Woman,” he said, “this child—is he mine?”

124. Giuseppa’s brown cheeks flamed brick-red.

125. “What are you saying, Mateo? Do you know to whom you are speaking?”

Key.

126. “Well, this child is the first of his race who has committed a treason.”

Decision, and foundation for final crisis.

127. Fortunato’s sobs and hiccoughs redoubled, and Falcone kept his lynx-eyes always fixed upon him. At length he struck the ground with the butt of his gun; *Full Resultant Crisis.*then he flung it across his shoulder and, calling to Fortunato to follow him, retook the way to the *maquis*. The child obeyed.

128. Giuseppa ran after Mateo, and seized him by the arm.

129. “He is your son,” she said to him in a trembling voice, fixing her black eyes on those of her husband, as though to read what was passing through his mind.

Note the double meaning.

130. “Let me go,” replied Mateo: “I am his father.”

131. Giuseppa embraced her son, and went back crying into the hut. She threw herself on her knees before an image of the Virgin, and prayed with fervor.

Forecast.

132. Meanwhile, Falcone had walked about two-hundred yards along the path, and stopped at a little ravine, which he descended. He sounded the earth with the butt of his gun and found it soft and easy to dig. The spot seemed suitable for his design.

Suspense.

133. “Fortunato, go near to that large rock.”

134. The boy did as he was commanded, then he knelt down.

135. “Say your prayers.”

136. “Father, Father, do not kill me!”

137. “Say your prayers!” repeated Mateo in a terrible voice.

“Our Father, etc.,” “I believe in God, etc.”

138. The child, all stammering and sobbing, repeated the *Pater* and the *Credo*. The father, in a firm voice responded Amen at the close of each prayer.

139. “Are those all the prayers that you know?”

“Hail Mary, etc.” A liturgical prayer.

140. “I also know the *Ave Maria*, and the *Litany* that my aunt taught me, Father.”

141. “It is rather long, but it doesn’t matter.”

Note force of “achieved.”

142. The child achieved the *Litany* in a faint voice.

143. “Have you finished?”

Contrast with his former vicious “coolness.”

144. “Oh, Father, Father, mercy! Pardon me! I will never do it again! I will beg my cousin the corporal with all my might for mercy for Gianetto!”

145. He went on speaking; Mateo loaded his rifle and took aim as he said:

146. “May God forgive you!”

Full Climax and Denouement.

147. The boy made a desperate effort to get up and clasp his father's knees, but he had not time. Mateo fired, and Fortunato fell dead.

Note force of "throwing."

148. Without throwing a single glance at the body, Mateo returned to his house to fetch a spade with which to bury his son. He had taken but a few steps when he met Giuseppa, who had run out, alarmed by the sound of the firing.

149. "What have you done?"

150. "Justice!"

151. "Where is he?"

Sixth Contributory Incident.
Swift conclusion.
Character revelation.

152. "In the ravine; I am going to bury him.

He died a Christian; I shall have a mass sung for him.

Let some one tell my son-in-law Tiodoro Bianchi to come and live with us."

STEVENSON AND HIS WRITINGS

Robert Lewis Balfour Stevenson, as he was baptized, was born November 13, 1850, at Edinburgh, Scotland, of Scotch parents. He entered Edinburgh University when he was seventeen, intending to learn his father's profession, civil engineering—though he had always longed to be a writer, having dictated books at the precocious ages of six, seven,

and nine. At twenty-one he decided to study law, and four years later passed the bar examination in his native city. In 1880 he married Mrs. Osbourne, with whose son, Lloyd, he collaborated in the writing of several stories. Stevenson's health, which was never robust, sent him on many journeys in search of strength—to the European continent, several times to the United States, and once on a two years' voyage to the South Seas. In 1890 he finally settled in Samoa, where he died at his home, Vailima, December 3, 1894. He was buried on the nearby summit of Mount Vaea.

Stevenson was a brilliant novelist, essayist, poet, and short-story writer. *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped*, *The Master of Ballantrae*, and *Weir of Hermiston*—the last of which he left unfinished—are his best novels. His journeys were chronicled by such delightful travel-sketches as *An Inland Voyage*, *Travels With a Donkey*, and *The Silverado Squatters*. *A Child's Garden of Verse* contains his best poems. His most noteworthy essays are found in *Memories and Portraits*, and *Familiar Studies of Men and Books*. Most famous among his short-stories are "The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" (a novelette in length), "The Pavilion on the Links," "Thrawn Janet," "Will o' the Mill," "The Sire de Malétroit's Door," "The Merry Men," "Markheim," published first in *Unwin's Annual*, London, 1885, and given in this volume in full, and "A Lodging for the Night," which follows entire. It was first published in *The Temple Bar* magazine, October, 1877.

Stevenson was a supreme craftsman. No writer of the

short-story in English, except Edgar Allan Poe, was so conscious of his art and so gifted to create up to the measure of his orderly knowledge. In criticism of the story-teller's art, Poe was the greater originator, Stevenson the more brilliant generalizer; Poe was the deeper, Stevenson the broader; Poe's opinions as to form grew largely out of his own consciousness, and shaped his practices—they were arrived at deductively: Stevenson's standards grew as his creations shaped themselves, and were measurably molded by his own writings—they were examples of inductive reasoning. Thus Stevenson was doubly equipped to produce incomparably the greatest group of short-stories ever written by a Briton before the days of Kipling, and some sound critics will dispute even this reservation. In charm, in dash of style, in a sense of form, in pure romantic spirit, and in penetrating human interest, Stevenson ranks among the ten greatest short-story-tellers of his era.

> I wonder if any one had ever more energy upon so little strength?—R. L. STEVENSON, *Vailima Letters*.

> In the highest achievements of the art of words, the dramatic and the pictorial, the moral and romantic interest, rise and fall together by a common and organic law. Situation is animated with passion, passion clothed upon with situation. Neither exists for itself, but each inheres indissolubly with the other. This is high art; and not only the highest art possible in words, but the highest art of all, since it combines the greatest mass and diversity of the elements of truth and pleasure. Such are epics, and the few prose tales that have the epic weight.—R. L.

STEVENSON, *A Gossip on Romance*.

The stories of Stevenson exhibit a double union, as admirable as it is rare. They exhibit the union of splendid material with the most delicate skill in language; and they exhibit the union of thrilling events with a remarkable power of psychological analysis. —WILLIAM LYON PHELPS, *Essays on Modern Novelists*.

Mr. Stevenson enjoys the reputation of being the modern representative of the romantic school of fiction. There are others of high repute, for romanticism is now the vogue, but there is hardly any other whose name we would care to link with that of Walter Scott. —WILLIAM H. SHERAN, *Handbook of Literary Criticism*.

Perhaps the first quality in Mr. Stevenson's works, now so many and so various, which strikes a reader, is the buoyancy, the survival of the child in him. He has told the world often, in prose and verse, how vivid are his memories of his own infancy.... The peculiarity of Mr. Stevenson is not only to have been a fantastic child, and to retain, in maturity, that fantasy ripened into imagination: he has also kept up the habit of dramatising everything, of playing, half consciously, many parts, of making the world "an unsubstantial fairy place...." It is the eternal child that drives him to seek adventures and to sojourn among beach-combers and savages.—ANDREW LANG,

Essays in Little.

It has been stated that the finer qualities of Stevenson are called out by the psychological romance on native soil. He did some brilliant and engaging work of foreign setting and motive.... Judged as art, "The Bottle Imp" and "The Beach of Falesa" are among the triumphs of ethnic interpretation, let alone their more external charms of story. And another masterpiece of foreign setting, "A Lodging for the Night," is further proof of Stevenson's ability to use other than Scotch motives for the materials of his art.... Few novelists of any race have beaten this wandering Scot in the power of representing character and envisaging it, and there can hardly be successful characterization without this allied power of creating atmosphere.—RICHARD BURTON, *Masters of the English Novel.*

Not until 1877, and Robert Louis Stevenson's first published narrative, does any Englishman of real caliber show both desire and ability to do something *new* with the short story. This narrative was "A Lodging for the Night," published in *Temple Bar* for October.... "A Lodging for the Night" is as clearly and consciously an impressionistic short story as George Meredith's contemporary novelettes are not of that category; the two stories which followed ("Will o' the Mill" and "The Sire de Malétroit's Door") would assure the most timid critic of our generation that here was a master in this department of fiction.... There

is “The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,” that short story thrown over into the form of a detective romance.... Or there is “Markheim,” a story less powerful in execution, but more excellent in workmanship, and an almost ideal example of the impressionistic short story. Flaubert might have written the description of the curiosity shop as the murderer saw it, with its accusing clock-voices, its wavering shadows, from the inner door “a long slit of daylight like a pointing finger.” And Flaubert would have praised the skilful gradation of incident and description, whereby conscience gains and gains in the struggle for Markheim’s mind. But Hawthorne would have been prouder still of the plot—a weak man with a remnant of high ideals suddenly realizing that his curve is plotted and can lead him only downwards.... How like to Hawthorne’s usual way is Stevenson’s determination to make, at all costs, a moral issue the outcome of his story!... “Will o’ the Mill” is like a twice-told tale not only in theme; its whole effect is Hawthornesque. “A Lodging for the Night” has for its kernel a question of ethics.—H. S. CANBY, *The Short Story in English*.

FURTHER REFERENCES FOR READING ON STEVENSON

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(1895); *Adventures in Criticism*, A. T. Quiller-Couch (1896); *Critical Kit-Kats*, Edmund W. Gosse (1896); *Studies in Two Literatures*, Arthur Symons (1897); *Life of Robert Louis Stevenson*, Graham Balfour (1901); *Stevenson's Attitude to Life*, J. F. Genung (1901); *Memories of Vailima*, Isobel Strong and Lloyd Osbourne (1903); *Robert Louis Stevenson*, W. R. Nicoll and G. K. Chesterton.

FOR ANALYSIS

A LODGING FOR THE NIGHT

BY ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

It was late in November, 1456. The snow fell over Paris with rigorous, relentless persistence; sometimes the wind made a sally and scattered it in flying vortices; sometimes there was a lull, and flake after flake descended out of the black night air, silent, circuitous, interminable. To poor people, looking up under moist eyebrows, it seemed a wonder where it all came from. Master Francis Villon had propounded an alternative that afternoon, at a tavern window; was it only Pagan Jupiter plucking geese upon Olympus? or were the holy angels moulting? He was only a poor master of arts, he went on; and as the question somewhat touched upon divinity, he durst not venture to conclude. A silly old priest from Montargis, who was among the company, treated the young rascal to a bottle of wine in honor of the jest and grimaces with which it was accompanied, and swore on his own white beard that he had been just such another irreverent dog when he was Villon's age.

2. The air was raw and pointed, but not far below freezing; and the flakes were large, damp, and adhesive. The whole city was sheeted up. An army might have marched from end to end and not a footfall given the alarm. If there were any belated birds in heaven, they saw the island like a large

white patch, and the bridges like slim white spars, on the black ground of the river. High up overhead the snow settled among the tracery of the cathedral towers. Many a niche was drifted full; many a statue wore a long white bonnet on its grotesque or sainted head. The gargoyles had been transformed into great false noses, drooping toward the point. The crockets were like upright pillows swollen on one side. In the intervals of the wind, there was a dull sound of dripping about the precincts of the church.

3. The cemetery of St. John had taken its own share of the snow. All the graves were decently covered; tall white housetops stood around in grave array; worthy burghers were long ago in bed, be-nightcapped like their domiciles; there was no light in all the neighborhood but a little peep from a lamp that hung swinging in the church choir, and tossed the shadows to and fro in time to its oscillations. The clock was hard on ten when the patrol went by with halberds and a lantern, beating their hands; and they saw nothing suspicious about the cemetery of St. John.

4. Yet there was a small house, backed up against the cemetery wall, which was still awake, and awake to evil purpose, in that snoring district. There was not much to betray it from without; only a stream of warm vapor from the chimney-top, a patch where the snow melted on the roof, and a few half-obliterated footprints at the door. But within, behind the shuttered windows, Master Francis Villon, the poet, and some of the thievish crew with whom he consorted, were keeping the night alive and passing round the bottle.

5. A great pile of living embers diffused a strong and ruddy glow from the arched chimney. Before this

straddled Dom Nicolas, the Picardy monk, with his skirts picked up and his fat legs bared to the comfortable warmth. His dilated shadow cut the room in half; and the firelight only escaped on either side of his broad person, and in a little pool between his outspread feet. His face had the beery, bruised appearance of the continual drinker's; it was covered with a network of congested veins, purple in ordinary circumstances, but now pale violet, for even with his back to the fire the cold pinched him on the other side. His cowl had half fallen back, and made a strange excrescence on either side of his bull neck. So he straddled, grumbling, and cut the room in half with the shadow of his portly frame.

6. On the right, Villon and Guy Tabary were huddled together over a scrap of parchment; Villon making a ballad which he was to call the "Ballad of Roast Fish," and Tabary spluttering admiration at his shoulder. The poet was a rag of a man, dark, little, and lean, with hollow cheeks and thin black locks. He carried his four-and-twenty years with feverish animation. Greed had made folds about his eyes, evil smiles had puckered his mouth. The wolf and pig struggled together in his face. It was an eloquent, sharp, ugly, earthly countenance. His hands were small and prehensile, with fingers knotted like a cord; and they were continually flickering in front of him in violent and expressive pantomime. As for Tabary, a broad, complacent, admiring imbecility breathed from his squash nose and slobbering lips: he had become a thief, just as he might have become the most decent of burgesses, by the imperious chance that rules the lives of human geese and human donkeys.

7. At the monk's other hand, Montigny and Thevenin

Pensete played a game of chance. About the first there clung some flavor of good birth and training, as about a fallen angel; something long, lithe, and courtly in the person; something aquiline and darkling in the face. Thevenin, poor soul, was in great feather: he had done a good stroke of knavery that afternoon in the Faubourg St. Jacques, and all night he had been gaining from Montigny. A flat smile illuminated his face; his bald head shone rosily in a garland of red curls; his little protuberant stomach shook with silent chucklings as he swept in his gains.

8. “Doubles or quits?” said Thevenin.

9. Montigny nodded grimly.

10. “Some may prefer to dine in state,” wrote Villon, “On bread and cheese on silver plate. Or, or—help me out, Guido!”

11. Tabary giggled.

12. “Or parsley on a golden dish,” scribbled the poet.

13. The wind was freshening without; it drove the snow before it, and sometimes raised its voice in a victorious whoop, and made sepulchral grumblings in the chimney. The cold was growing sharper as the night went on. Villon, protruding his lips, imitated the gust with something between a whistle and a groan. It was an eerie, uncomfortable talent of the poet’s, much detested by the Picardy monk.

14. “Can’t you hear it rattle in the gibbet?” said Villon. “They are all dancing the devil’s jig on nothing, up there. You may dance, my gallants, you’ll be none the warmer! Whew! what a gust! Down went somebody just now! A medlar the fewer on the three-legged medlar-tree!—I say, Dom

Nicolas, it'll be cold to-night on the St. Denis Road?" he asked.

15. Dom Nicolas winked both his big eyes, and seemed to choke upon his Adam's apple. Montfaucon, the great grisly Paris gibbet, stood hard by the St. Denis Road, and the pleasantry touched him on the raw. As for Tabary, he laughed immoderately over the medlars; he had never heard anything more light-hearted; and he held his sides and crowed. Villon fetched him a fillip on the nose, which turned his mirth into an attack of coughing.

16. "Oh, stop that row," said Villon, "and think of rhymes to 'fish.'"

17. "Doubles or quits," said Montigny, doggedly.

18. "With all my heart," quoth Thevenin.

19. "Is there any more in that bottle?" asked the monk.

20. "Open another," said Villon. "How do you ever hope to fill that big hogshead, your body, with little things like bottles? And how do you expect to get to heaven? How many angels, do you fancy, can be spared to carry up a single monk from Picardy? Or do you think yourself another Elias—and they'll send the coach for you?"

21. "*Hominibus impossible*," replied the monk, as he filled his glass.

22. Tabary was in ecstasies.

23. Villon filliped his nose again.

24. "Laugh at my jokes, if you like," he said.

25. "It was very good," objected Tabary.

26. Villon made a face at him. "Think of rhymes to

'fish,'" he said. "What have you to do with Latin? You'll wish you knew none of it at the great assizes, when the devil calls for Guido Tabary, *clericus*—the devil with the humpback and red-hot finger-nails. Talking of the devil," he added, in a whisper, "look at Montigny!"

27. All three peered covertly at the gamester. He did not seem to be enjoying his luck. His mouth was a little to a side; one nostril nearly shut, and the other much inflated. The black dog was on his back, as people say in terrifying nursery metaphor; and he breathed hard under the grewsome burden.

28. "He looks as if he could knife him," whispered Tabary, with round eyes.

29. The monk shuddered, and turned his face and spread his open hands to the red embers. It was the cold that thus affected Dom Nicolas, and not any excess of moral sensibility.

30. "Come, now," said Villon—"about this ballad. How does it run so far?" And beating time with his hand he read it aloud to Tabary.

31. They were interrupted at the fourth rhyme by a brief and fatal movement among the gamesters. The round was completed, and Thevenin was just opening his mouth to claim another victory, when Montigny leaped up, swift as an adder, and stabbed him to the heart. The blow took effect before he had time to move. A tremor or two convulsed his frame; his hands opened and shut, his heels rattled on the floor; then his head rolled backward over one shoulder with the eyes wide open; and Thevenin Pensete's spirit had returned to Him who gave it.

32. Everyone sprung to his feet; but the business was over in two twos. The four living fellows looked at

each other in rather a ghastly fashion; the dead man contemplating a corner of the roof with a singular and ugly leer.

33. “My God!” said Tabary; and he began to pray in Latin.

34. Villon broke out into hysterical laughter. He came a step forward and ducked a ridiculous bow at Thevenin, and laughed still louder. Then he sat down suddenly, all of a heap, upon a stool, and continued laughing bitterly as though he would shake himself to pieces.

35. Montigny recovered his composure first.

36. “Let’s see what he has about him,” he remarked; and he picked the dead man’s pockets with a practiced hand, and divided the money into four equal portions on the table. “There’s for you,” he said.

37. The monk received his share with a deep sigh, and a single stealthy glance at the dead Thevenin, who was beginning to sink himself and topple sideways off the chair.

38. “We’re all in for it,” cried Villon, swallowing his mirth. “It’s a hanging job for every man jack of us that’s here—not to speak of those who aren’t.” He made a shocking gesture in the air with his raised right hand, and put out his tongue and threw his head on one side, so as to counterfeit the appearance of one who has been hanged. Then he pocketed his share of the spoil, and executed a shuffle with his feet as if to restore the circulation.

39. Tabary was the last to help himself; he made a dash at the money, and retired to the other end of the apartment.

40. Montigny stuck Thevenin upright in the chair, and drew out a dagger, which was followed by a jet of blood.

41. “You fellows had better be moving,” he said, as he wiped the blade on his victim’s doublet.

42. “I think we had,” returned Villon, with a great gulp. “Damn his fat head!” he broke out. “It sticks in my throat like phlegm. What right has a man to have red hair when he is dead?” And he fell all of a heap again upon the stool, and fairly covered his face with his hands.

43. Montigny and Dom Nicolas laughed aloud, even Tabary feebly chiming in.

44. “Cry baby,” said the monk.

45. “I always said he was a woman,” added Montigny, with a sneer. “Sit up, can’t you?” he went on, giving another shake to the murdered body. “Tread out that fire, Nick!”

46. But Nick was better employed; he was quietly taking Villon’s purse, as the poet sat, limp and trembling, on the stool where he had been making a ballad not three minutes before. Montigny and Tabary dumbly demanded a share of the booty, which the monk silently promised as he passed the little bag into the bosom of his gown. In many ways an artistic nature unfits a man for practical existence.

47. No sooner had the theft been accomplished than Villon shook himself, jumped to his feet, and began helping to scatter and extinguish the embers. Meanwhile Montigny opened the door and cautiously peered into the street. The coast was clear; there was no meddlesome patrol in sight. Still it was judged wiser to slip out severally; and as Villon was himself

in a hurry to escape from the neighborhood of the dead Thevenin, and the rest were in a still greater hurry to get rid of him before he should discover the loss of his money, he was the first by general consent to issue forth into the street.

48. The wind had triumphed and swept all the clouds from heaven. Only a few vapors, as thin as moonlight, fleeted rapidly across the stars. It was bitter cold; and by a common optical effect, things seemed almost more definite than in the broadest daylight. The sleeping city was absolutely still; a company of white hoods, a field full of little alps, below the twinkling stars. Villon cursed his fortune. Would it were still snowing! Now, wherever he went, he left an indelible trail behind him on the glittering streets; wherever he went he was still tethered to the house by the cemetery of St. John; wherever he went he must weave, with his own plodding feet, the rope that bound him to the crime and would bind him to the gallows. The leer of the dead man came back to him with a new significance. He snapped his fingers as if to pluck up his own spirits, and choosing a street at random, stepped boldly forward in the snow.

49. Two things preoccupied him as he went; the aspect of the gallows at Montfaucon in this bright, windy phase of the night's existence, for one; and for another, the look of the dead man with his bald head and garland of red curls. Both struck cold upon his heart, and he kept quickening his pace as if he could escape from unpleasant thoughts by mere fleetness of foot. Sometimes he looked back over his shoulder with a sudden nervous jerk; but he was the only moving thing in the white streets, except when the wind swooped round a corner and threw up the

snow, which was beginning to freeze, in spouts of glittering dust.

50. Suddenly he saw, a long way before him, a black clump and a couple of lanterns. The clump was in motion, and the lanterns swung as though carried by men walking. It was a patrol. And though it was merely crossing his line of march, he judged it wiser to get out of eyeshot as speedily as he could. He was not in the humor to be challenged, and he was conscious of making a very conspicuous mark upon the snow. Just on his left hand there stood a great hotel, with some turrets and a large porch before the door; it was half-ruinous, he remembered, and had long stood empty; and so he made three steps of it, and jumped into the shelter of the porch. It was pretty dark inside, after the glimmer of the snowy streets, and he was groping forward with outspread hands, when he stumbled over some substance which offered an indescribable mixture of resistances, hard and soft, firm and loose. His heart gave a leap, and he sprung two steps back and stared dreadfully at the obstacle. Then he gave a little laugh of relief. It was only a woman, and she dead. He knelt beside her to make sure upon this latter point. She was freezing cold, and rigid like a stick. A little ragged finery fluttered in the wind about her hair, and her cheeks had been heavily rouged that same afternoon. Her pockets were quite empty; but in her stocking, underneath the garter, Villon found two of the small coins that went by the name of whites. It was little enough, but it was always something, and the poet was moved with a deep sense of pathos that she should have died before she had spent her money. That seemed to him a dark and pitiful mystery; and he looked from the coins in his hand to the dead woman, and back again to the coins, shaking his

head over the riddle of man's life.

51. Henry V. of England, dying at Vincennes just after he had conquered France, and this poor jade cut off by a cold draught in a great man's doorway, before she had time to spend her couple of whites—it seemed a cruel way to carry on the world. Two whites would have taken such a little while to squander; and yet it would have been one more good taste in the mouth, one more smack of the lips, before the devil got the soul, and the body was left to birds and vermin. He would like to use all his tallow before the light was blown out and the lantern broken.

52. While these thoughts were passing through his mind, he was feeling, half mechanically, for his purse. Suddenly his heart stopped beating; a feeling of cold scales passed up the back of his legs, and a cold blow seemed to fall upon his scalp. He stood petrified for a moment; then he felt again with one feverish movement; and then his loss burst upon him, and he was covered at once with perspiration. To spend-thrifts money is so living and actual—it is such a thin veil between them and their pleasures! There is only one limit to their fortune—that of time; and a spendthrift with only a few crowns is the Emperor of Rome until they are spent. For such a person to lose his money is to suffer the most shocking reverse, and fall from heaven to hell, from all to nothing, in a breath. And all the more if he has put his head in the halter for it; if he may be hanged to-morrow for that same purse, so dearly earned, so foolishly departed! Villon stood and cursed; he threw the two whites into the street; he shook his fist at heaven; he stamped, and was not horrified to find himself trampling the poor corpse. Then he began

rapidly to retrace his steps toward the house beside the cemetery. He had forgotten all fear of the patrol, which was long gone by at any rate, and had no idea but that of his lost purse. It was in vain that he looked right and left upon the snow; nothing was to be seen. He had not dropped it in the streets. Had it fallen in the house? He would have liked dearly to go in and see; but the idea of the grisly occupant unmanned him. And he saw besides, as he drew near, that their efforts to put out the fire had been unsuccessful; on the contrary, it had broken into a blaze, and a changeful light played in the chinks of door and window, and revived his terror for the authorities and Paris gibbet.

53. He returned to the hotel with the porch, and groped about upon the snow for the money he had thrown away in his childish passion. But he could only find one white; the other had probably struck sideways and sunk deeply in. With a single white in his pocket, all his projects for a rousing night in some wild tavern vanished utterly away. And it was not only pleasure that fled laughing from his grasp; positive discomfort, positive pain, attacked him as he stood ruefully before the porch. His perspiration had dried upon him, and although the wind had now fallen, a binding frost was setting in stronger with every hour, and he felt benumbed and sick at heart. What was to be done? Late as was the hour, improbable as was success, he would try the house of his adopted father, the chaplain of St. Benoit.

54. He ran there all the way, and knocked timidly. There was no answer. He knocked again and again, taking heart with every stroke; and at last steps were heard approaching from within. A barred wicket fell open in the iron-studded door, and emitted a gush of

yellow light.

55. “Hold up your face to the wicket,” said the chaplain, from within.

56. “It’s only me,” whimpered Villon.

57. “Oh, it’s only you, is it?” returned the chaplain; and he cursed him with foul unpriestly oaths for disturbing him at such an hour, and bade him be off to hell, where he came from.

58. “My hands are blue to the wrist,” pleaded Villon; “my feet are dead and full of twinges; my nose aches with the sharp air; the cold lies at my heart. I may be dead before morning. Only this once, father, and before God, I will never ask again!”

59. “You should have come earlier,” said the ecclesiastic coolly. “Young men require a lesson now and then.” He shut the wicket and retired deliberately into the interior of the house.

60. Villon was beside himself; he beat upon the door with his hands and feet, and shouted hoarsely after the chaplain.

61. “Wormy old fox!” he cried. “If I had my hand under your twist, I would send you flying headlong into the bottomless pit.”

62. A door shut in the interior, faintly audible to the poet down long passages. He passed his hand over his mouth with an oath. And then the humor of the situation struck him, and he laughed and looked lightly up to heaven, where the stars seemed to be winking over his discomfiture.

63. What was to be done? It looked very like a night in the frosty streets. The idea of the dead woman popped into his imagination, and gave him a hearty

fright; what had happened to her in the early night might very well happen to him before morning. And he so young! and with such immense possibilities of disorderly amusement before him! He felt quite pathetic over the notion of his own fate, as if it had been some one else's, and made a little imaginative vignette of the scene in the morning when they should find his body.

64. He passed all his chances under review, turning the white between his thumb and forefinger. Unfortunately he was on bad terms with some old friends who would once have taken pity on him in such a plight. He had lampooned them in verses; he had beaten and cheated them; and yet now, when he was in so close a pinch, he thought there was at least one who might perhaps relent. It was a chance. It was worth trying at least, and he would go and see.

65. On the way two little accidents happened to him which colored his musings in a very different manner. For, first he fell in with the track of a patrol, and walked in it for some hundred yards, although it lay out of his direction. And this spirited him up; at least he had confused his trail; for he was still possessed with the idea of people tracking him all about Paris over the snow, and collaring him next morning before he was awake. The other matter affected him quite differently. He passed a street corner, where, not so long before, a woman and her child had been devoured by wolves. This was just the kind of weather, he reflected, when wolves might take it into their heads to enter Paris again; and a lone man in these deserted streets would run the chance of something worse than a mere scare. He stopped and looked upon the place with an unpleasant interest—it was a center where several

lanes intersected each other; and he looked down them all, one after another, and held his breath to listen, lest he should detect some galloping black things on the snow or hear the sound of howling between him and the river. He remembered his mother telling him the story and pointing out the spot, while he was yet a child. His mother! If he only knew where she lived, he might make sure at least of shelter. He determined he would inquire upon the morrow; nay, he would go and see her too, poor old girl! So thinking, he arrived at his destination—his last hope for the night.

66. The house was quite dark, like its neighbors; and yet after a few taps, he heard a movement overhead, a door opening, and a cautious voice asking who was there. The poet named himself in a loud whisper, and waited, not without some trepidation, the result. Nor had he to wait long. A window was suddenly opened, and a pailful of slops splashed down upon the doorstep. Villon had not been unprepared for something of the sort, and had put himself as much in shelter as the nature of the porch admitted; but for all that, he was deplorably drenched below the waist. His hose began to freeze almost at once. Death from cold and exposure stared him in the face; he remembered he was of phthisical tendency, and began coughing tentatively. But the gravity of the danger steadied his nerves. He stopped a few hundred yards from the door where he had been so rudely used, and reflected with his nose. He could only see one way of getting a lodging, and that was to take it. He had noticed a house not far away, which looked as if it might be easily broken into, and thither he betook himself promptly, entertaining himself on the way with the idea of a room still hot, with a table still loaded with the remains of supper,

where he might pass the rest of the black hours and whence he should issue, on the morrow, with an armful of valuable plate. He even considered on what viands and what wines he should prefer; and as he was calling the roll of his favorite dainties, roast fish presented itself to his mind with an odd mixture of amusement and horror.

67. “I shall never finish that ballad,” he thought to himself; and then, with another shudder at the recollection, “Oh, damn his fat head!” he repeated fervently, and spat upon the snow.

68. The house in question looked dark at first sight; but as Villon made a preliminary inspection in search of the handiest point of attack, a little twinkle of light caught his eye from behind a curtained window.

69. “The devil!” he thought. “People awake! Some student or some saint, confound the crew! Can’t they get drunk and lie in bed snoring like their neighbors! What’s the good of curfew, and poor devils of bellringers jumping at a rope’s end in bell-towers? What’s the use of day, if people sit up all night! The gripes to them!” He grinned as he saw where his logic was leading him. “Every man to his business, after all,” added he, “and if they’re awake, by the Lord, I may come by a supper honestly for once, and cheat the devil.”

70. He went boldly to the door and knocked with an assured hand. On both previous occasions, he had knocked timidly and with some dread of attracting notice; but now, when he had just discarded the thought of a burglarious entry, knocking at a door seemed a mighty simple and innocent proceeding. The sound of his blows echoed through the house with thin, phantasmal reverberations, as though the

house were empty; but these had scarcely died away before a measured tread drew near, a couple of bolts were withdrawn, and one wing was opened broadly, as though no guile or fear of guile were known to those within. A tall figure of a man, muscular and spare, but a little bent, confronted Villon. The head was massive in bulk, but finely sculptured; the nose blunt at the bottom, but refining upward to where it joined a pair of strong and honest eyebrows; the mouth and eyes surrounded with delicate markings, and the whole face based upon a thick white beard, boldly and squarely trimmed. Seen as it was by the light of a flickering hand-lamp, it looked, perhaps, nobler than it had a right to do; but it was a fine face, honorable rather than intelligent, strong, simple, and righteous.

71. “You knock late, sir,” said the old man, in resonant, courteous tones.

72. Villon cringed, and brought up many servile words of apology; at a crisis of this sort, the beggar was uppermost in him, and the man of genius hid his head with confusion.

73. “You are cold,” repeated the old man, “and hungry? Well, step in.” And he ordered him into the house with a noble enough gesture.

74. “Some great seigneur,” thought Villon, as his host, setting down the lamp on the flagged pavement of the entry, shot the bolts once more into their places.

75. “You will pardon me if I go in front,” he said, when this was done; and he preceded the poet up-stairs into a large apartment, warmed with a pan of charcoal and lit by a great lamp hanging from the roof. It was very bare of furniture; only some gold

plate on a sideboard; some folios; and a stand of armor between the windows. Some smart tapestry hung upon the walls, representing the crucifixion of our Lord in one piece, and in another a scene of shepherds and shepherdesses by a running stream. Over the chimney was a shield of arms.

76. “Will you seat yourself,” said the old man, “and forgive me if I leave you? I am alone in my house to-night, and if you are to eat I must forage for you myself.”

77. No sooner was his host gone than Villon leaped from the chair on which he had just seated himself, and began examining the room, with the stealth and passion of a cat. He weighed the gold flagons in his hand, opened all the folios, and investigated the arms upon the shield, and the stuff with which the seats were lined. He raised the window curtains, and saw that the windows were set with rich stained glass in figures, so far as he could see, of martial import. Then he stood in the middle of the room, drew a long breath, and, retaining it with puffed cheeks, looked round and round him, turning on his heels, as if to impress every feature of the apartment on his memory.

78. “Seven pieces of plate,” he said. “If there had been ten, I would have risked it. A fine house, and a fine old master, so help me all the saints!”

79. And just then, hearing the old man’s tread returning along the corridor, he stole back to his chair, and began humbly toasting his wet legs before the charcoal pan.

80. His entertainer had a plate of meat in one hand and a jug of wine in the other. He sat down the plate upon the table, motioning Villon to draw in his chair,

and, going to the sideboard, brought back two goblets, which he filled.

81. “I drink your better fortune,” he said, gravely touching Villon’s cup with his own.

82. “To our better acquaintance,” said the poet, growing bold. A mere man of the people would have been awed by the courtesy of the old seigneur, but Villon was hardened in that matter; he had made mirth for great lords before now, and found them as black rascals as himself. And so he devoted himself to the viands with a ravenous gusto, while the old man, leaning backward, watched him with steady, curious eyes.

83. “You have blood on your shoulder, my man,” he said.

84. Montigny must have laid his wet right hand upon him as he left the house. He cursed Montigny in his heart.

85. “It was none of my shedding,” he stammered.

86. “I had not supposed so,” returned his host, quietly. “A brawl?”

87. “Well, something of that sort,” Villon admitted with a quaver.

88. “Perhaps a fellow murdered?”

89. “Oh, no, not murdered,” said the poet, more and more confused. “It was all fair play—murdered by accident. I had no hand in it, God strike me dead!” he added, fervently.

90. “One rogue the fewer, I dare say,” observed the master of the house.

91. “You may dare to say that,” agreed Villon,

infinitely relieved. “As big a rogue as there is between here and Jerusalem. He turned up his toes like a lamb. But it was a nasty thing to look at. I dare say you’ve seen dead men in your time, my lord?” he added, glancing at the armor.

92. “Many,” said the old man. “I have followed the wars, as you imagine.”

93. Villon laid down his knife and fork, which he had just taken up again.

94. “Were any of them bald?” he asked.

95. “Oh, yes, and with hair as white as mine.”

96. “I don’t think I should mind the white so much,” said Villon. “His was red.” And he had a return of his shuddering and tendency to laughter, which he drowned with a great draught of wine. “I’m a little put out when I think of it,” he went on. “I knew him —damn him! And then the cold gives a man fancies —or the fancies give a man cold, I don’t know which.”

97. “Have you any money?” asked the old man.

98. “I have one white,” returned the poet, laughing. “I got it out of a dead jade’s stocking in a porch. She was as dead as Cæsar, poor wench, and as cold as a church, with bits of ribbon sticking in her hair. This is a hard world in winter for wolves and wenches and poor rogues like me.”

99. “I,” said the old man, “am Enguerrand de la Feuillee, seigneur de Brisetout, bailly du Patatrac. Who and what may you be?”

100. Villon rose and made a suitable reverence. “I am called Francis Villon,” he said, “a poor master of arts in this university. I know some Latin, and a deal

of vice. I can make chansons, ballads, lais, virelais, and roundels and I am very fond of wine. I was born in a garret and I shall not improbably die upon the gallows. I may add, my lord, that from this night forward I am your lordship's very obsequious servant to command."

101. "No servant of mine," said the knight; "my guest for this evening, and no more."

102. "A very grateful guest," said Villon, politely, and he drank in dumb show to his entertainer.

103. "You are shrewd," began the old man, tapping his forehead, "very shrewd; you have learning; you are a clerk; and yet you take a small piece of money off a dead woman in the street. Is it not a kind of theft?"

104. "It is a kind of theft much practiced in the wars, my lord."

105. "The wars are the field of honor," returned the old man, proudly. "There a man plays his life upon the cast; he fights in the name of his lord the king, his Lord God, and all their lordships the holy saints and angels."

106. "Put it," said Villon, "that I were really a thief, should I not play my life also, and against heavier odds?"

107. "For gain, but not for honor."

108. "Gain?" repeated Villon, with a shrug. "Gain! The poor fellow wants supper, and takes it. So does the soldier in a campaign. Why, what are all these requisitions we hear so much about? If they are not gain to those who take them, they are loss enough to the others. The men-at-arms drink by a good fire,

while the burgher bites his nails to buy them wine and wood. I have seen a good many plowmen swinging on trees about the country; ay, I have seen thirty on one elm, and a very poor figure they made; and when I asked some one how all these came to be hanged, I was told it was because they could not scrape together enough crowns to satisfy the men-at-arms."

109. "These things are a necessity of war, which the low-born must endure with constancy. It is true that some captains drive overhard; there are spirits in every rank not easily moved by pity; and indeed many follow arms who are no better than brigands."

110. "You see," said the poet, "you cannot separate the soldier from the brigand; and what is a thief but an isolated brigand with circumspect manners? I steal a couple of mutton chops, without so much as disturbing people's sleep; the farmer grumbles a bit, but sups none the less wholesomely on what remains. You come up blowing gloriously on a trumpet, take away the whole sheep, and beat the farmer pitifully into the bargain. I have no trumpet; I am only Tom, Dick, or Harry; I am a rogue and a dog, and hanging's too good for me—with all my heart; but just ask the farmer which of us he prefers, just find out which of us he lies awake to curse on cold nights."

111. "Look at us two," said his lordship. "I am old, strong, and honored. If I were turned from my house to-morrow, hundreds would be proud to shelter me. Poor people would go out and pass the night in the streets with their children, if I merely hinted that I wished to be alone. And I find you up, wandering homeless, and picking farthings off dead women by the wayside! I fear no man and nothing; I have seen

you tremble and lose countenance at a word. I wait God's summons contentedly in my own house, or, if it please the king to call me out again, upon the field of battle. You look for the gallows; a rough, swift death, without hope or honor. Is there no difference between these two?"

112. "As far as to the moon," Villon acquiesced. "But if I had been born Lord of Brisetout, and you had been the poor scholar Francis, would the difference have been any the less? Should I not have been warming my knees at this charcoal pan, and would not you have been groping for farthings in the snow? Should not I have been the soldier and you the thief?"

113. "A thief?" cried the old man. "I a thief! If you understood your words you would repent them."

114. Villon turned out his hands with a gesture of inimitable impudence. "If your lordship had done me the honor to follow my argument!" he said.

115. "I do you too much honor in submitting to your presence," said the knight. "Learn to curb your tongue when you speak with old and honorable men, or some one hastier than I may reprove you in a sharper fashion." And he rose and paced the lower end of the apartment, struggling with anger and antipathy. Villon surreptitiously refilled his cup, and settled himself more comfortably in the chair, crossing his knees and leaning his head upon one hand and the elbow against the back of the chair. He was now replete and warm, and he was in nowise frightened for his host, having gauged him as justly as was possible between two such different characters. The night was far spent, and in a very comfortable fashion after all; and he felt morally certain of a safe departure on the morrow.

116. “Tell me one thing,” said the old man, pausing in his walk. “Are you really a thief?”

117. “I claim the sacred rights of hospitality,” returned the poet. “My lord, I am.”

118. “You are very young,” the knight continued.

119. “I should never have been so old,” replied Villon, showing his fingers, “if I had not helped myself with these ten talents. They have been my nursing mothers and my nursing fathers.”

120. “You may still repent and change.”

121. “I repent daily,” said the poet. “There are few people more given to repentance than poor Francis. As for change, let somebody change my circumstances. A man must continue to eat, if it were only that he may continue to repent.”

122. “The change must begin in the heart,” returned the old man solemnly.

123. “My dear lord,” answered Villon, “do you really fancy that I steal for pleasure? I hate stealing, like any other piece of work or of danger. My teeth chatter when I see a gallows. But I must eat, I must drink, I must mix in society of some sort. What the devil! Man is not a solitary animal—*Cui Deus fœminam tradit*. Make me king’s pantler—make me abbot of St. Denis; make me bailly of the Patatrac; and then I shall be changed indeed. But as long as you leave me the poor scholar Francis Villon, without a farthing, why, of course, I remain the same.”

124. “The grace of God is all-powerful.”

125. “I should be a heretic to question it,” said Francis. “It has made you lord of Brisetout and bailly

of the Patatrac; it has given me nothing but the quick wits under my hat and these ten toes upon my hands. May I help myself to wine? I thank you respectfully. By God's grace, you have a very superior vintage."

126. The lord of Brisetout walked to and fro with his hands behind his back. Perhaps he was not yet quite settled in his mind about the parallel between thieves and soldiers; perhaps Villon had interested him by some cross-thread of sympathy; perhaps his wits were simply muddled by so much unfamiliar reasoning; but whatever the cause, he somehow yearned to convert the young man to a better way of thinking, and could not make up his mind to drive him forth again into the street.

127. "There is something more than I can understand in this," he said at length. "Your mouth is full of subtleties, and the devil has led you very far astray; but the devil is only a very weak spirit before God's truth, and all his subtleties vanish at a word of true honor, like darkness at morning. Listen to me once more. I learned long ago that a gentleman should live chivalrously and lovingly to God, and the king, and his lady; and though I have seen many strange things done, I have still striven to command my ways upon that rule. It is not only written in all noble histories, but in every man's heart, if he will take care to read. You speak of food and wine, and I know very well that hunger is a difficult trial to endure; but you do not speak of other wants; you say nothing of honor, of faith to God and other men, of courtesy, of love without reproach. It may be that I am not very wise—and yet I am—but you seem to me like one who has lost his way and made a great error in life. You are attending to the little wants, and you have totally forgotten the great and only real ones,

like a man who should be doctoring toothache on the Judgment Day. For such things as honor and love and faith are not only nobler than food and drink, but indeed I think we desire them more, and suffer more sharply for their absence. I speak to you as I think you will most easily understand me. Are you not while careful to fill your belly, disregarding another appetite in your heart, which spoils the pleasure of your life and keeps you continually wretched?"

128. Villon was sensibly nettled under all this sermonizing. "You think I have no sense of honor!" he cried. "I'm poor enough, God knows! It's hard to see rich people with their gloves, and you blowing in your hands. An empty belly is a bitter thing, although you speak so lightly of it. If you had had as many as I, perhaps you would change your tune. Any way, I'm a thief—make the most of that—but I'm not a devil from hell, God strike me dead. I would have you to know I've an honor of my own, as good as yours, though I don't prate about it all day long, as if it was a God's miracle to have any. It seems quite natural to me; I keep it in its box till it's wanted. Why, now, look you here, how long have I been in this room with you? Did you not tell me you were alone in the house? Look at your gold plate! You're strong, if you like, but you're old and unarmed, and I have my knife. What did I want but a jerk of the elbow and here would have been you with the cold steel in your bowels, and there would have been me, linking in the streets, with an armful of golden cups! Did you suppose I hadn't wit enough to see that? And I scorned the action. There are your damned goblets as safe as in a church, there are you with your heart ticking as good as new, and here am I, ready to go out again as poor as I came in, with my

one white that you threw in my teeth! And you think I have no sense of honor—God strike me dead!"

129. The old man stretched out his right arm. "I will tell you what you are," he said. "You are a rogue, my man, an impudent and black-hearted rogue and vagabond. I have passed an hour with you. Oh! believe me, I feel myself disgraced! And you have eaten and drunk at my table. But now I am sick at your presence; the day has come, and the night-bird should be off to his roost. Will you go before, or after?"

130. "Which you please," returned the poet, rising. "I believe you to be strictly honorable." He thoughtfully emptied his cup. "I wish I could add you were intelligent," he went on, knocking on his head with his knuckles. "Age! age! the brains stiff and rheumatic."

131. The old man preceded him from a point of self-respect; Villon followed, whistling, with his thumbs in his girdle.

132. "God pity you!" said the lord of Brisetout at the door.

133. "Good-bye, papa," returned Villon, with a yawn. "Many thanks for the cold mutton."

134. The door closed behind him. The dawn was breaking over the white roofs. A chill, uncomfortable morning ushered in the day. Villon stood and heartily stretched himself in the middle of the road.

135. "A very dull old gentleman," he thought. "I wonder what his goblets may be worth."

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Briefly write out the plot of the story.

2. Which incidents are essential to the story (plot incidents)?

3. Which incidents could be altered without vitally changing the story (developing incidents)? For a discussion of these types of incidents see the present author's *Writing the Short-Story*, pp. 174-181.

4. Show how one such change could be made.

5. Does the external (visible or bodily) action stand out as clearly as the internal (invisible or soul) action?

6. (a) Is the story probable? (b) Usual? (c) Convincing?—That is, does it seem real?

7. What are its strongest points, to you?

8. Criticise its weak points, if any.

9. Can you suggest any improvements?

10. (a) Do you know any stories similar in theme? (b) If so, which is the better story, to you, and why?

11. Briefly write out the plots of three stories of action or adventure, taken from any book or magazine.

12. Compare one of them with one of these two stories.

TEN REPRESENTATIVE STORIES OF ACTION AND ADVENTURE

"After He was Dead," Melville Davisson Post. *Atlantic Monthly*, April, 1911.

"The Attack on the Mill," Émile Zola. Translated in *Great Short*

Stories.

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FOOTNOTES:

[13] AUTHOR'S NOTE.—Corporals were formerly the chief officers of the Corsican communes after they had rebelled against their feudal lords. To-day they still occasionally give the name to a man who—because of his property, his relationships, and his business—commands a certain influence, and a sort of effective magistracy over a parish or a canton. The Corsicans divide themselves, after ancient custom, into five castes: gentlemen (of whom some, *magnifiques*, are of higher estate, and some of lower, *signori*), corporals, citizens, plebeians, and foreigners.

[14] AUTHOR'S NOTE.—This word is synonymous with outlaw.

[15] AUTHOR'S NOTE.—*Voltigeurs*, that is, a body raised by the government of late years which acts in conjunction with the police to maintain order.

[16] AUTHOR'S NOTE.—The uniform of the *voltigeurs* was at that period brown, with a yellow collar.

[17] AUTHOR'S NOTE.—A leather belt which served the joint purpose of a cartridge box and pocket for dispatches and orders.

[18] AUTHOR'S NOTE.—*Buon giorno, fratello*—the ordinary salutation of the Corsicans.

II
STORIES OF MYSTERY AND FANTASY

The Purloined Letter.—EDGAR ALLAN POE

The Monkey's Paw.—W. W. JACOBS

The fact is ... that, in the riddle story, the detective was an after-thought, or, more accurately, a *deus ex machina* to make the story go. The riddle had to be unriddled; and who could do it so naturally and readily as a detective? The detective, as Poe saw him, was a means to this end; and it was only afterwards that writers perceived his availability as a character. Lecoq accordingly becomes a figure in fiction, and Sherlock, while he was as yet a novelty, was nearly as attractive as the complications in which he involved himself.—JULIAN HAWTHORNE, Introduction to *The Lock and Key Library*.

The literature of ghosts is very ancient. In visions of the night, and in the lurid vapors of mystic incantations, figures rise and smile, or frown and disappear. The Witch of Endor murmurs her spell, and "an old man cometh up, and he is covered with a mantle." Macbeth takes a bond of fate, and from Hecate's caldron, after the apparition of an armed head and that of a bloody child, "an apparition of a child crowned, with a tree in his hand, rises." The wizard recounts to Lochiel his warning vision, and Lochiel departs to his doom. There are stories of the Castle of Otranto and of The Three Spaniards, and the infinite detail of "singular experiences," which make our conscious daily life the frontier and border-land of an impinging world of mystery.—GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS, Introduction to *Modern*

Ghosts.

STORIES OF MYSTERY AND FANTASY

Even more deeply seated and elemental than our love for the mysterious is our passion for undertaking its solution. It is this, doubtless, that challenges us to match our wits with the clever rogues of fiction, and to pit our resources of detection against the forces seen and unseen which play in tales of the weird, the mysterious, and the unexplained.

Such stories readily fall into two classes, with as many sub-sorts as the invention of man may compass —those which are soluble and those which are not. Of the former, the detective story is the more common, followed at no very great distance by the tale which seems to involve the supernatural, but whose mystery transpires quite plainly in the end. Of the latter are all those inexplicable wonder-fictions dealing with shapes that haunt the dream-dusk, the whole shadow-land of wraiths and spirits and presences and immaterialities which cross the borders of experience at the call of fantasy. They are all the inheritance of the credulous age in which romance was born, and few of us are so engirded with the armor of stoicism that we cannot enjoy their gathering goose-flesh and creeping spinal chill. Hawthorne and Poe and Irving were masters here.

The processes of inductive reasoning by which Voltaire's Zadig reconstructed actual occurrences from trivial clues have developed into modern detective stories of uncounted variety, in which the criminal is hunted down by a professional sleuth.

Then, too, the “clever amateur” often takes a hand in the game, and even accident plays at times, until there is no end to the possible combinations growing out of pure reasoning employed to unravel the tangle.

Much the same processes are employed to discover the pseudo-supernatural mystery, like Fitz-James O’Brien’s solved ghost-story, “What Was It? A Mystery.” But when we enter the domain of the unexplained, the story tends to become a study of fear and of pure mystery, like Marion Crawford’s “The Upper Berth,” and “The Damned Thing,” by Ambrose Bierce.

Poe was the great American originator of the detective story, and to-day his “Purloined Letter,” reproduced here in full, “The Mystery of Marie Rogêt,” and “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” are unsurpassed.

POE AND HIS WRITINGS

Edgar Allan Poe was born in Boston, January 19, 1809. His father, of a good Maryland family, was an actor, and his mother an actress of English extraction. Both parents dying before Edgar was three, he, with his brother William and sister Rosalie, was left homeless in Richmond, where each found a protector. Mrs. Allan adopted Edgar, giving him his middle name, and bestowing at the same time every opportunity that wealth could offer. He was sent to school at Stoke Newington, England, attended a private school in Richmond, and entered the University of Virginia, but remained there less than a year, for his reckless and erratic temperament

champed under the restraints of routine. He was placed in Mr. Allan's counting-room, but ran away to enlist in the United States Army as "Edgar Allan Perry." After the death of Mrs. Allan, her husband secured Poe's discharge from the army and his appointment to West Point as a cadet, July 1, 1830; but after six months Poe contrived to be dismissed. He had already published his poems successfully, so he went to New York, in the early part of 1831, to begin his professional literary life. For four years—1833 to 1837—he wrote brilliantly for *The Southern Literary Messenger*, in Baltimore. Then he went successively to New York and Philadelphia, where he worked on various literary enterprises for six years. In 1844 he returned to New York, and became assistant to N. P. Willis, in whose journal, *The Mirror*, "The Raven" appeared in 1845. Poe's literary reputation was now established both in America and abroad, most of his masterpieces having been created during the turbulent years of his wanderings. In 1835 he had been married to Virginia Clemm, his cousin, and her early death in 1847 broke his spirit. His health had already succumbed to his morbid temperament—which magnified every sorrow of his chaotic career—and to the excesses of drugs and drink. He died most unhappily, October 7, 1849, at the age of forty—a master spirit pitifully wrecked before his prime.

Poe was a remarkable poet, essayist, critic, and short-story writer. "The Raven," "Lenore," "Ulalume," "The Bells," "Annabel Lee," "Israfel," and "To One in Paradise" are among his best poems. Probably the greatest of his stories are, "MS. Found in A Bottle," "The Assignation," "Ligeia," "The Murders in The Rue Morgue," "The Mystery of Marie

Rogêt," "A Descent into The Maelstrom," "The Masque of The Red Death," "The Pit and the Pendulum," "The Gold Bug," "The Black Cat," "The Cask of Amontillado," "The Fall of the House of Usher," first published in *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine*, September, 1839—and "The Purloined Letter," first published in *The Gift*, an "annual," in 1845.

Poe was the greatest conscious artist that American literature has ever known. He not only looked backward upon his own work and, as did Stevenson, clearly traced the operations of his mind in its production, but he built up a structure of literary theory which has been powerfully attacked, indeed, but whose walls remain substantially whole to-day. To his constructive criticism of the short-story is directly due its present advanced form, for while current practice has widely departed from Poe's morbid, gloomy, extravagant themes and formal, abundant diction, his stories are still unsurpassed for vigor, atmosphere, invention, and thrill, and his laws of composition are read everywhere with the respect due authority.

Ah, dream too bright to last!
Ah, starry Hope, that didst arise
But to be overcast!
A voice from out the Future cries,
"Onward!"—but o'er the Past
(Dim gulf!) my spirit hovering lies,
Mute—motionless—aghast!

EDGAR ALLAN POE, *The Assignation*.

Had you lived a generation later, honor, wealth, applause, success in Europe and at home, would all have been yours.—ANDREW

LANG, *Letters to Dead Authors*.

There are literary evolutionists who, in their whim of seeing in every original writer a copy of some predecessor, have declared that Hawthorne is derived from Tieck, and Poe from Hoffmann.... If the adjective American has any meaning at all, it qualifies Poe and Hawthorne. They were American to the core. They both revealed the curious sympathy with Oriental moods of thought which is often an American characteristic. Poe, with his cold logic and his mathematical analysis, and Hawthorne, with his introspective conscience and his love of the subtle and the invisible, are representative of phases of American character not to be mistaken by any one who has given thought to the influence of nationality.... Nothing better of its kind has ever been done than the "Pit and the Pendulum," or than the "Fall of the House of Usher" (which has been compared aptly with Browning's "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came" for its power of suggesting intellectual desolation). Nothing better of its kind has ever been done than the "Gold Bug," or than the "Purloined Letter," or than the "Murders in the Rue Morgue."—BRANDER MATTHEWS, *The Philosophy of the Short-story*.

The conception of gloomy terror which impregnates "The House of Usher" is as complete as the idea of medieval chivalry underlying *Ivanhoe*.... To be sure, the terror in his stories, so he said in his preface to the *Tales of the Grotesque and the Arabesque*, was

> "not of Germany, but of the soul...." Yet one can readily believe that his Roderick in "The House of Usher," who pored over books which had the "character of phantasm," Morella, who was interested in the transcendentalism of Schelling and Fichte, Ægæus, whom "the realities of the world affected—as visions," are all identical with the Young Poe when he freed his mind and later his fancy in the fields where Novalis sought the blue flower and all the German romanticists wandered.... To say that Poe was a creature of German influence would be absurd. To say that German thought and fancy were sympathetic to his genius, would be putting it too mildly. Between these extremes the truth must lie.—H. S. CANBY, *The Short Story in English*.

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THE PURLOINED LETTER

Nil sapientiae odiosius acumina nimio.—*Seneca.*

(Nothing is more odious to wisdom than too great acumen.)

BY EDGAR ALLAN POE

Formal Introduction.

At Paris, just after dark one gusty evening in the autumn of 18—, I was enjoying the twofold luxury of meditation and a meerschaum, in company with my friend C. Auguste Dupin,*Dupin appears as the detective in Poe's other mystery stories, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," and "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt."*

Au troisième—third flight, or fourth floor. in his little back library, or book closet, *au troisième, No. 33 Rue Dunôt, Faubourg St. Germain*. For one hour at least we had maintained a profound silence; while each, to any casual observer, might have seemed intently and exclusively occupied with the curling eddies of smoke that oppressed the atmosphere of the chamber. *Compare this story with Sardou's "A Scrap of Paper."*For myself, however, I was mentally discussing certain topics which had formed matter for conversation between us at an earlier period of the evening; I mean the affair of the Rue Morgue, and the mystery attending the murder of Marie Rogêt. I looked upon it, therefore, as something of a coincidence,*G—— also appears in "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt."* when the door of our apartment was thrown open and admitted our old acquaintance, Monsieur G——, the Prefect of the Parisian police.

Careless English.

2. We gave him a hearty welcome; for there was nearly half as much of the entertaining as of the contemptible about the man, and we had not seen him for several years. We had been sitting in the

dark, and Dupin now arose for the purpose of lighting a lamp, but sat down again, without doing so, upon G——'s saying that he had called to consult us, or rather to ask the opinion of my friend, about some official business which had occasioned a great deal of trouble.

3. “If it is any point requiring reflection,” observed Dupin, as he forbore to enkindle the wick, “we shall examine it to better purpose in the dark.”

Later writers of detective stories follow Poe’s lead in showing contempt for police officials.

4. “That is another of your odd notions,” said the Prefect, who had a fashion of calling everything “odd” that was beyond his comprehension, and thus lived amid an absolute legion of “oddities.”

5. “Very true,” said Dupin, as he supplied his visitor with a pipe, and rolled towards him a comfortable chair.

6. “And what is the difficulty now?” I asked. “Nothing more in the assassination way, I hope?”

7. “Oh, no; nothing of that nature. The fact is, the business is *very* simple, indeed, and I make no doubt that we can manage it sufficiently well ourselves; but then I thought Dupin would like to hear the details of it, because it is so excessively *odd*.”

8. “Simple and odd,” said Dupin.

Poe makes G—— to serve as a foil for Dupin, while the narrator plays Watson to Dupin’s Sherlock—but Poe came first!

9. “Why, yes; and not exactly that, either. The fact is, we have all been a good deal puzzled because the affair is so simple, and yet baffles us altogether.”

Forecast of denouement. Note how this point is emphasized.

10. “Perhaps it is the very simplicity of the thing which puts you at fault,” said my friend.

11. “What nonsense you *do* talk!” replied the Prefect, laughing heartily.

12. “Perhaps the mystery is a little *too* plain,” said Dupin.

13. “Oh, good Heavens! who ever heard of such an idea?”

14. “A little *too* self-evident.”

Later imitators freely use this scheme of the superior pose of the police.

15. “Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ho! ho! ho!” roared our visitor, profoundly amused. “Oh, Dupin, you will be the death of me yet!”

16. “And what, after all, is the matter on hand?” I asked.

This device has since been much overworked.

17. “Why, I will tell you,” replied the Prefect, as he gave a long, steady, and contemplative puff, and settled himself in his chair. “I will tell you in a few words; but, before I begin, let me caution you that this is an affair demanding the greatest secrecy, and that I should most probably lose the position I now hold were it known that I confided it to any one.”

Lengthy Introduction Ends. Note that this is one unified story, with much philosophising, but no minor episodes.

18. “Proceed,” said I.

19. “Or not,” said Dupin.

20. “Well, then; I have received personal information from a very high quarter that a certain document of the last importance has been purloined from the

royal apartments. The individual who purloined it is known; this beyond a doubt; *The foundation laid; SUMMARY OF PROBLEM.* he was seen to take it. It is known, also, that it still remains in his possession."

21. "How is this known?" asked Dupin.

Development of problem.

22. "It is clearly inferred," replied the Prefect, "from the nature of the document, and from the non-appearance of certain results which would at once arise from its passing out of the robber's possession; that is to say, from his employing it as he must design in the end to employ it."

23. "Be a little more explicit," I said.

24. "Well, I may venture so far as to say that the paper gives its holder a certain power in a certain quarter where such power is immensely valuable." The Prefect was fond of the cant of diplomacy.

25. "Still I do not quite understand," said Dupin.

Importance of problem.

26. "No? well; the disclosure of the document to a third person, who shall be nameless, would bring in question the honor of a personage of most exalted station; and this fact gives the holder of the document an ascendency over the illustrious personage whose honor and peace are so jeopardized."

Philosophy of problem.

27. "But this ascendency," I interposed, "would depend upon the robber's knowledge of the loser's knowledge of the robber. Who would dare—"

28. “The thief,” said G——, “is the Minister D——, who dares all things, those unbecoming as well as those becoming a man. *Unique situation: the thief is known.* The method of the theft was not less ingenious than bold. The document in question—a letter, to be frank—had been received by the personage robbed while alone in the royal *boudoir*. During its perusal she was suddenly interrupted by the entrance of the other exalted personage, from whom especially it was her wish to conceal it. *Method and circumstances of the theft related.* After a hurried and vain endeavor to thrust it in a drawer, she was forced to place it, open as it was, upon a table. The address, however, was uppermost, and, the contents thus unexposed, the letter escaped notice. *See note on ¶115, p. 104.* At this juncture enters the Minister D——. His lynx eye immediately perceives the paper, recognizes the handwriting of the address, observes the confusion of the personage addressed, and fathoms her secret. After some business transactions, hurried through in his ordinary manner, he produces a letter somewhat similar to the one in question, opens it, pretends to read it, and then places it in close juxtaposition to the other. Again he converses for some fifteen minutes upon the public affairs. *Note “the”.* At length in taking leave he takes also from the table the letter to which he had no claim. Its rightful owner saw, but of course dared not call attention to the act, in the presence of the third personage, who stood at her elbow. The minister decamped, leaving his own letter—one of no importance—upon the table.”

29. “Here, then,” said Dupin to me, “you have precisely what you demand to make the ascendency complete—the robber’s knowledge of the loser’s knowledge of the robber.”

Results of theft.

30. “Yes,” replied the Prefect; “and the power thus attained has, for some months past, been wielded, for political purposes, to a very dangerous extent. The personage robbed is more thoroughly convinced, every day, of the necessity of reclaiming her letter. *End of statement of case as a problem.*But this, of course, cannot be done openly. In fine, driven to despair, she has committed the matter to me.”

Character development.
Satire supports his attitude toward the police.

31. “Than whom,” said Dupin, amid a perfect whirlwind of smoke, “no more sagacious agent could, I suppose, be desired, or even imagined.”

Character delineation.

32. “You flatter me,” replied the Prefect; “but it is possible that some such opinion may have been entertained.”

33. “It is clear,” said I, “as you observe, that the letter is still in possession of the minister; since it is this possession, and not any employment of the letter, which bestows the power. With the employment the power departs.”

Attempts at recovery of the purloined letter. Second stage of the plot.

34. “True,” said G——, “and upon this conviction I proceeded. My first care was to make thorough search of the minister’s hotel; and here my chief embarrassment lay in the necessity of searching without his knowledge. Beyond all things, I have been warned of the danger which would result from giving him reason to suspect our design.”

Au fait—to the point; therefore, at home.

35. “But,” said I, “you are quite *au fait* in these investigations. The Parisian police have done this thing often before.”

36. “Oh, yes; and for this reason I did not despair. The habits of the minister gave me, too, a great advantage. He is frequently absent from home all night. His servants are by no means numerous. They sleep at a distance from their master’s apartment, and being chiefly Neapolitans, are readily made drunk. I have keys, as you know, with which I can open any chamber or cabinet in Paris. For three months, a night has not passed during the greater part of which I have not been engaged, personally, in ransacking the D—— Hotel. My honor is interested, and, to mention a great secret, the reward is enormous. So I did not abandon the search until I had become fully satisfied that the thief is a more astute man than myself. I fancy that I have investigated every nook and corner of the premises in which it is possible that the paper can be concealed.”

37. “But is it not possible,” I suggested, “that although the letter may be in possession of the minister, as it unquestionably is, he may have concealed it elsewhere than upon his own premises?”

Inferential reasoning.

38. “This is barely possible,” said Dupin. “The present peculiar condition of affairs at court, and especially of those intrigues in which D—— is known to be involved, would render the instant availability of the document—its susceptibility of being produced at a moment’s notice—a point of nearly equal importance with its possession.”

39. “Its susceptibility of being produced?” said I.

Note the distinction.

40. “That is to say, of being *destroyed*,” said Dupin.

41. “True,” I observed; “the paper is clearly then upon the premises. As for its being upon the person of the*A just inference.* minister, we may consider that as out of the question.”

42. “Entirely,” said the Prefect. “He has been twice waylaid, as if by footpads, and his person rigorously searched under my own inspection.”

43. “You might have spared yourself this trouble,” said Dupin. “D——, I presume, is not altogether a fool, and, if not, must have anticipated these waylayings as a matter of course.”

44. “Not *altogether* a fool,” said G——; “but then he’s a poet, which I take to be only one remove from a fool.”

45. “True,” said Dupin, after a long and thoughtful whiff from his meerschaum, “although I have been guilty of certain doggerel myself.”

46. “Suppose you detail,” said I, “the particulars of your search.”

The thoroughness of the search tends to interest the reader in the problem as a difficult one.

47. “Why, the fact is, we took our time, and we searched *everywhere*. I have had long experience in these affairs. I took the entire building, room by room, devoting the nights of a whole week to each. We examined, first, the furniture of each apartment. We opened every possible drawer; and I presume you know that, to a properly trained police agent, such a

thing as a *secret* drawer is impossible. *On Poe's "police methods" most modern detective writers have drawn for material.* Any man is a dolt who permits a 'secret' drawer to escape him in a search of this kind. The thing is *so* plain. There is a certain amount of bulk—of space—to be accounted for in every cabinet. Then we have accurate rules. The fiftieth part of a line could not escape us. After the cabinets we took the chairs. The cushions we probed with the fine long needles you have seen me employ. From the tables we removed the tops."

48. "Why so?"

Doubtless the narrator speaks.

49. "Sometimes the top of a table, or other similarly arranged piece of furniture, is removed by the person wishing to conceal an article; then the leg is excavated, the article deposited within the cavity, and the top replaced. The bottoms and tops of bed-posts are employed in the same way."

50. "But could not the cavity be detected by sounding?" I asked.

Note improper shifting of tenses in question and answer.

51. "By no means, if, when the article is deposited, a sufficient wadding of cotton be placed around it. Besides, in our case we were obliged to proceed without noise."

52. "But you could not have removed—you could not have taken to pieces *all* articles of furniture in which it would have been possible to make a deposit in the manner you mention. A letter may be compressed into a thin spiral roll, not differing much in shape or bulk from a large knitting-needle, and in this form it

might be inserted into the rung of a chair, for example. You did not take to pieces all the chairs?"

Note how ingeniously Poe weaves his knowledge of detective methods into the actual search of the story.

53. "Certainly not; but we did better—we examined the rungs of every chair in the hotel, and indeed, the jointings of every description of furniture, by the aid of a most powerful microscope. Had there been any traces of recent disturbance we should not have failed to detect it instantly. A single grain of gimlet-dust, for example, would have been as obvious as an apple. Any disorder in the gluing—any unusual gaping in the joints—would have sufficed to insure detection."

54. "I presume you looked to the mirrors, between the boards and the plates, and you probed the beds and the bed-clothes, as well as the curtains and carpets?"

55. "That, of course; and when we had absolutely completed every particle of the furniture in this way, then we examined the house itself. We divided its entire surface into compartments, which we numbered, so that none might be missed; then we scrutinized each individual square inch throughout the premises including the two houses immediately adjoining, with the microscope, as before."

This seems to be a break in the chain of probability, as G—— has already carefully explained how he was able to go over D——'s house with impunity.

56. "The two houses adjoining!" I exclaimed; "you must have had a great deal of trouble."

57. "We had; but the reward offered is prodigious."

58. “You include the *grounds* about the houses?”

59. “All the grounds are paved with brick. They gave us comparatively little trouble. We examined the moss between the bricks, and found it undisturbed.”

60. “You looked among D——'s papers, of course, and into the books of the library?”

Note unusual word.

61. “Certainly; we opened every package and parcel; we not only opened every book, but we turned over every leaf in each volume, not contenting ourselves with a mere shake, according to the fashion of some of our police officers. We also measured the thickness of every book-*cover*, with the most accurate admeasurement, and applied to each the most jealous scrutiny of the microscope. Had any of the bindings been recently meddled with, it would have been utterly impossible that the fact should have escaped observation. Some five or six volumes, just from the hands of the binder, we carefully probed, longitudinally, with the needles.”

62. “You explored the floors beneath the carpets?”

63. “Beyond doubt. We removed every carpet, and examined the boards with the microscope.”

64. “And the paper on the walls?”

65. “Yes.”

66. “You looked into the cellars?”

67. “We did.”

Dupin would not have said this.

68. “Then,” I said, “you have been making a miscalculation, and the letter is *not* on the premises,

as you suppose."

First Deduction Rejected.

69. "I fear you are right there," said the Prefect. "And now, Dupin, what would you advise me to do?"

Third Stage of Plot.

70 "To make a thorough research of the premises."

71. "That is absolutely needless," replied G——. "I am not more sure that I breathe than I am that the letter is not at the Hotel."

Preparation for denouement.

72. "I have no better advice to give you," said Dupin. "You have, of course, an accurate description of the letter?"

Attempt to mislead reader.

73. "Oh, yes." And here the Prefect, producing a memorandum-book, proceeded to read aloud a minute account of the internal, and especially of the external, appearance of the missing document. Soon after finishing*Note the patronizing "good gentleman."* the perusal of this description, he took his departure, more entirely depressed in spirits than I had ever known the good gentleman before.

74. In about a month afterwards he paid us another visit, and found us occupied very nearly as before. He took a pipe and a chair, and entered into some ordinary conversation. At length I said:

75. "Well, but G——, what of the purloined letter? I presume you have at last made up your mind that there is no such thing as overreaching the minister?"

76. “Confound him, say I—yes; I made the reëxamination, however, as Dupin suggested—but it was all labor lost, as I knew it would be.”

77. “How much was the reward offered, did you say?” asked Dupin.

78. “Why, a very great deal—a *very* liberal reward—I don’t like to say how much precisely; but one thing I *will* say, that I wouldn’t mind giving my individual check for fifty thousand francs to any one who would obtain me that letter. The fact is, it is becoming of more and more importance every day; and the reward has been lately doubled. If it were trebled, however, I could do no more than I have done.”

79. “Why, yes,” said Dupin drawlingly, between the whiffs of his meerschaum, “I really—think, G——, you have not exerted yourself—to the utmost in this matter. You might—do a little more, I think, eh?”

80. “How?—in what way?”

Fourth Stage of Plot.
Illustrative anecdote of Dr. John Abernethy, the English surgeon.

81. “Why [puff, puff], you might [puff, puff] employ counsel in the matter, eh? [puff, puff, puff] Do you remember the story they tell of Abernethy?”

82. “No; hang Abernethy!”

83. “To be sure! hang him and welcome. But once upon a time, a certain rich miser conceived the design of sponging upon this Abernethy for a medical opinion. Getting up, for this purpose, an ordinary conversation in a private company, he insinuated his case to the physician as that of an imaginary individual.”

84. “‘We will suppose,’ said the miser, ‘that his

symptoms are such and such; now, doctor, what would *you* have directed him to take?'"

85. "'Take!' said Abernethy, 'why, take *advice*, to be sure.'"

86. "But," said the Prefect, a little discomposed, "I am *perfectly* willing to take advice, and to pay for it. I would *really* give fifty thousand francs to any one who would aid me in the matter."

Minor Climax.

87. "In that case," replied Dupin, opening a drawer, and producing a check-book, "you may as well fill me up a check for the amount mentioned. When you have signed it, I will hand you the letter."

Character delineation.

88. I was astounded. The Prefect appeared absolutely thunderstricken. For some minutes he remained speechless and motionless, looking incredulously at my friend with open mouth, and eyes that seemed starting from their sockets; then, apparently recovering himself in some measure, he seized a pen, and after several pauses and vacant stares, finally filled up and signed a check for fifty thousand francs, and handed it across the table to Dupin. *Climax.* The latter examined it carefully and deposited it in his pocket; then, unlocking an *escritoire*, took thence a letter and gave it to the Prefect.*The plot seems to end here, for long reasoning and explanation follow. There is, however, a second climax as Dupin's story reaches its denouement.* This functionary grasped it in a perfect agony of joy, opened it with a trembling hand, cast a rapid glance at its contents, and then, scrambling and struggling to the door, rushed at length unceremoniously from the room and from the house, without having uttered a syllable since Dupin

had requested him to fill up the check.

89. When he had gone, my friend entered into some explanations.

First Stage of Dupin's Account. This account places Dupin's methods in artistic contrast with those of the Prefect.

90. "The Parisian police," he said, "are exceedingly able in their way. They are persevering, ingenious, cunning, and thoroughly versed in the knowledge which their duties seem chiefly to demand. Thus, when G—— detailed to us his mode of searching the premises at the Hotel D——, I felt entire confidence in his having made a satisfactory investigation—so far as his labors extended."

91. "So far as his labors extended?" said I.

Not a precise statement.

92. "Yes," said Dupin. "The measures adopted were not only the best of their kind, but carried out to absolute perfection. Had the letter been deposited within the range of their search, these fellows would, beyond a question, have found it."

93. I merely laughed, but he seemed quite serious in all that he said.

94. "The measures, then," he continued, "were good in their kind, and well executed; their defect lay in their being inapplicable to the case, and to the man. A certain set of highly ingenious resources are, with the Prefect, a sort of Procrustean bed to which he forcibly adapts his designs. But he perpetually errs by being too deep or too shallow for the matter in hand; and many a schoolboy is a better reasoner than *Illustrative anecdote.* he. I knew one about eight years of age, whose success at guessing in the game of 'even

and odd' attracted universal admiration. This game is simple, and is played with marbles. One player holds in his hand a number of these toys, and demands of another whether that number is even or odd. If the guess is right, the guesser wins one; if wrong, he loses one. The boy to whom I allude won all the marbles of the school. Of course he had some principle of guessing; and this lay in mere observation and admeasurement of the astuteness of his *Joint inductive-deductive method of reasoning.* opponents. For example an arrant simpleton is his opponent, and, holding up his closed hand asks, 'Are they even or odd?' Our schoolboy replies, 'Odd,' and loses; but upon the second trial he wins, for he then says to himself, 'The simpleton had them even upon the first trial, and his amount of cunning is just sufficient to make him have them odd upon the second; I will therefore guess odd;' he guesses odd, and wins. Now, with a simpleton a degree above the first, he would have reasoned thus: 'This fellow finds that in the first instance*Inductive reasoning.* I guessed odd, and in the second he will propose to himself, upon the first impulse, a simple variation from even to odd, as did the first simpleton; but then a second thought will suggest that this is too simple a variation, and finally he will decide upon putting it even as before. I will therefore guess even;' he guesses even, and wins. Now this mode of reasoning in the schoolboy, whom his fellows term 'lucky'—what, in its last analysis, is it?"

Reduced to untechnical language.

95. "It is merely," I said, "an identification of the reasoner's intellect with that of his opponent."

96. "It is," said Dupin; "and, upon inquiring of the

boy by what means he effected the *thorough* identification in which his success consisted, I received answer as follows: 'When I wish to find out how wise, or how stupid, or how good, or how wicked is any one, or what are his thoughts at the moment, I fashion the expression of my face, as accurately as possible,*Compare with Barrie's statement on p. 217.* in accordance with the expression of his, and then wait to see what thoughts or sentiments arise in my mind or heart, as if to match or correspond with the expression.' This response of the schoolboy lies at the *1 and 2, French authors and moralists; 3, astute Italian statesman; 4, Italian thinker.* bottom of all the spurious profundity which has been attributed to Rochefoucauld, to La Bruyère, to Machiavelli, and to Campanella."

97. "And the identification," I said, "of the reasoner's intellect with that of his opponent's, depends, if I understand you aright, upon the accuracy with which the opponent's intellect is admeasured."

Analysis.
Observe how fond Poe is of long paragraphs.

98. "For its practical value it depends upon this," replied Dupin, "and the Prefect and his cohort fail so frequently, first, by default of this identification, and secondly, by ill-admeasurement, or rather through non-admeasurement, of the intellect with which they are engaged. They consider only their *own* ideas of ingenuity; and, in searching for anything hidden, advert only to the modes in which *they* would have hidden it. They are right in this much—that their own ingenuity is a faithful representative of that of *the mass*; but when the cunning of the individual felon is diverse in character from their own, the felon foils them, of course. This always happens when it is above their own, and very usually when it is below.

They have no *Astute comment.* variation of principle in their investigations; at best, when urged by some unusual emergency, by some extraordinary reward, they extend or exaggerate their old modes of *practice*, without touching their principles. What, for example, in this case of D——, has been done to vary the principle of action? What is all this *Note the length of this paragraph.* boring, and probing, and sounding, and scrutinizing with the microscope, and dividing the surface of the building into registered square inches —what is it all but an exaggeration *of the application* of the one principle or set of principles of search, which are based upon the one set of notions regarding human ingenuity, to which the Prefect, in the long routine of his duty, has been accustomed? Do you not see he has taken it for granted that *all* men proceed to conceal a letter—not exactly in a gimlet-hole bored in a chair leg—but, at least, in *some* out of the way hole or *A cumbersomely long sentence.* corner suggested by the same tenor of thought which would urge a man to secrete a letter in a gimlet-hole bored in a chair leg? And do you not see, also, that such *recherchés* nooks for concealment are adapted only for ordinary occasions and would be adopted only by*Recherchés—carefully sought out.* ordinary intellects; for, in all cases of concealment, a disposal of the article concealed—a disposal of it in this *recherché* manner—is, in the very first instance, presumable and presumed; and thus its discovery depends, not at all upon the acumen, but altogether upon the mere care, patience, and determination of the seekers; and where the case is of importance—or, what amounts to the same thing in policial eyes, when the reward is of magnitude—the qualities in question have *never* been known to fail. You will now understand what I meant in suggesting that, had the purloined letter

been hidden anywhere within the limits of the Prefect's examination—in other words, had the principle of its concealment *Note force of "hidden."* been comprehended within the principles of the Prefect, its discovery would have been a matter altogether beyond question. This functionary, however, has been thoroughly mystified; and the remote source of his defeat lies in the supposition that the minister is a fool because he has acquired renown as a poet. All fools *"The undistributed middle" is a form of logical fallacy.* are poets; this the Prefect *feels*; and he is merely guilty of a *non distributio medii* in thence inferring that all poets are fools."

Note the following series of unusual statements.

99. "But is this really the poet?" I asked. "There are two brothers, I know; and both have attained reputation in letters. The minister, I believe, has written learnedly on the Differential Calculus. He is a mathematician and no poet."

100. "You are mistaken; I know him well; he is both. As poet *and* mathematician he would reason well; as mere mathematician he could not have reasoned at all, and thus would have been at the mercy of the Prefect."

101. "You surprise me," I said, "by these opinions, which have been contradicted by the voice of the world. You do not mean to set at naught the well-digested idea of centuries. The mathematical reason has long been regarded as *the* reason *par excellence*."

"It may be said that every public idea, every received convention, is a piece of stupidity, for it has suited the greater number."—Nicolas Chamfort.

102. "'*Il y a à parier*,'" replied Dupin, quoting from Chamfort, "'*que toute idée publique, toute convention*

reçue, est une sottise, car elle a convenu au plus grand nombre.' The mathematicians, I grant you, have done their best to promulgate the popular error to which you allude, and which is none the less an error for its promulgation as truth. With an art worthy a better cause, for example, they have insinuated the term 'analysis' into application to *This whole section of the story triumphs notwithstanding its undue length of learned discussion and its formal diction. It must be admitted that in these respects the present-day short-story is in advance of Poe. A number of paragraphs here fail to advance the narration as fiction.* algebra. The French are the originators of this practical deception; but if a term is of any importance—if words derive any value from applicability—then 'analysis' conveys 'algebra,' about as much as, in Latin, '*ambitus*' implies 'ambition,' '*religio*,' 'religion,' or '*homines honesti*,' a set of *honorable* men."

103. "You have a quarrel on hand, I see," said I, "with some of the algebraists of Paris; but proceed."

104. "I dispute the availability, and thus the value of that reason which is cultivated in any especial form other than the abstractly logical. I dispute, in particular, the reason educed by mathematical study. *Unusual form. Throughout, note Poe's unusual choice of words.* The mathematics are the science of form and quantity; mathematical reasoning is merely logic applied to observation upon form and quantity. The great error lies in supposing that even the truths of what is called *pure* algebra are abstract or general truths. And this error is so egregious that I am confounded at the universality with which it has been received. Mathematical axioms are *not* axioms of general truth. What is true of *relation*—of form and quantity—is often grossly false in regard to morals, for example. In this latter *As a piece of pure reasoning this long treatise is not without its defects, but it does bring out—though too laboriously to please—the point at*

which Dupin is driving. science it is very usually *un*true that the aggregated parts are equal to the whole. In chemistry, also, the axiom fails. In the consideration of motive it fails; for two motives, each of a given value, have not, necessarily, a value when united equal to the sum of their values apart. There are numerous other mathematical truths which are only truths within the limits of *relation*. But the mathematician argues, from his *finite truths*, through habit, as if they were of an absolutely general applicability—as the world indeed imagines them to be. *Jacob Bryant.*Bryant, in his very learned 'Mythology,' mentions an analogous source of error, when he says that 'although the Pagan fables are not believed, yet we forget ourselves continually, and make inferences from them as existing realities.' *He speaks figuratively.* With the algebraists, however, who are Pagans themselves, the 'Pagan fables' *are* believed and the inferences are made, not so much through lapse of memory as through an unaccountable addling of the brains. In short, I never yet encountered the mere mathematician who could be trusted out of equal roots, or one who did not clandestinely hold it as a point of his faith *A striking satire.* that $x^2 + px$ was absolutely and unconditionally equal to q. Say to one of these gentlemen, by way of experiment, if you please, that you believe occasions may occur where $x^2 + px$ is not altogether equal to q, *More satire.* and, having made him understand what you mean, get out of his reach as speedily as convenient, for beyond doubt he will endeavor to knock you down."

Note the force of "last."

105. "I mean to say," continued Dupin, while I merely laughed at his last observations, "that if the

minister had been no more than a mathematician the Prefect would have been under no necessity of giving me this check. I knew him, however, as both mathematician and poet, and my measures were adapted to his capacity with reference to the circumstances by which he was surrounded. *A return from the special argument to the practical.*

Application of the foregoing principles. I knew him as courtier, too, and as a bold *intriguant*. Such a man, I considered, could not fail to be aware of the ordinary policial modes of action. He could not have failed to anticipate—and events have proved that he did not fail to anticipate—the waylayings to which he was subjected. He must have foreseen, I reflected, the secret investigations of his premises. *A difficult point explained.* His frequent absences from home at night, which were hailed by the Prefect as certain aids to his success, I regarded only as ruses, to afford opportunity for thorough search to the police, and thus the sooner to impress them with the conviction to which G——, in fact, *Note the unusual use of "to," instead of "at."* did finally arrive—the conviction that the letter was not upon the premises. I felt, also, that the whole train of thought, which I was at some pains in detailing to you just now, concerning the invariable principle of policial action in searches for articles concealed—I felt that this whole *Is this probable?* train of thought would necessarily pass through the mind of the minister. It would imperatively lead him to despise all the ordinary *nooks* of concealment. *Compare ¶95.He* could not, I reflected, be so weak as not to see that the most intricate and remote recess of his hotel would be as open as his commonest closets to the eyes, to the probes, to the gimlets, and to the microscopes of the Prefect. I saw, in fine, that he would be driven, as a matter of course, to *simplicity*, if not deliberately induced to it as a matter of choice.

You will remember, perhaps, how desperately the Prefect laughed when I suggested, upon our *Key. Compare ¶10.* first interview, that it was just possible this mystery troubled him so much on account of its being so *very* self-evident."

106. "Yes," said I, "I remember his merriment well. I really thought he would have fallen into convulsions."

A return to philosophising.

107. "The material world," continued Dupin, "abounds with very strict analogies to the immaterial; and thus some color of truth has been given to the rhetorical dogma, that metaphor, or simile, may be made to strengthen an argument, as well as to embellish a description. The principle of the *vis inertiæ*, *Force of inertia.* for example, seems to be identical in physics and metaphysics. It is not more true in the former, that a large body is with more difficulty set in motion than a smaller one, and that its subsequent momentum is commensurate with this difficulty, than it is, in the latter, that intellects of the vaster capacity, while more forcible, more constant, and more eventful in their movements than those of inferior grade, are yet the less readily moved, and more embarrassed and full of hesitation in the first few steps of their progress. *This inquiry is the heart of the inference.* Again: have you ever noticed which of the street signs over the shop doors are the most attractive of attention?"

108. "I have never given the matter a thought," I said.

Illustrative example.

109. "There is a game of puzzles," he resumed,

"which is played upon a map. One party playing requires another to find a given word—the name of town, river, state, or empire—any word, in short, upon the motley and perplexed surface of the chart. *Note the diction.* A novice in the game generally seeks to embarrass his opponents by giving them the most minutely lettered names; but the adept selects such words as stretch in large characters from one end of the chart to the other. These, like the over-largely lettered signs and placards of the street, escape observation by dint of being excessively obvious; and here the physical oversight is precisely analogous with the moral inapprehension by which the intellect suffers to pass unnoticed those considerations which are too obtrusively and too palpably self-evident. But *Compare ¶94 and ¶98.* this is a point, it appears, somewhat above or beneath the understanding of the Prefect. He never once thought it probable, or possible, that *Summary of "accusation" against the Prefect's sagacity.* the minister had deposited the letter immediately beneath the nose of the whole world, by way of best preventing any portion of that world from perceiving it.

Note the alliteration.

110. "But the more I reflected upon the daring, dashing, and discriminating ingenuity of D——; upon the fact that the document must always have been *at hand*, if he intended to use it to good purpose; and upon the decisive evidence, obtained by the Prefect, that it was not hidden within the limits of that dignitary's ordinary search—the more satisfied *Climax of Dupin's inferential reasoning.* I became that, to conceal this letter, the minister had resorted to the comprehensive and sagacious expedient of not attempting to conceal it at all.

Beginning of Real Plot.
Incident of Dupin's Story.
From this point the narration is free from the formalities of expression which mar the central section of the story. These, however, were a characteristic of Poe and his era.

111. "Full of these ideas, I prepared myself with a pair of green spectacles, and called one fine morning, quite by accident, at the ministerial hotel. I found D —— at home, yawning, lounging, and dawdling, as usual, and pretending to be in the last extremity of *ennui*. He is, perhaps, the most really energetic human*Note the use of "now."* being now alive—but that is only when nobody sees him.

112. "To be even with him, I complained of my weak eyes, and lamented the necessity of the spectacles, under cover of which I cautiously and thoroughly surveyed the whole apartment, while seemingly intent only upon the conversation of my host.

113. "I paid especial attention to a large writing-table near which he sat, and upon which lay confusedly some miscellaneous letters and other papers, with one or two musical instruments and a few books. Here, however, after a long and very deliberate scrutiny, I saw nothing to excite particular suspicion.

Dupin's reasoning sustained.

114. "At length my eyes, in going the circuit of the room, fell upon a trumpery filigree card-rack of paste-board, that hung dangling, by a dirty blue ribbon, from a little brass knob just beneath the middle of the mantelpiece. In this rack, which had three or four compartments, were five or six visiting cards and a solitary letter. This last was much soiled and crumpled. It was torn nearly in two, across the middle—as if a design, in the first instance, to tear it

entirely up as worthless had been altered, or stayed, in the second. It had a large black seal, bearing the D —— cipher *very* conspicuously, and was addressed, in a diminutive female hand, to D——, the minister himself. It was thrust carelessly, and even, as it seemed, contemptuously, into one of the uppermost divisions of the rack.

Throughout, Poe used punctuation more freely than is now the custom.

115. “No sooner had I glanced at this letter than I concluded it to be that of which I was in search. To be sure, it was, to all appearance, radically different from the one of which the Prefect had read us so minute a description. Here the seal was large and black, with the D—— cipher; there it was small and red, with the ducal arms of the S—— family. Here the address, to the minister, was diminutive and feminine; there, the superscription, to a certain royal personage, was markedly bold and decided; the size alone formed a point of correspondence.*It was the custom in earlier times simply to fold a letter, seal it with a wafer, and address it on the back, which was allowed to remain otherwise blank. This accounts for there being no reference to an envelope, and also for the refolding of the letter.* But, then, the *radicalness* of these differences, which was excessive; the dirt, the soiled and torn condition of the paper, so inconsistent with the *true* methodical habits of D——, and so suggestive of a design to delude the beholder into an idea of the worthlessness of the document; these things, together with the hyper-obtrusive situation of this document, full in the view of every visitor, and thus exactly in accordance with the conclusions to which I had previously arrived; these things, I say, were strongly corroborative of suspicion, in one who came with the intention to suspect.

116. “I protracted my visit as long as possible, and

while I maintained a most animated discussion with the minister, upon a topic which I knew well had never failed to interest and excite him, I kept my attention really riveted upon the letter. In this examination, I committed to memory its external appearance and arrangement in the rack; and also fell, at length, upon a discovery which set at rest whatever trivial doubt I might have entertained. *Note use of "fold" and its derivatives.* In scrutinizing the edges of the paper, I observed them to be more *chafed* than seemed necessary. They presented the *broken* appearance which is manifested when a stiff paper, having been once folded and pressed with a folder, is refolded in a reversed direction, in the same creases or edges which had formed the original fold. This discovery was sufficient. It was clear to me that the letter had been turned, as a glove, inside out, re-directed, and re-sealed.*A good device.* I bade the minister good-morning, and took my departure at once, leaving a gold snuff-box upon the table.

Apparent Full Climax.

117. "The next morning I called for the snuff-box, when we resumed, quite eagerly, the conversation of the preceding day. While thus engaged, however, a loud report, as if of a pistol, was heard immediately beneath the windows of the hotel, and was succeeded by a series of fearful screams, and the shoutings of a mob. D—— rushed to a casement, threw it open, and looked out. In the meantime, I stepped to the card-rack, took the letter, put it in my pocket, and replaced it by a *facsimile* (so far as regards externals) which I had carefully prepared at my lodgings—imitating the D—— cipher very readily by means of a seal formed of bread.

Concluding explanations.

118. “The disturbance in the street had been occasioned by the frantic behavior of a man with a musket. He had fired it among a crowd of women and children. It proved, however, to have been without ball, and the fellow was suffered to go his way as a lunatic or a drunkard.*Note how the climax of Dupin’s story also serves as the climax of the Prefect’s earlier statement of the problem and his efforts to solve it.* When he had gone, D—— came from the window, whither I had followed him immediately upon securing the object in view. Soon afterwards I bade him farewell. The pretended lunatic was a man in my own pay.”

119. “But what purpose had you,” I asked, “in replacing the letter by a *facsimile*? Would it not have been better, at the first visit, to have seized it openly and departed?”

In the interest in Dupin’s reasoning and its results we have lost sight of the real importance of the letter.

120. “D——,” replied Dupin, “is a desperate man, and a man of nerve. His hotel, too, is not without attendants devoted to his interest. Had I made the wild attempt you suggest I might never have left the ministerial presence alive. The good people of Paris might have heard of me no more. But I had an object apart from these considerations. You know my political prepossessions. In this matter I act as a partisan of the lady concerned. For eighteen months the minister has had her in his power. She has now him in hers—since, being unaware that the letter is not in his possession, he will proceed with his exactions as if it was.*Is “was” correct?* Thus will he inevitably commit himself at once to his political destruction. His downfall, too, will not be more precipitate than awkward. *The descent to Avernus (the fabled*

entrance to the Infernal Regions) is easy. It is all very well to talk about the *facilis descensus Averni*; but in all kinds of climbing, as Catalani said of singing, it is far more easy to get up than to come down. In the present instance I have no sympathy—at least no pity—for him who descends. He is that *monstrum horrendum*, an unprincipled man of genius. I confess, *Monster to be shuddered at.* however, that I should like very well to know the precise character of his thoughts, when, being defied by her whom the Prefect terms 'a certain personage,' he is reduced to opening the letter which I left for him in the card-rack."

121. "How? Did you put anything particular in it?"

Real Climax.

122. "Why, it did not seem altogether right to leave the interior blank—that would have been insulting. D——, at Vienna, once did me an evil turn, which I told him, quite good-humoredly, I should remember. So, as I knew he would feel some curiosity in regard to the identity of the person who had outwitted him, I thought it a pity not to give him a clew. He is well acquainted with my MS., and I just copied into the middle of the blank sheet the words:—

A design so baleful, if not worthy of Atreus, is worthy of Thyestes.

> '——Un dessein si funeste,
> S'il n'est digne d'Atrée, est digne de Thyeste.'

They are to be found in Crébillon's 'Atrée.'"

JACOBS AND HIS WRITINGS

William Wymark Jacobs was born in London, September 8, 1863, the son of William Gage Jacobs. He was educated at private schools, and entered the employ of the Post Office Savings Bank at sixteen. Four years later he secured a regular clerkship there. He began his literary career at the age of twenty-one with a contribution to the *Blackfriars Magazine*, a publication conducted by the clerks at the Post Office, and from that he was led to contributing articles to various London papers, though he retained his Civil Service position until 1899. His remarkable acquaintance with nautical subjects, and characters of the coasting trade and seaport wharves, was acquired during several years spent in Wapping, while his father was wharfinger there, as during that period the younger Jacobs was brought into contact with many seamen and wharf hands, and came to know many of them very well. In 1900 he married Agnes Eleanor Williams. Some of Jacobs' most popular collections of stories are *Many Cargoes*; *More Cargoes*; *Short Cruises*; *Odd Craft*; *Captains All*; *Light Freights*; and *The Lady of the Barge*. His longer stories include *A Master of Craft*, *Dialstone Lane*; *Salthaven*, and *At Sunwich Port.*

Mr. Jacobs is known mostly by his delightfully quaint and humorous character delineations of river, shore, and sea-faring folk. The remarkable short-story given herewith, however, is of a very different sort and discloses a mastery of the weird, of the supernatural, which is not surpassed in the whole short-story field. With a sureness of character-

drawing which is nothing short of amazing in a humorist, he outlines scene and actors, and when the crises are reached—so completely is all visualized—we are able to infer the swift-moving climax with scarce the need of a word. “The Monkey’s Paw” is one of the most dramatically poignant stories of the supernatural ever written, and invites us to a closer study of its gifted and versatile author.

> It [a sea-life] is a man’s life. It teaches self-restraint and discipline and the art of governing men. It is a fine, healthy life that breeds men. All that I mean to say is that distance lends enchantment to the view, and that the essential romance and comedy of the life of those who go down to the sea in ships are intensified in the perspective of years.—W. W. JACOBS, *London Daily Chronicle*.

> Londoners, in particular, should hail him with applause, for he has done more than make them laugh; he has added character to their river. Henceforward no one who has read *Many Cargoes* will look at a passing barge with an apathetic gaze. He will see before him not merely a vehicle of porterage, but a hot-bed of liquorish and acceptable sarcasm.—*Academy* (London).

> Mr. Jacobs has two great gifts: one is the power to place a simple-minded man in a corner, excite our sympathies for him, magnify his embarrassments, and keep us engrossed all the time.... But we do not consider that herein lies Mr. Jacobs’s special distinction.... It is in his eye for character, his knowledge of a certain kind of human nature, his genius for the little touches, as we

prefer to call them, that Mr. Jacobs stands out so notably. No one now writing can manage the little touches as Mr. Jacobs can, at once so naturally, so truthfully, so usefully, and so joyously.... None of them actually helps the plot, but every one of them is so much added to the characters and conditions of the story.—IBID.

We cannot think of any other books with which to compare Mr. Jacobs's, because there are none just like them. To-day a number of the best and brightest English and American writers seem to be getting their inspiration from the sea.... Each one of these has his own particular field, and in presenting the humour of the sailor's life and environment no one approaches Mr. Jacobs. —BOOKMAN (New York).

We are acquainted with one pronounced pessimist, who maintains defiantly and aggressively that he never reads anything in the nature of modern fiction. "Except, of course," he adds, "the short stories of W. W. Jacobs, which certainly make me laugh...." We are inclined to believe that there are a number of men who are of the same mind in regard to the work of Mr. Jacobs. Yet we do not think that his most ardent admirer, after having laid aside one of his books for three days, would be able to give more than the vaguest description of the tales contained therein. To this rule there are, however, several exceptions. "The Monkey's Paw," as grewsome a story as has appeared for years, was one.—IBID.

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FOR ANALYSIS

THE MONKEY'S PAW[19]

BY W. W. JACOBS

I

Without, the night was cold and wet, but in the small parlour of Laburnam Villa the blinds were drawn and the fire burned brightly. Father and son were at chess, the former, who possessed ideas about the game involving radical changes, putting his king into such sharp and unnecessary perils that it even provoked comment from the white-haired old lady knitting placidly by the fire.

2. "Hark at the wind," said Mr. White, who having seen a fatal mistake after it was too late, was amiably desirous of preventing his son from seeing it.

3. "I'm listening," said the latter, grimly surveying the board as he stretched out his hand. "Check."

4. “I should hardly think that he’d come to-night,” said his father, with his hand poised over the board.

5. “Mate,” replied the son.

6. “That’s the worst of living so far out,” bawled Mr. White, with sudden and unlooked-for violence; “of all the beastly, slushy, out-of-the-way places to live in, this is the worst. Pathway’s a bog, and the road’s a torrent. I don’t know what people are thinking about. I suppose because only two houses in the road are let, they think it doesn’t matter.”

7. “Never mind, dear,” said his wife, soothingly; “perhaps you’ll win the next one.”

8. Mr. White looked up sharply, just in time to intercept a knowing glance between mother and son. The words died away on his lips, and he hid a guilty grin in his thin grey beard.

9. “There he is,” said Herbert White, as the gate banged to loudly and heavy footsteps came toward the door.

10. The old man rose with hospitable haste, and opening the door, was heard condoling with the new arrival. The new arrival also condoled with himself, so that Mrs. White said, “Tut, tut!” and coughed gently as her husband entered the room, followed by a tall, burly man, beady of eye and rubicund of visage.

11. “Sergeant-Major Morris,” he said, introducing him.

12. The sergeant-major shook hands, and taking the proffered seat by the fire, watched contentedly while his host got out whiskey and tumblers and stood a small copper kettle on the fire.

13. At the third glass his eyes got brighter, and he began to talk, the little family circle regarding with eager interest this visitor from distant parts, as he squared his broad shoulders in the chair and spoke of wild scenes and doughty deeds; of wars and plagues and strange peoples.

14. “Twenty-one years of it,” said Mr. White, nodding at his wife and son. “When he went away he was a slip of a youth in the warehouse. Now look at him.”

15. “He don’t look to have taken much harm,” said Mrs. White, politely.

16. “I’d like to go to India myself,” said the old man, “just to look round a bit, you know.”

17. “Better where you are,” said the sergeant-major, shaking his head. He put down the empty glass, and sighing softly, shook it again.

18. “I should like to see those old temples and fakirs and jugglers,” said the old man. “What was that you started telling me the other day about a monkey’s paw or something, Morris?”

19. “Nothing,” said the soldier, hastily. “Leastways nothing worth hearing.”

20. “Monkey’s paw?” said Mrs. White, curiously.

21. “Well, it’s just a bit of what you might call magic, perhaps,” said the sergeant-major, offhandedly.

22. His three listeners leaned forward eagerly. The visitor absentmindedly put his empty glass to his lips and then set it down again. His host filled it for him.

23. “To look at,” said the sergeant-major, fumbling in his pocket, “it’s just an ordinary little paw, dried

to a mummy."

24. He took something out of his pocket and proffered it. Mrs. White drew back with a grimace, but her son, taking it, examined it curiously.

25. "And what is there special about it?" inquired Mr. White as he took it from his son, and having examined it, placed it upon the table.

26. "It had a spell put on it by an old fakir," said the sergeant-major, "a very holy man. He wanted to show that fate ruled people's lives, and that those who interfered with it did so to their sorrow. He put a spell on it so that three separate men could each have three wishes from it."

27. His manner was so impressive that his hearers were conscious that their light laughter jarred somewhat.

28. "Well, why don't you have three, sir?" said Herbert White, cleverly.

29. The soldier regarded him in the way that middle age is wont to regard presumptuous youth. "I have," he said, quietly, and his blotchy face whitened.

30. "And did you really have the three wishes granted?" asked Mrs. White.

31. "I did," said the sergeant-major, and his glass tapped against his strong teeth.

32. "And has anybody else wished?" persisted the old lady.

33. "The first man had his three wishes. Yes," was the reply; "I don't know what the first two were, but the third was for death. That's how I got the paw."

34. His tones were so grave that a hush fell upon the

group.

35. “If you’ve had your three wishes, it’s no good to you now, then, Morris,” said the old man at last. “What do you keep it for?”

36. The soldier shook his head. “Fancy, I suppose,” he said, slowly. “I did have some idea of selling it, but I don’t think I will. It has caused enough mischief already. Besides, people won’t buy. They think it’s a fairy tale, some of them; and those who do think anything of it want to try it first and pay me afterward.”

37. “If you could have another three wishes,” said the old man, eyeing him keenly, “would you have them?”

38. “I don’t know,” said the other. “I don’t know.”

39. He took the paw, and dangling it between his forefinger and thumb, suddenly threw it upon the fire. White, with a slight cry, stooped down and snatched it off.

40. “Better let it burn,” said the soldier, solemnly.

41. “If you don’t want it, Morris,” said the other, “give it to me.”

42. “I won’t,” said his friend doggedly. “I threw it on the fire. If you keep it, don’t blame me for what happens. Pitch it on the fire again like a sensible man.”

43. The other shook his head and examined his new possession closely. “How do you do it?” he inquired.

44. “Hold it up in your right hand and wish aloud,” said the sergeant-major, “but I warn you of the consequences.”

45. “Sounds like the Arabian Nights,” said Mrs. White, as she rose and began to set the supper. “Don’t you think you might wish for four pairs of hands for me?”

46. Her husband drew the talisman from his pocket, and then all three burst into laughter as the sergeant-major, with a look of alarm on his face, caught him by the arm.

47. “If you must wish,” he said, gruffly, “wish for something sensible.”

48. Mr. White dropped it back in his pocket, and placing chairs, motioned his friend to the table. In the business of supper the talisman was partly forgotten, and afterward the three sat listening in an enthralled fashion to a second installment of the soldier’s adventures in India.

49. “If the tale about the monkey’s paw is not more truthful than those he has been telling us,” said Herbert, as the door closed behind their guest, just in time for him to catch the last train, “we shan’t make much out of it.”

50. “Did you give him anything for it, father?” inquired Mrs. White, regarding her husband closely.

51. “A trifle,” said he, colouring slightly. “He didn’t want it, but I made him take it. And he pressed me again to throw it away.”

52. “Likely,” said Herbert, with pretended horror. “Why, we’re going to be rich, and famous and happy. Wish to be an emperor, father, to begin with; then you can’t be hen-pecked.”

53. He darted round the table, pursued by the maligned Mrs. White armed with an antimacassar.

54. Mr. White took the paw from his pocket and eyed it dubiously. “I don’t know what to wish for, and that’s a fact,” he said, slowly. “It seems to me I’ve got all I want.”

55. “If you only cleared the house, you’d be quite happy, wouldn’t you?” said Herbert, with his hand on his shoulder. “Well, wish for two hundred pounds, then; that’ll just do it.”

56. His father, smiling shamefacedly at his own credulity, held up the talisman, as his son, with a solemn face, somewhat marred by a wink at his mother, sat down at the piano and struck a few impressive chords.

57. “I wish for two hundred pounds,” said the old man distinctly.

58. A fine crash from the piano greeted the words, interrupted by a shuddering cry from the old man. His wife and son ran toward him.

59. “It moved,” he cried, with a glance of disgust at the object as it lay on the floor.

60. “As I wished, it twisted in my hand like a snake.”

61. “Well, I don’t see the money,” said his son as he picked it up and placed it on the table, “and I bet I never shall.”

62. “It must have been your fancy, father,” said his wife, regarding him anxiously.

63. He shook his head. “Never mind, though; there’s no harm, but it gave me a shock all the same.”

64. They sat down by the fire again while the two men finished their pipes. Outside, the wind was higher than ever, and the old man started nervously at the sound of a door banging up-stairs. A silence

unusual and depressing settled upon all three, which lasted until the old couple rose to retire for the night.

65. “I expect you’ll find the cash tied up in a big bag in the middle of your bed,” said Herbert, as he bade them good-night, “and something horrible squatting up on top of the wardrobe watching you as you pocket your ill-gotten gains.”

66. He sat alone in the darkness, gazing at the dying fire, and seeing faces in it. The last face was so horrible and so simian that he gazed at it in amazement. It got so vivid that, with a little uneasy laugh, he felt on the table for a glass containing a little water to throw over it. His hand grasped the monkey’s paw, and with a little shiver he wiped his hand on his coat and went up to bed.

II

67. In the brightness of the wintry sun next morning as it streamed over the breakfast table he laughed at his fears. There was an air of prosaic wholesomeness about the room which it had lacked on the previous night, and the dirty, shrivelled little paw was pitched on the sideboard with a carelessness which betokened no great belief in its virtues.

68. “I suppose all old soldiers are the same,” said Mrs. White. “The idea of our listening to such nonsense! How could wishes be granted in these days? And if they could, how could two hundred pounds hurt you, father?”

69. “Might drop on his head from the sky,” said the frivolous Herbert.

70. “Morris said the things happened so naturally,” said his father, “that you might if you so wished

attribute it to coincidence."

71. "Well, don't break into the money before I come back," said Herbert as he rose from the table. "I'm afraid it'll turn you into a mean, avaricious man, and we shall have to disown you."

72. His mother laughed, and following him to the door, watched him down the road; and returning to the breakfast table, was very happy at the expense of her husband's credulity. All of which did not prevent her from scurrying to the door at the postman's knock, nor prevent her from referring somewhat shortly to retired sergeant-majors of bibulous habits when she found that the post brought a tailor's bill.

73. "Herbert will have some more of his funny remarks, I expect, when he comes home," she said, as they sat at dinner.

74. "I dare say," said Mr. White, pouring himself out some beer; "but for all that, the thing moved in my hand; that I'll swear to."

75. "You thought it did," said the old lady soothingly.

76. "I say it did," replied the other. "There was no thought about it; I had just—What's the matter?"

77. His wife made no reply. She was watching the mysterious movements of a man outside, who, peering in an undecided fashion at the house, appeared to be trying to make up his mind to enter. In mental connection with the two hundred pounds, she noticed that the stranger was well dressed, and wore a silk hat of glossy newness. Three times he paused at the gate, and then walked on again. The fourth time he stood with his hand upon it, and then with sudden resolution flung it open and walked up

the path. Mrs. White at the same moment placed her hands behind her, and hurriedly unfastening the strings of her apron, put that useful article of apparel beneath the cushion of her chair.

78. She brought the stranger, who seemed ill at ease, into the room. He gazed at her furtively, and listened in a preoccupied fashion as the old lady apologized for the appearance of the room, and her husband's coat, a garment which he usually reserved for the garden. She then waited as patiently as her sex would permit, for him to broach his business, but he was at first strangely silent.

79. "I—was asked to call," he said at last, and stooped and picked a piece of cotton from his trousers. "I come from Maw and Meggins."

80. The old lady started. "Is anything the matter?" she asked, breathlessly. "Has anything happened to Herbert? What is it? What is it?"

81. Her husband interposed. "There, there, mother," he said, hastily. "Sit down, and don't jump to conclusions. You've not brought bad news, I'm sure, sir;" and he eyed the other wistfully.

82. "I'm sorry—" began the visitor.

83. "Is he hurt?" demanded the mother, wildly.

84. The visitor bowed in assent. "Badly hurt," he said, quietly, "but he is not in any pain."

85. "Oh, thank God!" said the old woman, clasping her hands. "Thank God for that! Thank—"

86. She broke off suddenly as the sinister meaning of the assurance dawned upon her and she saw the awful confirmation of her fears in the other's averted face. She caught her breath, and turning to her

slower-witted husband, laid her trembling old hand upon his. There was a long silence.

87. “He was caught in the machinery,” said the visitor at length in a low voice.

88. “Caught in the machinery,” repeated Mr. White, in a dazed fashion, “yes.”

89. He sat staring blankly out at the window, and taking his wife’s hand between his own, pressed it as he had been wont to do in their old courting-days nearly forty years before.

90. “He was the only one left to us,” he said, turning gently to the visitor. “It is hard.”

91. The other coughed, and rising, walked slowly to the window. “The firm wished me to convey their sincere sympathy with you in your great loss,” he said, without looking round. “I beg that you will understand I am only their servant and merely obeying orders.”

92. There was no reply; the old woman’s face was white, her eyes staring, and her breath inaudible; on the husband’s face was a look such as his friend the sergeant might have carried into his first action.

93. “I was to say that Maw and Meggins disclaim all responsibility,” continued the other. “They admit no liability at all, but in consideration of your son’s services, they wish to present you with a certain sum as compensation.”

94. Mr. White dropped his wife’s hand, and rising to his feet, gazed with a look of horror at his visitor. His dry lips shaped the words. “How much?”

95. “Two hundred pounds,” was the answer.

96. Unconscious of his wife’s shriek, the old man

smiled faintly, put out his hands like a sightless man, and dropped, a senseless heap, to the floor.

III

97. In the huge new cemetery, some two miles distant, the old people buried their dead, and came back to a house steeped in shadow and silence. It was all over so quickly that at first they could hardly realize it, and remained in a state of expectation as though of something else to happen—something else which was to lighten this load, too heavy for old hearts to bear.

98. But the days passed, and expectation gave place to resignation—the hopeless resignation of the old, sometimes miscalled, apathy. Sometimes they hardly exchanged a word, for now they had nothing to talk about, and their days were long to weariness.

99. It was about a week after that the old man, waking suddenly in the night, stretched out his hand and found himself alone. The room was in darkness, and the sound of subdued weeping came from the window. He raised himself in bed and listened.

100. “Come back,” he said, tenderly. “You will be cold.”

101. “It is colder for my son,” said the old woman, and wept afresh.

102. The sound of her sobs died away on his ears. The bed was warm, and his eyes heavy with sleep. He dozed fitfully, and then slept until a sudden wild cry from his wife awoke him with a start.

103. “The paw!” she cried wildly. “The monkey’s paw!”

104. He started up in alarm. “Where? Where is it? What’s the matter?”

105. She came stumbling across the room toward him. “I want it,” she said, quietly. “You’ve not destroyed it?”

106. “It’s in the parlour, on the bracket,” he replied marvelling. “Why?”

107. She cried and laughed together, and bending over, kissed his cheek.

108. “I only just thought of it,” she said, hysterically. “Why didn’t I think of it before? Why didn’t you think of it?”

109. “Think of what?” he questioned.

110. “The other two wishes,” she replied, rapidly. “We’ve only had one.”

111. “Was not that enough?” he demanded, fiercely.

112. “No,” she cried, triumphantly; “we’ll have one more. Go down and get it quickly, and wish our boy alive again.”

113. The man sat up in bed and flung the bed-clothes from his quaking limbs. “Good God, you are mad!” he cried, aghast.

114. “Get it,” she panted; “get it quickly, and wish—Oh, my boy, my boy!”

115. Her husband struck a match and lit the candle. “Get back to bed,” he said, unsteadily. “You don’t know what you are saying.”

116. “We had the first wish granted,” said the old woman, feverishly; “why not the second?”

117. “A coincidence,” stammered the old man.

118. “Go and get it and wish,” cried his wife, quivering with excitement.

119. The old man turned and regarded her, and his voice shook. “He has been dead ten days, and besides he—I would not tell you else, but—I could only recognize him by his clothing. If he was too terrible for you to see then, how now?”

120. “Bring him back,” cried the old woman, and dragged him toward the door. “Do you think I fear the child I have nursed?”

121. He went down in the darkness, and felt his way to the parlour, and then to the mantelpiece. The talisman was in its place, and a horrible fear that the unspoken wish might bring his mutilated son before him ere he could escape from the room seized upon him, and he caught his breath as he found that he had lost the direction of the door. His brow cold with sweat, he felt his way round the table, and groped along the wall until he found himself in the small passage with the unwholesome thing in his hand.

122. Even his wife’s face seemed changed as he entered the room. It was white and expectant, and to his fears seemed to have an unnatural look upon it. He was afraid of her.

123. “Wish!” she cried in a strong voice.

124. “It is foolish and wicked,” he faltered.

125. “Wish!” repeated his wife.

126. He raised his hand. “I wish my son alive again.”

127. The talisman fell to the floor, and he regarded it fearfully. Then he sank trembling into a chair as the old woman, with burning eyes, walked to the window and raised the blind.

128. He sat until he was chilled with the cold, glancing occasionally at the figure of the old woman peering through the window. The candle-end, which had burned below the rim of the china candle-stick, was throwing pulsating shadows on the ceilings and walls, until, with a flicker larger than the rest, it expired. The old man, with an unspeakable sense of relief at the failure of the talisman, crept back to his bed, and a minute or two afterward the old woman came silently and apathetically beside him.

129. Neither spoke, but lay silently listening to the ticking of the clock. A stair creaked, and a squeaky mouse scurried noisily through the wall. The darkness was oppressive, and after lying for some time screwing up his courage, he took the box of matches, and striking one, went downstairs for a candle.

130. At the foot of the stairs the match went out, and he paused to strike another; and at the same moment a knock, so quiet and stealthy as to be scarcely audible, sounded on the front door.

131. The matches fell from his hand and spilled in the passage. He stood motionless, his breath suspended until the knock was repeated. Then he turned and fled swiftly back to his room, and closed the door behind him. A third knock sounded through the house.

132. “What’s that?” cried the old woman, starting up.

133. “A rat,” said the old man in shaking tones—“a rat. It passed me on the stairs.”

134. His wife sat up in bed listening. A loud knock resounded through the house.

135. “It’s Herbert!” she screamed, “It’s Herbert!”

136. She ran to the door, but her husband was before her, and catching her by the arm, held her tightly.

137. “What are you going to do?” he whispered hoarsely.

138. “It’s my boy; it’s Herbert!” she cried, struggling mechanically. “I forgot it was two miles away. What are you holding me for? Let go. I must open the door.”

139. “For God’s sake don’t let it in,” cried the old man, trembling.

140. “You’re afraid of your own son,” she cried, struggling. “Let me go. I’m coming, Herbert; I’m coming.”

141. There was another knock, and another. The old woman with a sudden wrench broke free and ran from the room. Her husband followed to the landing, and called after her appealingly as she hurried downstairs. He heard the chain rattle back and the bottom bolt drawn slowly and stiffly from the socket. Then the old woman’s voice, strained and panting.

142. “The bolt,” she cried, loudly. “Come down. I can’t reach it.”

143. But her husband was on his hands and knees groping wildly on the floor in search of the paw. If he could only find it before the thing outside got in. A perfect fusillade of knocks reverberated through the house, and he heard the scraping of a chair as his wife put it down in the passage against the door. He heard the creaking of the bolt as it came slowly back, and at the same moment he found the monkey’s paw, and frantically breathed his third and last wish.

144. The knocking ceased suddenly, although the echoes of it were still in the house. He heard the chair drawn back, and the door opened. A cold wind rushed up the staircase, and a long loud wail of disappointment and misery from his wife gave him courage to run down to her side, and then to the gate beyond. The street lamp flickering opposite shone on a quiet and deserted road.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Does it add to the interest of a story, for you, when you are baffled by its mystery up to the very end?

2. What author's detective stories do you consider the best? Why?

3. If possible, secure a copy of Voltaire's "Zadig," and write a short paper on Zadig's reasoning.

4. Does the introduction of an element of the supernatural increase or lessen the interest of a story, for you?

5. Write about two-hundred words comparing (a) the work of Poe's Dupin with Doyle's Sherlock Holmes; (b) with that of any other fictional detective—Chesterton's Father Brown, for example.

6. Explain what is meant by *inductive* reasoning.

7. Select from some magazine (a) a good detective story, and (b) a good story of the unexplained, or supernatural. (c) Discuss the relative merits of each.

8. Do you prefer Jacobs as a writer of humorous stories of sea-faring folk or as a writer of the weird?

9. Which of Poe's stories do you like best, and why?

TEN REPRESENTATIVE STORIES OF MYSTERY AND FANTASY

"The Horla," Guy de Maupassant, translated in *Modern Ghosts*.

"The Lost Duchess," Anonymous, in *The Lock and Key Library*.

"The Golden Ingot," Fitz-James O'Brien, in *The Lock and Key Library*.

"The Gold Bug," Edgar Allan Poe, in *Tales*.

"The Black Spaniel," Robert Hichens, in volume of same title.

"The Upper Berth," F. Marion Crawford, in *Short-Story Classics, American*.

"The Adventure of the Dancing Men," A. Conan Doyle, in *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*.

"The Venus of Ille," Prosper Mérimée, translated in *Little French Masterpieces*.

"The Pavilion on the Links," Robert Louis Stevenson, in *New Arabian Nights*.

"The Damned Thing," Ambrose Bierce, in *Short-Story Classics, American*.

FOOTNOTES:

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III
STORIES OF EMOTION

The Last Class.—ALPHONSE DAUDET

Without Benefit of Clergy.—RUDYARD KIPLING

In painting we may represent any fine figure we please; but we never can give it those enlivening touches which it may receive from words. To represent an angel in a picture, you can only draw a beautiful young man winged: but what painting can furnish out any thing so grand as the addition of one word, "the angel of the *Lord*?..." Now, as there is a moving tone of voice, an impassioned countenance, an agitated gesture, which affect independently of the things about which they are exerted, so there are words, and certain dispositions of words, which being peculiarly devoted to passionate subjects, and always used by those who are under the influence of any passion, touch and move us more than those which far more

clearly and distinctly express the subject-matter. We yield to sympathy what we refuse to description.—EDMUND BURKE, *On the Sublime and Beautiful.*

STORIES OF EMOTION

Fictional plots deal with the inner man quite as often as with the outer. Indeed, the action of the soul is more real, intense and interesting than mere visible action could possibly be. For this reason the master story-tellers nearly always interpret the inner life—whether of thought, of emotion, or of decision—by displaying the outer, instead of by merely analyzing and discussing the thoughts, feelings and decisions of their characters. The more clearly this outer action pictures the inner man, the more real does the character become to us and the more perfectly do we grasp the whole story.

As a universal human experience, emotion[20] mingles with all manifestations of life. In the short-story it finds various expression in the hilarious fun of “Pigs is Pigs,” by Butler; the character humor of Barrie’s “Thrums” stories; the mingled humor and pathos of Harte’s “The Luck of Roaring Camp”; the patriotic sentiment of Daudet’s “The Siege of Berlin”; the mystic sympathy of Kipling’s “They”; the idyllic love of the Book of Ruth; the incomparable psychological insight of Maupassant’s “A Coward”; the cold, revengeful jealousy of Balzac’s “La Grande Bretêche”; the choking, supernatural terror of Poe’s “The Pit and the Pendulum”; the tragic passion of Mérimée’s “Mateo Falcone,” and all the myriad shades and combinations of shades which lie between.

Naturally, each story in this entire collection illustrates one or another emotional phase, as even a

cursory reading will make clear. What, for example, could be more intense than the emotions of those two parents, as depicted in "The Monkey's Paw?" But for this group two stories have been selected as being typical examples of emotional expression, because in them human feeling predominates over all other characteristics and really makes the story.

"The Last Class," which is here presented in a translation by the editor of this volume, is rich in local color, in impressionism, and in character drawing, but as an unaffected picture of patriotic feeling it is unsurpassed in the literature of the short-story. There is not a single jarring emotional tone, not the slightest exaggeration of true emotional values. With singular repression, Daudet secures his effects by suggesting rather than fully expressing the profound feelings of the school-master, his pupils, and the visitors; and when the majestically simple climax is reached, we have accepted the reality of it all and have received a single effective and lasting impression.

"Without Benefit of Clergy," the second specimen, is left for the reader to analyze and discuss. Surely this most sadly touching of all love-stories presents the poignant pity, the inevitable disaster, the final heart-break of unsanctified love, as never before or since in the pages of fiction.

DAUDET AND HIS WRITINGS

Alphonse Daudet was born at Nîmes, France, May 13, 1840. Here and at Lyons he received his education. At the age of seventeen he and his brother Ernest went to Paris, where Alphonse published his

first long poem two years later. This began his literary success. From 1860 to 1865 he served as secretary in the Cabinet of the Duke de Morny, and at the early age of twenty-five was decorated with the Cross of the Legion of Honor. He was profoundly impressed by the memories of his early life and frequently revisited his native Provence. The South-of-France tone is distinguishable in much of his work, just as the powerful feelings called forth by the Franco-Prussian war find expression in other of his writings. He died in Paris, December 16, 1897.

Alphonse Daudet was a dramatist, poet, novelist, and short-story writer. *The Nabob*, *Sappho*, *Jack*, *Kings in Exile*, *Numa Roumestan*, *Fromont and Risler*, *The Evangelist*, and the "Tartarin" books are his best known novels. Among his best short-stories are "The Pope's Mule," "The Death of the Dauphin," "The Three Low Masses," "The Elixir of the Reverend Father Gaucher," "Old Folks," and "Master Cornille's Secret"—all from the collection, *Letters from My Mill*. The following little masterpieces are from his *Monday Tales*: "The Game of Billiards," "The Child Spy," "The Little Pies," "Mothers," "The Siege of Berlin," and "The Last Class."

At the close of the Franco-Prussian war, in 1871, France was forced to cede to Germany almost all of Alsace, about nine thousand square miles of territory, in addition to an indemnity of one billion dollars. "The Last Class" was held, therefore, about 1872, and the story was first published in 1873.

Daudet's literary genius sounded every note, from farce, delicate humor, and satire, to poetic pathos,

dramatic action, character analysis, and social criticism. He resembled Dickens in his humor, but displayed more emotional tenderness, and, in his later work, more satire, than did the English writer. Though he may be called the literary descendant of Balzac, whose novels systematically depicted French society in all its phases, Daudet was less a social philosopher and more a man expressing his own personality through his work. Comparing him with Maupassant, we find his stories less perfect in form, but far richer in human feeling. Though at times he dealt with subjects which English readers consider broad, his sympathy unmistakably appears to be with his nobler characters.

> When only ten years of age, I was already haunted at times by the desire to lose my own personality, and incarnate myself in other beings; the mania was already laying hold of me for observing and analyzing, and my chief amusement during my walks was to pick out some passerby, and to follow him all over Lyons, through all his idle strollings or busy occupations, striving to identify myself with his life, and to enter into his innermost thoughts.—ALPHONSE DAUDET, *Thirty Years of Paris*.

> Daudet expresses many things; but he most frequently expresses himself—his own temper in the presence of life, his own feeling on a thousand occasions.—HENRY JAMES, *Partial Portraits*.

> Life, as he knows it, is sad, full of disappointment, bitterness, and suffering; and yet the conclusion he draws from experience is that this life, with all its

sadness, is well worth living.—RENÉ DOUMIC, *Contemporary French Novelists*.

The short stories are Daudet at his best, a style tense, virile, full of suppressed energy.... There is a nobler strain in these stories than speaks from the pages of *Le Petit Chose* ["Little What's-His-Name"],—the ring of passionate patriotism, no longer the voice of Provence, or of Paris, but the voice of France.... The touching story, *La Dernière Classe*, might have come from the lips of an Alsatian, so true is it to the spirit of Alsace during those sorrowful days that followed the Franco-Prussian War.—MARION MCINTYRE, Introduction to *Works*.

Daudet's two main series of stories (*Letters from My Mill* and *Monday Tales*) contain between sixty and seventy pieces.... They represent Daudet the poet, with his exquisite fancy, his winning charm, his subtle, indescribable style, his susceptibility to all that is lovely and joyous in nature and in human life; in short, in his sunny, mercurial Provençal temperament.... But there was another Daudet more or less superimposed upon this sunny, poetic Daudet, true child of Provence. Upon few Frenchmen of a generation ago did the terrible years of the Franco-Prussian War and the Commune produce a more sobering impression. The romanticist and poet deepened into a realistic observer of human life in all its phases.—W. P. TRENT, Introduction to the volume on Daudet, in *Little French Masterpieces*.

The charm reflected in his works lay in the man himself, and earned for him a host of friends and an unclouded domestic life—it lay in his open, sunny, inconsequent, southern nature, with his quick sympathies, his irony at once forcible and delicate, his ready tears. It lay in the spontaneousness of his talent, in his Provençal gift of improvisation.... And it lay, too, in what was an essential characteristic of his nature, his rapid alternation of mood. Take even the slightest of his *Contes* [stories].... Within a few pages he is in turn sad, gay, sentimental, ironical, pathetic, and one mood glides into the next without jar or friction.—V. M. CRAWFORD, *Studies in Foreign Literature*.

His stories first of all amuse, excite, distress himself.... He never could, indeed, look on them disinterestedly, either while they were making or when they were made. He made them with actual tears and laughter; and they are read with actual tears and laughter by the crowd.... But he had no philosophy behind his fantastic and yet only too probable creations. Caring, as he thought, supremely for life, he cared really for that surprising, bewildering pantomime which life seems to be to those who watch its coloured movement, its flickering lights, its changing costumes, its powdered faces, without looking through the eyes into the hearts of the dancers. He wrote from the very midst of the human comedy; and it is from this that he seems at times to have caught the bodily warmth and the taste of the tears and the very ring of the laughter of

men and women....—ARTHUR SYMONS, *Studies in Prose and Verse*.

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THE LAST CLASS

(La Dernière Classe)

THE STORY OF A LITTLE ALSATIAN

BY ALPHONSE DAUDET

Translation by The Editor

Introduction plunges us at once into the action. There is one main incident throughout. The narrator is immediately seen to be a child, and surmised to be a boy.

That morning I was very late for school, so I was terribly afraid of a scolding—particularly since Master Hamel had said that he would examine us on participles, and I knew not the first word about them! For a little while I thought of playing truant and wandering the fields.

2. The day was so warm, so clear!

Setting. Note how the rural community is suggested.

3. I could hear the blackbirds whistling on the border of the wood; and back of the sawmill, in the Rippert field, the Prussian soldiers were drilling. All of this was much more tempting to me than participial rules —but I was strong enough to resist and away to school I ran, as fast as I could.

Small municipalities have mayors, in France.

4. As I passed by the mayor's office, I observed that a number of people were assembled before the little board on which notices were generally posted.*The tone is struck here. Forecast of crisis.* For two years every piece of bad news had come from that board—defeats in battle, *Franco-Prussian War.*conscriptions, orders from headquarters—and, without stopping, I wondered:

Forecasts a crisis.

5. "What can it be this time!"

6. Just then, as I was running across the square, Wachter the blacksmith,*Note the Prussian name. Alsace was a border province.* who with his apprentice stood reading the placard, called after me:

Hint of crisis to come. Contributory Incident.

7. "You needn't hurry so fast, my lad, you'll get to school soon enough!"

The school was held in the master's house.

8. I thought he was making game of me, and I kept right on, reaching Master Hamel's little yard quite out of breath.

Unusual air depicted by contrast.
The story proper begins.

9. Ordinarily, as school was opening, the uproar was so great that it could be heard clear out on the street —desk-lids opening and shutting, lessons droned aloud in unison, pupils holding their ears shut to learn their *An old custom.* lessons easier, while the master's great ferrule beat upon the desks:

10. "A little quietness!"

Contrast.

11. I had counted on all this noise to enable me to reach my seat unnoticed; but on that particular day everything was as quiet as a Sabbath morning. Through the open window I saw my schoolmates already ranged in their places, and Master Hamel pacing to and fro, his formidable iron ferrule under his arm. In the midst of that complete silence I had to open the door and go in! You can well imagine whether I blushed and was afraid!

Contrast.

12. But, quite to the contrary, Master Hamel looked at me with no sign of anger, and then very gently said:

Evidently a small school.

13. "Go directly to your seat, my little Frantz—we were about to begin without you."

14. Immediately I stepped over the bench and sat down at my desk.*At which others were also seated.* Only then, when I had partly gotten over my fright, did I observe that our master was wearing his handsome blue riding-coat, his plaited ruff, and his black silk embroidered breeches—worn only on inspection days or when prizes were awarded.*All the contrasts prepare*

us for the crisis. Furthermore, there was something extraordinary, something solemn, about the whole school. But what astounded me more than anything else was to see a number of people from the village sitting, as silent as we, on the usually empty benches at the back of the room: old Father Hauser *Prussian name.* with his three-cornered hat, the ex-mayor, the former postman, besides a number of others. All seemed cast down, and Father Hauser had brought with him an old primer, with chewed up leaves, *Dazed.* which he held wide-open up-side-down on his knees, and lying on it his huge spectacles.

15. While I was marvelling at all this, Master Hamel had mounted his platform, and in the same gentle and serious voice with which he had greeted me, he said to us:

Foundation of Climax. Summary of the theme. Compare with Longfellow's Evangeline.

16. "My children, this is the last day that I shall keep school. The order has come from Berlin that nothing but German shall be taught in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine. *This law went into effect July 1, 1870.* The new school-master will arrive to-morrow. This is the last class in French—I beg of you to be very attentive!"

17. His simple words overwhelmed me. This, then, was the notice they had posted at the mayor's office. Oh, the scoundrels!

The crisis becomes personal.

18. My last lesson in French!

19. And I was scarcely able to write! Then I was never to learn! I must stop short just where I was! *Scarcely a paragraph but appeals to emotion in some form.* How angry with myself it made me to remember the time I had

frittered away, and the lessons I had missed while hunting birds' nests or sliding on the Saar! My books now seemed to me like old comrades from whom it broke my heart to part, and *The Saar flows northward into the Moselle.* only a moment since I had found them—my grammar, my sacred history—so dull, and so heavy to carry! It was just the same when I thought of Master Hamel. He was going away. I should never see him again—the thought made me forget all his punishments and strokes with the ferrule.

Shift to interest in the Master.

20. Poor old man! So it was in honor of that last lesson in French that he had donned his Sunday best —and now I understood why those old folks from the village were seated at the back of the room. *Now to the villagers.* It seemed to say they regretted that they had not visited the school oftener. *Age indicated, thus adding to the pathos.* Besides, it was a sort of way of thanking our teacher for his forty years of devoted service, and of showing *These are the key words.* their love for the fatherland which was passing away.

Note how Daudet arouses our sympathies by avoiding generalities and centering our interest upon persons.

21. Just at this point in my reflections I heard my name called—it was my turn to recite. Oh, I would have given anything to be able to recite without a slip, in a strong, clear voice, that celebrated rule about participles; but at the very first words I grew confused and I only stood there at my bench swaying back and forward, my heart swelling, not daring to lift my head. At length I heard Master Hamel saying to me:

Ordinary rebuke is swallowed up in the great common sorrow.

22. “My little Frantz, I shall not scold you; you are punished enough, I think. It is so with all of us; every day we reassure ourselves: ‘Bah! I have plenty of time. To-morrow I shall learn.’ Then you see what happens. Alas! it has ever been the great misfortune of our Alsace to defer its lessons until the morrow.*Daudet here teaches all France a lesson—and all nations as well.* And now these people are justified in saying to us, ‘What, you pretend to be French, and you are able neither to speak nor to write your language!’ But in all this you are not the most guilty one, my poor Frantz—we are all worthy of a full measure of self-reproach.

Note M. Hamel’s simple sincerity.

23. “Your parents have not taken enough care to see that you got an education. They preferred to save a few more sous by putting you to work in the fields or in the factories. And I—have I nothing for which to blame myself? Have I not frequently sent you to water my garden instead of keeping you at your books? Or have I ever hesitated to dismiss school when I wanted to go trout-fishing?”

24. So Master Hamel, passing from one theme to another, began to speak to us about our French language. He said that it was the most beautiful language in the whole world—the most clear, the most substantial; that we must ever cherish it among ourselves, and never forget it, for when a nation falls into bondage, just so long as it clings to its language, it holds the key of its prison.[21]

The attention follows the lead of the emotions.

25. Then he took a grammar and read us our lesson. I was astonished to see how readily I understood!

Everything he said seemed to me so easy—so very easy. I believe that never before had I listened so attentively, and that he, in turn, had never explained things with such *So does the teacher's skill.* infinite patience. It almost seemed as though the poor fellow wished to impart all his knowledge to us before he left us—to drive it all into our heads with one blow.

26. The lesson ended, we went on to the exercises in penmanship. For that day Master Hamel had gotten ready some entirely new copies on which he had written in a neat, round hand: "France, Alsace, France, Alsace."*A proof of unusual absorption.* The slips of paper looked like tiny flags, waving all about the room and hanging from the rods of our desks. You should have seen how diligently everyone worked, and how quiet it was! Only the scratching of the pens over the paper could be heard. Once some beetles flew in, but nobody paid any attention to them—not even the very smallest chaps, who were struggling to draw their oblique lines with a will and an application as sincere as though even the lines themselves were French....*Note the pathos of the appeal.* Pigeons cooed in low tones on the roof of the schoolhouse, and as I listened to them I thought to myself:

27. "I wonder if they are going to make them coo in German too!"

A picture. All of these contributory pictures stand in lieu of contributory incidents. The whole is highly unified.

28. Now and then, as I lifted my eyes from my task, I saw Master Hamel seated motionless in his chair, and staring at things about him as though in that look he would carry away with him the whole of his little schoolhouse. Think of it! For forty years he had

occupied that same place, his yard in front of him, and his school always unchanged. Only the benches and desks were rubbed by use until they were polished; the walnuts in the yard had grown large, and the hop-vine he himself had planted now hung in festoons from *The lad reasons as a lad—to him the pathos is not for himself but for the old man.* the windows clear to the roof. How heartbreaking it must have been for that poor man to leave all this—to hear his sister moving to and fro in the room overhead as she packed their trunks! Next day they were going away—to leave the fatherland forever.

29. All the same, he had the courage to keep the school to the very closing minute. The writing over, we had our lesson in history. Then the little ones sang in unison their *ba, be, bi, bo, bu*. Yonder, at the back of the room, old Father Hauser was holding his spelling-book with both hands, and with the aid of his great spectacles he spelled out the letters—one could see that even he too was applying himself. Emotion shook his voice, and to hear him was so droll that we all wanted to laugh—and to cry. Ah! I shall always remember that last class.

Preparation for Climax.
Formal Crisis—the end approaches.
Note the force of this.
Moral qualities affect the physical.

30. Suddenly the church clock sounded twelve. Then the Angelus. At the same instant were heard under our very windows the trumpets of the Prussians returning from drill. Pale as death, Master Hamel rose from his chair. Never had he seemed so large.

31. “My friends,” he began; “my friends, I—I—”

32. But something choked him. He could not end the

sentence.

Note the intensity.

33. Then he turned to the blackboard, seized a piece of chalk, and, bearing with all his strength, he wrote in the largest letters he could make:

Full Climax.

34. “VIVE LA FRANCE!”

35. Then he stood there, his head leaning against the wall, and without a word he signed to us with his hand:

36. “It is the end ... go!”

KIPLING AND HIS WRITINGS

Joseph Rudyard Kipling was born in Bombay, India, December 30, 1865, of English parents, his father, J. Lockwood Kipling, an artist of ability, having been in the colonial Civil Service. He was educated at the United Services College, Devon, but returned to India in 1882 and became an editorial writer and correspondent. In 1889 he began extensive travels. For several years he resided in Brattleboro, Vermont, but returned to England and settled in Rottingdean, Sussex.

Rudyard Kipling has attained celebrity as poet, novelist, and short-story writer. His best-known poems are found in the collections entitled *Departmental Ditties*, *Barrack-Room Ballads*, *The Seven Seas*, and *The Five Nations*. *Kim* is his ablest novel. The two “Jungle Books” constitute a remarkable collection of connected tales of the jungle folk. His

best short-stories are found in the following volumes: *Soldiers Three* (the "Mulvaney" stories, "The Man Who Was," etc.), *The Phantom Rickshaw* ("The Man Who Would be King," "The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes," etc.), *Wee Willie Winkie and Other Stories* ("The Drums of the Fore and Aft," "Under the Deodars," etc.), *The Day's Work* ("The Bridge Builders," "The Brushwood Boy," etc.), and *Traffic and Discoveries* ("They," etc.). "Without Benefit of Clergy" first appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine* (London) in June, 1890, and in the June 7th and 14th, 1890, numbers of *Harper's Weekly* (New York). In the same year it was published in the volume, *The Courting of Dinah Shadd, and Other Stories*, but in 1891 it was included in the volume *Life's Handicap: being Stories of Mine Own People.*

Rudyard Kipling is without doubt the greatest of living short-story writers, though in interest his later fiction does not equal his productions of the early nineties. His journalistic work drilled him in compression; his precocious intuitions and personal experience of life in India opened up a fresh and fascinating field; his genius taught him how to tell his stories with unfailing variety, a robust humor, and an understanding of the human heart quite uncanny in one so young. In style, he is a master of the unexpected; in narration, he is by turns deliberate and swift; in atmospheric painting, he transports us to real places, wherein real folk do real things.

> Tell them first of those things that thou hast seen and they have seen together. Thus their

knowledge will piece out thy imperfections. Tell them of what thou alone hast seen, then what thou hast heard, and since they be children tell them of battles and kings, horses, devils, elephants, and angels, but omit not to tell them of love and such like. All the earth is full of tales to him who listens and does not drive away the poor from his door. The poor are the best of tale-tellers; for they must lay their ear to the ground every night.—RUDYARD KIPLING, Preface to *Life's Handicap*.

The tremulous passion of Ameera, her hopes, her fears, and her agonies of disappointment, combine to form by far the most tender page which Mr. Kipling has written.—EDMUND GOSSE, *Questions at Issue*.

... The truly appreciative reader should surely have no quarrel with the primitive element in Mr. Kipling's subject-matter, or with what, for want of a better name, I may call his love of low life. What is that but essentially a part of his freshness? And for what part of his freshness are we exactly more thankful than for just this smart jostle that he gives the old stupid superstition that the amiability of a story-teller is the amiability of the people he represents—that their vulgarity, or depravity, or gentility, or fatuity are tantamount to the same qualities in the painter himself?—HENRY JAMES, Introduction to *Works*.

It was not until "Without Benefit of Clergy" that he came to his full strength in pathetic prose. The history of Ameera is one of the

triumphs of the short story. Its characterization is vivid; its progress direct and poignant. I do not wish even for an instant to seem to cheapen one of the most touching and beautiful stories in the world when I call it journalism. But the voice of the desolate mother breaking into the nursery rime of the wicked crow,

> "And the wild plums grow in the jungle, only a penny a pound,
> Only a penny a pound, baba—only—,"

and every pathetic moment, is chosen by an inspired sense for what would most feelingly grasp the interest of the reader. This is high art, with intense feeling behind it—otherwise it would not be so excellent. But it is also good journalism.—HENRY SEIDEL CANBY, *The Short-Story in English.*

For Mr. Kipling to write a story without some firm human touch, however slight, would be impossible.... In his effects Mr. Kipling is usually photographic ("cinematographic" is better), but his methods are almost invariably, for want of a better word, "artistic." I mean that whereas the principle of selection, which is a vital principle of art, can operate but little in photography, it is seen to be remarkably active in all Mr. Kipling's best work. His stories, so to speak, represent the epigram of action, the epigram of a given situation.... It is from the lives of such Englishmen ... that Mr. Kipling has gathered so many of his vivid anecdotes. A great number of them ... are the lesser lights and darks contributing to such more serious

elements of the general picture as “At the End of the Passage,” “Without Benefit of Clergy,” “In Flood Time,” “The Man Who Was,” behind which looms vast in the background the image of that old Sphinx of the Plains complete in mystery as no other writer has ever been able to suggest her.... Also he had written at least one love-story (“Without Benefit of Clergy”) that broke one’s heart.... For all the humour and buoyancy of his writings, Mr. Kipling is at heart a pessimist, and, perhaps, his sincerest expression of opinion in regard to the government of the universe is contained in the fierce Omarian exclamation of Holden in “Without Benefit of Clergy,” addressed to no one in particular, but evidently meant to reach far up into the skies: “O you brute! You utter brute!” So Omar bade Allah “man’s forgiveness give and take.”—RICHARD LE GALLIENNE, *Rudyard Kipling: A Criticism.*

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FOR ANALYSIS

WITHOUT BENEFIT OF CLERGY

BY RUDYARD KIPLING

Before my Spring I garnered Autumn's gain,
Out of her time my field was white with grain,
The year gave up her secrets to my woe.
Forced and deflowered each sick season lay,
In mystery of increase and decay;
I saw the sunset ere men saw the day,
Who am too wise in that I should not know.

Bitter Waters.

I

"But if it be a girl?"

2. "Lord of my life, it cannot be. I have prayed for so many nights, and sent gifts to Sheikh Badl's shrine so often, that I know God will give us a son—a man-child that shall grow into a man. Think of this and be glad. My mother shall be his mother till I can take him again, and the mullah of the Pattan mosque shall cast his nativity—God send he be born in an auspicious hour!—and then, thou wilt never weary of me, thy slave."

3. "Since when hast thou been a slave, my queen?"

4. "Since the beginning—till this mercy came to me. How could I be sure of thy love when I knew that I had been bought with silver?"

5. "Nay, that was the dowry. I paid it to thy mother."

6. "And she has buried it, and sits upon it all day long like a hen. What talk is yours of dower! I was bought as though I had been a Lucknow dancing-girl instead of a child."

7. “Art thou sorry for the sale?”

8. “I have sorrowed; but to-day I am glad. Thou wilt never cease to love me now?—answer, my king.”

9. “Never—never. No.”

10. “Not even though the *mem-log*—the white women of thy own blood—love thee? And remember, I have watched them driving in the evening; they are very fair.”

11. “I have seen fire-balloons by the hundred. I have seen the moon, and—then I saw no more fire-balloons.”

12. Ameera clapped her hands and laughed. “Very good talk,” she said. Then with an assumption of great stateliness: “It is enough. Thou hast my permission to depart—if thou wilt.”

13. The man did not move. He was sitting on a low red-lacquered couch in a room furnished only with a blue and white floor-cloth, some rugs, and a very complete collection of native cushions. At his feet sat a woman of sixteen, and she was all but all the world in his eyes. By every rule and law she should have been otherwise, for he was an Englishman, and she a Mussulman’s daughter bought two years before from her mother, who, being left without money, would have sold Ameera shrieking to the Prince of Darkness if the price had been sufficient.

14. It was a contract entered into with a light heart; but even before the girl had reached her bloom she came to fill the greater portion of John Holden’s life. For her, and the withered hag, her mother, he had taken a little house overlooking the great red-walled city, and found—when the marigolds had sprung up by the well in the courtyard and Ameera had

established herself according to her own ideas of comfort, and her mother had ceased grumbling at the inadequacy of the cooking-places, the distance from the daily market, and at matters of housekeeping in general—that the house was to him his home. Any one could enter his bachelor's bungalow by day or night, and the life that he led there was an unlovely one. In the house in the city his feet only could pass beyond the outer courtyard to the women's rooms; and when the big wooden gate was bolted behind him he was king in his own territory, with Ameera for queen. And there was going to be added to this kingdom a third person whose arrival Holden felt inclined to resent. It interfered with his perfect happiness. It disarranged the orderly peace of the house that was his own. But Ameera was wild with delight at the thought of it, and her mother not less so. The love of a man, and particularly a white man, was at the best an inconstant affair, but it might, both women argued, be held fast by a baby's hands. "And then," Ameera would always say, "then he will never care for the white *mem-log*. I hate them all—I hate them all."

15. "He will go back to his own people in time," said the mother; "but by the blessing of God that time is yet afar off."

16. Holden sat silent on the couch thinking of the future, and his thoughts were not pleasant. The drawbacks of a double life are manifold. The Government, with singular care, had ordered him out of the station for a fortnight on special duty in the place of a man who was watching by the bedside of a sick wife. The verbal notification of the transfer had been edged by a cheerful remark that Holden ought to think himself lucky in being a bachelor and a free

man. He came to break the news to Ameera.

17. “It is not good,” she said slowly, “but it is not all bad. There is my mother here, and no harm will come to me—unless indeed I die of pure joy. Go thou to thy work and think no troublesome thoughts. When the days are done I believe ... nay, I am sure. And—and then I shall lay *him* in thy arms, and thou wilt love me forever. The train goes to-night, at midnight is it not? Go now, and do not let thy heart be heavy by cause of me. But thou wilt not delay in returning? Thou wilt not stay on the road to talk to the bold white *mem-log*. Come back to me swiftly, my life.”

18. As he left the courtyard to reach his horse that was tethered to the gate-post, Holden spoke to the white-haired old watchman who guarded the house, and bade him under certain contingencies despatch the filled-up telegraph-form that Holden gave him. It was all that could be done, and with the sensations of a man who has attended his own funeral Holden went away by the night mail to his exile. Every hour of the day he dreaded the arrival of the telegram, and every hour of the night he pictured to himself the death of Ameera. In consequence his work for the state was not of first-rate quality, nor was his temper towards his colleagues of the most amiable. The fortnight ended without a sign from his home, and, torn to pieces by his anxieties, Holden returned to be swallowed up for two precious hours by a dinner at the club, wherein he heard, as a man hears in a swoon, voices telling him how execrably he had performed the other man’s duties, and how he had endeared himself to all his associates. Then he fled on horseback through the night with his heart in his mouth. There was no answer at first to his blows on

the gate, and he had just wheeled his horse round to kick it in when Pir Khan appeared with a lantern and held his stirrup.

19. “Has aught occurred?” said Holden.

20. “The news does not come from my mouth, Protector of the Poor, but—” He held out his shaking hand as befitted the bearer of good news who is entitled to a reward.

21. Holden hurried through the courtyard. A light burned in the upper room. His horse neighed in the gateway, and he heard a shrill little wail that sent all the blood into the apple of his throat. It was a new voice, but it did not prove that Ameera was alive.

22. “Who is there?” he called up the narrow brick staircase.

23. There was a cry of delight from Ameera, and then the voice of the mother, tremulous with old age and pride—“We be two women and—the man—thy —son.”

24. On the threshold of the room Holden stepped on a naked dagger, that was laid there to avert ill-luck, and it broke at the hilt under his impatient heel.

25. “God is great!” cooed Ameera in the half-light. “Thou hast taken his misfortunes on thy head.”

26. “Ay, but how is it with thee, life of my life? Old woman, how is it with her?”

27. “She has forgotten her sufferings for joy that the child is born. There is no harm; but speak softly,” said the mother.

28. “It only needed thy presence to make me all well,” said Ameera. “My king, thou hast been very long away. What gifts hast thou for me? Ah, ah! It is

I that bring gifts this time. Look, my life, look! Was there ever such a babe? Nay, I am too weak even to clear my arm from him."

29. "Rest then, and do not talk. I am here, *bachari* [little woman]."

30. "Well said, for there is a bond and a heel-rope [*peecharee*] between us now that nothing can break. Look—canst thou see in this light? He is without spot or blemish. Never was such a man-child. *Ya illah!* he shall be a pundit—no, a trooper of the Queen. And, my life, dost thou love me as well as ever, though I am faint and sick and worn? Answer truly."

31. "Yea. I love as I have loved, with all my soul. Lie still, pearl, and rest."

32. "Then do not go. Sit by my side here—so. Mother, the lord of this house needs a cushion. Bring it." There was an almost imperceptible movement on the part of the new life that lay in the hollow of Ameera's arm. "Aho!" she said, her voice breaking with love. "The babe is a champion from his birth. He is kicking me in the side with mighty kicks. Was there ever such a babe! And he is ours to us—thine and mine. Put thy hand on his head, but carefully, for he is very young, and men are unskilled in such matters."

33. Very cautiously Holden touched with the tips of his fingers the downy head.

34. "He is of the faith," said Ameera; "for lying here in the night-watches I whispered the Call to Prayer and the Profession of Faith into his ears. And it is most marvellous that he was born upon a Friday, as I was born. Be careful of him, my life; but he can almost grip with his hands."

35. Holden found one helpless little hand that closed feebly on his finger. And the clutch ran through his body till it settled about his heart. Till then his sole thought had been for Ameera. He began to realise that there was some one else in the world, but he could not feel that it was a veritable son with a soul. He sat down to think, and Ameera dozed lightly.

36. “Get hence, *sahib*,” said her mother under her breath. “It is not good that she should find you here on waking. She must be still.”

37. “I go,” said Holden submissively. “Here be rupees. See that my *baba* gets fat and finds all that he needs.”

38. The chink of the silver roused Ameera. “I am his mother, and no hireling,” she said weakly. “Shall I look to him more or less for the sake of money? Mother, give it back. I have borne my lord a son.”

39. The deep sleep of weakness came upon her before the sentence was completed. Holden went down to the courtyard very softly, with his heart at ease. Pir Khan, the old watchman, was chuckling with delight. “This house is now complete,” he said, and without further comment thrust into Holden’s hands the hilt of a sabre worn many years ago when he, Pir Khan, served the Queen in the police. The bleat of a tethered goat came from the well-curb.

40. “There be two,” said Pir Khan, “two goats of the best. I bought them, and they cost much money; and since there is no birth-party assembled their flesh will be all mine. Strike craftily, *sahib*! ’Tis an ill-balanced sabre at the best. Wait till they raise their heads from cropping the marigolds.”

41. “And why?” said Holden, bewildered.

42. “For the birth-sacrifice. What else? Otherwise the child being unguarded from fate may die. The Protector of the Poor knows the fitting words to be said.”

43. Holden had learned them once with little thought that he would ever speak them in earnest. The touch of the cold sabre-hilt in his palm turned suddenly to the clinging grip of the child up-stairs—the child that was his own son—and a dread of loss filled him.

44. “Strike!” said Pir Khan. “Never life came into the world but life was paid for it. See, the goats have raised their heads. Now! With a drawing cut!”

45. Hardly knowing what he did, Holden cut twice as he muttered the Mohammedan prayer that runs: “Almighty! In place of this my son I offer life for life, blood for blood, head for head, bone for bone, hair for hair, skin for skin.” The waiting horse snorted and bounded in his pickets at the smell of the raw blood that spirted over Holden’s riding-boots.

46. “Well smitten!” said Pir Khan, wiping the sabre. “A swordsman was lost in thee. Go with a light heart, heaven-born. I am thy servant, and the servant of thy son. May the Presence live a thousand years and ... the flesh of the goats is all mine?” Pir Khan drew back richer by a month’s pay. Holden swung himself into the saddle and rode off through the low-hanging wood-smoke of the evening. He was full of riotous exultation, alternating with a vast vague tenderness directed towards no particular object, that made him choke as he bent over the neck of his uneasy horse. “I never felt like this in my life,” he thought. “I’ll go to the club and pull myself together.”

47. A game of pool was beginning, and the room was full of men. Holden entered, eager to get to the light

and the company of his fellows, singing at the top of his voice:

"'In Baltimore a-walking, a lady I did meet!'"

48. "Did you?" said the club-secretary from his corner. "Did she happen to tell you that your boots were wringing wet? Great goodness, man, it's blood!"

49. "Bosh!" said Holden, picking his cue from the rack. "May I cut in? It's dew. I've been riding through high crops. My faith, my boots are in a mess, though!"

50.

"'And if it be a girl she shall wear a wedding-ring,
And if it be a boy he shall fight for his king,
With his dirk, and his cap, and his little jacket blue,
He shall walk the quarter-deck—'"

51. "Yellow on blue—green next player," said the marker monotonously.

52. "*He shall walk the quarter-deck*'—Am I green, marker?—*He shall walk the quarter-deck*'—eh! that's a bad shot—'*As his daddy used to do*!'"

53. "I don't see that you have anything to crow about," said a zealous junior civilian acidly. "The Government is not exactly pleased with your work when you relieved Sanders."

54. "Does that mean a wigging from headquarters?" said Holden with an abstracted smile. "I think I can stand it."

55. The talk beat up round the ever-fresh subject of each man's work, and steadied Holden till it was time to go to his dark empty bungalow, where his butler received him as one who knew all his affairs. Holden remained awake for the greater part of the

night, and his dreams were pleasant ones.

II

56. “How old is he now?”

57. “*Ya illah!* What a man’s question! He is all but six weeks old; and on this night I go up to the housetop with thee, my life, to count the stars. For that is auspicious. And he was born on a Friday under the sign of the Sun, and it has been told to me that he will outlive us both and get wealth. Can we wish for aught better, beloved?”

58. “There is nothing better. Let us go up to the roof, and thou shalt count the stars—but a few only, for the sky is heavy with cloud.”

59. “The winter rains are late, and maybe they come out of season. Come, before all the stars are hid. I have put on my richest jewels.”

60. “Thou hast forgotten the best of all.”

61. “*Ai!* Ours. He comes also. He has never yet seen the skies.”

62. Ameera climbed the narrow staircase that led to the flat roof. The child, placid and unwinking, lay in the hollow of her right arm, gorgeous in silver-fringed muslin with a small skull-cap on his head. Ameera wore all that she valued most. The diamond nose-stud that takes the place of the Western patch in drawing attention to the curve of the nostril, the gold ornament in the centre of the forehead studded with tallow-drop emeralds and flawed rubies, the heavy circlet of beaten gold that was fastened round her neck by the softness of the pure metal, and the chinking curb-patterned silver anklets hanging low over the rosy ankle-bone. She was dressed in jade-

green muslin as befitted a daughter of the Faith, and from shoulder to elbow and elbow to wrist ran bracelets of silver tied with floss silk, frail glass bangles slipped over the wrist in proof of the slenderness of the hand, and certain heavy gold bracelets that had no part in her country's ornaments but, since they were Holden's gift and fastened with a cunning European snap, delighted her immensely.

63. They sat down by the low white parapet of the roof, overlooking the city and its lights.

64. "They are happy down there," said Ameera. "But I do not think that they are as happy as we. Nor do I think the white *mem-log* are as happy. And thou?"

65. "I know they are not."

66. "How dost thou know?"

67. "They give their children over to the nurses."

"I have never seen that," said Ameera with a sigh, "nor do I wish to see. *Ahi!*"—she dropped her head on Holden's shoulder—"I have counted forty stars, and I am tired. Look at the child, love of my life, he is counting too."

68. The baby was staring with round eyes at the dark of the heavens. Ameera placed him in Holden's arms, and he lay there without a cry.

69. "What shall we call him among ourselves?" she said. "Look! Art thou ever tired of looking? He carries thy very eyes. But the mouth—"

70. "Is thine, most dear. Who should know better than I?"

71. "'Tis such a feeble mouth. Oh, so small! And yet it holds my heart between its lips. Give him to me now. He has been too long away."

72. “Nay, let him lie; he has not yet begun to cry.”

73. “When he cries thou wilt give him back—eh? What a man of mankind thou art! If he cried he were only the dearer to me. But, my life, what little name shall we give him?”

74. The small body lay close to Holden’s heart. It was utterly helpless and very soft. He scarcely dared to breathe for fear of crushing it. The caged green parrot that is regarded as a sort of guardian spirit in most native households moved on its perch and fluttered a drowsy wing.

75. “There is the answer,” said Holden. “Mian Mittu has spoken. He shall be the parrot. When he is ready he will talk mightily and run about. Mian Mittu is the parrot in thy—in the Mussulman tongue, is it not?”

76. “Why put me so far off?” said Ameera fretfully. “Let it be like unto some English name—but not wholly. For he is mine.”

77. “Then call him Tota, for that is likest English.”

78. “Ay, Tota, and that is still the parrot. Forgive me, my lord, for a minute ago, but in truth he is too little to wear all the weight of Mian Mittu for name. He shall be Tota—our Tota to us. Hearest thou, O small one? Littlest, thou art Tota.” She touched the child’s cheek, and he waking, wailed, and it was necessary to return him to his mother, who soothed him with the wonderful rhyme of “*Aré koko, Jaré koko!*” which says:

> “Oh, crow! Go crow! Baby’s sleeping sound,
> And the wild plums grow in the jungle, only a penny a pound,
> Only a penny a pound, *baba*, only a penny a pound.”

79. Reassured many times as to the price of those plums, Tota cuddled himself down to sleep. The two sleek, white well-bullocks in the courtyard were steadily chewing the cud of their evening meal; old Pir Khan squatted at the head of Holden's horse, his police sabre across his knees, pulling drowsily at a big water-pipe that croaked like a bull-frog in a pond. Ameera's mother sat spinning in the lower veranda, and the wooden gate was shut and barred. The music of a marriage-procession came to the roof above the gentle hum of the city, and a string of flying-foxes crossed the face of the low moon.

80. "I have prayed," said Ameera, after a long pause, "I have prayed for two things. First that I may die in thy stead if thy death is demanded, and in the second that I may die in the place of the child. I have prayed to the Prophet and to Beebee Miriam [the Virgin Mary]. Thinkest thou either will hear?"

81. "From thy lips who would not hear the lightest word?"

82. "I asked for straight talk, and thou hast given me sweet talk. Will my prayers be heard?"

83. "How can I say? God is very good."

84. "Of that I am not sure. Listen now. When I die, or the child dies, what is thy fate? Living, thou wilt return to the bold white *mem-log*, for kind calls to kind."

85. "Not always."

86. "With a woman, no; with a man it is otherwise. Thou wilt in this life, later on, go back to thine own folk. That I could almost endure for I should be dead. But in thy very death thou wilt be taken away to a strange place and a paradise that I do not know."

87. “Will it be paradise?”

88. “Surely, for who would harm thee? But we two—I and the child—shall be elsewhere, and we cannot come to thee, nor canst thou come to us. In the old days, before the child was born, I did not think of these things; but now I think of them always. It is very hard talk.”

89. “It will fall as it will fall. To-morrow we do not know, but to-day and love we know well. Surely we are happy now.”

90. “So happy that it were well to make our happiness assured. And thy Beebee Miriam should listen to me; for she is also a woman. But then she would envy me! It is not seemly for men to worship a woman.”

91. Holden laughed aloud at Ameera’s little spasm of jealousy.

92. “Is it not seemly? Why didst thou not turn me from worship of thee, then?”

93. “Thou a worshipper! And of me? My king, for all thy sweet words, well I know that I am thy servant and thy slave, and the dust under thy feet. And I would not have it otherwise. See!”

94. Before Holden could prevent her she stooped and touched his feet; recovering herself with a little laugh she hugged Tota close to her bosom. Then, almost savagely:

95. “Is it true that the bold white *mem-log* live for three times the length of my life? Is it true that they make their marriages not before they are old women?”

96. “They marry as do others—when they are

women."

97. "That I know, but they wed when they are twenty-five. Is that true?"

98. "That is true."

99. "*Ya illah!* At twenty-five! Who would of his own will take a wife even of eighteen? She is a woman—aging every hour. Twenty-five! I shall be an old woman at that age, and—those *mem-log* remain young forever. How I hate them!"

100. "What have they to do with us?"

101. "I cannot tell. I know only that there may now be alive on this earth a woman ten years older than I who may come to thee and take thy love ten years after I am an old woman, gray-headed, and the nurse of Tota's son. That is unjust and evil. They should die too."

102. "Now, for all thy years thou art a child, and shalt be picked up and carried down the staircase."

103. "Tota! Have a care for Tota, my lord! Thou at least art as foolish as any babe!" Ameera tucked Tota out of harm's way in the hollow of her neck, and was carried downstairs laughing in Holden's arms, while Tota opened his eyes and smiled after the manner of the lesser angels.

104. He was a silent infant, and almost before Holden could realise that he was in the world, developed into a small gold-coloured little god and unquestioned despot of the house overlooking the city. Those were months of absolute happiness to Holden and Ameera—happiness withdrawn from the world, shut in behind the wooden gate that Pir Khan guarded. By day Holden did his work with an immense pity for such as were not so fortunate as

himself, and a sympathy for small children that amazed and amused many mothers at the little station gatherings. At nightfall he returned to Ameera—Ameera, full of the wondrous doings of Tota; how he had been seen to clap his hands together and move his fingers with intention and purpose—which was manifestly a miracle; how, later, he had of his own initiative crawled out of his low bedstead on to the floor and swayed on both feet for the space of three breaths.

105. “And they were long breaths, for my heart stood still with delight,” said Ameera.

106. Then Tota took the beasts into his councils—the well-bullocks, the little gray squirrels, the mongoose that lived in a hole near the well, and especially Mian Mittu, the parrot, whose tail he grievously pulled, and Mian Mittu screamed till Ameera and Holden arrived.

107. “O villain! Child of strength! This to thy brother on the housetop! *Tobah, tobah!* Fie! Fie! But I know a charm to make him wise as Suleiman and Aflatoun [Solomon and Plato]. Now look,” said Ameera. She drew from an embroidered bag a handful of almonds. “See! we count seven. In the name of God!”

108. She placed Mian Mittu, very angry and rumpled, on the top of his cage, and seating herself between the babe and the bird she cracked and peeled an almond less white than her teeth. “This is a true charm, my life, and do not laugh. See! I give the parrot one half and Tota the other.” Mian Mittu with careful beak took his share from between Ameera’s lips, and she kissed the other half into the mouth of the child, who ate it slowly with wondering eyes. “This I will do each day of seven, and without doubt he who is ours will be a bold speaker and

wise. Eh, Tota, what wilt thou be when thou art a man and I am gray-headed?" Tota tucked his fat legs into adorable creases. He could crawl, but he was not going to waste the spring of his youth in idle speech. He wanted Mian Mittu's tail to tweak.

109. When he was advanced to the dignity of a silver belt—which, with a magic square engraved on silver and hung round his neck, made up the greater part of his clothing—he staggered on a perilous journey down the garden to Pir Khan and proffered him all his jewels in exchange for one little ride on Holden's horse, having seen his mother's mother chaffering with peddlers in the veranda. Pir Khan wept and set the untried feet on his own gray head in sign of fealty, and brought the bold adventurer to his mother's arms, vowing that Tota would be a leader of men ere his beard was grown.

110. One hot evening, while he sat on the roof between his father and mother watching the never-ending warfare of the kites that the city boys flew, he demanded a kite of his own with Pir Khan to fly it, because he had a fear of dealing with anything larger than himself, and when Holden called him a "spark" he rose to his feet and answered slowly in defence of his new-found individuality: *"Hum 'park nahin hai. Hum admi hai* [I am no spark, but a man]."

111. The protest made Holden choke and devote himself very seriously to a consideration of Tota's future. He need hardly have taken the trouble. The delight of that life was too perfect to endure. Therefore it was taken away as many things are taken away in India—suddenly and without warning. The little lord of the house, as Pir Khan called him, grew sorrowful and complained of pains who had never known the meaning of pain. Ameera, wild with

terror, watched him through the night, and in the dawning of the second day the life was shaken out of him by fever—the seasonal autumn fever. It seemed altogether impossible that he could die, and neither Ameera nor Holden at first believed the evidence of the little body on the bedstead. Then Ameera beat her head against the wall and would have flung herself down the well in the garden had Holden not restrained her by main force.

112. One mercy only was granted to Holden. He rode to his office in broad daylight and found waiting him an unusually heavy mail that demanded concentrated attention and hard work. He was not, however, alive to this kindness of the gods.

III

113. The first shock of a bullet is no more than a brisk pinch. The wrecked body does not send in its protest to the soul till ten or fifteen seconds later. Holden realised his pain slowly, exactly as he had realised his happiness, and with the same imperious necessity for hiding all traces of it. In the beginning he only felt that there had been a loss, and that Ameera needed comforting where she sat with her head on her knees shivering as Mian Mittu from the housetop called: *Tota! Tota! Tota!* Later, all his world and the daily life of it rose up to hurt him. It was an outrage that any one of the children at the band-stand in the evening should be alive and clamorous, when his own child lay dead. It was more than mere pain when one of them touched him, and stories told by over-fond fathers of their children's latest performances cut him to the quick. He could not declare his pain. He had neither help, comfort, nor sympathy; and Ameera at the end of each weary day

would lead him through the hell of self-questioning reproach which is reserved for those who have lost a child, and believe that with a little—just a little—more care it might have been saved.

114. “Perhaps,” Ameera would say, “I did not take sufficient heed. Did I, or did I not? The sun on the roof that day when he played so long alone and I was—ahi! braiding my hair—it may be that the sun then bred the fever. If I had warned him from the sun he might have lived. But oh, my life, say that I am guiltless! Thou knowest that I loved him as I love thee. Say that there is no blame on me, or I shall die—I shall die!”

115. “There is no blame—before God, none. It was written, and how could we do aught to save? What has been, has been. Let it go, beloved.”

116. “He was all my heart to me. How can I let the thought go when my arm tells me every night that he is not here? *Ahi! Ahi!* O Tota, come back to me—come back again, and let us be all together as it was before!”

117. “Peace, peace! For thine own sake, and for mine also, if thou lovest me—rest.”

118. “By this I know thou dost not care; and how shouldst thou? The white men have hearts of stone and souls of iron. Oh, that I had married a man of mine own people—though he beat me—and had never eaten the bread of an alien!”

119. “Am I an alien—mother of my son?”

120. “What else—*sahib*?... Oh, forgive me—forgive! The death has driven me mad. Thou art the life of my heart, and the light of my eyes, and the breath of my life, and—and I have put thee from me, though it

was but for a moment. If thou goest away, to whom shall I look for help? Do not be angry. Indeed, it was the pain that spoke and not thy slave."

121. "I know, I know. We be two who were three. The greater need therefore that we should be one."

122. They were sitting on the roof as of custom. The night was a warm one in early spring, and sheet-lightning was dancing on the horizon to a broken tune played by far-off thunder. Ameera settled herself in Holden's arms.

123. "The dry earth is lowing like a cow for the rain, and I—I am afraid. It was not like this when we counted the stars. But thou lovest me as much as before, though a bond is taken away? Answer!"

124. "I love more because a new bond has come out of the sorrow that we have eaten together, and that thou knowest."

125. "Yea, I knew," said Ameera in a very small whisper. "But it is good to hear thee say so, my life, who art so strong to help. I will be a child no more but a woman and an aid to thee. Listen! Give me my *sitar* and I will sing bravely."

126. She took the light silver-studded *sitar* and began a song of the great hero Rajah Rasalu. The hand failed on the strings, the tune halted, checked, and at a low note turned off to the poor little nursery-rhyme about the wicked crow:

> "'And the wild plums grow in the jungle, only a penny a pound,
> Only a penny a pound, *baba*—only....'"

127. Then came the tears and the piteous rebellion against fate till she slept, moaning a little in her sleep, with the right arm thrown clear of the body as

though it protected something that was not there. It was after this night that life became a little easier for Holden. The ever-present pain of loss drove him into his work, and the work repaid him by filling up his mind for nine or ten hours a day. Ameera sat alone in the house and brooded, but grew happier when she understood that Holden was more at ease, according to the custom of women. They touched happiness again, but this time with caution.

128. “It was because we loved Tota that he died. The jealousy of God was upon us,” said Ameera. “I have hung up a large black jar before our window to turn the evil eye from us, and we must make no protestations of delight, but go softly underneath the stars, lest God find us out. Is that not good talk, worthless one?”

129. She had shifted the accent on the word that means “beloved,” in proof of the sincerity of her purpose. But the kiss that followed the new christening was a thing that any deity might have envied. They went about henceforward saying: “It is naught, it is naught”; and hoping that all the Powers heard.

130. The Powers were busy on other things. They had allowed thirty million people four years of plenty wherein men fed well and the crops were certain, and the birth-rate rose year by year; the districts reported a purely agricultural population varying from nine hundred to two thousand to the square mile of the overburdened earth; and the Member for Lower Tooting, wandering about India in pot-hat and frock-coat, talked largely of the benefits of British rule and suggested as the one thing needful the establishment of a duly qualified electoral system and a general bestowal of the franchise. His long-

suffering hosts smiled and made him welcome, and when he paused to admire, with pretty picked words, the blossom of the blood-red dhak-tree that had flowered untimely for a sign of what was coming, they smiled more than ever.

131. It was the Deputy Commissioner of Kot-Kumharsen, staying at the club for a day, who lightly told a tale that made Holden's blood run cold as he overheard the end.

132. "He won't bother any one any more. Never saw a man so astonished in my life. By Jove, I thought he meant to ask a question in the House about it. Fellow passenger in his ship—dined next him—bowled over by cholera and died in eighteen hours. You needn't laugh, you fellows. The Member for Lower Tooting is awfully angry about it; but he's more scared. I think he's going to take his enlightened self out of India."

133. "I'd give a good deal if he were knocked over. It might keep a few vestrymen of his kidney to their own parish. But what's this about cholera? It's full early for anything of that kind," said the warden of an unprofitable salt-lick.

134. "Don't know," said the Deputy Commissioner reflectively. "We've got locusts with us. There's sporadic cholera all along the north—at least we're calling it sporadic for decency's sake. The spring crops are short in five districts, and nobody seems to know where the rains are. It's nearly March now. I don't want to scare anybody, but it seems to me that Nature's going to audit her accounts with a big red pencil this summer."

135. "Just when I wanted to take leave, too!" said a voice across the room.

136. “There won’t be much leave this year, but there ought to be a great deal of promotion. I’ve come in to persuade the Government to put my pet canal on the list of famine-relief works. It’s an ill wind that blows no good. I shall get that canal finished at last.”

137. “Is it the old programme then,” said Holden; “famine, fever, and cholera?”

138. “Oh, no. Only local scarcity and an unusual prevalence of seasonal sickness. You’ll find it all in the reports if you live till next year. You’re a lucky chap. *You* haven’t got a wife to send out of harm’s way. The hill stations ought to be full of women this year.”

139. “I think you’re inclined to exaggerate the talk in the *bazars*,” said a young civilian in the secretariat. “Now I have observed—”

140. “I daresay you have,” said the Deputy Commissioner, “but you’ve a great deal more to observe, my son. In the meantime, I wish to observe to you—” and he drew him aside to discuss the construction of the canal that was so dear to his heart. Holden went to his bungalow and began to understand that he was not alone in the world, and also that he was afraid for the sake of another—which is the most soul-satisfying fear known to man.

141. Two months later, as the Deputy had foretold, Nature began to audit her accounts with a red pencil. On the heels of the spring reapings came a cry for bread, and the Government, which had decreed that no man should die of want, sent wheat. Then came the cholera from all four quarters of the compass. It struck a pilgrim-gathering of half a million at a sacred shrine. Many died at the feet of their god; the others broke and ran over the face of the land

carrying the pestilence with them. It smote a walled city and killed two hundred a day. The people crowded the trains, hanging on to the foot-boards and squatting on the roofs of the carriages, and the cholera followed them, for at each station they dragged out the dead and the dying. They died by the roadside, and the horses of the Englishmen shied at the corpses in the grass. The rains did not come, and the earth turned to iron lest man should escape death by hiding in her. The English sent their wives away to the hills and went about their work, coming forward as they were bidden to fill the gaps in the fighting-line. Holden, sick with fear of losing his chiefest treasure on earth, had done his best to persuade Ameera to go away with her mother to the Himalayas.

142. “Why should I go?” said she one evening on the roof.

143. “There is sickness, and people are dying, and all the white *mem-log* have gone.”

144. “All of them?”

145. “All—unless perhaps there remain some old scald-head who vexes her husband’s heart by running risk of death.”

146. “Nay; who stays is my sister, and thou must not abuse her, for I will be a scald-head too. I am glad all the bold *mem-log* are gone.”

147. “Do I speak to a woman, or a babe? Go to the hills and I will see to it that thou goest like a queen’s daughter. Think, child. In a red-lacquered bullock-cart, veiled and curtained, with brass peacocks upon the pole and red cloth hangings. I will send two orderlies for guard, and—”

148. “Peace! Thou art the babe in speaking thus. What use are those toys to me? *He* would have patted the bullocks and played with the housings. For his sake, perhaps—thou hast made me very English—I might have gone. Now, I will not. Let the *mem-log* run.”

149. “Their husbands are sending them, beloved.”

150. “Very good talk. Since when hast thou been my husband to tell me what to do? I have but borne thee a son. Thou art only all the desire of my soul to me. How shall I depart when I know that if evil befall thee by the breadth of so much as my littlest finger-nail—is that not small?—I should be aware of it though I were in paradise. And here, this summer thou mayest die—*ai, janee*, die! and in dying they might call to tend thee a white woman, and she would rob me in the last of thy love!”

151. “But love is not born in a moment or on a death-bed!”

152. “What dost thou know of love, stone-heart? She would take thy thanks at least and, by God and the Prophet and Beebee Miriam the mother of thy Prophet, that I will never endure. My lord and my love, let there be no more foolish talk of going away. Where thou art, I am. It is enough.” She put an arm round his neck and a hand on his mouth.

153. There are not many happinesses so complete as those that are snatched under the shadow of the sword. They sat together and laughed, calling each other openly by every pet name that could move the wrath of the gods. The city below them was locked up in its own torments. Sulphur fires blazed in the streets; the conches in the Hindu temples screamed and bellowed, for the gods were inattentive in those

days. There was a service in the great Mohammedan shrine, and the call to prayer from the minarets was almost unceasing. They heard the wailing in the houses of the dead, and once the shriek of a mother who had lost a child and was calling for its return. In the gray dawn they saw the dead borne out through the city gates, each litter with its own little knot of mourners. Wherefore they kissed each other and shivered.

154. It was a red and heavy audit, for the land was very sick and needed a little breathing space ere the torrent of cheap life should flood it anew. The children of immature fathers and undeveloped mothers made no resistance. They were cowed and sat still, waiting till the sword should be sheathed in November if it were so willed. There were gaps among the English, but the gaps were filled. The work of superintending famine-relief, cholera-sheds, medicine-distribution, and what little sanitation was possible, went forward because it was so ordered.

155. Holden had been told to keep himself in readiness to move to replace the next man who should fall. There were twelve hours in each day when he could not see Ameera, and she might die in three. He was considering what his pain would be if he could not see her for three months, or if she died out of his sight. He was absolutely certain that her death would be demanded—so certain that when he looked up from the telegram and saw Pir Khan breathless in the doorway, he laughed aloud. “And?” said he—

156. “When there is a cry in the night and the spirit flutters into the throat, who has a charm that will restore? Come swiftly, heaven-born! It is the black cholera.”

157. Holden galloped to his home. The sky was heavy with clouds, for the long-deferred rains were near and the heat was stifling. Ameera's mother met him in the courtyard, whimpering: "She is dying. She is nursing herself into death. She is all but dead. What shall I do, *sahib*?"

158. Ameera was lying in the room in which Tota had been born. She made no sign when Holden entered, because the human soul is a very lonely thing and, when it is getting ready to go away, hides itself in a misty border-land where the living may not follow. The black cholera does its work quietly and without explanation. Ameera was being thrust out of life as though the Angel of Death had himself put his hand upon her. The quick breathing seemed to show that she was either afraid or in pain, but neither eyes nor mouth gave any answer to Holden's kisses. There was nothing to be said or done. Holden could only wait and suffer. The first drops of the rain began to fall on the roof, and he could hear shouts of joy in the parched city.

159. The soul came back a little and the lips moved. Holden bent down to listen. "Keep nothing of mine," said Ameera. "Take no hair from my head. *She* would make thee burn it later on. That flame I should feel. Lower! Stoop lower! Remember only that I was thine and bore thee a son. Though thou wed a white woman to-morrow, the pleasure of receiving in thy arms thy first son is taken from thee forever. Remember me when thy son is born—the one that shall carry thy name before all men. His misfortunes be on my head. I bear witness—I bear witness"—the lips were forming the words on his ear—"that there is no God but—thee, beloved!"

160. Then she died. Holden sat still, and all thought

was taken from him—till he heard Ameera's mother lift the curtain.

161. "Is she dead, *sahib*?"

162. "She is dead."

163. "Then I will mourn, and afterwards take an inventory of the furniture in this house. For that will be mine. The *sahib* does not mean to resume it? It is so little, so very little, *sahib*, and I am an old woman. I would like to lie softly."

164. "For the mercy of God be silent a while. Go out and mourn where I cannot hear."

165. "*Sahib*, she will be buried in four hours."

166. "I know the custom. I shall go ere she is taken away. That matter is in thy hands. Look to it, that the bed on which—on which she lies—"

167. "Aha! That beautiful red-lacquered bed. I have long desired—"

168. "That the bed is left here untouched for my disposal. All else in the house is thine. Hire a cart, take everything, go hence, and before sunrise let there be nothing in this house but that which I have ordered thee to respect."

169. "I am an old woman. I would stay at least for the days of mourning and the rains have just broken. Whither shall I go?"

170. "What is that to me? My order is that there is a going. The house-gear is worth a thousand rupees, and my orderly shall bring thee a hundred rupees to-night."

171. "That is very little. Think of the cart-hire."

172. "It shall be nothing unless thou goest, and with

speed. O woman, get hence and leave me with my dead!"

173. The mother shuffled down the staircase, and in her anxiety to take stock of the house-fittings forgot to mourn. Holden stayed by Ameera's side and the rain roared on the roof. He could not think connectedly by reason of the noise, though he made many attempts to do so. Then four sheeted ghosts glided dripping into the room and stared at him through their veils. They were the washers of the dead. Holden left the room and went out to his horse. He had come in a dead, stifling calm through ankle-deep dust. He found the courtyard a rain-lashed pond alive with frogs; a torrent of yellow water ran under the gate, and a roaring wind drove the bolts of the rain like buckshot against the mud walls. Pir Khan was shivering in his little hut by the gate, and the horse was stamping uneasily in the water.

174. "I have been told the *sahib's* order," said Pir Khan. "It is well. This house is now desolate. I go also, or my monkey face would be a reminder of that which has been. Concerning the bed, I will bring that to thy house yonder in the morning; but remember, *sahib*, it will be to thee a knife turning in a green wound. I go upon a pilgrimage, and I will take no money. I have grown fat in the protection of the Presence whose sorrow is my sorrow. For the last time I hold his stirrup."

175. He touched Holden's foot with both hands, and the horse sprang out into the road, where the creaking bamboos were whipping the sky and all the frogs were chuckling. Holden could not see for the rain in his face. He put his hands before his eyes and muttered:

176. “Oh, you brute! You utter brute!”

177. The news of his trouble was already in his bungalow. He read the knowledge in his butler’s eyes when Ahmed Khan brought in food, and for the first and last time in his life laid a hand upon his master’s shoulder, saying: “Eat, *sahib*, eat. Meat is good against sorrow. I also have known. Moreover the shadows come and go, *sahib*; the shadows come and go. These be curried eggs.”

178. Holden could neither eat nor sleep. The heavens sent down eight inches of rain in that night and washed the earth clean. The waters tore down walls, broke roads, and scoured open the shallow graves on the Mohammedan burying-ground. All next day it rained, and Holden sat still in his house considering his sorrow. On the morning of the third day he received a telegram which said only: “Ricketts, Myndonie. Dying. Holden relieve. Immediate.” Then he thought that before he had departed he would look at the house wherein he had been master and lord. There was a break in the weather, and the rank earth steamed with vapour.

179. He found that the rains had torn down the mud pillars of the gateway, and the heavy wooden gate that had guarded his life hung lazily from one hinge. There was grass three inches high in the courtyard; Pir Khan’s lodge was empty, and the sodden thatch sagged between the beams. A gray squirrel was in possession of the veranda, as if the house had been untenanted for thirty years instead of three days. Ameera’s mother had removed everything except some mildewed matting. The *tick-tick* of the little scorpions as they hurried across the floor was the only sound in the house. Ameera’s room and the other one where Tota had lived were heavy with

mildew; and the narrow staircase leading to the roof was streaked and stained with rain-borne mud. Holden saw all these things, and came out again to meet in the road Durga Dass, his landlord—portly, affable, clothed in white muslin, and driving a C-spring buggy. He was overlooking his property to see how the roofs stood the stress of the first rains.

180. “I have heard,” said he, “you will not take this place any more, *sahib*?”

181. “What are you going to do with it?”

182. “Perhaps I shall let it again.”

183. “Then I will keep it on while I am away.”

184. Durga Dass was silent for some time. “You shall not take it on, *sahib*,” he said. “When I was a young man I also—But to-day I am a member of the Municipality. Ho! Ho! No. When the birds have gone, what need to keep the nest? I will have it pulled down—the timber will sell for something always. It shall be pulled down, and the Municipality shall make a road across as they desire, from the burning-ghaut to the city wall, so that no man may say where this house stood.”

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Using the term “Emotion”[22] broadly, make a list of all the emotions you can.

2. Which of these are displayed in “The Last Class”?

3. Which in “Without Benefit of Clergy”?

4. Cite different passages, by referring to the numbered paragraphs, in which certain specific emotions are displayed.

5. Do you notice any emotional expressions which seem to you to be either extravagant, or weak, or in any way untrue to life?

6. Point out how the author conveys the ideas of emotion, such as by emotional words, gestures, attitudes, etc.

7. Write five short original paragraphs expressing five different emotions, using varied means of conveying the impressions of strong feeling.

8. Select from some magazine a story of the emotional type, and point out in a few words why you consider it to be a typically emotional story.

TEN REPRESENTATIVE STORIES OF EMOTION OR SENTIMENT

"A Doctor of The Old School," Ian Maclaren, in *The Days of Auld Lang Syne*.

"A Descent into the Maelstrom," Edgar Allan Poe, in *Tales*.

"The Duchess at Prayer," Edith Wharton, in *Crucial Instances*.

"A Lear of the Steppes," Ivan Turgeneff, translated in *The Book of The Short-Story*. Jessup and Canby.

"The Death of the Dauphin," Alphonse Daudet, translated in *Little French Masterpieces*.

"The Birthmark," Nathaniel Hawthorne, in *Mosses From an Old Manse*.

"Tennessee's Partner," Bret Harte, in *The Luck of Roaring Camp and Other Stories*.

"The Death of Olivier Becaille," Émile Zola, translated in *Masterpieces of Fiction*.

"They," Rudyard Kipling, in *Traffic and Discoveries*.

"Juggler to 'Our Lady,'" Anatole France, in *Short-Story Masterpieces*.

FOOTNOTES:

[20] Emotion is a broad word loosely used to embrace all the tones of inner feeling, from the palest sentiment depicted by a Jane Austen, to the darkest passion of a Werther.—*Writing the Short-Story*, p. 181, which see for a fuller discussion of emotion in the short-story.

[21] “S’il tient sa langue, il tient la clé qui de ses chaînes le délivre.”—FREDERIC MISTRAL, a poet friend of Daudet’s.

[22] NOTE.—Any good psychology is likely to help you understand the nature of emotion in general.

IV
HUMOROUS STORIES

The Ransom of Red Chief.—O. HENRY

The Courting of T'Nowhead's Bell.—J. M. BARRIE

Sydney Smith uses this word [humor] to cover any thing that is ridiculous and laughable. So the epithet *comic* is quite indiscriminately applied. But we ought not to submit to this loose application; for there are plenty of other words to make proper distinctions for us amid our pleasurable moods, and permit us to reserve humor for something which is neither punning, wit, satire, nor comedy. Humor may avail itself of all these mental exercises, but only as a manager casts his stock company to set forth the prevailing spirit of a play. Comedy, for instance, represents sorrows, passions, and annoyances, but shows them without the sombre purpose of tragedy to enforce a supreme will at any cost. All our weaknesses threaten in comedy to result in serious embarrassments, but there is such inexhaustible material for laughter in the whims and follies with which we baffle ourselves and others, that the tragic threat is collared just in time and shaken into pleasure. All kinds of details of our life are represented, which tragedy could never tolerate in its main drift towards the pathos of defeated human wills and broken hearts. Tricks, vices, fatuities, crotchets, vanities, play their game for a stake no higher than the mirth of outwitting each other; and they all pay penalties of a light kind which God exacts smilingly for the sake of keeping our disorders at a minimum. Comedy also finds a great deal of its charm in the unconsciousness of an infirmity. We exhibit

ourselves unawares: each one is perfectly understood by everybody but himself; so we plot and vapor through an intrigue with placards on each back, where all but the wearers can indulge their mirth at seeing us parading so innocently with advertisements of our price and quality.—JOHN WEISS, *Wit, Humor, and Shakespeare*.

HUMOROUS STORIES

There are as many kinds of humorous stories as there are kinds of humor, ranging from gentle mirth, comedy, fun, and farce, to burlesque, ridicule, satire and irony. Some stories are typically humorous in their central situation, as Mark Twain's "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County"; others abound in a whole series of funny situations, as "The King of Boyville," by William Allen White; others, again, are rich in the humorous sayings by the writer, rather than revealed in humorous plot, as in Artemus Ward's sketch, "Horace Greeley's Ride to Placerville"; still others put the humor into the speech of the characters, as in "The Phonograph and the Graft," by O. Henry; while yet others exhibit two or more of the foregoing kinds, and are by turns gay, or whimsical, or satirical, as the characters and happenings may permit, mingling humor of plot with mirth of word and incident.

The two chief ingredients of humor—though for the most part it defies analysis—are surprise, and a feeling of incongruity. But these must be accompanied by no higher emotion. It would surprise us to meet the incongruous sight of a half-clad child struggling in the snow, but the vision would not be humorous—the higher emotion of pity would preclude that. But to see an arrogant fop stripped of his finery and floundering and spluttering in a snow drift into which he had been tossed, *would* be funny —to others.

Merely for a story to possess humor would not warrant our classing it as a humorous story, for

humor is a sunny ray gleaming often through literature and life, but when the typical spirit and prevailing treatment of the story are humorous, it may properly be so entitled.

HENRY AND HIS WRITINGS

William Sidney Porter, otherwise known as "O. Henry," was born in 1867, in Greensboro, N. C.—the descendant of several governors of that state, it may be remarked in passing. While still very young he went to Texas and received his education at an academy there. Because of poor health he was unable to attend college, so he spent two and a half years of his early manhood on a cattle ranch. Following that period came his journalistic work on the Houston *Post*, and a little ten-page weekly story-paper of his own, *The Iconoclast*—afterwards renamed *The Rolling Stone*—most of the stories for which he wrote himself. After several years in Houston, he visited Central America with a friend—a trip which, later, yielded rich material for his first book. Then followed a short period as a drug clerk in Austin, Texas. Next we see him in New Orleans, again embarked upon literary work; and there it was that he first showed real promise as a short-story writer, and there also that he adopted his unique pseudonym—the surname of which was selected at random from a newspaper account of a social function, and the initial letter because it was the "easiest letter written." About eight years before his death he came to New York, in response to an offer from one of the magazine editors there, and after that his name became well-known and his success assured. He died in New York City, June 5, 1910, at

the age of forty-two. His three earliest books are perhaps the ones by which he is best known; *Cabbages and Kings*, *The Four Million*, and *The Trimmed Lamp*. Eleven volumes of short-stories comprise his literary output. The later stories do not enhance his reputation, though some of them are in his best vein—notably "The Ransom of Red Chief," contained in the volume *Whirligigs*, published the year of his death. His last book, *Sixes and Sevens*, was issued posthumously, in 1911.

Of all short-story writers O. Henry was easily first as a master of surprise. The sudden and often astounding reversals at the end of his stories became delightfully characteristic, and the reader with the O. Henry habit played a happy though always losing game with himself in trying to forecast the denouement of each new story. Sometimes the yarn-spinner would delight in leading us to curl our lip, and say, "Pshaw, O. Henry is employing a rather old device—in fact, this is quite trite—" and then all in an instant the sly phrase would peep forth to show that we had been caught from ambush; for O. Henry had scant reverence for the reader's dignity—he poked fun at him as laughingly as could Shakespeare himself, on occasion.

No other writer ever made slang so really funny, yet few knew better the richness of serious English diction for really literary ends. Not that he embellished his sentences, but that he appraised every word at its true value before uttering it as literary coin. When he said that one of his characters was "denounced by the name of——" (I have

forgotten what), he extracted the full essence from those six words, and that is art.

Other short-story writers have been as trenchant in wit, others as keen in observation, but none has known so wide a variety of common-folk as O. Henry. Four great types he understood with rare completeness: the Texan (*Heart of the West*), the Central American (*Cabbages and Kings*), the middle- and lower-class New Yorker (*The Four Million*),—and Everybody Else (*all of his eleven books of short-stories*).

> O. Henry's advice to young writers as to the secret of short-story writing is well known. "There are two rules," he said. "The first rule is to write stories that please yourself. There is no second rule." He was once facetiously asked if there were a second rule, what that rule would be. "Sell the story," he answered. —G. J. NATHAN, *O. Henry in His Own Bagdad. The Bookman*, vol. 31.

> O. Henry has often been called "the Yankee Maupassant," and up to a certain point the characterization is suggestive. His stories have the swiftness and point of the anecdote, as Maupassant's have. He employs just enough art to keep alive the reader's interest for the laugh or the gasp to which everything else leads up.... As a humorist he was American to the finger tips. That is to say, he secured his effects by over-statement, which is the salient characteristic of American humor.... Mark Twain was a world humorist; O. Henry was an American humorist.—*A Typically American Short-Story Writer* (*Current Literature*, vol. 49).

> The author seems to know almost every type

> of man—the rich and portly financier, the "fly" newsboy or district messenger, the denizens of the great hotels, the "salesladies," the chorus girls, the women in the shop, the raffish hangers-on of the saloons, the gamblers, and the grafters.... Mr. Porter is a real *flâneur* of the American type, only, he confines himself to no boulevard, to no city, to no state, nor even to a single country. The world, in fact, is his oyster, and he has learned almost unconsciously to open it and to extract from it alike the meat and the salty juices.... He gets down to the very heart of things. He sees the humour and the pathos blended; yet, on the whole, he is an optimist ... who believes that in every human being there is to be found something good, however mixed it may be with other qualities; and, like a true American, he can see and chuckle at the humour of it all.—HARRY THURSTON PECK, *Some Representative American Story-Tellers*, *The Bookman*, vol. 31.

FURTHER REFERENCES FOR READING ON O. HENRY

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THE RANSOM OF RED CHIEF[23]

BY O. HENRY

Introduction.
Setting and characters.
A favorite form of humor with 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.

Setting more specific.
Satire of contrast—frequent with author.

2. 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.

The narrator is not consistently ungrammatical.

3. 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 *The introduction develops the foundation of the Plot Situation gradually.* 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 know that Summit couldn't

get after us with anything stronger than constables and, maybe, some lackadaisical blood-hounds and a diatribe or two in the Weekly Farmers' Budget. So, it looked good.

The humor takes the form of situation, diction, satire, and sly little surprises throughout.

4. We selected for our victim the only child of a prominent citizen named Ebenezer Dorset. The father was respectable 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 color 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.

Setting for main action.

5. 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.

Main Action Begins: First Plot Incident.

6. One evening after sundown, we drove in a buggy past old Dorset's house. The kid was in the street, throwing rocks at the kitten on the opposite fence.

7. "Hey, little boy!" says Bill, "would you like to have a bag of candy and a nice ride?"

8. The boy catches Bill neatly in the eye with a piece of brick. *Contributory Incident.*

As a matter of technique, note that contributory incidents might be varied or omitted without altering the plot essentially. These are not all specifically noted in this story.

9. “That will cost the old man an extra five hundred dollars,” says Bill, climbing over the wheel.

10. That boy put up a fight like a welterweight 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 I hitched 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” and “the Kid” serve as the contesting characters.

11. 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:

Note title of the story.
“Bill” never smiles.

12. “Ha! cursed paleface, do you dare to enter the camp of Red Chief, the terror of the plains?”

13. “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. *Note how the author uses swift changes to humorous effect.* 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.”

Essential, or Plot, Situation.

14. Yes, sir, that kid 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.

15. 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:

Somewhat overdone, but we must judge the story not as comedy but as farce, which blithely assumes the improbable as true.

16. “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 dasent 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?”

17. Every few minutes he would remember that he was a pesky red-skin, and pick up his stick rifle and tip-toe to the mouth of the cave to rubber for the scouts of the hated paleface. *Essential Situation.*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.

18. “Red Chief,” says I to the kid, “would you like to go home?”

19. “Aw, what for?” says he. “I don’t have any fun at home. I hate to go to school. I like to camp out. *Key. Use of the unexpected.* You won’t take me back home again, Snake-eye, will you?”

20. “Not right away,” says I. “We’ll stay here in the cave a while.”

21. “All right!” says he. “That’ll be fine. I never had such fun in all my life.”

A tribute throughout to the dime dreadful.

22. 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. *Narrator lapses now and then into “better” language.* 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.

Contrast.

23. 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.

24. 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.

Plot Situation.

25. 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 *Note that the author develops his story by the use of progressive plot situations and contributory (non-essential) incidents.* 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.

26. "What you getting up so soon for, Sam?" asked Bill.

27. "Me?" says I. "Oh, I got a kind of a pain in my shoulder. I thought sitting up would rest it."

28. "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?"

29. "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."

Note the humorous use of the language of "literature"—sparingly.

30. 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 country-side for the dastardly kidnappers. But what I saw was a peaceful landscape dotted with one man ploughing with a dun mule. *Plot Situation.* 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 the 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. *Key.* Heaven help the wolves!" says I, and I went down the mountain to breakfast.

31. 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 cocoanut.

Contrast of unexpected.

32. "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?"

33. 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!"

Return to first style of narration.

34. 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.

A Frank R. Stockton expression.

35. “What’s he up to now?” says Bill, anxiously. “You don’t think he’ll run away, do you, Sam?”

36. “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 neighbors. Anyhow, he’ll be missed to-day. To-night we must get a message to his father demanding the two thousand dollars for his return.”

Plot situation hidden, action halts.

37. 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.

38. 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 the 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.

This expression is more clever than natural to “Bill.”

39. By and by, Bill sits up and feels behind his ear

and says: “Sam, do you know who my favorite Biblical character is?”

40. “Take it easy,” says I. “You’ll come to your senses presently.”

Slaughter of the Innocents.

41. “King Herod,” says he. “You won’t go away and leave me here alone, will you, Sam?”

See ¶4.

42. I went out and caught that boy and shook him until his freckles rattled.

Note the use of the incongruous.

43. “If you don’t behave,” says I, “I’ll take you straight home. Now, are you going to be good, or not?”

44. “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 to-day.”

45. “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.”

Plot Incident.

46. 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.

Do these men seem like actual criminals? See comment on ¶16.

47. “You know, Sam,” says Bill, “I’ve stood by you without batting 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?”

Irony.

48. “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.”

Key.

49. 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.”

Preparation for Crisis.

50. So, to relieve Bill, I acceded, and we collaborated a letter that ran this way:

In intelligence of expression, does this letter correspond to the general style

of the narrator?

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 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 writing by a solitary messenger to-night 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 paste-board 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.

51. 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:

Character delineation and by-play.

52. “Aw, Snake-eye, you said I could play the Black Scout while you was gone.”

53. “Play it, of course,” says I. “Mr. Bill will play with you. What kind of a game is it?”

54. “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 so tired of playing Indian myself. I want to be the Black Scout.”

55. “All right,” says I. “It sounds harmless to me. I guess Mr. Bill will help you foil the pesky savages.”

56. “What am I to do?” says Bill, looking at the kid suspiciously.

57. “You are the hoss,” says Black Scout. “Get down on your hands and knees. How can I ride to the stockade without a hoss?”

58. “You’d better keep him interested,” said I, “till we get the scheme going. Loosen up.”

59. 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.

The two are typically in character in these paragraphs.

60. “How far is it to the stockade, Kid?” he asks, in a husky manner of voice.

61. “Ninety miles,” says the Black Scout. “And you have to hump yourself to get there on time. Whoa, now!”

62. The Black Scout jumps on Bill’s back and digs his heels in his side.

63. “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.”

Plot Situation.

64. I walked over to Poplar Cove and sat around the post-office and store, talking with the chawbacons 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.

65. 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.

66. So I lighted my pipe and sat down on a mossy bank to await developments.

67. 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.

Typical O. Henry speech in this paragraph.

68. “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-defence, 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."

69. "What's the trouble, Bill?" I asks him.

70. "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.

Note the stage trick of a character in ignorance while the audience enjoys his delusion. The surprise is his, not ours.

71. "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."

72. Bill is puffing and blowing but there is a look of ineffable peace and growing content on his rose-pink features.

73. "Bill," says I, "there isn't any heart disease in

your family, is there?"

74. "No," says Bill, "nothing chronic except malaria and accidents. Why?"

75. "Then you might turn around," says I, "and have a look behind you."

Suggestion.

76. 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. *Straight delineation. The former is the better art.* 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 *Plot Situation.* 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.

Plot Incident.

77. 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 that tree as well hidden as a tree toad, waiting for the messenger to arrive.

78. Exactly on time, a half-grown boy rides up the road on a bicycle, locates the paste-board box at the

foot of the fence-post, slips a folded piece of paper into it and pedals away again back toward Summit.

79. 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:

Main Plot Incident.

Two Desperate Men.

Gentlemen: I received your letter to-day 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 counter-proposition, 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. *Climax.* 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.

80. "Great pirates of Penzance!" says I, "of all the impudent—"

Suggestion.

81. But I glanced at Bill, and hesitated. He had the most appealing look in his eyes I ever saw on the face of a dumb or a talking brute.

Serio-comic.

82. “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 a liberal offer. You ain’t going to let the chance go, are you?”

83. “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.”

Extreme of contrast.

84. 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.

Denouement.

85. 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 *Contrasting Plot Situation—Summary of the plot-outcome.* tree, according to the original proposition, Bill was counting out two hundred and fifty dollars into Dorset’s hand.

Note free use of simile.

86. 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.

87. “How long can you hold him?” asks Bill.

88. “I’m not as strong as I used to be,” says old

Dorset. “But I think I can promise you ten minutes.”

Humor of hyperbole.

89. “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.”

Resultant Climax.

90. 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 half out of Summit before I could catch up with him.

BARRIE AND HIS WRITINGS

James Matthew Barrie was born at Kirriemuir (“Thrums”), Scotland, on the 9th of May, 1860. He is the son of a physician, whom he has lovingly embodied as “Dr. McQueen”; his mother and sister also will live as “Jess” and “Leeby.” He was educated at Dumfries Academy, entering the University of Edinburgh at eighteen, from which he was graduated in 1882 with the degree of M.A., taking honors in English literature. He began writing literary criticisms for the *Edinburgh Courant* at this period. Several months after his graduation Barrie took a position on a Nottingham newspaper, leaving that city for London in 1885, where his literary career commenced in earnest; but success did not come until after the customary struggles and hindrances to which young literary aspirants are ever subject. In 1893 he married Miss Ansell, an actress, whom he divorced in 1909. Some of his best-known books are *Auld Licht Idylls*; *A Window in Thrums*; *Margaret Ogilvy*; *My Lady Nicotine*; *The Little Minister*

(afterwards dramatized); *Sentimental Tommy*; *Tommy and Grizel* (a sequel), and *The Little White Bird*. He also wrote several plays, the most notable of which are *The Professor's Love Story*; *Peter Pan* (a partial dramatization of *The Little White Bird*); *Quality Street*; and *What Every Woman Knows*. It is interesting to note that Mr. Barrie did not succeed in securing the magazine publication of "The Courting of T'Nowhead's Bell," which is given herewith; it was first issued between book covers, in 1888.

Barrie is a versatile story-teller, though he deals mostly with Scotch characters. His early work exhibits his short-story ability at its best. The warm human interest of *A Window in Thrums* and *Auld Licht Idylls*, is matched only by Ian Maclaren's *Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush* and *The Days of Auld Lang Syne*. A quaint character-humor, with swift flashes of pathos, pervades all his work, which for local-color and insight into the character of the Scotch rural dweller has won a place of distinction among the stories of present-day writers. With Barrie, realism is rarely unpleasant; he sees all things with a gentle eye. Even when in his keen ability to penetrate to the heart of things he discovers the weaknesses of humanity, he also finds redeeming virtues. Thus his characters are continually disclosing their true natures underneath the garb and custom of picturesque life, and we feel ourselves to be kin to them, every one. His dialect in itself is masterly and often deliciously humorous, so that actions and dialogue in themselves commonplace take on an extraordinary interest. No modern writer has a greater gift of character-drawing, and none is more sympathetically human in his

interpretations of the Scotch commoner.

> It is my contemptible weakness that if I say a character smiled vacuously, I must smile vacuously; if he frowns or leers, I frown or leer; if he is a coward or given to contortions, I cringe, or twist my legs until I have to stop writing to undo the knot. I bow with him, eat with him, and gnaw my moustache with him. If the character be a lady with an exquisite laugh, I suddenly terrify you by laughing exquisitely. One reads of the astounding versatility of an actor who is stout and lean on the same evening, but what is he to the novelist who is a dozen persons within the hour?—J. M. BARRIE, *Margaret Ogilvy*.

> There are writers who can plan out their story beforehand as clearly as though it were a railway journey, and adhere throughout to their original design—they draw up what playwrights call a scenario—but I was never one of those. I spend a great deal of time indeed in looking for the best road in the map and mark it with red ink, but at the first bypath off my characters go. "Come back," I cry, "you are off the road." "We prefer this way," they reply. I try bullying. "You are only people in a book," I shout, "and it is my book, and I can do what I like with you, so come back!" But they seldom come, and it ends with my plodding after them.—J. M. BARRIE, Introduction to *When a Man's Single*.

> The chief features of Barrie's style are a quaintness of expression, a simple directness of narrative, and an unfailing sense of humor

—often as though the author were chuckling to himself as he wrote. His gift for descriptive writing—probably the best test of "style"—is very marked, though he makes little of it.—J. A. HAMMERTON, *J. M. Barrie and His Books*.

Auld Licht Idylls is a set of regular descriptions of the life of "Thrums," with special reference to the ways and character of the "Old Lights," the stubborn conservative Scotch Puritans; it contains also a most amusing and characteristic love story of the sect ("The Courting of T'Nowhead's Bell"), and a satiric political skit.—CHARLES DUDLEY WARNER'S *Library of the World's Best Literature*.

By the time "Auld Licht Idylls" appeared, he had achieved a reputation,—at least a local one. This book had an immediate success, and ran rapidly through several editions. His mother had been an Auld Licht in her youth.... Mrs. Barrie, knowing them from the inside, could tell all sorts of quaint and marvellous tales about them, whose humor was sure to please. It was from her stories that the Idylls were mainly drawn, so she was in a sense a collaborator with her son in their production.—HATTIE T. GRISWOLD, *Personal Sketches of Recent Authors*.

As a literary artist he belongs in the foremost rank. He has that sense of the typical in incident, of the universal in feeling, and of the suggestive in language, which mark the chiefs of letters. No one can express an idea with fewer strokes; he never expands a

> sufficient hint into an essay. His management of the Scotch dialect is masterly: he uses it sparingly, in the nearest form to English compatible with retaining the flavor; he never makes it so hard as to interfere with enjoyment; in few dialect writers do we feel so little alienness.—CHARLES DUDLEY WARNER'S *Library of the World's Best Literature*.

FURTHER REFERENCES FOR READING ON BARRIE

My Contemporaries in Fiction, by J. D. C. Murray (1897); *Theology of Modern Literature*, by S. Law Wilson (1899); *Fame and Fiction*, by E. A. Bennett (1901); *J. M. Barrie and His Books*, by J. A. Hammerton (1902).

FOR ANALYSIS

THE COURTING OF T'NOWHEAD'S BELL

BY JAMES MATTHEW BARRIE

For two years it had been notorious in the square that Sam'l Dickie was thinking of courting T'Nowhead's Bell, and that if little Sanders Elshioner (which is the Thrums pronunciation of Alexander Alexander) went in for her he might prove a formidable rival. Sam'l was a weaver in the Tenements, and Sanders a coal-carter whose trade-mark was a bell on his horse's neck that told when coals were coming. Being something of a public man,

Sanders had not so high a social position as Sam'l, but he had succeeded his father on the coal-cart, while the weaver had already tried several trades. It had always been against Sam'l, too, that once when the kirk was vacant he had advised the selection of the third minister who preached for it on the ground that it came expensive to pay a large number of candidates. The scandal of the thing was hushed up, out of respect for his father, who was a God-fearing man, but Sam'l was known by it in Lang Tammas' circle. The coal-carter was called Little Sanders to distinguish him from his father, who was not much more than half his size. He had grown up with the name, and its inapplicability now came home to nobody. Sam'l's mother had been more far-seeing than Sanders'. Her man had been called Sammy all his life because it was the name he got as a boy, so when their eldest son was born she spoke of him as Sam'l while still in his cradle. The neighbours imitated her, and thus the young man had a better start in life than had been granted to Sammy, his father.

2. It was Saturday evening—the night in the week when Auld Licht young men fell in love. Sam'l Dickie, wearing a blue glengarry bonnet with a red ball on the top, came to the door of a one-story house in the Tenements and stood there wriggling, for he was in a suit of tweeds for the first time that week, and did not feel at one in them. When his feeling of being a stranger to himself wore off, he looked up and down the road, which straggles between houses and gardens, and then, picking his way over the puddles, crossed to his father's henhouse and sat down on it. He was now on his way to the square.

3. Eppie Fargus was sitting on an adjoining dike knitting stockings, and Sam'l looked at her for a time.

4. "Is't yersel, Eppie?" he said at last.

5. "It's a' that," said Eppie.

6. "Hoo's a' wi' ye?" asked Sam'l.

7. "We're juist aff an' on," replied Eppie cautiously.

8. There was not much more to say, but as Sam'l sidled off the henhouse he murmured politely, "Ay, ay." In another minute he would have been fairly started, but Eppie resumed the conversation.

9. "Sam'l," she said, with a twinkle in her eye, "ye can tell Lisbeth Fargus I'll likely be drappin' in on her aboot Munday or Teisday."

10. Lisbeth was sister to Eppie, and wife of Tammas McQuhatty, better known as T'Nowhead, which was the name of his farm. She was thus Bell's mistress.

11. Sam'l leaned against the henhouse as if all his desire to depart had gone.

12. "Hoo d'ye kin I'll be at the T'Nowhead the nicht?" he asked, grinning in anticipation.

13. "Ou, I'se warrant ye'll be after Bell," said Eppie.

14. "Am no sure o' that," said Sam'l, trying to leer. He was enjoying himself now.

15. "Am no sure o' that," he repeated, for Eppie seemed lost in stitches.

16. "Sam'l—"

17. "Ay."

Asking her.

18. “Ye’ll be spierin’ her sune noo, I dinna doot?”

19. This took Sam’l, who had only been courting Bell for a year or two, a little aback.

20. “Hoo d’ye mean, Eppie?” he asked.

21. “Maybe ye’ll do’t the nicht.”

22. “Na, there’s nae hurry,” said Sam’l.

23. “Weel, we’re a’ coontin’ on’t, Sam’l.”

24. “Gae wa wi’ ye.”

25. “What for no?”

26. “Gae wa wi’ ye,” said Sam’l again.

27. “Bell’s gie an’ fond o’ ye, Sam’l.”

28. “Ay,” said Sam’l.

29. “But am dootin’ ye’re a fell billy wi’ the lasses.”

30. “Ay, oh, I d’na kin, moderate, moderate,” said Sam’l, in high delight.

31. “I saw ye,” said Eppie, speaking with a wire in her mouth, “gaein’ on terr’ble wi’ Mysy Haggart at the pump last Saturday.”

32. “We was juist amoosin’ oorsels,” said Sam’l.

33. “It’ll be nae amoosement to Mysy,” said Eppie, “gin ye brak her heart.”

34. “Losh, Eppie,” said Sam’l, “I didna think o’ that.”

35. “Ye maun kin weel, Sam’l, 'at there’s mony a lass wid jump at ye.”

36. “Ou, weel,” said Sam’l, implying that a man must take these things as they come.

37. “For ye’re a dainty chield to look at, Sam’l.”

38. “Do ye think so, Eppie? Ay, ay; oh, I d’na kin am

onything by the ordinar."

39. "Ye mayna be," said Eppie, "but lasses doesna do to be ower partikler."

40. Sam'l resented this, and prepared to depart again.

41. "Ye'll no tell Bell that?" he asked anxiously.

42. "Tell her what?"

43. "Aboot me an' Mysy."

44. "We'll see hoo ye behave yersel, Sam'l."

45. "No 'at I care, Eppie; ye can tell her gin ye like. I widna think twice o' tellin' her mysel."

46. "The Lord forgie ye for leein', Sam'l," said Eppie, as he disappeared down Tammy Tosh's close. *Alley, or court.* Here he came upon Henders Webster.

47. "Ye're late, Sam'l," said Henders.

48. "What for?"

49. "Ou, I was thinkin' ye wid be gaen the length o' T'Nowhead the nicht, an' I saw Sanders Elshioner makkin's wy there an oor syne."

50. "Did ye?" cried Sam'l, adding craftily, "but it's naething to me."

51. "Tod, lad," said Henders, "gin ye dinna buckle to, Sanders'll be carryin' her off."

52. Sam'l flung back his head and passed on.

53. "Sam'l!" cried Henders after him.

54. "Ay," said Sam'l, wheeling round.

55. "Gie Bell a kiss frae me."

56. The full force of this joke struck neither all at

once. Sam'l began to smile at it as he turned down the school-wynd, and it came upon Henders while he was in his garden feeding his ferret. Then he slapped his legs gleefully, and explained the conceit to Will'um Byars, who went into the house and thought it over.

57. There were twelve or twenty little groups of men in the square, which was lit by a flare of oil suspended over a cadger's cart. Now and again a staid young woman passed through the square with a basket on her arm, and if she had lingered long enough to give them time, some of the idlers would have addressed her. As it was, they gazed after her, and then grinned to each other.

58. "Ay, Sam'l," said two or three young men as Sam'l joined them beneath the town clock.

59. "Ay, Davit," replied Sam'l.

60. This group was composed of some of the sharpest wits in Thrums, and it was not to be expected that they would let this opportunity pass. Perhaps when Sam'l joined them he knew what was in store for him.

61. "Was ye lookin' for T'Nowhead's Bell, Sam'l?" asked one.

62. "Or mebbe ye was wantin' the minister?" suggested another, the same who had walked out twice with Christy Duff and not married her after all.

63. Sam'l could not think of a good reply at the moment, so he laughed good-naturedly.

64. "Ondoobtedly she's a snod bit crittur," said Davit archly.

65. "An' michty clever wi' her fingers," added Jamie

Deuchars.

66. “Man, I’ve thocht o’ makkin’ up to Bell mysel,” said Peter Ogle. “Wid there be ony chance, think ye, Sam’l?”

67. “I’m thinkin’ she widna hae ye for her first, Pete,” replied Sam’l, in one of those happy flashes that come to some men, “but there’s nae sayin’ but what she micht tak ye to finish up wi’.”

68. The unexpectedness of this sally startled everyone. Though Sam’l did not set up for a wit, however, like Davit, it was notorious that he could say a cutting thing once in a way.

69. “Did ye ever see Bell reddin’ up?” asked Pete, recovering from his overthrow. He was a man who bore no malice.

70. “It’s a sicht,” said Sam’l solemnly.

71. “Hoo will that be?” asked Jamie Deuchars.

72. “It’s well worth yer while,” said Pete, “to ging atower to the T’Nowhead an’ see. Ye’ll mind the closed-in beds i’ the kitchen? Ay, well, they’re a fell spoilt crew, T’Nowhead’s litlins, an’ no that aisy to manage. *Little ones.* Th’ither lasses Lisbeth’s hae’n had a michty trouble wi’ them. When they war i’ the middle o’ their reddin’ up the bairns wid come tumlin’ about the floor, but, sal, I assure ye, Bell didna fash lang wi’ them. Did she, Sam’l?”

73. “She did not,” said Sam’l, dropping into a fine mode of speech to add emphasis to his remark.

74. “I’ll tell ye what she did,” said Pete to the others. “She juist lifted up the litlins, twa at a time, an’ flung them into the coffin-beds. Syne she snibbit the doors on them, an’ keepit them there till the floor was

dry."

75. "Ay, man, did she so?" said Davit admiringly.

76. "I've seen her do't mysel," said Sam'l.

77. "There's no a lassie makes better bannocks this side o' Fetter Lums," continued Pete.

78. "Her mither tocht her that," said Sam'l; "she was a gran' han' at the bakin', Kitty Ogilvy."

79. "I've heard say," remarked Jamie, putting it this way, so as not to tie himself down to anything, "'at Bell's scones is equal to Mag Lunan's."

80. "So they are," said Sam'l, almost fiercely.

81. "I kin she's a neat han' at singein' a hen," said Pete.

82. "An' wi't a'," said Davit, "she's a snod, canty bit stocky in her Sabbath claes."

83. "If onything, thick in the waist," suggested Jamie.

84. "I dinna see that," said Sam'l.

85. "I d'na care for her hair either," continued Jamie, who was very nice in his tastes; "something mair yallowchy wid be an improvement."

86. "A'body kins," growled Sam'l, "'at black hair's the bonniest."

87. The others chuckled.

88. "Puir Sam'l!" Pete said.

89. Sam'l not being certain whether this should be received with a smile or a frown, opened his mouth wide as a kind of compromise. This was position one with him for thinking things over.

90. Few Auld Lichts, as I have said, went the length of choosing a helpmate for themselves. One day a young man's friends would see him mending the washing-tub of a maiden's mother. They kept the joke until Saturday night, and then he learned from them what he had been after. It dazed him for a time, but in a year or so he grew accustomed to the idea, and they were then married. With a little help he fell in love just like other people.

91. Sam'l was going the way of the others, but he found it difficult to come to the point. He only went courting once a week, and he could never take up the running at the place where he left off the Saturday before. Thus he had not, so far, made great headway. His method of making up to Bell had been to drop in at T'Nowhead on Saturday nights and talk with the farmer about the rinderpest.

92. The farm kitchen was Bell's testimonial. Its chairs, tables, and stools were scoured by her to the whiteness of Rob Angus's sawmill boards, and the muslin blind on the window was starched like a child's pinafore. Bell was brave, too, as well as energetic. Once Thrums had been overrun with thieves. It is now thought that there may have been only one, but he had the wicked cleverness of a gang. Such was his repute that there were weavers who spoke of locking their doors when they went from home. He was not very skilful, however, being generally caught, and when they said they knew he was a robber he gave them their things back and went away. If they had given him time there is no doubt that he would have gone off with his plunder. One night he went to T'Nowhead, and Bell, who slept in the kitchen, was wakened by the noise. She knew who it would be, so she rose and dressed herself and

went to look for him with a candle. The thief had not known what to do when he got in, and as it was very lonely he was glad to see Bell. She told him he ought to be ashamed of himself, and would not let him out by the door until he had taken off his boots so as not to soil the carpet.

93. On this Saturday evening Sam'l stood his ground in the square, until by and by he found himself alone. There were other groups there still, but his circle had melted away. They went separately, and no one said good-night. Each took himself off slowly, backing out of the group until he was fairly started.

94. Sam'l looked about him, and then, seeing that the others had gone, walked round the townhouse into the darkness of the brae that leads down and then up to the farm of T'Nowhead.

95. To get into the good graces of Lisbeth Fargus you had to know her ways and humour them. Sam'l, who was a student of women, knew this, and so, instead of pushing the door open and walking in, he went through the rather ridiculous ceremony of knocking. Sanders Elshioner was also aware of this weakness of Lisbeth's, but, though he often made up his mind to knock, the absurdity of the thing prevented his doing so when he reached the door. T'Nowhead himself had never got used to his wife's refined notions, and when any one knocked he always started to his feet, thinking there must be something wrong.

96. Lisbeth came to the door, her expansive figure blocking the way in.

97. "Sam'l," she said.

98. "Lisbeth," said Sam'l.

99. He shook hands with the farmer's wife, knowing

that she liked it, but only said, “Ay, Bell,” to his sweetheart, “Ay, T’Nowhead,” to McQuhatty, and “It’s yersel, Sanders,” to his rival.

100. They were sitting round the fire, T’Nowhead, with his feet on the ribs, wondering why he felt so warm, and Bell darned a stocking, while Lisbeth kept an eye on a goblet full of potatoes.

101. “Sit into the fire, Sam’l,” said the farmer, not, however, making way for him.

102. “Na, na,” said Sam’l, “I’m to bide nae time.” Then he sat into the fire. His face was turned away from Bell, and when she spoke he answered her without looking round. Sam’l felt a little anxious. Sanders Elshioner, who had one leg shorter than the other, but looked well when sitting, seemed suspiciously at home. He asked Bell questions out of his own head, which was beyond Sam’l, and once he said something to her in such a low voice that the others could not catch it. T’Nowhead asked curiously what it was, and Sanders explained that he had only said, “Ay, Bell, the morn’s the Sabbath.” There was nothing startling in this, but Sam’l did not like it. He began to wonder if he was too late, and had he seen his opportunity would have told Bell of a nasty rumour that Sanders intended to go over to the Free Church if they would make him kirk-officer.

103. Sam’l had the good-will of T’Nowhead’s wife, who liked a polite man. Sanders did his best, but from want of practice he constantly made mistakes. To-night, for instance, he wore his hat in the house because he did not like to put up his hand and take it off. T’Nowhead had not taken his off either but that was because he meant to go out by and by and lock the byre door. It was impossible to say which of her lovers Bell preferred. The proper course with an Auld

Licht lassie was to prefer the man who proposed to her.

104. “Ye’ll bide a wee, an’ hae something to eat?” Lisbeth asked Sam’l, with her eyes on the goblet.

105. “No, I thank ye,” said Sam’l, with true gentility.

106. “Ye’ll better?”

107. “I dinna think it.”

108. “Hoots aye; what’s to hender ye?”

109. “Weel, since ye’re sae pressin’, I’ll bide.”

110. No one asked Sanders to stay. Bell could not, for she was but the servant, and T’Nowhead knew that the kick his wife had given him meant that he was not to do so either. Sanders whistled to show that he was not uncomfortable.

111. “Ay then, I’ll be stappin’ ower the brae,” he said at last.

112. He did not go, however. There was sufficient pride in him to get him off his chair, but only slowly, for he had to get accustomed to the notion of going. At intervals of two or three minutes he remarked that he must now be going. In the same circumstances Sam’l would have acted similarly. For a Thrums man it is one of the hardest things in life to get away from anywhere.

113. At last Lisbeth saw that something must be done. The potatoes were burning, and T’Nowhead had an invitation on his tongue.

114. “Yes, I’ll hae to be movin’,” said Sanders, hopelessly, for the fifth time.

115. “Guid nicht to ye, then, Sanders,” said Lisbeth. “Gie the door a fling-to, ahent ye.”

116. Sanders, with a mighty effort, pulled himself together. He looked boldly at Bell, and then took off his hat carefully. Sam'l saw with misgivings that there was something in it which was not a handkerchief. It was a paper bag glittering with gold braid, and contained such an assortment of sweets as lads bought for their lasses on the Muckle Friday.

117. "Hae, Bell," said Sanders, handing the bag to Bell in an off-hand way as if it were but a trifle. Nevertheless he was a little excited, for he went off without saying good-night.

118. No one spoke. Bell's face was crimson. T'Nowhead fidgeted on his chair, and Lisbeth looked at Sam'l. The weaver was strangely calm and collected, though he would have liked to know whether this was a proposal.

119. "Sit in by to the table, Sam'l," said Lisbeth, trying to look as if things were as they had been before.

120. She put a saucerful of butter, salt, and pepper near the fire to melt, for melted butter is the shoeing-horn that helps over a meal of potatoes. Sam'l, however, saw what the hour required, and jumping up, he seized his bonnet.

121. "Hing the tatties higher up the joist, Lisbeth," he said with dignity; "I'se be back in ten meenits."

122. He hurried out of the house, leaving the others looking at each other.

123. "What do ye think?" asked Lisbeth.

124. "I d'na kin," faltered Bell.

125. "Thae tatties is lang o' comin' to the boil," said T'Nowhead.

126. In some circles a lover who behaved like Sam'l would have been suspected of intent upon his rival's life, but neither Bell nor Lisbeth did the weaver that injustice. In a case of this kind it does not much matter what T'Nowhead thought.

127. The ten minutes had barely passed when Sam'l was back in the farm kitchen. He was too flurried to knock this time, and, indeed, Lisbeth did not expect it of him.

128. "Bell, hae!" he cried, handing his sweetheart a tinsel bag twice the size of Sander's gift.

129. "Losh preserve's!" exclaimed Lisbeth; "I'se warrant there's a shillin's worth."

130. "There's a' that, Lisbeth—an' mair," said Sam'l, firmly.

131. "I thank ye, Sam'l," said Bell, feeling an unwonted elation as she gazed at the two paper bags in her lap.

132. "Ye're ower extravegint, Sam'l," Lisbeth said.

133. "Not at all," said Sam'l; "not at all. But I widna advise ye to eat thae ither anes, Bell—they're second quality."

134. Bell drew back a step from Sam'l.

135. "How do ye kin?" asked the farmer shortly, for he liked Sanders.

136. "I spiered i' the shop," said Sam'l.

137. The goblet was placed on a broken plate on the table with the saucer beside it, and Sam'l, like the others, helped himself. What he did was to take potatoes from the pot with his fingers, peel off their coats, and then dip them into the butter. Lisbeth would have liked to provide knives and forks, but

she knew that beyond a certain point T'Nowhead was master in his own house. As for Sam'l, he felt victory in his hands, and began to think that he had gone too far.

138. In the meantime Sanders, little witting that Sam'l had trumped his trick, was sauntering along the kirk-wynd with his hat on the side of his head. Fortunately he did not meet the minister.

139. The courting of T'Nowhead's Bell reached its crisis one Sabbath about a month after the events above recorded. The minister was in great force that day, but it is no part of mine to tell how he bore himself. I was there, and am not likely to forget the scene. It was a fateful Sabbath for T'Nowhead's Bell and her swains, and destined to be remembered for the painful scandal which they perpetrated in their passion.

140. Bell was not in the kirk. There being an infant of six months in the house it was a question of either Lisbeth or the lassie's staying at home with him, and though Lisbeth was unselfish in a general way, she could not resist the delight of going to church. She had nine children besides the baby, and being but a woman, it was the pride of her life to march them into the T'Nowhead pew, so well watched that they dared not misbehave, and so tightly packed that they could not fall. The congregation looked at that pew, the mothers enviously, when they sang the lines—

"Jerusalem like a city is
Compactly built together."

141. The first half of the service had been gone through on this particular Sunday without anything remarkable happening. It was at the end of the psalm

which preceded the sermon that Sanders Elshioner, who sat near the door, lowered his head until it was no higher than the pews, and in that attitude, looking almost like a four-footed animal, slipped out of the church. In their eagerness to be at the sermon many of the congregation did not notice him, and those who did put the matter by in their minds for future investigation. Sam'l, however, could not take it so coolly. From his seat in the gallery he saw Sanders disappear, and his mind misgave him. With the true lover's instinct he understood it all. Sanders had been struck by the fine turn-out in the T'Nowhead's pew. Bell was alone at the farm. What an opportunity to work one's way up to a proposal. T'Nowhead was so overrun with children that such a chance seldom occurred, except on a Sabbath. Sanders, doubtless, was off to propose, and he, Sam'l, was left behind.

142. The suspense was terrible. Sam'l and Sanders had both known all along that Bell would take the first of the two who asked her. Even those who thought her proud admitted that she was modest. Bitterly the weaver repented having waited so long. Now it was too late. In ten minutes Sanders would be at T'Nowhead; in an hour all would be over. Sam'l rose to his feet in a daze. His mother pulled him down by the coat-tail, and his father shook him, thinking he was walking in his sleep. He tottered past them, however, hurried up the aisle, which was so narrow that Dan'l Ross could only reach his seat by walking sideways, and was gone before the minister could do more than stop in the middle of a whirl and gape in horror after him.

143. A number of the congregation felt that day the advantage of sitting in the loft. What was a mystery

to those downstairs was revealed to them. From the gallery windows they had a fine open view to the south; and as Sam'l took the common, which was a short cut though a steep ascent, to T'Nowhead, he was never out of their line of vision. Sanders was not to be seen, but they guessed rightly the reason why. Thinking he had ample time, he had gone round by the main road to save his boots—perhaps a little scared by what was coming. Sam'l's design was to forestall him by taking the shorter path over the burn and up the common.

144. It was a race for a wife, and several onlookers in the gallery braved the minister's displeasure to see who won. Those who favoured Sam'l's suit exultingly saw him leap the stream, while the friends of Sanders fixed their eyes on the top of the common where it ran into the road. Sanders must come into sight there, and the one who reached this point first would get Bell.

145. As Auld Lichts do not walk abroad on the Sabbath, Sanders would probably not be delayed. The chances were in his favour. Had it been any other day in the week Sam'l might have run. So some of the congregation in the gallery were thinking, when suddenly they saw him bend low and then take to his heels. He had caught sight of Sander's head bobbing over the hedge that separated the road from the common, and feared that Sanders might see him. The congregation who could crane their necks sufficiently saw a black object, which they guessed to be the carter's hat, crawling along the hedge-top. For a moment it was motionless, and then it shot ahead. The rivals had seen each other. It was now a hot race. Sam'l, dissembling no longer, clattered up the common, becoming smaller and smaller to the

onlookers as he neared the top. More than one person in the gallery almost rose to their feet in their excitement. Sam'l had it. No, Sanders was in front. Then the two figures disappeared from view. They seemed to run into each other at the top of the brae, and no one could say who was first. The congregation looked at one another. Some of them perspired. But the minister held on his course.

146. Sam'l had just been in time to cut Sanders out. It was the weaver's saving that Sanders saw this when his rival turned the corner; for Sam'l was sadly blown. Sanders took in the situation and gave in at once. The last hundred yards of the distance he covered at his leisure, and when he arrived at his destination he did not go in. It was a fine afternoon for the time of the year, and he went round to have a look at the pig, about which T'Nowhead was a little sinfully puffed up.

147. "Ay," said Sanders, digging his fingers critically into the grunting animal; "quite so."

148. "Grumph," said the pig, getting reluctantly to his feet.

149. "Ou ay; yes," said Sanders, thoughtfully.

150. Then he sat down on the edge of the sty, and looked long and silently at an empty bucket. But whether his thoughts were of T'Nowhead's Bell, whom he had lost for ever, or of the food the farmer fed his pig on, is not known.

151. "Lord preserve's! Are ye no at the kirk?" cried Bell, nearly dropping the baby as Sam'l broke into the room.

152. "Bell!" cried Sam'l.

153. Then T'Nowhead's Bell knew that her hour had

come.

154. “Sam’l,” she faltered.

155. “Will ye hae’s, Bell?” demanded Sam’l, glaring at her sheepishly.

156. “Ay,” answered Bell.

157. Sam’l fell into a chair.

158. “Bring’s drink o’ water, Bell,” he said. But Bell thought the occasion required milk, and there was none in the kitchen. She went out to the byre, still with the baby in her arms, and saw Sanders Elshioner sitting gloomily on the pigsty.

159. “Weel, Bell,” said Sanders.

160. “I thocht ye’d been at the kirk, Sanders,” said Bell.

161. Then there was a silence between them.

162. “Has Sam’l spiered ye, Bell?” asked Sanders, stolidly.

163. “Ay,” said Bell again, and this time there was a tear in her eye. Sanders was little better than an “orra man,” and Sam’l was a weaver, and yet—But it was too late now. Sanders gave the pig a vicious poke with a stick, and when it had ceased to grunt, Bell was back in the kitchen. She had forgotten about the milk, however, and Sam’l only got water after all.

164. In after days, when the story of Bell’s wooing was told, there were some who held that the circumstances would have almost justified the lassie in giving Sam’l the go-by. But these perhaps forgot that her other lover was in the same predicament as the accepted one—that of the two, indeed, he was the more to blame, for he set off to T’Nowhead on

the Sabbath of his own accord, while Sam'l only ran after him. And then there is no one to say for certain whether Bell heard of her suitors' delinquencies until Lisbeth's return from the kirk. Sam'l could never remember whether he told her, and Bell was not sure whether, if he did, she took it in. Sanders was greatly in demand for weeks after to tell what he knew of the affair, but though he was twice asked to tea to the manse among the trees, and subjected thereafter to ministerial cross-examinations, this is all he told. He remained at the pigsty until Sam'l left the farm, when he joined him at the top of the brae, and they went home together.

165. "It's yersel, Sanders," said Sam'l.

166. "It is so, Sam'l," said Sanders.

167. "Very cauld," said Sam'l.

168. "Blawy," assented Sanders.

169. After a pause—

170. "Sam'l," said Sanders.

171. "Ay."

172. "I'm hearin' yer to be mairit."

173. "Ay."

174. "Weel, Sam'l she's a snod bit lassie."

175. "Thank ye," said Sam'l.

176. "I had ance a kin' o' notion o' Bell mysel," continued Sanders.

177. "Ye had?"

178. "Yes, Sam'l; but I thocht better o't."

179. "Hoo d'ye mean?" asked Sam'l, a little anxiously.

180. “Weel, Sam’l, mairitch is a terrible responsibeelity.”

181. “It is so,” said Sam’l, wincing.

182. “An’ no the thing to tak up withoot conseederation.”

183. “But it’s a blessed and honourable state, Sanders; ye’ve heard the minister on’t.”

184. “They say,” continued the relentless Sanders, “'at the minister doesna get on sair wi’ the wife himsel.”

185. “So they do,” cried Sam’l, with a sinking at the heart.

186. “I’ve been telt,” Sanders went on, “'at gin ye can get the upper han’ o’ the wife for a while at first, there’s the mair chance o’ a harmonious exeestence.”

187. “Bell’s no the lassie,” said Sam’l, appealingly, “to thwart her man.”

188. Sanders smiled.

189. “D’ye ye think she is, Sanders?”

190. “Weel, Sam’l, I d’na want to fluster ye, but she’s been ower lang wi’ Lisbeth Fargus no to hae learnt her ways. An a’body kins what a life T’Nowhead has wi’ her.”

191. “Guid sake, Sanders, hoo did ye no speak o’ this afore?”

192. “I thocht ye kent o’t, Sam’l.”

193. They had now reached the square, and the U. P. kirk was coming out. The Auld Licht kirk would be half an hour yet.

194. “But, Sanders,” said Sam’l, brightening up, “ye

was on yer wy to spier her yersel."

195. "I was, Sam'l," said Sanders, "and I canna but be thankfu' ye was ower quick for's."

196. "Gin't hadna been you," said Sam'l, "I wid never hae thocht o't."

197. "I'm sayin' naething agin Bell," pursued the other, "but, man Sam'l, a body should be mair deleeberate in a thing o' the kind."

198. "It was michty hurried," said Sam'l, woefully.

199. "It's a serious thing to spier a lassie," said Sanders.

200. "It's an awfu' thing," said Sam'l.

201. "But we'll hope for the best," added Sanders, in a hopeless voice.

202. They were close to the Tenements now, and Sam'l looked as if he were on his way to be hanged.

203. "Sam'l?"

204. "Ay, Sanders."

205. "Did ye—did ye kiss her, Sam'l?"

206. "Na."

207. "Hoo?"

208. "There was varra little time, Sanders."

209. "Half an 'oor," said Sanders.

210. "Was there? Man Sanders, to tell ye the truth, I never thoct o't."

211. Then the soul of Sanders Elshioner was filled with contempt for Sam'l Dickie.

212. The scandal blew over. At first it was expected that the minister would interfere to prevent the

union, but beyond intimating from the pulpit that the souls of Sabbath-breakers were beyond praying for, and then praying for Sam'l and Sanders at great length, with a word thrown in for Bell, he let things take their course. Some said it was because he was always frightened lest his young men should intermarry with other denominations, but Sanders explained it differently to Sam'l.

213. "I hav'na a word to say agin the minister," he said, "they're gran' prayers, but, Sam'l, he's a mairit man himsel."

214. "He's a' the better for that, Sanders, isna he?"

215. "Do ye no see," asked Sanders, compassionately, "'at he's tryin' to mak the best o't?"

216. "Oh, Sanders, man!" said Sam'l.

217. "Cheer up, Sam'l," said Sanders, "it'll sune be ower."

218. Their having been rival suitors had not interfered with their friendship. On the contrary, while they had hitherto been mere acquaintances, they became inseparables as the wedding-day drew near. It was noticed that they had much to say to each other, and that when they could not get a room to themselves they wandered about together in the churchyard. When Sam'l had anything to tell Bell he sent Sanders to tell it, and Sanders did as he was bid. There was nothing that he would not have done for Sam'l.

219. The more obliging Sanders was, however, the sadder Sam'l grew. He never laughed now on Saturdays, and sometimes his loom was silent half the day. Sam'l felt that Sanders's was the kindness of a friend for a dying man.

220. It was to be a penny wedding, and Lisbeth Fargus said it was delicacy that made Sam'l superintend the fitting-up of the barn by deputy. Once he came to see it in person, but he looked so ill that Sanders had to see him home. This was on the Thursday afternoon, and the wedding was fixed for Friday.

221. "Sanders, Sanders," said Sam'l, in a voice strangely unlike his own, "it'll a' be ower by this time the morn."

222. "It will," said Sanders.

223. "If I had only kent her langer," continued Sam'l.

224. "It wid hae been safer," said Sanders.

Flower.

225. "Did ye see the yallow floor in Bell's bonnet?" asked the accepted swain.

226. "Ay," said Sanders, reluctantly.

227. "I'm dootin'—I'm sair dootin' she's but a flichty, licht-hearted crittur after a'."

228. "I had ay my suspeecions o't," said Sanders.

229. "Ye hae kent her langer than me," said Sam'l.

230. "Yes," said Sanders, "but there's nae gettin' at the heart o' women. Man Sam'l they're desperate cunnin'."

231. "I'm dootin't; I'm sair dootin't."

232. "It'll be a warnin' to ye, Sam'l, no to be in sic a hurry i' the futur," said Sanders.

233. Sam'l groaned.

234. "Ye'll be gaein up to the manse to arrange wi'

the minister the morn's mornin',” continued Sanders, in a subdued voice.

235. Sam'l looked wistfully at his friend.

236. “I canna do't, Sanders,” he said, “I canna do't.”

237. “Ye maun,” said Sanders.

238. “It's aisy to speak,” retorted Sam'l, bitterly.

239. “We have a' oor troubles, Sam'l,” said Sanders, soothingly, “an' every man maun bear his ain burdens. Johnny Davie's wife's dead, an' he's no repinin'.”

240. “Ay,” said Sam'l, “but a death's no a mairitch. We hae haen deaths in our family too.”

241. “It may a' be for the best,” added Sanders, “an' there wid be a michty talk i' the hale country-side gin ye didna ging to the minister like a man.”

242. “I maun hae langer to think o't,” said Sam'l.

243. “Bell's mairitch is the morn,” said Sanders, decisively.

244. Sam'l glanced up with a wild look in his eyes.

245. “Sanders,” he cried.

246. “Sam'l?”

247. “Ye hae been a guid friend to me, Sanders, in this sair affliction.”

248. “Nothing ava,” said Sanders; “dount mention'd.”

249. “But, Sanders, ye canna deny but what your rinnin oot o' the kirk that awfu' day was at the bottom o'd a'.”

250. “It was so,” said Sanders, bravely.

251. “An' ye used to be fond o' Bell, Sanders.”

252. “I dinna deny’t.”

253. “Sanders laddie,” said Sam’l, bending forward and speaking in a wheedling voice, “I aye thocht it was you she likeit.”

254. “I had some sic idea mysel,” said Sanders.

255. “Sanders, I canna think to pairt twa fowk sae weel suited to ane anither as you an’ Bell.”

256. “Canna ye, Sam’l?”

257. “She wid mak ye a guid wife, Sanders. I hae studied her weel, and she’s a thrifty, douce, clever lassie. Sanders, there’s no the like o’ her. Mony a time, Sanders, I hae said to mysel, There’s a lass ony man micht be prood to tak. A’body says the same, Sanders. There’s nae risk ava, man: nane to speak o’. Tak her, laddie, tak her, Sanders; it’s a grand chance, Sanders. She’s yours for the spierin. I’ll gie her up, Sanders.”

258. “Will ye, though?” said Sanders.

259. “What d’ye think?” said Sam’l.

260. “If ye wid raythe r,” said Sanders, politely.

261. “There’s my han’ on’t,” said Sam’l. “Bless ye, Sanders; ye’ve been a true frien’ to me.”

262. Then they shook hands for the first time in their lives; and soon afterwards Sanders struck up the brae to T’Nowhead.

263. Next morning Sanders Elshioner, who had been very busy the night before, put on his Sabbath clothes and strolled up to the manse.

264. “But—but where is Sam’l?” asked the minister; “I must see himself.”

265. “It’s a new arrangement,” said Sanders.

266. “What do you mean, Sanders?”

267. “Bell’s to marry me,” explained Sanders.

268. “But—but what does Sam’l say?”

269. “He’s willin’,” said Sanders.

270. “And Bell?”

271. “She’s willin’, too. She prefers’t.”

272. “It is unusual,” said the minister.

273. “It’s a’ richt,” said Sanders.

274. “Well, you know best,” said the minister.

275. “You see the hoose was taen, at ony rate,” continued Sanders. “An I’ll juist ging in til’t instead o’ Sam’l.”

276. “Quite so.”

277. “An’ I cudna think to disappoint the lassie.”

278. “Your sentiments do you credit, Sanders,” said the minister; “but I hope you do not enter upon the blessed state of matrimony without full consideration of its responsibilities. It is a serious business, marriage.”

279. “It’s a’ that,” said Sanders, “but I’m willin’ to stan’ the risk.”

280. So, as soon as it could be done, Sanders Elshioner took to wife T’Nowhead’s Bell, and I remember seeing Sam’l Dickie trying to dance at the penny wedding.

281. Years afterwards it was said in Thrums that Sam’l had treated Bell badly, but he was never sure about it himself.

282. “It was a near thing—a michty near thing,” he admitted in the square.

283. “They say,” some other weaver would remark, “'at it was you Bell liked best.”

284. “I d’na kin,” Sam’l would reply, “but there’s nae doot the lassie was fell fond o’ me. Ou, a mere passin’ fancy’s ye micht say.”

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. In a few sentences, state whether the humor of this story centers in the central situation, the several incidents, the dialogue, the character, or in the climax.

2. If in more than one element, name them in the order of their interest, or humor, to you.

3. Does the humor go to the limit of silliness at any point?

4. Point out any passages which are serio-comic.

5. Define (a) Farce, (b) Burlesque, (c) Comedy, (d) Wit, (e) Satire.

6. Point out passages in this or any other stories which illustrate the foregoing types.

7. Name other humorous stories by O. Henry and J. M. Barrie.

8. Name the best humorous story you know.

TEN REPRESENTATIVE HUMOROUS STORIES

"The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County," Mark Twain, in *Short Stories and Sketches*, Vol. I.

"Mike Grady's Safety," Will Lewis, *Everybody's Magazine*, Aug., 1905.

"Their First Formal Call," Grace MacGowan Cooke, in volume of same title.

"The Day of the Dog," George Barr McCutcheon, in volume of same title.

"Edgar, the Choir-Boy Uncelestial," *McClure's Magazine*, Jan., 1902.

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FOOTNOTES:

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V
STORIES OF SETTING

The Outcasts of Poker Flat.—BRET HARTE

Moonlight.—GUY DE MAUPASSANT

It is the habit of my imagination to strive after as full a vision of the medium in which a character moves as of the character itself. The psychological causes which prompted me to give such details of Florentine life and history as I have given [in *Romola*] are precisely the same as those which determined me in giving the details of English village life in *Silas Marner* or the "Dodson" life, out of which were developed the destinies of poor Tom and Maggie.—GEORGE ELIOT, quoted in her *Life* by J. W. CROSS.

STORIES OF SETTING

"Setting consists of the circumstances, material and immaterial, in which the characters are seen to move in the story. Its elements are time, place, occupations, and (I lack a more expressive word) conditions."[24]

To be classified properly as a story of setting, a narrative must be more than merely rich in local-color—as the characteristic environment of a certain district, as set forth in fiction, is often called. The true story of setting is one in which the setting has a vital bearing on the natures or the destinies of the characters. To be sure, the setting of a story, like the staging of a play, has an important part in the realistic presentation of the scene, but setting assumes a predominating part when it actually moves the characters to certain deciding actions, as do the snow-storm in "The Outcasts of Poker Flat," and the soft light of the moon in "Moonlight."

The local-color story is one which could not have been set elsewhere without vitally changing, that is to say destroying, the story. For example, Balzac's "The Unknown Masterpiece" is set almost entirely in an artist's studio. The story would be slain by dragging it away from that atmosphere. But it is also a story of setting, because, whatever internal influences also affected the characters, the setting influences their destinies—the men and the women live lives as determined by their surroundings. "Mateo Falcone," too, is a story of setting, but not primarily so; for while it could have happened only

in Corsica, and the local-color is singularly vivid, it is primarily a story of human motive and action.

Because of the powerful effect of environment upon character—in fiction just as in real life—the reader often judges of coming events by the feeling of the setting. The stage manager knows this, too, and accompanies, or even forecasts, a moral crisis by having lights, music, sounds, and other stage accessories harmonize with the mood of the actors. Or, contrariwise, the tone of the piece may best be brought out by a setting in contrast.

Observe how in the two stories illustrating this type the authors never draw pictures of costumes and scenery just for the sake of description, as beginners might do. The setting, to Harte and Maupassant, is vitally a part of the story, and any unnecessary detail would mar the harmony of the whole. Too much were worse than too little.

"When the characters live, move, and have their being in the setting, the result is 'atmosphere.' Atmosphere is thus an effect. It is felt, not seen. *Through* its medium the reader must see all the action, yes, all the details of the story. Atmosphere gives value to the tones of fiction as in real life it does to landscape. The hills are actually the same in cloud and in sunshine, but the eye sees them as different through the mediate atmosphere. And so setting and characters, perfectly adjusted, make the reader, that is to say the beholder, see the story in the very tones the literary artist desires. A story of the sea has an atmosphere of its own, but the atmosphere does not consist merely of the accurately colored picture of sea and strand and sailor and ship and sky. The whole story is informed with the *spirit* of the sea—its tang clings to the garments, its winds

breathe through every passage, its wonderful lights and glooms tone the whole story. Without it the story would be a poor thing, bloodless and inert."[25]

HARTE AND HIS WRITINGS

Francis Bret Harte was born in Albany, New York, August 25, 1839, of gentle parents. Abandoning his common-school education at the age of fifteen, he followed the lure of the gold craze to California, but neither teaching nor mining enriched him, so in 1857 he became a compositor on the *Golden Era*, San Francisco. He then edited the *Californian*, and in 1864 was appointed secretary of the branch Mint, remaining until 1870. Two years before, however, he had become editor of the new *Overland Monthly*, where some of his best work appeared. This position did not prove permanent, and even less so was that of the professorship of "recent literature" in the University of California, for in 1871 he removed to New York. In 1878 he became United States Consul at Crefeld, Germany, and in 1880 was transferred to Glasgow, Scotland, holding this post until 1885. His later life was spent chiefly in London, where his brilliant talents brought him the full recognition of *littérateurs*. He died in London, May 6, 1902.

Bret Harte was a poet, critic, novelist, and short-story writer. His novels give him no such claim to fame as do his other writings. His best-known dialect verses are "The Society Upon the Stanislaus," "Jim," "Dickens in Camp," "Dow's Flat," and "Plain Language From Truthful James" (often called "The Heathen Chinee"). His best sketches and short-stories include "The Luck of Roaring Camp," "An Heiress of

Red Dog," "Miggles," "Tennessee's Partner," "M'liss," "The Idyl of Red Gulch," "Brown of Calaveras," and "The Outcasts of Poker Flat"—which was first published in *The Overland Monthly*, January, 1869.

If artistic repression, dramatic feeling, mingled humor and pathos, deft character drawing, a sure sense of a "good story," and the ability to win the reader in spite of himself—if the certain possession of all these are marks of fictional genius, surely Bret Harte deserves the name. For themes, he chose—and doubtless over-colored at times—the people and the happenings of '49 during the gold craze, and not a few have charged him with a fondness for heroes and heroines of undoubted reputations—for evil. Social outcasts, they say, he treated too tenderly. But Bret Harte himself effectively answered this criticism when he said:

"When it shall be proven to him that communities are degraded and brought to guilt and crime, suffering or destitution, from a predominance of this quality [too much mercy]; when he shall see pardoned ticket-of-leave men elbowing men of austere lives out of situation and position, and the repentant Magdalen supplanting the blameless virgin in society, then he will lay aside his pen and extend his hand to the new Draconian discipline in fiction. But until then he will, without claiming to be a religious man or a moralist, but simply as an artist, reverently and humbly conform to the rules laid down by a Great Poet, who created the parable of the 'Prodigal Son' and the 'Good Samaritan,' whose works have lasted eighteen hundred years, and will

remain when the present writer and his generation are forgotten."

> The secret of the American short story is the treatment of characteristic American life, with absolute knowledge of its peculiarities and sympathy with its methods; with no fastidious ignoring of its habitual expression, or the inchoate poetry that may be found even hidden in its slang; with no moral determination except that which may be the legitimate outcome of the story itself; with no more elimination than may be necessary for the artistic conception, and never from the fear of the fetich of conventionalism. Of such is the American short story of to-day—the germ of American literature to come.—BRET HARTE, *The Rise of the Short Story, Cornhill Magazine*, July, 1899.

> He expounds an important half-truth which has been too much neglected: that as being is greater than seeming, appearances are often deceitful; under the most repellent exterior a soul of goodness may exist. But if we study him over much, we may become victims of the delusion that any person whose dress and manners are respectable, is, to say the least, a suspicious character, while drunken and profane ruffians are the saints of the earth.—WALTER LEWIN, *The Abuse of Fiction*.

> Mr. Kipling is a great man at sentiment (though we hear more of his anti-sentimental side), but has he written a child-story we can remember as long as "The Luck of Roaring Camp," or anything we shall remember as long as "The Outcasts of Poker Flat," or

"Tennessee's Partner"? These things are not so exact in their "business" (to borrow a term from still another art), but, perhaps on that very account, they remain symbols of the human heart. They have the simplicity of classics, a simplicity in which all unnecessary subtleties are dissolved.—RICHARD LE GALLIENNE, *Rudyard Kipling: A Criticism*.

His own style, as finally formed, leaves little to be desired; it is clear, flexible, virile, laconic and withal graceful. Its full meaning is given to every word, and occasionally, like all original masters of prose, he imparts into a familiar word a racier significance than it had possessed before. His genius is nowhere more unmistakable than in the handling of his stories, which is terse to the point of severity, yet wholly adequate; everything necessary to the matter in hand is told, but with an economy of word and phrase that betokens a powerful and radical conception. —JULIAN HAWTHORNE and LEONARD LEMMON, *American Literature*.

Tennessee's Partner, John Oakhurst, Yuba Bill, Kentucky, are as long-lived, seemingly, as any characters in nineteenth century fiction.... What gives these characters their lasting power? Why does that highly melodramatic tragedy in the hills above Poker Flat, with its stagy reformations, and contrasts of black sinner and white innocent, hold you spellbound at the thirtieth as at the first reading? Why does Tennessee's Partner make you wish to grasp him by the hand? Bret Harte believed, apparently, that it was

his realism which did it.... But we do not wait to be told by Californians, who still remember the red-shirt period, that Roaring Camp is not realism.... Not the realism, but the idealization, of this life of the Argonauts was the prize Bret Harte gained.—HENRY S. CANBY, *The Short Story in English*.

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THE OUTCASTS OF POKER FLAT

BY BRET HARTE

Central character.

As Mr. John Oakhurst, gambler, stepped into the main street of Poker Flat on the morning of the twenty-third of November, 1850, he was conscious of a change in its *Crisis at once forecasted.* moral atmosphere since the preceding night. Two or three men, conversing earnestly together, ceased as he approached, and exchanged significant *Preliminary setting.* glances. There was a Sabbath lull in the air, which, in a settlement unused to Sabbath influences, looked ominous.

Physical delineation interwoven with the progress of the story.

2. Mr. Oakhurst's calm, handsome face betrayed small concern of these indications. Whether he was conscious of any predisposing cause, was another question. "I reckon *Summary of tone of the fundamental situation. Foundation Crisis.* they're after somebody," he reflected; "likely it's me." He returned to his pocket the handkerchief with which he had been whipping away the red dust of Poker Flat from his neat boots, and quietly discharged his mind of any further conjecture.

Situation explained.

3. In point of fact, Poker Flat was "after somebody." It had lately suffered the loss of several thousand dollars, two valuable horses, and a prominent citizen. It was experiencing a spasm of virtuous reaction, quite as lawless and ungovernable as any of the acts that had provoked it. *Foundation Plot Incident.* A secret committee had determined to rid the town of all improper persons. This was done permanently in regard to two men who were then hanging from the boughs of a sycamore in the gulch, and temporarily in the banishment of certain other objectionable characters. I regret to say that some of these were ladies.*Euphemism.* It is but due to the sex, however, to state that their impropriety was professional, and it was only in such easily established standards of evil that Poker Flat ventured to sit in judgment.

Note the author's slight ironic tone, which later gives way to simple pathos.

4. Mr. Oakhurst was right in supposing that he was included in this category. A few of the committee had urged hanging him as a possible example, and a sure method of reimbursing themselves from his

pockets of the sums he had won from them. “It’s agin justice,” said Jim Wheeler, “to let this yer young man from Roaring Camp—an entire stranger—carry away our money.” But a crude sentiment of equity residing in the breasts of those who had been fortunate enough to win from Mr. Oakhurst overruled this narrower local prejudice.

Character delineation.

5. Mr. Oakhurst received his sentence with philosophic calmness, none the less coolly that he was aware of the hesitation of his judges. He was too much of a gambler not to accept Fate. With him life was at best an uncertain game, and he recognized the usual percentage in favor of the dealer.

First group of characters.

6. A body of armed men accompanied the deported wickedness of Poker Flat to the outskirts of the settlement. Besides Mr. Oakhurst, who was known to be a coolly desperate man, and for whose intimidation the armed escort was intended, the expatriated party consisted of a young woman familiarly known as “The Duchess”; another, who had *First group of characters.* gained the infelicitous title of “Mother Shipton”; and “Uncle Billy,” a suspected sluice-robber and confirmed drunkard. *Climax of first crisis.*The cavalcade provoked no comments from the spectators, nor was any word uttered by the escort. *End of Introduction and groundwork.*Only, when the gulch which marked the uttermost limit of Poker Flat was reached, the leader spoke briefly and to the point. The exiles were forbidden to return at the peril of their lives.

Third Stage of First Plot Incident.

Is "their" well used?

7. As the escort disappeared, their pent-up feelings found vent in a few hysterical tears from the Duchess, some bad language from Mother Shipton, and a Parthian volley of expletives from Uncle Billy. The philosophic Oakhurst alone remained silent. He listened calmly to Mother Shipton's desire to cut somebody's heart out, to the repeated statements of the Duchess that she would die in the road, and to the alarming oaths that seemed to be bumped out of Uncle Billy as he rode forward.*Paragraph of character delineation.* With the easy good-humor characteristic of his class, he insisted upon exchanging his own riding-horse, "Five Spot," for the sorry mule which the Duchess rode. But even this act did not draw the party into any closer sympathy. The young woman readjusted her somewhat draggled plumes with a feeble, faded coquetry; Mother Shipton eyed the possessor of "Five Spot" with malevolence, and Uncle Billy included the whole party in one sweeping anathema.

Second preliminary setting.

8. The road to Sandy Bar—a camp that, not having as yet experienced the regenerating influences of Poker Flat, consequently seemed to offer some invitation to the emigrants—lay over a steep mountain range. It was distant a day's severe journey. In that advanced season, the party soon passed out of the moist, temperate regions of the foothills into the dry, cold, bracing air of the Sierras. The trail was narrow and difficult. *Foundation for Main Crisis.* At noon the Duchess, rolling out of her saddle upon the ground, declared her intention of going no further, and the party halted.

Main Setting.

9. The spot was singularly wild and impressive. A wooded amphitheatre, surrounded on three sides by precipitous cliffs of naked granite, sloped gently toward the crest of another precipice that overlooked the valley. It was, undoubtedly, the most suitable spot for a camp, had camping been advisable. But Mr. Oakhurst knew that scarcely half the journey to Sandy Bar was accomplished, and the party were not equipped or provisioned for delay. This fact he pointed out to his companions curtly, with a philosophic commentary on the folly of "throwing up their hand before the game was played out." But they were furnished with liquor, which in this emergency stood them in place of food, fuel, rest, and prescience. In spite of his remonstrances, it was not long before they were more or less under its influence. *Character contrasts.* Uncle Billy passed rapidly from a bellicose state into one of stupor, the Duchess became maudlin, and Mother Shipton snored. Mr. Oakhurst alone remained erect, leaning against a rock, calmly surveying them.

Setting in harmony with tone of story.

10. Mr. Oakhurst did not drink. It interfered with a profession which required coolness, impassiveness and presence of mind, and, in his own language, he "couldn't afford it." As he gazed at his recumbent fellow-exiles, the loneliness begotten of his pariah-trade, his habits of life, his very vices, for the first time seriously oppressed him. He bestirred himself in dusting his black clothes, washing his hands and face, and other acts characteristic of his studiously neat habits, and for a moment forgot his annoyance. The thought of deserting his weaker and more

pitiable companions never perhaps occurred to him. Yet he could not help feeling the want of that excitement which, singularly enough, was most conducive to that calm equanimity for which he was notorious. He looked at the gloomy walls that rose a thousand feet sheer above the circling pines around him; at the sky, ominously clouded; at the valley below, already deepening into shadow. And, doing so, suddenly he heard his own name called.

Second group of characters.

11. A horseman slowly ascended the trail. In the fresh, open face of the newcomer Mr. Oakhurst recognized Tom Simson, otherwise known as "The Innocent" of Sandy Bar. He had met him some months before over a "little game," and had, with perfect equanimity, won the entire fortune—amounting to some forty dollars—of that guileless youth. *Opening of Main Plot Situation.* After the game was finished, Mr. Oakhurst drew the youthful speculator behind the door and thus addressed him: "Tommy, you're a good little man, but you can't gamble worth a cent. Don't try it over again." He then handed him his money back, pushed him gently from the room, and so made a devoted slave of Tom Simson.

Character Contrasts.

12. There was a remembrance of this in his boyish and enthusiastic greeting of Mr. Oakhurst. He had started, he said, to go to Poker Flat to seek his fortune. "Alone?" No, not exactly alone; in fact (a giggle), he had run away with Piney Woods. Didn't Mr. Oakhurst remember Piney? She that used to wait on the table at the Temperance House? They had been engaged a long time, but old Jake Woods had objected, and so they ran away, and were going to

Poker Flat to be married, and here they were. And they were tired out, and how lucky it was they had found a place to camp, and company. All this the Innocent delivered rapidly, while Piney, a stout, comely damsel of fifteen, emerged from behind the pine-tree, where she had been blushing unseen, and rode to the side of her lover.

First effect of the newcomers on the tone of the first group of characters. This furnishes the motif for the story.

13. Mr. Oakhurst seldom troubled himself with sentiment, still less with propriety; but he had a vague idea that the situation was not felicitous. He retained, however, his presence of mind sufficiently to kick Uncle Billy, who was about to say something, and Uncle Billy was sober enough to recognize in Mr. Oakhurst's kick a superior power that would not bear trifling. He then endeavored to dissuade Tom Simson from delaying further, but in vain. He even pointed out the fact that there was no provision, nor means of making a camp. But, unluckily, the Innocent met this objection by assuring the party that he was provided with an extra mule loaded with provisions, and by the discovery of a rude attempt at a log-house near the trail. "Piney can stay with Mrs. Oakhurst," said the Innocent, pointing to the Duchess, "and I can shift for myself."

Further effect.

14. Nothing but Mr. Oakhurst's admonishing foot saved Uncle Billy from bursting into a roar of laughter. As it was, he felt compelled to retire up the cañon until he could recover his gravity. There he confided the joke to the tall pine-trees, with many slaps of his leg, contortions of his face, and the usual profanity. But when he returned to the party, he

found them seated by a fire—for the air had grown strangely chill and the sky overcast—in apparently amicable conversation. Piney was actually talking in an impulsive, girlish fashion to the Duchess, who was listening with an interest and animation she had not shown for many days. The Innocent was holding forth, apparently with equal effect, to Mr. Oakhurst and Mother Shipton, who was actually relaxing into amiability. “Is this yer a d—d picnic?” said Uncle Billy, with inward scorn, as he surveyed the sylvan group, the glancing firelight, and the tethered animals in the foreground.*Foundation for Main Crisis—not yet apparent.* Suddenly an idea mingled with the alcoholic fumes that disturbed his brain. It was apparently of a jocular nature, for he felt impelled to slap his leg again and cram his fist into his mouth.

Local color.

15. As the shadows crept slowly up the mountain, a slight breeze rocked the tops of the pine-trees, and moaned through their long and gloomy aisles. The ruined cabin, patched and covered with pine-boughs, was set apart for the ladies. As the lovers parted, they unaffectedly exchanged a parting kiss, so honest and sincere that it might have been heard above the swaying pines. The frail Duchess and the malevolent Mother Shipton were probably too stunned to remark upon this last evidence of simplicity, and so turned without a word to the hut. The fire was replenished, the men lay down before the door, and in a few minutes were asleep.

Change—approach of main crisis.

16. Mr. Oakhurst was a light sleeper. Toward morning he awoke benumbed and cold. As he stirred the dying fire, the wind, which was now blowing

strongly, brought to his cheek that which caused the blood to leave it—snow!

Forecasted in ¶14.

17. He started to his feet with the intention of awakening the sleepers, for there was no time to lose. But turning to where Uncle Billy had been lying, he found him gone. A suspicion leaped to his brain and a curse to his lips. He ran to the spot where the mules had been tethered; they were no longer there. The tracks were already rapidly disappearing in the snow.

Tone of character.

18. The momentary excitement brought Mr. Oakhurst back to the fire with his usual calm. He did not waken the sleepers. The Innocent slumbered peacefully, with a smile on his good-humored, freckled face; the virgin Piney slept beside her frailer *Contrast with crisis. Note casual physical description.* sisters as sweetly as though attended by celestial guardians, and Mr. Oakhurst, drawing his blanket over his shoulders, stroked his mustaches and waited for the dawn. It came slowly *Main Plot Incident—What follows is its outgrowth.* in a whirling mist of snow-flakes, that dazzled and confused the eye. What could be seen of the landscape appeared magically changed.*Crisis acute.* He looked over the valley, and summoned up the present and future in two words,—"snowed in!"

As the story progresses note how the physical crises and the moral crises keep pace.

19. A careful inventory of the provisions, which, fortunately for the party, had been stored within the hut, and so escaped the felonious fingers of Uncle Billy, disclosed the fact that with care and prudence

they might last ten days longer. “That is,” said Mr. Oakhurst, *sotto voce* to the Innocent, “if you’re willing to board us. If you ain’t—and perhaps you’d better not—you can wait till Uncle Billy gets back with provisions.” For some occult reason, Mr. Oakhurst could not bring himself to disclose Uncle Billy’s rascality, and so offered the hypothesis that he had wandered from the camp and had accidentally stampeded the animals. He dropped a warning to the Duchess and Mother Shipton, who of course knew the facts of their associate’s defection. “They’ll find out the truth about us *all* when they find out anything,” he added, significantly, “and there’s no good frightening them now.”

Lull in crisis.

20. Tom Simson not only put all his worldly store at the disposal of Mr. Oakhurst, but seemed to enjoy the prospect of their enforced seclusion. “We’ll have a good camp for a week, and then the snow’ll melt, and we’ll all go back together.” The *From this point the story develops gradually and by closely knit incidents in direct succession, all growing out of the setting, which furnishes the physical crisis.* cheerful gayety of the young man, and Mr. Oakhurst’s calm infected the others. The Innocent, with the aid of pine-boughs, extemporized a thatch for the roofless cabin, and the Duchess directed Piney in the rearrangement of the interior with a taste and tact that opened the blue eyes of that provincial maiden to their fullest extent. “I reckon now you’re used to fine things at Poker Flat,” said Piney. The Duchess turned away sharply to conceal something that reddened her cheek through its professional tint, and Mother Shipton requested Piney not to “chatter.” *Pseudo crisis.*But when Mr. Oakhurst returned from a weary search for the trail, he heard the sound of

happy laughter echoed from the rocks. He stopped in some alarm, and his thoughts first naturally reverted to the whiskey, which he had prudently *cachéd*. “And yet it don’t somehow sound like whiskey,” said the gambler. *Resolution of pseudo crisis.*It was not until he caught sight of the blazing fire through the still blinding storm and the group around it that he settled to the conviction that it was “square fun.”

21. Whether Mr. Oakhurst had *cachéd* his cards with the whiskey as something debarred the free access of the community, I cannot say. *Contrast with the actual danger.* It was certain that, in Mother Shipton’s words, he “didn’t say cards once” during the evening. Haply the time was beguiled by an accordion, produced somewhat ostentatiously by Tom Simson from his pack. Notwithstanding some difficulties attending the manipulation of his instrument, *Contrast is the author’s main reliance in this story.* Piney Woods managed to pluck several reluctant melodies from its keys, to an accompaniment by the Innocent on a pair of bone castanets. But the crowning festivity of the evening was reached in a rude camp-meeting *Contrast with character-habits. A hint of character change.* hymn, which the lovers, joining hands, sang with great earnestness and vociferation. I fear that a certain defiant tone and Covenanter’s swing to its chorus, *Is “Covenanter’s” well used?* rather than any devotional quality, caused it speedily to infect the others, who at last joined in the refrain:—

> “I’m proud to live in the service of the Lord,
> And I’m bound to die in His army.”

22. The pines rocked, the storm eddied and whirled above the miserable group, and the flames of their altar leaped heavenward, as if in token of the vow.

Hope.

23. At midnight the storm abated, the rolling clouds parted, and the stars glittered keenly above the sleeping camp. Mr. Oakhurst, whose professional habits had enabled him to live on the smallest possible amount of sleep, in dividing the watch with Tom Simson, somehow managed to take upon himself the greater part of that duty. *Character revelation.* He excused himself to the Innocent, by saying that he had "often been a week without sleep." "Doing what?" asked Tom. "Poker!" replied Oakhurst, sententiously; "when a man gets a streak of luck,—nigger-luck,—he don't get tired. The luck gives in first. Luck," continued the gambler, reflectively, "is a mighty queer thing. All you know about it for certain is that it's bound to change. And it's finding out when it's going to change that makes you. We've had a streak of bad luck since we left Poker Flat,—you come along, and slap you get into it, too. If you can hold your cards right along, you're all right. For," added the gambler, with cheerful irrelevance:—

"'I'm proud to live in the service of the Lord,
And I'm bound to die in His army'."

Note the union of setting with the progress of the story.

24. The third day came, and the sun, looking through the white-curtained valley, saw the outcasts divide their slowly decreasing store of provisions for the morning meal. It was one of the peculiarities of that mountain climate that its rays diffused a kindly warmth over the wintry landscape, as if in regretful commiseration of the past. *Contrast.* But it revealed drift on drift of snow piled high around the hut,—a

hopeless, uncharted, trackless sea of white lying below the rocky shores to which the cast-aways still clung. *Key to Setting.*Through the marvellously clear air the smoke of the pastoral village of Poker Flat rose miles away. Mother Shipton saw it, and from a remote pinnacle of her rocky fastness, hurled in that direction a final malediction. *Character change—a key passage.*It was her last vituperative attempt, and perhaps for that reason was invested with a certain degree of sublimity. It did her good, she privately informed the Duchess. “Just you go out there and cuss, and see.” *Contributory incident.*She then set herself to the task of amusing “the child,” as she and the Duchess were pleased to call Piney. Piney was no chicken, but it was a soothing and ingenious theory of the pair thus to account for the fact that she didn’t swear and wasn’t improper.

25. When night crept up again through the gorges, the reedy notes of the accordion rose and fell in fitful spasms and long-drawn gasps by the flickering camp-fire. But music failed to fill entirely the aching void left by insufficient food, and a new diversion was proposed by Piney,—story-telling. Neither Mr. Oakhurst nor his female companions caring to relate their personal experiences, this plan would have failed, too, but for the Innocent. Some months before he had chanced upon a stray copy of Mr. Pope’s ingenious translation of the Iliad. *Developing or contributory incident.*He now proposed to narrate the principal incidents of that poem—having thoroughly mastered the argument and fairly forgotten the words—in the current vernacular of Sandy Bar. And so for the rest of that night the Homeric demigods again walked the earth. Trojan bully and wily Greek wrestled in the winds, and the great pines in the cañon seemed to bow to the wrath of the son of Peleus. Mr. Oakhurst

listened with quiet satisfaction. Most especially was he interested in the fate of "Ash-heels," as the Innocent persisted in denominating the "swift-footed Achilles."

Note upward and downward movement—alternations of hope and despair, but a gradual deepening of the crisis.
Note the contrast between the epithet "outcasts" and the feeling with which they are now invested.

26. So with small food and much of Homer and the accordion, a week passed over the heads of the outcasts. The sun again forsook them, and again from leaden skies the snow-flakes were sifted over the land. Day by day closer around them drew the snowy circle, until at last they looked from their prison over drifted walls of dazzling white, that towered twenty feet above their heads. It became more and more difficult to replenish their fires, even from the fallen trees beside them, now half hidden in the drifts. And yet no one complained. The lovers turned from the dreary prospect and looked into each other's eyes, and were happy. *Character progress.* Mr. Oakhurst settled himself coolly to the losing game before him. The Duchess, more cheerful than she had been, assumed the care of Piney.*Hint of later character revelation.* Only Mother Shipton—once the strongest of the party—seemed to sicken and fade. At midnight on the tenth day she called Oakhurst to her side. "I'm going," she said, in a voice of querulous weakness, "but don't say anything about it. Don't waken the kids. Take the bundle from under my head and open it." Mr. Oakhurst did so. It contained Mother Shipton's rations for the last week, untouched. "Give 'em to the child," she said, pointing to the sleeping Piney. "You've starved yourself," said the gambler. *First Character Climax.*"That's what they call it," said the woman, querulously, as she lay down again, and,

turning her face to the wall, passed quietly away.

27. The accordion and the bones were put aside that day, and Homer was forgotten. When the body of Mother Shipton had been committed to the snow, Mr. Oakhurst took the Innocent aside, and showed him a pair of snow-shoes, which he had fashioned from the old pack-saddle.*Plot Incident.* "There's one chance in a hundred to save her yet," he said, pointing to Piney; "but it's there," he added, pointing toward Poker Flat. "If you can reach there in two days she's safe." "And you?" asked Tom Simson. "I'll stay here," was the curt reply.

28. The lovers parted with a long embrace. "You are not going, too?" said the Duchess, as she saw Mr. Oakhurst apparently waiting to accompany him. *Preparation for climax.*"As far as the cañon," he replied. He turned suddenly, and kissed the Duchess, leaving her pallid face aflame, and her trembling limbs rigid with amazement.

29. Night came, but not Mr. Oakhurst. It brought the storm again and the whirling snow. Then the Duchess, feeding the fire, found that some one had quietly piled beside the hut enough fuel to last a few days longer. The tears rose to her eyes, but she hid them from Piney.

Characters in full change.

30. The women slept but little. In the morning, looking into each other's faces, they read their fate. Neither spoke; but Piney, accepting the position of the stronger, drew near and placed her arm around the Duchess's *Note the repression of this entire climax. Simple, quiet sentences are enough.* waist. They kept this attitude for the rest of the day. That night the storm reached its greatest fury, and, rending asunder the protecting

pines, invaded the very hut.

31. Toward morning they found themselves unable to feed the fire, which gradually died away. As the embers slowly blackened, the Duchess crept closer to Piney, and broke the silence of many hours: “Piney, can you pray?”*No melodrama here.* “No, dear,” said Piney, simply. The Duchess, without knowing exactly why, felt relieved, and putting her head upon Piney’s shoulder, spoke no more.*Second Character Climax.* And so reclining, the younger and purer pillowing the head of her soiled sister upon her virgin breast, they fell asleep.

Local color in harmony with spirit of story.

32. The wind lulled as if it feared to waken them. Feathery drifts of snow, shaken from the long pine-boughs, flew like white-winged birds, and settled about them as they slept. The moon through the rifted clouds looked down upon what had been the camp. *Symbolism of physical nature.*But all human stain, all trace of earthly travail, was hidden beneath the spotless mantle mercifully flung from above.

Poetic euphemism.

33. They slept all that day and the next, nor did they waken when voices and footsteps broke the silence of the camp. And when pitying fingers brushed the snow from their wan faces, you could scarcely have told from the equal peace that dwelt upon them, which was she that had sinned. Even the law of Poker Flat recognized this, and turned away, leaving them still locked in each other’s arms.

Main Character Climax, and Denouement.

34. But at the head of the gulch, on one of the largest

pine-trees, they found the deuce of clubs pinned to the bark with a bowie-knife. It bore the following, written in pencil, in a firm hand:—

BENEATH THIS TREE
LIES THE BODY
OF
JOHN OAKHURST,
WHO STRUCK A STREAK OF BAD
LUCK
ON THE 23D OF NOVEMBER, 1850,
AND
HANDED IN HIS CHECKS
ON THE 7TH DECEMBER, 1850.

Swift Conclusion.

And pulseless and cold, with a derringer by his side and a bullet in his heart, though still calm as in life, beneath the snow lay he who was at once the strongest and yet the weakest of the outcasts of Poker Flat.

MAUPASSANT AND HIS WRITINGS

Henri René Albert Guy de Maupassant was born in Normandy, France, in 1850. In that picturesque region he passed his youth, and returned thither for frequent sojourns in later life. Having finished his studies, he became an employé in the government service in Paris. This experience, his love for athletics, and his recollections of the Franco-Prussian war, he turned to good account in his fictional work. His literary education was conducted by Gustave Flaubert, his uncle and god-father, under whom he served so rigid an apprenticeship that when he produced his first short-story, “Tallow Ball” (*Boule de*

Suif), his preceptor pronounced it a masterpiece, as indeed it is. He died in 1893, at the age of 43, by his own hand, his reason having failed after some years of increasing depression and gloom.

Though his productive period covered only ten years, Guy de Maupassant has left several notable novels, some fair poetry, and a large number of remarkable short-stories. Most of his work deals more frankly with the sordid side of life than American society approves, but many of his short-stories are unexceptionable. Among the best of these are "The Necklace," "The Horla," "Happiness," "Vain Beauty," "A Coward," "A Ghost," "Little Soldier," "The Wolf," "Moonlight," and "The Piece of String."

Technically, Maupassant was the most finished short-story writer of all; but he lacked spiritual power, and so he himself missed much of the world's beauty, and disclosed but little to others. Rarely can the reader feel the least throb of sympathy of the author for his characters. Technically flawless, his work is too often cold, and the warm ideals of a tender heart are chiefly absent. An inflexible realist, he pressed his method farther than did Flaubert, a really strong novelist. From life's raw materials Maupassant wove incomparably brilliant fiction-fabrics, equally distinguished for plot, characterization, and style; but it cannot be said that he interpreted life with a wholesome, uplifting spirit.

> Happy are they whom life satisfies, who can amuse themselves, and be content ... who have not discovered, with a vast disgust, ... that all things are a weariness.—GUY DE MAUPASSANT.

> He who destroys the ideal destroys himself.

In art and in life Maupassant lived in the lower order of facts, the brutal world of events unrelated to a spiritual order. He drained his senses of the last power of sensation and reaction; he plunged headlong into the sensual life upon which they opened when the luminous heaven above the material world was obliterated. Madness always lies that way as a matter of physiology as well as of morals, and Maupassant went the tragic way of the sensualist since time began.—HAMILTON W. MABIE, in *The Outlook*.

Maupassant saw life with his senses, and he reflected on it in a purely animal revolt, the recoil of the hurt animal. His observation is not, as it has been hastily assumed to be, cold; it is as superficially emotional as that of the average sensual man, and its cynicism is only another, not less superficial, kind of feeling. He saw life in all its details, and his soul was entangled in the details. He saw it without order, without recompense, without pity; he saw it too clearly to be duped by appearances, and too narrowly to distinguish any light beyond what seemed to him the enclosing bounds of darkness.—ARTHUR SYMONS, *Studies in Prose and Verse*.

He has produced a hundred short tales and only four regular novels; but if the tales deserve the first place in any candid appreciation of his talent it is not simply because they are so much the more numerous: they are also more characteristic; they represent him best in his originality,

and their brevity, extreme in some cases, does not prevent them from being a collection of masterpieces.... What they have most in common is their being extremely strong, and after that their being extremely brutal.... M. de Maupassant sees human life as a terribly ugly business relieved by the comical, but even the comedy is for the most part the comedy of misery, of avidity, of ignorance, helplessness, and grossness.—HENRY JAMES, *Partial Portraits*.

His short-stories are masterpieces of the art of story-telling, because he had a Greek sense of form, a Latin power of construction, and a French felicity of style. They are simple, most of them; direct, swift, inevitable, and inexorable in their straightforward movement. If art consists in the suppression of non-essentials, there have been few greater artists in fiction than Maupassant. In his Short-stories there is never a word wasted, and there is never an excursus. Nor is there any feebleness or fumbling. What he wanted to do he did, with the unerring certainty of Leatherstocking, hitting the bull's-eye again and again. He had the abundance and the ease of the very great artists; and the half-dozen or the half-score of his best stories are among the very best Short-stories in any language.—BRANDER MATTHEWS, *The Philosophy of the Short-Story*.

His firm, alert prose is so profoundly French, free from neologisms, strong in verbs, sober in adjectives, every sentence standing out with no apparent effort, no excess, like a

muscle in the perfect body of a young athlete.... He has that sense of the real which so many naturalists lack, and which the care for exact detail does not replace.... His predilection for ordinary scenes and ordinary types is everywhere evident; he uses all kinds of settings,—a café, a furnished room, a farmyard, seen in their actual character without poetic transfiguration, with all their vulgarity, their poverty, their ugliness. And he uses, too, all kinds of characters,—clerks, peasants of Normandy, petty bourgeois of Paris and of the country. They live the empty, tragic, or grotesque hours of their lives; are sometimes touching, sometimes odious; and never achieve greatness either in heroism or in wickedness.

They are not gay, these stories; and the kind of amusement they afford is strongly mixed with irony, pity, and contempt. Gayety, whether brutal, frank, mocking, or delicate, never leaves this bitter taste in the heart. How pitiful in its folly, in its vanity, in its weakness, is the humanity which loves, weeps, or agitates in the tales of Maupassant! There, virtue if awkward is never recompensed, nor vice if skillful punished; mothers are not always saints, nor sons always grateful and respectful; the guilty are often ignorant of remorse. Then are these beings immoral? To tell the truth, they are guided by their instincts, by events, submissive to the laws of necessity, and apparently released by the author from all responsibility.—FIRMIN ROZ, *Guy de Maupassant*, in WARNER'S *Library of the*

World's Best Literature.

FURTHER REFERENCES FOR READING ON MAUPASSANT

French Fiction of To-day, M. S. Van de Velde (1891); *Some French Writers*, Edward Delille (1893); *Studies in Two Literatures*, Arthur Symons (1897); *French Literature of To-day*, Yetta Blaze de Bury (1898); *A Century of French Fiction*, Benjamin W. Wells (1898); *Contemporary French Novelists*, René Doumic (1899).

FOR ANALYSIS

MOONLIGHT

(CLAIR DE LUNE)

BY GUY DE MAUPASSANT

Translation by The Editor[26]

The Abbé Marignan bore well his title of Soldier of the Church. He was a tall priest, and spare; fanatical, perpetually in a state of spiritual exaltation, but upright of soul. His every belief was settled, without even a thought of wavering. He imagined sincerely that he understood his God thoroughly, that he penetrated His designs, His will, His purposes.

2. As with long strides he promenaded the garden walk of his little country presbytery, sometimes a question would arise in his mind: "Why did God create that?" And, mentally taking the place of God, he searched obstinately for the answer—and nearly

always found it. It would not have been like him to murmur, in an outburst of pious humility: “O Lord, thy designs are impenetrable!” Rather might he say to himself: “I am the servant of God; I ought to know the reasons for what He does, or, if I know them not, I ought to divine them.”

3. To him all nature seemed created with a logic as absolute as it was admirable. The “wherefore” and the “because” always corresponded perfectly. Dawn was made to gladden our waking, the day to ripen the crops, the rain to water them, the evening to prepare for slumber, and the night was darkened for sleep.

4. The four seasons met perfectly all the needs of agriculture; and to the priest it was quite inconceivable that nature had no designs, and that, on the contrary, all living things were subjects of the same inexorable laws of period, climate, and matter.

5. But he did hate woman! He hated her unconscionably, and by instinct held her in contempt. Often did he repeat the words of Christ, “Woman, what have I to do with thee?” And he would add, “One might think that God Himself did not feel quite content with this one work of his hands!” To him, indeed, woman was the child twelve times unclean of whom the poet speaks. She was the temptress who had ensnared the first man, and who constantly kept up her work of damnation—she was a feeble, dangerous, and mysteriously troublous creature. And even more than her accursed body did he hate her loving spirit.

6. He had often felt that women were regarding him tenderly, and even though he knew himself to be invulnerable, it exasperated him to recognize that need for loving which fluttered ever-present in their

hearts.

7. In his opinion, God had created woman only to tempt man and to test him. She should never be even approached without those defensive measures which one would take, and those fears which one would harbor, when nearing a trap. In fact, she was precisely like a trap, with her lips open and arms extended towards man.

8. Only toward nuns did he exercise any indulgence, for they were rendered harmless by their vow. But he treated them harshly just the same, because, ever-living in the depths of their pent-up and humble hearts, he discerned that everlasting tenderness which constantly surged up toward him, priest though he was.

9. Of all this he was conscious in their upturned glances, more limpid with pious feeling than the looks of monks; in the spiritual exaltations in which their sex indulged; in their ecstasies of love toward Christ, which made the priest indignant because it was really woman's love, carnal love. Of this detestable tenderness he was conscious, too, in their very docility, in the gentleness of their voices when they addressed him, in their downcast eyes, and in their submissive tears when he rudely rebuked them.

10. So he would shake his cassock when he left the convent door, and stride off, stretching his legs as if fleeing before some danger.

11. Now the abbé had a niece who lived with her mother in a little house near by. He was determined to make of her a sister of charity.

12. She was pretty, giddy, and a born tease. When he preached at her, she laughed; and when he became angry with her, she kissed him vehemently, pressing

him to her bosom, while he would instinctively seek to disengage himself from this embrace—which, all the same, gave him a thrill of exquisite joy, awaking deep within his soul that feeling of fatherhood which slumbers in every man.

13. Often as they walked together along the foot-paths through the fields, he would talk with her of God, of his God; but she scarcely heard him, for she was looking at the sky, the grass, the flowers, with a joy of life which beamed from her eyes. Sometimes she would dart away to catch some flying creature, crying as she brought it back: “See, my uncle, how pretty it is; I should like to kiss it.” And that passion to kiss insects, or lilac flowers, disturbed, irritated, and repelled the priest, who recognized even in that longing the ineradicable love which blooms perennial in the heart of woman.

14. And now one day the sacristan’s wife, who was the Abbé Marignan’s housekeeper, cautiously told him that his niece had a lover!

15. He was dreadfully shocked, and stood gasping for breath, lather all over his face, for he was shaving.

16. When at length he was able to think and speak, he cried: “It is not true. You are lying, Mélanie!”

17. But the peasant woman laid her hand over her heart: “May our Lord judge me if I am lying, *monsieur le curé*. I tell you she goes out to meet him every night as soon as your sister is in bed. They meet each other down by the river. You need only go there between ten o’clock and midnight to see for yourself.”

18. He stopped rubbing his chin and began pacing the room violently, as was his custom in times of serious thought. When at length he did try to finish

his shaving he cut himself three times, from nose to ear.

19. All day long he was silent, though almost exploding with indignation and wrath. To his priestly rage against the power of love was now added the indignation of a spiritual father, of a teacher, of the guardian of souls, who has been deceived, robbed, and trifled with by a mere child. He felt that egotistical suffocation which parents experience when their daughter tells them that she has selected a husband without their advice and in defiance of their wishes.

20. After dinner he tried to read a little, but he could not—he grew more and more exasperated. When the clock struck ten, he grasped his cane, a formidable oaken club which he always carried when he went out at night to visit the sick. With a smile he examined this huge cudgel, gripped it in his solid, countryman's fist, and flourished it menacingly in the air. Then, suddenly, with grinding teeth, he brought it down upon a chair-back, which fell splintered to the floor.

21. He opened his door to go out; but paused upon the threshold, surprised by such a glory of moonlight as one rarely sees.

22. And as he was endowed with an exalted soul of such a sort as the Fathers of the Church, those poetic seers, must have possessed, he became suddenly entranced, moved by the grand and tranquil beauty of the pale-faced night.

23. In his little garden, all suffused with the tender radiance, his fruit-trees, set in rows, outlined in shadows upon the paths their slender limbs of wood, scarce clothed with verdure. The giant honeysuckle,

clinging to the house wall, exhaled its delicious, honeyed breath—the soul of perfume seemed to hover about in the warm, clear night.

24. He began to breathe deep, drinking in the air as drunkards drink their wine; and he walked slowly, ravished, amazed, his niece almost forgotten.

25. When he reached the open country he paused to gaze upon the broad sweep of landscape, all deluged by that caressing radiance, all drowned in that soft and sensuous charm of peaceful night. Momently the frogs sounded out their quick metallic notes, and distant nightingales added to the seductive moonlight their welling music, which charms to dreams without thought—that gossamer, vibrant melody born only to mate with kisses.

26. The Abbé moved again, his courage unaccountably failing. He felt as though he were enfeebled, suddenly exhausted—he longed to sit down, to linger there, to glorify God for all His works.

27. A little farther on, following the winding of the little river, curved a row of tall poplars. Suspended about and above the banks, enwrapping the whole sinuous course of the stream with a sort of light, transparent down, was a fine white mist, shot through by the moon-rays, and transmuted by them into gleaming silver.

28. The priest paused once again, stirred to the deeps of his soul by a growing, an irresistible feeling of tenderness.

29. And a doubt, an undefined disquietude, crept over him; he discerned the birth of one of those questions which now and again came to him.

30. Why had God made all this? Since the night was ordained for slumber, for unconsciousness, for repose, for forgetfulness of everything, why should He make it lovelier than the day, sweeter than dawn and sunset? And that star, slow-moving, seductive, more poetic than the sun, so like to destiny, and so delicate that seemingly it was created to irradiate things too subtle, too refined, for the greater orb—why was it come to illumine all the shades?

31. Why did not the most accomplished of all singing birds repose now like the others, but sing in the unquiet dark?

32. Why was this semi-veil cast over the world? Why this sighing of the heart, this tumult of the soul, this languor of the flesh?

33. Why this show of charms, never seen by men because they are asleep? For whose eyes was all this sublime spectacle designed, all this wealth of poetic loveliness diffused from heaven over the earth?

34. And the Abbé did not understand it at all.

35. But there below, at the very edge of the field, under the arching trees wet with luminous mist, two shadows appeared, walking side by side.

36. The man was the taller, and had his arm about his sweetheart's neck; and from time to time he bent to kiss her forehead. They animated suddenly the lifeless landscape, which enveloped their figures like a divine frame fashioned expressly for them. They seemed, those two, like a single being, the being for whom was created this tranquil, silent night. Like a living answer, the answer which his Master had sent to his question, they moved toward the priest.

37. Overwhelmed, his heart throbbing, he stood still,

and it seemed as though there spread before him some Biblical scene, like the loves of Ruth and Boaz, the working out of the Lord's will in one of those majestic dramas set forth in the lives of the saints. The verses of the Song of Songs, the ardent cries, the call of the body—all the glowing romance of that poem so aflame with tenderness and love, began to sing itself into his mind.

38. And he said to himself: "Perhaps God made nights such as this in order to cast the veil of the ideal over the loves of men."

39. He withdrew before this pair, who went on arm in arm. True, it was his niece; but now he asked himself if he had not been upon the verge of disobeying God. And, indeed, if God did not permit love, why did he visibly encompass it with glory such as this?

40. And he fled, bewildered, almost ashamed, as if he had penetrated in a temple wherein he had no right to enter.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Precisely why do our surroundings affect our moods and actions? Give examples from your own experience.

2. Which seems to you to be the more frequent in fiction: harmony, or contrast of character with setting?

3. Which seems to you to be the more effective? Why?

4. Outline the motives which actuated at least three

of the characters in “The Outcasts of Poker Flat.”

5. Is the story overdrawn?

6. Is the influence of the moonlight enough to account for the change in the priest in “Moonlight,” or must we allow something for romance?

7. Trace the several physical crises of Harte’s story from the very beginning.

8. Do the same for the moral crises.

9. Show their inter-relation.

10. Select from a magazine a story in which setting influences in some way the actions of the characters, and point out precisely how.

TEN REPRESENTATIVE STORIES OF SETTING

“A Leaf in the Storm,” Ouida, in *Stories by English Authors*.

“Mrs. Knollys,” F. J. Stimson, *Century Magazine*, Nov., 1883.

“Up the Coulée,” Hamlin Garland, in *Main Travelled Roads*.

“The Girl at Duke’s,” James W. Linn, *McClure’s Magazine*, Aug., 1903.

“The Dancin’ Party at Harrison’s Cove,” Charles Egbert Craddock, *Atlantic Monthly*, May, 1878.

“Twenty-Six and One,” Maxim Gorky, translated in volume of same title.

“The Unknown Masterpiece,” Honoré de Balzac, translated in *Little French Masterpieces, Balzac*.

“Red Bird,” Elizabeth Maury Coombs, *Lippincott’s Magazine*, Dec., 1911.

“The Wall Opposite,” Pierre Loti, translated in *Short Story Classics, Foreign*.

“The End of the Tether,” Joseph Conrad, in *Youth*.

FOOTNOTES:

[24] From the author's *Writing the Short-Story*, p. 149, which see for a chapter on "The Setting of the Story."

[25] *Writing the Short-Story*, pp. 151-152.

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VI
IMPRESSIONISTIC STORIES

The White Old Maid.—Nathaniel Hawthorne

The Fall of the House of Usher.—Edgar Allan Poe

I prefer commencing with the consideration of an *effect*. Keeping originality *always* in view—for he is false to himself who ventures to dispense with so obvious and so easily attainable a source of interest —I say to myself, in the first place, "Of the innumerable effects or impressions of which the heart, the intellect, or (more generally) the soul is susceptible, what one shall I, on the present occasion, select?" Having chosen a novel first, and secondly, a vivid effect, I consider whether it can be best wrought by incident or tone, or the converse, or by peculiarity both of incident and tone—afterwards looking about me (or rather within) for such combinations of event or tone as shall best aid me in the construction of the effect.—EDGAR ALLAN POE, *The Philosophy of Composition*.

IMPRESSIONISTIC STORIES

The value of a literary term lies in the comprehensive and precise picture which it calls up in the mind of him who reads it. So we must seek to limit, as well as seize upon, the meaning of this word "impressionistic."

The first purpose in telling a story would seem to be the pleasure or the profit of the hearer—if we exclude the bore who tells a yarn chiefly to please himself. But a closer scrutiny of certain stories discloses other objects of the narrator, and these may be either subordinate or paramount to considerations of benefit or entertainment. The most important of these artistic purposes is to reproduce in the hearer the full effect which a certain mood, theme, character, situation, incident, or chain of incidents, originally made upon the story-teller himself. When he succeeds in reproducing in others his own feeling, by such means as we shall presently study, he does so by impressionistic means.

Poe, writing in *Graham's Magazine*, May, 1842, says: "A skilful literary artist has constructed a tale. If wise, he has not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or single *effect* to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents—he then combines such events—as may best aid him in establishing the preconceived effect. If his very initial sentence tend not to the outbringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step. In the whole composition there should be no word written,

of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one preëstablished design."

It does not seem probable that Poe meant to speak of impressionism as constituting so much a distinct type of story as to point out its importance as a method in all story-telling; and we must not overlook its usefulness in this respect. Indeed, nearly all good short-stories begin, in the mind of the author, and end, in the spirit of the reader, with a more or less clear and unified impression. Still, certain little fictions are, alike in theme and treatment, so decidedly conceived and told with the purpose of leaving the reader under the spell of a mood, a feeling, a character, or a situation, that they are IMPRESSIONISTIC stories, rather than impressionistic STORIES.

The natural tendency for the impressionistic writer is to subordinate incident and plot to tone—in a word, to emphasize a picture, whether internal or external, rather than a set of happenings, which in dealing with fiction we call the action. So an impressionistic narrative may really tell a story of situation, crisis, and denouement, or, as is more likely to be the case, it may tend decidedly toward the sketch. All depends upon the nature of the theme. Thus, the *beauty of sacrifice* demands an action to illustrate that abnegation, and all the accessories must serve as high-lights and shadows to bring out this motive in strong relief; but the *tone of gloom* may be conveyed without even the semblance of a plot.

Now a story may produce a gloomy effect without deliberately picturing an atmosphere of gloom—it may leave the reader with a vague, pessimistic distaste for joy, and yet present no such picture. Or it may marvellously delineate loneliness, without

leaving that as the final impression of the story. This is not impressionism, though it may be very good story-telling. Impressionism is conscious art, art prepense, and, as will be seen in the two stories presented as examples in this section, subordinates everything to tonal effect; in other words, the impressionistic story symbolizes in human action some human mood or condition. For this reason such stories are often called stories of symbolism.

HAWTHORNE AND HIS WRITINGS

Nathaniel Hawthorne was born in Salem, Massachusetts, July 4, 1804. His New England ancestors bore the name Hathorne, as did the author's sea-captain father—also a Nathaniel—who died at Surinam, Dutch Guiana, when his son was four years old. In 1818 the family moved to Raymond, Maine, but most of the youth's education was gotten at Salem, and there his family returned in 1820. The following year he entered Bowdoin College, from which he was graduated in 1825. At this time—when he was twenty-one—he had already begun *Twice-Told Tales*; it was then, too, that he inserted the *w* into his name. He was now writing industriously, often under a pseudonym; he also did considerable hack and editorial work. During 1839 and a part of 1840 he served in the Boston Custom House; then he joined the Brook Farm Community in 1841, but remained there only a short time. He married Sophia Peabody in 1842. In 1846 he returned to the Customs service, in Salem, remaining this time about three years. In 1853 he was appointed by his classmate, President Pierce, as United States Consul at Liverpool. During the more

than three years of his consulship he traveled widely in Great Britain, and later spent much time in Italy, where some of his best work was accomplished. During the last years of his life he wrote but intermittently, being a prey to depression and ill health. He died at Plymouth, New Hampshire, May 19, 1864, and is buried in the Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, Concord, Mass.

Nathaniel Hawthorne was a remarkable novelist, essayist, and short-story writer. *The Scarlet Letter* and *The Marble Faun*, are his greatest novels. *The House of the Seven Gables* is a series of related sketches rather than a romance. Probably his best short-stories are "The Birthmark," "Rappaccini's Daughter," and "Drowne's Wooden Image," in *Mosses From An Old Manse*; "The Gray Champion," "The Minister's Black Veil," "The Gentle Boy," "The Great Carbuncle," "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment," "The Ambitious Guest," "Wakefield," and "The White Old Maid," from *Twice-Told Tales*; and "The Great Stone Face," "Ethan Brand" and "The Snow-Image," in *The Snow-Image and other Twice-Told Tales*. These three collections contain also many charming sketches, while *The Wonder Book*, and *Tanglewood Tales* are rich in interest for younger readers.

"The White Old Maid," given herewith in full, was first published in the *New England Magazine* for July, 1835, and was entitled "The Old Maid in the Winding Sheet, by the Author of The Gray Champion."

Hawthorne enjoyed the distinction of winning in his day the almost unanimous approval of critics both at

home and abroad, and this in a period when criticism was not a gentle art. Time, moreover, has only added to his praises. As a fiction writer he had depth, breadth, and height. Hawthorne alone among the fictionists of his era may justly be said to have a philosophy of his own; his themes cover a wide range; and the loftiness of his ideals is well recognized. As Longfellow discerned, and generously announced as early as 1837, Hawthorne was a poet who wrote prose. He knew a mood in nature to match every human emotion, and in her multiform life he saw images to enforce a thousand striking comparisons. He was a student of the soul, too, albeit a gloomy one, for the most part. But while the sombreness of lives beset by stern problems oppressed him, and but little humor brightens his pages, one searches in vain for a pessimistic spirit—Hawthorne's knowledge of the human heart saddened him, but it did not make him misanthropic. One feels the reality, the vital bearing, of the things he writes about. It is impossible to read him appreciatively and not realize the sincerity of the man, and the fine earnestness, the upright though severe justness, with which he viewed life. Sweetness, beauty—haunting beauty, indeed—and a certain airy lightness, were not wanting in his work; but the big tones—resonant, solemn at times, and inspiring always—were poetic insight, fervid intensity, and lofty purpose. Hawthorne was a seer. The inside of things was disclosed to him. That which he could not see, he felt. And with a classic purity of style he worded the fantastic, gloomy, lightsome, or tragic pageantry of his creations in sentences that live and live.

> I wish God had given me the faculty of writing a sunshiny book.—NATHANIEL

HAWTHORNE, *Letter to James T. Fields*.

Soon to be all spirit, I have already a spiritual sense of human nature, and see deeply into the hearts of mankind, discovering what is hidden from the wisest.... My glance comprehends the crowd, and penetrates the breast of the solitary man.—NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE, *My Home Return*, in *Tales and Sketches*.

He uses his characters, like algebraic symbols, to work out certain problems with; they are rather more, yet rather less, than flesh and blood.—H. A. BEERS, quoted in Tappan's *Topical Notes on American Authors*.

Hawthorne's style, at its best, is one of the most perfect media employed by any writer using the English language. Dealing, as it usually does, with an immaterial subject-matter, with dream-like impressions, and fantastic products of the imagination, it is concrete without being opaque,—luminously concrete, one might say. No other writer that I know of has the power of making his fancies visible and tangible without impairing their delicate immateriality. If any writer can put the rainbow into words, and yet leave it a rainbow, surely that writer is Hawthorne.—RICHARD LE GALLIENNE, *Attitudes and Avowals*.

In all his most daring fantasies Hawthorne is natural; and though he may project his vision far beyond the boundaries of fact, nowhere does he violate the laws of nature.... A brutal misuse of the supernatural is

perhaps the very lowest degradation of the art of fiction. But "to mingle the marvellous rather as a slight, delicate, and evanescent flavour than as any actual portion of the substance," to quote from the preface to the *House of the Seven Gables*, this is, or should be, the aim of the writer of Short-stories whenever his feet leave the firm ground of fact as he strays in the unsubstantial realms of fantasy.—BRANDER MATTHEWS, *The Philosophy of the Short-story*.

Hawthorne has been called a mystic, which he was not,—and a psychological dreamer, which he was in very slight degree. He was really the ghost of New England. I do not mean the "spirit," nor the "phantom," but the ghost in the older sense in which that term is used, the thin, rarefied essence which is to be found somewhere behind the physical organization: embodied, indeed, and not by any means in a shadowy or diminutive earthly tabernacle, but yet only half embodied in it, endowed with a certain painful sense of the gulf between his nature and its organization, always recognizing the gulf, always trying to bridge it over, and always more or less unsuccessful in the attempt. His writings are not exactly spiritual writings, for there is no dominating spirit in them. They are ghostly writings.... I may, perhaps, accept a phrase of which Hawthorne himself was fond,—"the moonlight of romance,"—and compel it to explain something of the secret of his characteristic genius.—R. H. HUTTON, *Essays in Literary Criticism*.

> This, too ["The White Old Maid"], is a story, in the sense that something happens; and yet the real story, by which I mean the narrative which would logically connect and develop these events, is just hinted at, and is not very important. It is subordinated, indeed, to a new aim. "The White Old Maid" is narrative for a purpose, and this purpose is to suggest an impression, and to leave us with a vivid sensation rather than a number of remembered facts. In short, it is contrived, not to leave a record of such and such an old woman who did this or that, but rather to stamp upon our minds the impression of a mystery-haunted house, mysterious figures entering, strange words, and a terrible sorrow behind all. Towards such a result the structure of the plot, every bit of description, every carefully chosen word, directly tends. —HENRY SEIDEL CANBY, *The Book of the Short Story*.

FURTHER REFERENCES FOR READING ON HAWTHORNE

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THE WHITE OLD MAID

BY NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

Introduction of setting, giving atmosphere of story.

The moonbeams came through two deep and narrow windows, and showed a spacious chamber richly furnished in an antique fashion. From one lattice the shadow of the diamond panes was thrown upon the floor; the ghostly light, through the other, slept upon a bed, falling between the heavy silken curtains, and illuminating the face of a young man.*First Plot Situation.* But, how quietly the slumberer lay! how pale his features! and how like a shroud the sheet was wound about his frame! Yes; it was a corpse, in its burial clothes.

This uncertainty strikes the tone of the story, which trembles constantly between the real and the fancied, the physical and the spirit world, keeping the reader in doubt as to whether he is witnessing a manifestation of the supernatural or is deceived by the mysterious atmosphere of the unusual.

2. Suddenly, the fixed features seemed to move with dark emotion. Strange fantasy! It was but the shadow of the fringed curtain waving betwixt the dead face and the moonlight, as the door of the chamber opened and a girl stole softly to the bedside. Was there delusion in the moonbeams, or did her gesture and her eye betray a gleam of triumph, as she bent over the pale corpse—pale as itself—and pressed her living lips to the cold ones of the dead? As she drew back from that long kiss, her features writhed as if a proud heart were fighting with its anguish. Again it seemed that the features of the corpse had moved responsive to her own. Still an illusion! The silken curtain had waved, a second time, betwixt the dead face and the moonlight, as another fair young girl

unclosed the door, and glided, ghostlike, to the bedside. *Two main characters introduced.*There the two maidens stood, both beautiful, with the pale beauty of the dead between them. But she who had first entered was proud and stately, and the other a soft and fragile thing.

Note the archaic, formal language, which sets the period in the long ago.

3. “Away!” cried the lofty one. “Thou hadst him living! The dead is mine!”

Motif of story.

4. “Thine!” returned the other, shuddering. “Well hast thou spoken! The dead is thine!”

5. The proud girl started, and stared into her face with a ghastly look. But a wild and mournful expression passed across the features of the gentle one; and weak and helpless, she sank down on the bed, her head pillowed beside that of the corpse, and her hair mingling with his dark locks. A creature of hope and joy, the first draught of sorrow had bewildered her.

6. “Edith!” cried her rival.

Note “of the heart.”

7. Edith groaned, as with a sudden compassion of the heart; and removing her cheek from the dead youth’s pillow, she stood upright, fearfully encountering the eyes of the lofty girl.

8. “Wilt thou betray me?” said the latter calmly.

Full statement of the motif, ending with ¶12. Foundation of Main Crisis.

9. “Till the dead bid me speak, I will be silent,”

answered Edith. “Leave us alone together! Go, and live many years, and then return, and tell me of thy life. He, too, will be here! Then, if thou tellest of sufferings more than death, we will both forgive thee.”

10. “And what shall be the token?” asked the proud girl, as if her heart acknowledged a meaning in these wild words.

11. “This lock of hair,” said Edith, lifting one of the dark, clustering curls that lay heavily on the dead man’s brow.

12. The two maidens joined their hands over the bosom of the corpse, and appointed a day and hour, far, far in time to come, for their next meeting in that chamber. The statelier girl gave one deep look at the motionless countenance, and departed—yet turned again and trembled ere she closed the door, almost believing that her dead lover frowned upon her. And Edith, too! Was not her white form fading into the moonlight? Scorning her own weakness she went forth, and perceived that a negro slave was waiting in the passage with a wax-light, which he held between her face and his own, and regarded her, as she thought, with an ugly expression of merriment. Lifting his torch on high, the slave lighted her down the staircase, and undid the portal of the mansion. *End of first part of story.*The young clergyman of the town had just ascended the steps, and bowing to the lady, passed in without a word.

Second stage.

13. Years, many years, rolled on; the world seemed new again, so much older was it grown since the night when those pale girls had clasped their hands across the bosom of the corpse. In the interval, a

lonely woman had passed from youth to extreme age, and was known by all the town as the "Old Maid in the Winding Sheet."*Hawthorne's first title for this story.* A taint of insanity had affected her whole life, but so quiet, sad, and gentle, so utterly free from violence, that she was suffered to pursue her harmless fantasies, unmolested by the world, with whose business or pleasure she had nought to do. *Character delineation, largely mental and moral.*She dwelt alone, and never came into the daylight, except to follow funerals. Whenever a corpse was borne along the street in sunshine, rain, or snow; whether a pompous train of the rich and proud thronged after it, or few and humble were the mourners, behind them came the lonely woman in a long white garment which the people called her shroud. She took no place among the kindred or the friends, but stood at the door to hear the funeral prayer, and walked in the rear of the procession, as one whose earthly charge it was to haunt the house of mourning, and be the shadow of affliction, and see that the dead were duly buried. *Key.*So long had this been her custom that the inhabitants of the town deemed her a part of every funeral, as much as the coffin pall, or the very corpse itself, and augured ill of the sinner's destiny unless the "Old Maid in the Winding Sheet" came gliding, like a ghost, behind. *Contributory incident.*Once, it is said, she affrighted a bridal party with her pale presence, appearing suddenly in the illuminated hall, just as the priest was uniting a false maid to a wealthy man, before her lover had been dead a year. Evil was the omen to that marriage! Sometimes she stole forth by moonlight and visited the graves of venerable Integrity, and wedded Love, and virgin Innocence,*Note language of symbolism.* and every spot where the ashes of a kind and faithful heart were mouldering. Over the

hillocks of those favored dead would she stretch out her arms, with a gesture, as if she were scattering seeds; and many believed that she brought them from the garden of Paradise; for the graves which she had visited were green beneath the snow, and covered with sweet flowers from April to November. Her blessing was better than a holy verse upon the tombstone.*Key.* Thus wore away her long, sad, peaceful, and fantastic life, till few were so old as she, and the people of later generations wondered how the dead had ever been buried, or mourners had endured their grief, without the "Old Maid in the Winding Sheet."

Third stage.

14. Still years went on, and still she followed funerals, and was not yet summoned to her own festival of death. One afternoon the great street of the town was all alive with business and bustle, though the sun now gilded only the upper half of the church spire, having left the housetops and loftiest trees in shadow. *Preparation for main crisis.* *Opening of Main Plot Incident.* The scene was cheerful and animated, in spite of the sombre shade between the high brick buildings. Here were pompous merchants, in white wigs and laced velvet; the bronzed faces of sea-captains; the foreign garb and air of Spanish creoles;*Local-color.* and the disdainful port of natives of Old England; all contrasted with the rough aspect of one or two back settlers, negotiating sales of timber from forests where axe had never sounded. Sometimes a lady passed, swelling roundly forth in an embroidered petticoat, balancing her steps in high-heeled shoes, and courtesying with lofty grace to the punctilious obeisances of the gentlemen.*Central setting; return to original setting.* The life of the town seemed to

have its very centre not far from an old mansion, that stood somewhat back from the pavement, surrounded by neglected grass, with a strange air of loneliness, rather deepened than dispelled by the throng so near. Its site would have been suitably occupied by a magnificent Exchange or a brick block, lettered all over with various signs; or the large house itself might have made a noble tavern, with the "King's Arms" swinging before it, and guests in every chamber, instead of the present solitude.*Development of setting, and TONE OF AN EMPTY HOUSE.* But owing to some dispute about the right of inheritance, the mansion had been long without a tenant, decaying from year to year, and throwing the stately gloom of its shadow over the busiest part of the town. Such was the scene, and such the time, when a figure unlike any that have been described was observed at a distance down the street.

First main character.

15. "I espy a strange sail, yonder," remarked a Liverpool captain; "that woman in the long white garment!"

16. The sailor seemed much struck by the object, as were several others who, at the same moment, caught a glimpse of the figure that had attracted his notice. Almost immediately the various topics of conversation gave place to speculations, in an undertone, on this unwonted occurrence.

17. "Can there be a funeral so late this afternoon?" inquired some.

18. They looked for the signs of death at every door —the sexton, the hearse, the assemblage of black-clad relatives—all that makes up the woful pomp of

funerals. They raised their eyes, also, to the sun-gilt spire of the church, and wondered that no clang proceeded from its bell, which had always tolled till now when this figure appeared in the light of day. But none had heard that a corpse was to be borne to its home that afternoon, nor was there any token of funeral, except the apparition of the "Old Maid in the Winding Sheet."

Key.

19. "What may this portend?" asked each man of his neighbor.

Contrast.

20. All smiled as they put the question, yet with a certain trouble in their eyes, as if pestilence or some other wide calamity were prognosticated by the untimely intrusion among the living of one whose presence had always been associated with death and woe. What a comet is to the earth was that sad woman to the town. Still she moved on, while the hum of surprise was hushed at her approach, and the proud and the *Impressionism vivid.* humble stood aside, that her white garment might not wave against them. It was a long, loose robe, of spotless purity. Its wearer appeared very old, pale, emaciated, and feeble, *Direct character description.* yet glided onward without the unsteady pace of extreme age. At one point of her course a little rosy boy burst forth from a door, and ran, with open arms, towards the ghostly woman, seeming to expect a kiss from her bloodless lips. She made a slight *Contrast.* pause, fixing her eye upon him with an expression of no earthly sweetness, so the child shivered and stood awe-struck, rather than affrighted, while the Old Maid passed on. *Character delineation by suggestion.* Perhaps her

garment might have been polluted even by an infant's touch; perhaps her kiss would have been death to the sweet boy within a year.

Tone of story summarized.

21. "She is but a shadow," whispered the superstitious. "The child put forth his arms and could not grasp her robe!"

Crisis approaches.

22. The wonder was increased when the Old Maid passed beneath the porch of the deserted mansion, ascended the moss-covered steps, lifted the iron knocker, and gave three raps. The people could only conjecture that some old remembrance, troubling her bewildered brain, had impelled the poor woman hither to visit the friends of her youth; *The house mentioned in paragraphs 1, 12 and 14.* all gone from their home long since and forever, unless their ghosts still haunted it —fit company for the "Old Maid in the Winding Sheet." An elderly man approached the steps, and, reverently uncovering his gray locks, essayed to explain the matter.

Note "None—have."
Contributory incident.

23. "None, Madam," said he, "have dwelt in this house these fifteen years agone—no, not since the death of old Colonel Fenwicke,*First mention of name.* whose funeral you may remember to have followed. His heirs, being ill agreed among themselves, have let the mansion-house go to ruin."

24. The Old Maid looked slowly round with a slight gesture of one hand, and a finger of the other upon her lip, appearing more shadow-like than ever in the

obscurity of the porch. But again she lifted the hammer, and gave, this time, a single rap. *Note atmosphere of vagueness.* Could it be that a footstep was now heard coming down the staircase of the old mansion, which all conceived to have been so long untenanted? Slowly, feebly, yet heavily, like the pace of an aged and infirm person, the step approached, more distinct on every downward stair, till it reached the portal. The bar fell on the inside; the door opened. One upward glance towards the church spire, whence the sunshine had just faded, was the last that the people saw of the "Old Maid in the Winding Sheet."

Tone of mystery.

25. "Who undid the door?" asked many.

26. This question, owing to the depth of shadow beneath the porch, no one could satisfactorily answer. Two or three aged men, while protesting against an inference which might be drawn, *See* ¶12. affirmed that the person within was a negro, and bore a singular resemblance to old Cæsar, formerly a slave in the house, but freed by death some thirty years before.

27. "Her summons has waked up a servant of the old family," said one, half seriously.

28. "Let us wait here," replied another. "More guests will knock at the door, anon. But the gate of the graveyard should be thrown open!"

29. Twilight had overspread the town before the crowd began to separate, or the comments on this incident were exhausted. *Preparation for climax.* One after another was wending his way homeward, when a coach—no common spectacle in those days—drove

slowly into the street. It was an old-fashioned equipage, hanging close to the ground, with arms on the panels, a footman behind, and a grave, corpulent *No indication whence it came.* coachman seated high in front —the whole giving an idea of solemn state and dignity. There was something awful in the heavy rumbling of the wheels. The coach rolled down the street, till, coming to the gateway *Setting.* of the deserted mansion, it drew up, and the footman sprang to the ground.

30. “Whose grand coach is this?” asked a very inquisitive body.

31. The footman made no reply, but ascended the steps of the old house, gave three raps with the iron hammer, and returned to open the coach door. *Three raps signify a formal demand for entrance.*An old man, possessed of the heraldic lore so common in that day, examined the shield of arms on the panel.

32. “Azure, a lion’s head erased, between three flower-de-luces,” said he; then whispered the name of the family to whom these bearings belonged.*Setting.* The last inheritor of his honors was recently dead, after a long residence amid the splendor of the British court, where his birth and wealth had given him no mean station. “He left no child,” continued the herald, “and these arms, being in a lozenge, betoken that the coach appertains to his widow.”

Second Main Character.

33. Further disclosures, perhaps, might have been made had not the speaker suddenly been struck dumb by the stern eye of an ancient lady who thrust forth her head from the coach, preparing to descend. As she emerged, the people saw that her dress was magnificent, and her figure dignified, in spite of age

and infirmity—a stately ruin but with a look, at once, of pride and wretchedness. Her strong and rigid features had an awe about them, unlike that of the white Old Maid, but as of something evil. *Contributory incident.* She passed up the steps, leaning on a gold-headed cane; the door swung open as she ascended—and the light of a torch glittered on the embroidery of her dress, and gleamed on the pillars of the porch. After a momentary pause—a glance backwards—and then a desperate effort—she went in. The decipherer of the coat of arms had ventured up the lowest step, and shrinking back immediately, pale and tremulous, affirmed that the torch was held by the very image of old Cæsar.

Subordinate character of central action.
Compare ¶12.

34. "But such a hideous grin," added he, "was never seen on the face of mortal man, black or white! It will haunt me till my dying day."

Note the use of shadows and twilights as accessories.

35. Meanwhile, the coach had wheeled round, with a prodigious clatter on the pavement, and rumbled up the street, disappearing in the twilight, while the ear still tracked its course. Scarcely was it gone, when the people began to question whether the coach and attendants, the ancient lady, the spectre of old Cæsar, and the Old Maid herself, *Key.* were not all a strangely combined delusion, with some dark purport in its mystery. *Atmosphere—a sense of something about to occur.* The whole town was astir, so that, instead of dispersing, the crowd continually increased, and stood gazing up at the windows of the mansion, now silvered by the brightening moon. The elders, glad to indulge the narrative propensity of age, told of the

long-faded splendor of the family, the entertainments they had given, and the guests, the greatest of the land, and even titled and noble ones from abroad, who had passed beneath that portal. These graphic reminiscences seemed to call up the ghosts of those to whom they referred. So strong was the impression on some of the more imaginative hearers, that two or three were seized with trembling fits, at one and the same moment, protesting that they had distinctly heard three other raps of the iron knocker.

Contributory material.

36. “Impossible!” exclaimed others. “See! The moon shines beneath the porch, and shows every part of it, except in the narrow shade of that pillar. There is no one there!”

37. “Did not the door open?” whispered one of these fanciful persons.

38. “Didst thou see it, too?” said his companion, in a startled tone.

Vagueness.

39. But the general sentiment was opposed to the idea that a third visitant had made application at the door of the deserted house. A few, however, adhered to this new marvel, and even declared that a red gleam like that of a torch had shone through the great front window, as if the negro were lighting a guest up the staircase. *Tone.* This, too, was pronounced a mere fantasy. But at once the whole multitude started, and each man beheld his own terror painted in the faces of all the rest.

40. “What an awful thing is this!” cried they.

Minor climax—preparation for main climax.

41. A shriek too fearfully distinct for doubt had been heard within the mansion, breaking forth suddenly, and succeeded by a deep stillness, as if a heart had burst in giving it utterance. The people knew not whether to fly from the very sight of the house, or to rush trembling in, and search out the strange mystery. Amid their confusion and affright,*Note shifting of tenses.* they are somewhat reassured by the appearance of their clergyman, a venerable patriarch, and equally a saint, who had taught them and their fathers the way to heaven for more than the space of an ordinary life-time.*Contributory incident.* He was a reverend figure, with long, white hair upon his shoulders, a white beard upon his breast, and a back so bent over his staff that he seemed to be looking downward continually, as if to choose a proper grave for his weary frame. It was some time before the good old man, being deaf and of impaired intellect, could be made to comprehend such portions of the affair as were comprehensible at all. But, when possessed of the facts, his energies assumed unexpected vigor.

42. “Verily,” said the old gentleman, “it will be fitting that I enter the mansion-house of the worthy Colonel Fenwicke, lest any harm should have befallen that true Christian woman whom ye call the ‘Old Maid in the Winding Sheet.’”

Again a shift in the manner of narration.

43. Behold, then, the venerable clergyman ascending the steps of the mansion, with a torch-bearer behind him. It was the elderly man who had spoken to the Old Maid, and the same who had afterwards explained the shield of arms and recognized the

features of the negro. Like their predecessors, they gave three raps with the iron hammer.

44. “Old Cæsar cometh not,” observed the priest. “Well I wot he no longer doth service in this mansion.”

45. “Assuredly, then, it was something worse, in old Cæsar’s likeness!” said the other adventurer.

One who ventures.

46. “Be it as God wills,” answered the clergyman. “See! my strength, though it be much decayed, hath sufficed to open this heavy door. Let us enter and pass up the staircase.”

Key to tone further developed.

47. Here occurred a singular exemplification of the dreamy state of a very old man’s mind. As they ascended the wide flight of stairs, the aged clergyman appeared to move with caution, occasionally standing aside, and oftener bending his head, as it were in salutation, thus practising all the gestures of one who makes his way through a throng. Reaching the head of the staircase, he looked around with sad and solemn benignity, laid aside his staff, bared his hoary locks, and was evidently on the point of commencing a prayer.

48. “Reverend Sir,” said his attendant, who conceived this a very suitable prelude to their further search, “would it not be well that the people join with us in prayer?”

Confusion between real and unreal further illustrated by contributory material.

49. “Welladay!” cried the old clergyman, staring

strangely around him. “Art thou here with me, and none other? Verily, past times were present to me, and I deemed that I was to make a funeral prayer, as many a time heretofore, from the head of this staircase. Of a truth, I saw the shades of many that are gone. *Deft introduction of central character.*Yea, I have prayed at their burials, one after another, and the ‘Old Maid in the Winding Sheet’ hath seen them to their graves!”

50. Being now more thoroughly awake to their present purpose, he took his staff and struck forcibly on the floor, till there came an echo from each deserted chamber, but no menial to answer their summons.*Tone.* They therefore walked along the passage, and again paused, opposite to the great front window through which was seen the crowd, in the shadow and partial moonlight of the street beneath.*Key.* On their right hand was the open door of a chamber, and a closed one on their left. The clergyman pointed his cane to the carved oak panel of the latter.

Foundation situation.

51. “Within that chamber,” observed he, “a whole life-time since, did I sit by the death-bed of a goodly young man, who, being now at the last gasp”—

Atmosphere.

52. Apparently there was some powerful excitement in the ideas which had now flashed across his mind. He snatched the torch from his companion’s hand, and threw open the door with such sudden violence that the flame was extinguished, leaving them no other light than the moonbeams, which fell through two windows into the spacious chamber. *Note author’s*

*device.*It was sufficient to discover all that could be known. In a high-backed oaken armchair, upright, with her hands clasped across her heart, and her head thrown back, sat the "Old Maid in the Winding Sheet." The stately dame had fallen on her knees, with her forehead on the holy knees of the Old Maid, one hand upon the floor and the other pressed convulsively against her heart. *The decision must be inferred.*It clutched a lock of hair, once sable, now discolored with a greenish mould. As the priest and layman advanced into the chamber, the Old Maid's features assumed such a semblance of shifting expression that they trusted to hear the whole mystery explained by a single word. *Tone of vagueness to the end.*But it was only the shadow of a tattered curtain waving betwixt the dead face and the moonlight.

Climax.
Vague denouement.

53. "Both dead!" said the venerable man. "Then who shall divulge the secret? Methinks it glimmers to and fro in my mind, like the light and shadow across the Old Maid's face. And now 'tis gone!"

FOR ANALYSIS

THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER

BY EDGAR ALLAN POE

Son cœur est un luth suspendu;
Sitôt qu'on le touche il résonne.

BERANGER.

During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country; and at length found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher. I know not how it was, but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say insufferable; for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable, because poetic, sentiment with which the mind usually receives even the sternest natural images of the desolate or terrible. I looked upon the scene before me—upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain, upon the bleak walls, upon the vacant eye-like windows, upon a few rank sedges, and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees—with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveler upon opium: the bitter lapse into everyday life, the hideous dropping off of the veil. There was an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart, an unredeemed dreariness of thought, which no goading of the imagination could torture into aught of the sublime. What was it—I paused to think —what was it that so unnerved me in the contemplation of the House of Usher? It was a mystery all insoluble; nor could I grapple with the shadow fancies that crowded upon me as I pondered. I was forced to fall back upon the unsatisfactory conclusion that while, beyond doubt, there *are* combinations of very simple natural objects which have the power of thus affecting us, still the analysis of this power lies among considerations beyond our depth. It was possible, I reflected, that a mere

different arrangement of the particulars of the scene, of the details of the picture, would be sufficient to modify, or perhaps to annihilate, its capacity for sorrowful impression, and, acting upon this idea, I reined my horse to the precipitous brink of a black and lurid tarn that lay in unruffled lustre by the dwelling, and gazed down—but with a shudder even more thrilling than before—upon the remodeled and inverted images of the gray sedge, and the ghastly tree-stems, and the vacant and eye-like windows.

2. Nevertheless, in this mansion of gloom I now proposed to myself a sojourn of some weeks. Its proprietor, Roderick Usher, had been one of my boon companions in boyhood; but many years had elapsed since our last meeting. A letter, however, had lately reached me in a distant part of the country—a letter from him—which in its wildly importunate nature had admitted of no other than a personal reply. The MS. gave evidence of nervous agitation. The writer spoke of acute bodily illness, of a mental disorder which oppressed him, and of an earnest desire to see me, as his best and indeed his only personal friend, with a view of attempting, by the cheerfulness of my society, some alleviation of his malady. It was the manner in which all this, and much more, was said—it was the apparent *heart* that went with his request—which allowed me no room for hesitation; and I accordingly obeyed forthwith what I still considered a very singular summons.

3. Although as boys we had been even intimate associates, yet I really knew little of my friend. His reserve had been always excessive and habitual. I was aware, however, that his very ancient family had been noted, time out of mind, for a peculiar sensibility of temperament, displaying itself, through

long ages, in many works of exalted art, and manifested of late in repeated deeds of munificent yet unobtrusive charity, as well as in a passionate devotion to the intricacies, perhaps even more than to the orthodox and easily recognizable beauties, of musical science. I had learned, too, the very remarkable fact that the stem of the Usher race, all time-honored as it was, had put forth at no period any enduring branch; in other words, that the entire family lay in the direct line of descent, and had always, with a very trifling and very temporary variation, so lain. It was this deficiency, I considered, while running over in thought the perfect keeping of the character of the premises with the accredited character of the people, and while speculating upon the possible influence which the one, in the long lapse of centuries, might have exercised upon the other,—it was this deficiency, perhaps, of collateral issue, and the consequent undeviating transmission from sire to son of the patrimony with the name, which had at length so identified the two as to merge the original title of the estate in the quaint and equivocal appellation of the "House of Usher,"—an appellation which seemed to include, in the minds of the peasantry who used it, both the family and the family mansion.

4. I have said that the sole effect of my somewhat childish experiment, that of looking down within the tarn, had been to deepen the first singular impression. There can be no doubt that the consciousness of the rapid increase of my superstition—for why should I not so term it?—served mainly to accelerate the increase itself. Such, I have long known, is the paradoxical law of all sentiments having terror as a basis. And it might have been for this reason only, that, when I again

uplifted my eyes to the house itself from its image in the pool, there grew in my mind a strange fancy,—a fancy so ridiculous, indeed, that I but mention it to show the vivid force of the sensations which oppressed me. I had so worked upon my imagination as really to believe that about the whole mansion and domain there hung an atmosphere peculiar to themselves and their immediate vicinity: an atmosphere which had no affinity with the air of heaven, but which had reeked up from the decayed trees, and the gray wall, and the silent tarn; a pestilent and mystic vapor, dull, sluggish, faintly discernible, and leaden-hued.

5. Shaking off from my spirit what *must* have been a dream, I scanned more narrowly the real aspect of the building. Its principal feature seemed to be that of an excessive antiquity. The discoloration of ages had been great. Minute fungi overspread the whole exterior, hanging in a fine tangled web-work from the eaves. Yet all this was apart from any extraordinary dilapidation. No portion of the masonry had fallen; and there appeared to be a wild inconsistency between its still perfect adaptation of parts and the crumbling condition of the individual stones. In this there was much that reminded me of the specious totality of old wood-work which has rotted for long years in some neglected vault, with no disturbance from the breath of the external air. Beyond this indication of extensive decay, however, the fabric gave little token of instability. Perhaps the eye of a scrutinizing observer might have discovered a barely perceptible fissure, which, extending from the roof of the building in front, made its way down the wall in a zigzag direction, until it became lost in the sullen waters of the tarn.

6. Noticing these things, I rode over a short causeway to the house. A servant in waiting took my horse, and I entered the Gothic archway of the hall. A valet, of stealthy step, thence conducted me in silence through many dark and intricate passages in my progress to the studio of his master. Much that I encountered on the way contributed, I know not how, to heighten the vague sentiments of which I have already spoken. While the objects around me—while the carvings of the ceiling, the sombre tapestries of the walls, the ebon blackness of the floors, and the phantasmagoric armorial trophies which rattled as I strode, were but matters of which, or to such as which, I had been accustomed from my infancy,—while I hesitated not to acknowledge how familiar was all this, I still wondered to find how unfamiliar were the fancies which ordinary images were stirring up. On one of the staircases I met the physician of the family. His countenance, I thought, wore a mingled expression of low cunning and perplexity. He accosted me with trepidation and passed on. The valet now threw open a door and ushered me into the presence of his master.

7. The room in which I found myself was very large and lofty. The windows were long, narrow, and pointed, and at so vast a distance from the black oaken floor as to be altogether inaccessible from within. Feeble gleams of encrimsoned light made their way through the trellised panes, and served to render sufficiently distinct the more prominent objects around; the eye, however, struggled in vain to reach the remoter angles of the chamber, or the recesses of the vaulted and fretted ceiling. Dark draperies hung upon the walls. The general furniture was profuse, comfortless, antique, and tattered. Many books and musical instruments lay scattered

about, but failed to give any vitality to the scene. I felt that I breathed an atmosphere of sorrow. An air of stern, deep, and irredeemable gloom hung over and pervaded all.

8. Upon my entrance, Usher arose from a sofa on which he had been lying at full length, and greeted me with a vivacious warmth which had much in it, I at first thought, of an overdone cordiality,—of the constrained effort of the *ennuyé* man of the world. A glance, however, at his countenance, convinced me of his perfect sincerity. We sat down; and for some moments, while he spoke not, I gazed upon him with a feeling half of pity, half of awe. Surely man had never before so terribly altered, in so brief a period, as had Roderick Usher! It was with difficulty that I could bring myself to admit the identity of the wan being before me with the companion of my early boyhood. Yet the character of his face had been at all times remarkable. A cadaverousness of complexion; an eye large, liquid, and luminous beyond comparison; lips somewhat thin and very pallid, but of a surpassingly beautiful curve; a nose of a delicate Hebrew model, but with a breadth of nostril unusual in similar formations; a finely-moulded chin, speaking, in its want of prominence, of a want of moral energy; hair of a more than web-like softness and tenuity,—these features, with an inordinate expansion above the regions of the temple, made up altogether a countenance not easily to be forgotten. And now in the mere exaggeration of the prevailing character of these features, and of the expression they were wont to convey, lay so much of change that I doubted to whom I spoke. The now ghastly pallor of the skin, and the now miraculous lustre of the eye, above all things startled and even awed me. The silken hair, too, had been suffered to grow all

unheeded, and as, in its wild gossamer texture, it floated rather than fell about the face, I could not, even with effort, connect its arabesque expression with any idea of simple humanity.

9. In the manner of my friend I was at once struck with an incoherence, an inconsistency; and I soon found this to arise from a series of feeble and futile struggles to overcome an habitual trepidancy, an excessive nervous agitation. For something of this nature I had indeed been prepared, no less by his letter than by reminiscences of certain boyish traits, and by conclusions deduced from his peculiar physical conformation and temperament. His action was alternately vivacious and sullen. His voice varied rapidly from a tremulous indecision (when the animal spirits seemed utterly in abeyance) to that species of energetic concision—that abrupt, weighty, unhurried, and hollow-sounding enunciation, that leaden, self-balanced, and perfectly modulated guttural utterance—which may be observed in the lost drunkard, or the irreclaimable eater of opium, during the periods of his most intense excitement.

10. It was thus that he spoke of the object of my visit, of his earnest desire to see me, and of the solace he expected me to afford him. He entered at some length into what he conceived to be the nature of his malady. It was, he said, a constitutional and a family evil, and one for which he despaired to find a remedy,—a mere nervous affection, he immediately added, which would undoubtedly soon pass off. It displayed itself in a host of unnatural sensations. Some of these, as he detailed them, interested and bewildered me; although, perhaps, the terms and the general manner of the narration had their weight. He suffered much from a morbid acuteness of the senses;

the most insipid food was alone endurable; he could wear only garments of certain texture; the odors of all flowers were oppressive; his eyes were tortured by even a faint light; and there were but peculiar sounds, and these from stringed instruments, which did not inspire him with horror.

11. To an anomalous species of terror I found him a bounden slave. “I shall perish,” said he, “I *must* perish in this deplorable folly. Thus, thus, and not otherwise, shall I be lost. I dread the events of the future, not in themselves, but in their results. I shudder at the thought of any, even the most trivial, incident, which may operate upon this intolerable agitation of soul. I have, indeed, no abhorrence of danger, except in its absolute effect,—in terror. In this unnerved, in this pitiable condition, I feel that the period will sooner or later arrive when I must abandon life and reason together in some struggle with the grim phantasm, FEAR.”

12. I learned moreover at intervals, and through broken and equivocal hints, another singular feature of his mental condition. He was enchained by certain superstitious impressions in regard to the dwelling which he tenanted, and whence for many years he had never ventured forth, in regard to an influence whose supposititious force was conveyed in terms too shadowy here to be restated,—an influence which some peculiarities in the mere form and substance of his family mansion had, by dint of long sufferance, he said, obtained over his spirit; an effect which the physique of the gray walls and turrets, and of the dim tarn into which they all looked down, had at length brought about upon the morale of his existence.

13. He admitted, however, although with hesitation,

that much of the peculiar gloom which thus afflicted him could be traced to a more natural and far more palpable origin,—to the severe and long-continued illness, indeed to the evidently approaching dissolution, of a tenderly beloved sister, his sole companion for long years, his last and only relative on earth. “Her decease,” he said, with a bitterness which I can never forget, “would leave him (him, the hopeless and the frail) the last of the ancient race of the Ushers.” While he spoke, the lady Madeline (for so was she called) passed slowly through a remote portion of the apartment, and, without having noticed my presence, disappeared. I regarded her with an utter astonishment not unmingled with dread, and yet I found it impossible to account for such feelings. A sensation of stupor oppressed me, as my eyes followed her retreating steps. When a door, at length, closed upon her, my glance sought instinctively and eagerly the countenance of the brother; but he had buried his face in his hands, and I could only perceive that a far more than ordinary wanness had overspread the emaciated fingers through which trickled many passionate tears.

14. The disease of the lady Madeline had long baffled the skill of her physicians. A settled apathy, a gradual wasting away of the person, and frequent although transient affections of a partially cataleptical character, were the unusual diagnosis. Hitherto she had steadily borne up against the pressure of her malady, and had not betaken herself finally to bed: but, on the closing-in of the evening of my arrival at the house, she succumbed (as her brother told me at night with inexpressible agitation) to the prostrating power of the destroyer; and I learned that the glimpse I had obtained of her person would thus probably be the last I should obtain,—

that the lady, at least while living, would be seen by me no more.

15. For several days ensuing, her name was unmentioned by either Usher or myself; and during this period I was busied in earnest endeavors to alleviate the melancholy of my friend. We painted and read together; or I listened, as if in a dream, to the wild improvisation of his speaking guitar. And thus, as a closer and still closer intimacy admitted me more unreservedly into the recesses of his spirit, the more bitterly did I perceive the futility of all attempt at cheering a mind from which darkness, as if an inherent positive quality, poured forth upon all objects of the moral and physical universe, in one unceasing radiation of gloom.

16. I shall ever bear about me a memory of the many solemn hours I thus spent alone with the master of the House of Usher. Yet I should fail in any attempt to convey an idea of the exact character of the studies, or of the occupations, in which he involved me, or led me the way. An excited and highly distempered ideality threw a sulphureous lustre over all. His long, improvised dirges will ring forever in my ears. Among other things, I hold painfully in mind a certain singular perversion and amplification of the wild air of the last waltz of Von Weber. From the paintings over which his elaborate fancy brooded, and which grew, touch by touch, into vaguenesses at which I shuddered the more thrillingly because I shuddered knowing not why,—from these paintings (vivid as their images now are before me) I would in vain endeavor to educe more than a small portion which should lie within the compass of merely written words. By the utter simplicity, by the nakedness of his designs, he

arrested and overawed attention. If ever mortal painted an idea, that mortal was Roderick Usher. For me at least, in the circumstances then surrounding me, there arose, out of the pure abstractions which the hypochondriac contrived to throw upon his canvas, an intensity of intolerable awe, no shadow of which felt I ever yet in the contemplation of the certainly glowing yet too concrete reveries of Fuseli.

17. One of the phantasmagoric conceptions of my friend, partaking not so rigidly of the spirit of abstraction, may be shadowed forth, although feebly, in words. A small picture presented the interior of an immensely long and rectangular vault or tunnel, with low walls, smooth, white, and without interruption or device. Certain accessory points of the design served well to convey the idea that this excavation lay at an exceeding depth below the surface of the earth. No outlet was observed in any portion of its vast extent, and no torch, or other artificial source of light, was discernible; yet a flood of intense rays rolled throughout, and bathed the whole in a ghastly and inappropriate splendor.

18. I have just spoken of that morbid condition of the auditory nerve which rendered all music intolerable to the sufferer, with the exception of certain effects of stringed instruments. It was, perhaps, the narrow limits to which he thus confined himself upon the guitar, which gave birth, in great measure, to the fantastic character of his performances. But the fervid *facility* of his impromptus could not be so accounted for. They must have been, and were, in the notes as well as in the words of his wild fantasias (for he not unfrequently accompanied himself with rhymed verbal improvisations), the result of that intense mental collectedness and concentration to

which I have previously alluded as observable only in particular moments of the highest artificial excitement. The words of one of these rhapsodies I have easily remembered. I was, perhaps, the more forcibly impressed with it as he gave it, because, in the under or mystic current of its meaning, I fancied that I perceived, and for the first time, a full consciousness, on the part of Usher, of the tottering of his lofty reason upon her throne. The verses, which were entitled “The Haunted Palace,” ran very nearly, if not accurately, thus:—

I.

In the greenest of our valleys
By good angels tenanted,
Once a fair and stately palace—
Radiant palace—reared its head.
In the monarch Thought’s dominion,
It stood there;
Never seraph spread a pinion
Over fabric half so fair.

II.

Banners yellow, glorious, golden,
On its roof did float and flow
(This—all this—was in the olden
Time long ago),
And every gentle air that dallied,
In that sweet day,
Along the ramparts plumed and pallid,
A winged odor went away.

III.

Wanderers in that happy valley
Through two luminous windows saw

Spirits moving musically
To a lute's well-tunèd law,
Round about a throne, where sitting,
Porphyrogene,
In state his glory well befitting,
The ruler of the realm was seen.

IV.

And all with pearl and ruby glowing
Was the fair palace door,
Through which came flowing, flowing, flowing,
And sparkling evermore,
A troop of Echoes, whose sweet duty
Was but to sing,
In voices of surpassing beauty,
The wit and wisdom of their king.

V.

But evil things, in robes of sorrow,
Assailed the monarch's high estate;
(Ah, let us mourn, for never morrow
Shall dawn upon him, desolate!)
And, round about his home, the glory
That blushed and bloomed
Is but a dim-remembered story
Of the old time entombed.

VI.

And travellers now within that valley
Through the red-litten windows see
Vast forms that move fantastically
To a discordant melody;
While, like a ghastly rapid river,
Through the pale door,
A hideous throng rush out forever,
And laugh—but smile no more.

19. I well remember that suggestions arising from

this ballad led us into a train of thought, wherein there became manifest an opinion of Usher's which I mention, not so much on account of its novelty (for other men have thought thus) as on account of the pertinacity with which he maintained it. This opinion, in its general form, was that of the sentience of all vegetable things. But in his disordered fancy, the idea had assumed a more daring character, and trespassed, under certain conditions, upon the kingdom of inorganization. I lack words to express the full extent or the earnest *abandon* of his persuasion. The belief, however, was connected (as I have previously hinted) with the gray stones of the home of his forefathers. The conditions of the sentience had been here, he imagined, fulfilled in the method of collocation of these stones,—in the order of their arrangement, as well as in that of the many fungi which overspread them, and of the decayed trees which stood around; above all, in the long undisturbed endurance of this arrangement, and in its reduplication in the still waters of the tarn. Its evidence—the evidence of the sentience—was to be seen, he said (and I here started as he spoke), in the gradual yet certain condensation of an atmosphere of their own about the waters and the walls. The result was discoverable, he added, in that silent yet importunate and terrible influence which for centuries had moulded the destinies of his family, and which made *him* what I now saw him,—what he was. Such opinions need no comment, and I will make none.

20. Our books—the books which for years had formed no small portion of the mental existence of the invalid—were, as might be supposed, in strict keeping with this character of phantasm. We pored together over such works as the Ververt and

Chartreuse of Gresset; the Belphegor of Machiavelli; the Heaven and Hell of Swedenborg; the Subterranean Voyage of Nicholas Klimm by Holberg; the Chiromancy of Robert Flud, of Jean D'Indaginé, and of De la Chambre; the Journey into the Blue Distance of Tieck; and the City of the Sun of Campanella. One favorite volume was a small octavo edition of the *Directorium Inquisitorum*, by the Dominican Eymeric de Gironne; and there were passages in Pomponius Mela, about the old African Satyrs and Ægipans, over which Usher would sit dreaming for hours. His chief delight, however, was found in the perusal of an exceedingly rare and curious book in quarto Gothic,—the manual of a forgotten church,—the *Vigilæ Mortuorum secundum Chorum Ecclesiæ Maguntinæ*.

21. I could not help thinking of the wild ritual of this work, and of its probable influence on the hypochondriac, when one evening, having informed me abruptly that the lady Madeline was no more, he stated his intention of preserving her corpse for a fortnight (previously to its final interment), in one of the numerous vaults within the main walls of the building. The worldly reason, however, assigned for this singular proceeding was one which I did not feel at liberty to dispute. The brother had been led to his resolution (so he told me) by consideration of the unusual character of the malady of the deceased, of certain obtrusive and eager inquiries on the part of her medical men, and of the remote and exposed situation of the burial-ground of the family. I will not deny that when I called to mind the sinister countenance of the person whom I met upon the staircase, on the day of my arrival at the house, I had no desire to oppose what I regarded as at best but a harmless, and by no means an unnatural, precaution.

22. At the request of Usher, I personally aided him in the arrangements for the temporary entombment. The body having been encoffined, we two alone bore it to its rest. The vault in which we placed it (and which had been so long unopened that our torches, half smothered in its oppressive atmosphere, gave us little opportunity for investigation) was small, damp, and entirely without means of admission for light; lying, at great depth, immediately beneath that portion of the building in which was my own sleeping apartment. It had been used apparently, in remote feudal times, for the worst purposes of a donjon-keep, and in later days as a place of deposit for powder, or some other highly combustible substance, as a portion of its floor, and the whole interior of a long archway through which we reached it, were carefully sheathed with copper. The door, of massive iron, had been also similarly protected. Its immense weight caused an unusually sharp grating sound as it moved upon its hinges.

23. Having deposited our mournful burden upon tressels within this region of horror, we partially turned aside the yet unscrewed lid of the coffin, and looked upon the face of the tenant. A striking similitude between the brother and sister now first arrested my attention; and Usher, divining, perhaps, my thoughts, murmured out some few words from which I learned that the deceased and himself had been twins, and that sympathies of a scarcely intelligible nature had always existed between them. Our glances, however, rested not long upon the dead, for we could not regard her unawed. The disease which had thus entombed the lady in the maturity of youth, had left, as usual in all maladies of a strictly cataleptical character, the mockery of a faint blush upon the bosom and the face, and that suspiciously

lingering smile upon the lip which is so terrible in death. We replaced and screwed down the lid, and having secured the door of iron, made our way, with toil, into the scarcely less gloomy apartments of the upper portion of the house.

24. And now, some days of bitter grief having elapsed, an observable change came over the features of the mental disorder of my friend. His ordinary manner had vanished. His ordinary occupations were neglected or forgotten. He roamed from chamber to chamber with hurried, unequal, and objectless step. The pallor of his countenance had assumed, if possible, a more ghastly hue, but the luminousness of his eye had utterly gone out. The once occasional huskiness of his tone was heard no more; and a tremulous quaver, as if of extreme terror, habitually characterized his utterance. There were times, indeed, when I thought his unceasingly agitated mind was laboring with some oppressive secret, to divulge which he struggled for the necessary courage. At times, again, I was obliged to resolve all into the mere inexplicable vagaries of madness, for I beheld him gazing upon vacancy for long hours, in an attitude of the profoundest attention, as if listening to some imaginary sound. It was no wonder that his condition terrified—that it infected me. I felt creeping upon me, by slow yet certain degrees, the wild influences of his own fantastic yet impressive superstitions.

25. It was, especially, upon retiring to bed late in the night of the seventh or eighth day after the placing of the lady Madeline within the donjon, that I experienced the full power of such feelings. Sleep came not near my couch, while the hours waned and waned away. I struggled to reason off the

nervousness which had dominion over me. I endeavored to believe that much if not all of what I felt was due to the bewildering influence of the gloomy furniture of the room,—of the dark and tattered draperies which, tortured into motion by the breath of a rising tempest, swayed fitfully to and fro upon the walls, and rustled uneasily about the decorations of the bed. But my efforts were fruitless. An irrepressible tremor gradually pervaded my frame; and at length there sat upon my very heart an incubus of utterly causeless alarm. Shaking this off with a gasp and a struggle, I uplifted myself upon the pillows, and, peering earnestly within the intense darkness of the chamber, hearkened—I know not why, except that an instinctive spirit prompted me—to certain low and indefinite sounds which came, through the pauses of the storm, at long intervals, I knew not whence. Overpowered by an intense sentiment of horror, unaccountable yet unendurable, I threw on my clothes with haste (for I felt that I should sleep no more during the night), and endeavored to arouse myself from the pitiable condition into which I had fallen, by pacing rapidly to and fro through the apartment.

26. I had taken but a few turns in this manner, when a light step on an adjoining staircase arrested my attention. I presently recognized it as that of Usher. In an instant afterward he rapped with a gentle touch at my door, and entered, bearing a lamp. His countenance was, as usual, cadaverously wan—but, moreover, there was a species of mad hilarity in his eyes,—an evidently restrained hysteria in his whole demeanor. His air appalled me—but anything was preferable to the solitude which I had so long endured, and I even welcomed his presence as a relief.

27. “And you have not seen it?” he said abruptly, after having stared about him for some moments in silence,—“you have not then seen it?—but, stay! you shall.” Thus speaking, and having carefully shaded his lamp, he hurried to one of the casements, and threw it freely open to the storm.

28. The impetuous fury of the entering gust nearly lifted us from our feet. It was, indeed, a tempestuous yet sternly beautiful night, and one wildly singular in its terror and its beauty. A whirlwind had apparently collected its force in our vicinity, for there were frequent and violent alterations in the direction of the wind; and the exceeding density of the clouds (which hung so low as to press upon the turrets of the house) did not prevent our perceiving the life-like velocity with which they flew careering from all points against each other, without passing away into the distance. I say that even their exceeding density did not prevent our perceiving this; yet we had no glimpse of the moon or stars, nor was there any flashing forth of the lightning. But the under surfaces of the huge masses of agitated vapor, as well as all terrestrial objects immediately around us, were glowing in the unnatural light of a faintly luminous and distinctly visible gaseous exhalation which hung about and enshrouded the mansion.

29. “You must not—you shall not behold this!” said I shudderingly, to Usher, as I led him with a gentle violence from the window to a seat. “These appearances, which bewilder you, are merely electrical phenomena not uncommon—or it may be that they have their ghastly origin in the rank miasma of the tarn. Let us close this casement; the air is chilling and dangerous to your frame. Here is one of your favorite romances. I will read, and you

shall listen;—and so we will pass away this terrible night together."

30. The antique volume which I had taken up was the "Mad Trist" of Sir Launcelot Canning; but I had called it a favorite of Usher's more in sad jest than in earnest; for, in truth, there is little in its uncouth and unimaginative prolixity which could have had interest for the lofty and spiritual ideality of my friend. It was, however, the only book immediately at hand; and I indulged a vague hope that the excitement which now agitated the hypochondriac might find relief (for the history of mental disorder is full of similar anomalies) even in the extremeness of the folly which I should read. Could I have judged, indeed, by the wild, overstrained air of vivacity with which he hearkened, or apparently hearkened, to the words of the tale, I might well have congratulated myself upon the success of my design.

31. I had arrived at that well-known portion of the story where Ethelred, the hero of the Trist, having sought in vain for peaceable admission into the dwelling of the hermit, proceeds to make good an entrance by force. Here, it will be remembered, the words of the narrative run thus:—

32. "And Ethelred, who was by nature of a doughty heart, and who was now mighty withal on account of the powerfulness of the wine which he had drunken, waited no longer to hold parley with the hermit, who, in sooth, was of an obstinate and maliceful turn, but, feeling the rain upon his shoulders, and fearing the rising of the tempest, uplifted his mace outright and with blows made quickly room in the plankings of the door for his gauntleted hand; and now, pulling therewith sturdily, he so cracked, and ripped, and tore all asunder, that the noise of the dry

and hollow-sounding wood alarumed and reverberated throughout the forest."

33. At the termination of this sentence I started, and for a moment paused; for it appeared to me (although I at once concluded that my excited fancy had deceived me)—it appeared to me that from some very remote portion of the mansion there came, indistinctly, to my ears, what might have been in its exact similarity of character the echo (but a stifled and dull one certainly) of the very cracking and ripping sound which Sir Launcelot had so particularly described. It was, beyond doubt, the coincidence alone which had arrested my attention; for, amid the rattling of the sashes of the casements, and the ordinary commingled noises of the still increasing storm, the sound, in itself, had nothing, surely, which should have interested or disturbed me. I continued the story:—

34. "But the good champion Ethelred, now entering within the door, was so enraged and amazed to perceive no signal of the maliceful hermit; but, in the stead thereof, a dragon of a scaly and prodigious demeanor, and of a fiery tongue, which sate in guard before a palace with a floor of silver; and upon the wall there hung a shield of shining brass with this legend enwritten:—

> Who entereth herein, a conqueror hath bin;
> Who slayeth the dragon, the shield he shall win.

And Ethelred uplifted his mace, struck upon the head of the dragon, which fell before him, and gave up his pesty breath, with a shriek so horrid and harsh, and withal so piercing, that Ethelred had fain to close his ears with his hands against the dreadful noise of it,

the like whereof was never before heard."

35. Here again I paused abruptly, and now with a feeling of wild amazement, for there could be no doubt whatever that, in this instance, I did actually hear (although from what direction it proceeded I found it impossible to say) a low and apparently distant, but harsh, protracted, and most unusual screaming or grating sound,—the exact counterpart of what my fancy had already conjured up for the dragon's unnatural shriek as described by the romancer.

36. Oppressed as I certainly was, upon the occurrence of this second and most extraordinary coincidence, by a thousand conflicting sensations, in which wonder and extreme terror were predominant, I still retained sufficient presence of mind to avoid exciting, by any observation, the sensitive nervousness of my companion. I was by no means certain that he had noticed the sounds in question; although, assuredly, a strange alteration had during the last few minutes taken place in his demeanor. From a position fronting my own, he had gradually brought round his chair, so as to sit with his face to the door of the chamber; and thus I could but partially perceive his features, although I saw that his lips trembled as if he were murmuring inaudibly. His head had dropped upon his breast; yet I knew that he was not asleep, from the wide and rigid opening of the eye as I caught a glance of it in profile. The motion of his body, too, was at variance with this idea, for he rocked from side to side with a gentle yet constant and uniform sway. Having rapidly taken notice of all this, I resumed the narrative of Sir Launcelot, which thus proceeded:—

37. "And now the champion, having escaped from

the terrible fury of the dragon, bethinking himself of the brazen shield, and of the breaking up of the enchantment which was upon it, removed the carcass from out of the way before him, and approached valorously over the silver pavement of the castle to where the shield was upon the wall; which in sooth tarried not for his full coming, but fell down at his feet upon the silver floor, with a mighty great and terrible ringing sound."

38. No sooner had these syllables passed my lips than—as if a shield of brass had indeed, at the moment, fallen heavily upon a floor of silver—I became aware of a distinct, hollow, metallic, and clangorous yet apparently muffled reverberation. Completely unnerved, I leaped to my feet; but the measured rocking movement of Usher was undisturbed. I rushed to the chair in which he sat. His eyes were bent fixedly before him, and throughout his whole countenance there reigned a stony rigidity. But, as I placed my hand upon his shoulder, there came a strong shudder over his whole person; a sickly smile quivered about his lips; and I saw that he spoke in a low, hurried, and gibbering murmur, as if unconscious of my presence. Bending closely over him, I at length drank in the hideous import of his words.

39. "Not hear it?—yes, I hear it, and *have* heard it. Long—long—long—many minutes, many hours, many days, have I heard it, yet I dared not—oh, pity me, miserable wretch that I am!—I dared not—I *dared* not speak! *We have put her living in the tomb!* Said I not that my senses were acute? I *now* tell you that I heard her first feeble movements in the hollow coffin. I heard them—many, many days ago—yet I dared not—*I dared not speak!* And now—to-night—

Ethelred—ha! ha!—the breaking of the hermit's door, and the death-cry of the dragon, and the clangor of the shield!—say rather, the rending of her coffin, and the grating of the iron hinges of her prison, and her struggles within the coppered archway of the vault! Oh, whither shall I fly? Will she not be here anon? Is she not hurrying to upbraid me for my haste? Have I not heard her footsteps on the stair? Do I not distinguish that heavy and horrible beating of her heart? Madman!"—here he sprang furiously to his feet, and shrieked out his syllables, as if in the effort he were giving up his soul —"*Madman! I tell you that she now stands without the door!*"

40. As if in the superhuman energy of his utterance there had been found the potency of a spell, the huge antique panels to which the speaker pointed threw slowly back, upon the instant, their ponderous and ebony jaws. It was the work of the rushing gust—but then without those doors there *did* stand the lofty and enshrouded figure of the lady Madeline of Usher! There was blood upon her white robes, and the evidence of some bitter struggle upon every portion of her emaciated frame. For a moment she remained trembling and reeling to and fro upon the threshold—then, with a low moaning cry, fell heavily inward upon the person of her brother, and, in her violent and now final death agonies, bore him to the floor a corpse, and a victim to the terrors he had anticipated.

41. From that chamber and from that mansion I fled aghast. The storm was still abroad in all its wrath as I found myself crossing the old causeway. Suddenly there shot along the path a wild light, and I turned to see whence a gleam so unusual could have issued;

for the vast house and its shadows were alone behind me. The radiance was that of the full, setting, and blood-red moon, which now shone vividly through that once barely discernible fissure, of which I have before spoken as extending from the roof of the building, in a zigzag direction, to the base. While I gazed, this fissure rapidly widened—there came a fierce breath of the whirlwind—the entire orb of the satellite burst at once upon my sight—my brain reeled as I saw the mighty walls rushing asunder—there was a long, tumultuous shouting sound like the voice of a thousand waters—and the deep and dank tarn at my feet closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the "*House of Usher*."

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. State as briefly as possible the impression made upon you by the story under consideration.

2. Cite passages which are most effective in making this impression.

3. Do you find any jarring elements which tend to mar the single impression?

4. Does the story approach any types besides that of the impressionistic?

5. Mention any weak points you discover.

6. Write about three hundred words on the merits of the story.

7. Try to find an impressionistic story in some present-day magazine.

8. Criticise Poe's language, in general and in particular.

9. Would either of these stories be popular if written to-day by an unknown author?

10. Would cutting improve either of these stories? If so, say where.

11. Compare Hawthorne's style with that of Poe.

12. Which story do you prefer, and why?

TEN REPRESENTATIVE IMPRESSIONISTIC STORIES

"The Luck of Roaring Camp," Bret Harte, in *The Luck of Roaring Camp and Other Stories*.

"The Father," Björnstjerne Björnson, translated in *Stories by Foreign Authors, Scandinavian*.

"A Journey," Edith Wharton, in *The Greater Inclination*.

"The Brushwood Boy," Rudyard Kipling, in *The Day's Work*.

"The Great Stone Face," Nathaniel Hawthorne, in *The Snow-Image and Other Twice-Told Tales*.

"A Passion in the Desert," Honoré de Balzac, translated in *Little French Masterpieces, Balzac*.

"The Pit and the Pendulum," Edgar Allan Poe, in *Tales*.

"The Silent Woman," Leopold Kompert, translated in *Modern Ghosts*.

"Jesus Christ in Flanders," Honoré de Balzac, translated in *Little French Masterpieces, Balzac*.

"Silence," Leonid Andreyev, translated in *Short-Story Masterpieces*.

VII
CHARACTER STUDIES

The Piece of String.—Guy de Maupassant

The Substitute.—François Coppée

> Most of us, in actual life, are accustomed to distinguish people who are worth our while from people who are not; and those of us who live advisedly are accustomed to shield ourselves from people who cannot, by the mere fact of what they are, repay us for the expenditure of time and energy we should have to make to know them. And whenever a friend of ours asks us deliberately to meet another friend of his, we take it for granted that our friend has reasons for believing that the acquaintanceship will be of benefit or of interest to both. Now the novelist stands in the position of a friend who asks us to meet certain people whom he knows; and he runs the risk of our losing faith in his judgment unless we find his people worth our while.... He ... owes us an assurance that they shall be even more worth while than the average actual person.—CLAYTON HAMILTON, *Materials and Methods of Fiction*.

CHARACTER STUDIES

A character-study, whether in the form of a sketch, a tale, or a short-story, attempts to reveal individual human nature by the unfolding of the story.

In the sketch it will be a photograph of character in a striking mood, under stress of emotion, or just before, or during, or after a crisis that is peculiarly suited to showing either the full character or one of its interesting phases. Some photographs consist of bold masses of light and shade, others are so handled

as to bring out a multitude of details. The sketch allows in a literary way the same methods of treatment, but the typical sketch avoids unnecessary minutiæ.

The tale is also a photograph, but instead of being a single stationary picture, it is a moving-picture, delineating character by a chain of incidents which allow us to see what the characters are by what they do. True to the type of the tale, it does not deal with character crisis, but merely reveals character in a series of illuminating deeds.

In the character short-story the author's method is more complicated, for the whole mechanism of the story—introduction, plot, dialogue, and conclusion—are designed to show us the characters under stress of emotion and the results of that emotional arousement. We learn the characters of the characters—for there is a distinction here—by seeing how they act upon each other, how they solve problems, how they meet the crises of life—what effect trouble or joy has upon them—and the final outcome of it all. It is like studying a human being while he is being subjected to a test, and observing the development of his character, or its failure to stand the test, in that critical moment.

By this it will be seen that a character-study is a story with a purpose—a purpose deeper than that of affording entertainment from the plot. The finest stories are those which so interest us in the action, or plot, of the story proper that the profound character disclosures and changes are borne in upon us while we are watching the progress of the story. It is this subtle balance of narrative and character-study which presents the story-teller's art at its best.

THE PIECE OF STRING

(LA FICELLE)

BY GUY DE MAUPASSANT

Translation by The Editor

Introduction.
Establishes the general setting, and station in life of the characters.

On all the roads around Goderville the peasants and their wives were coming towards the town, for it was market-day. The men swung along at an easy gait, their whole bodies swaying forward with every movement of their long, twisted legs—legs misshapen by hard work: by holding down the plough, which *Minute observation.* throws up the left shoulder while it deforms the figure; by mowing grain, the effort of which spreads the knees too wide apart to permit them to stand quite steady; by all the tedious and laborious tasks of the fields. Their blue blouses, starched and glossy as though varnished, and decorated at collar and cuffs with neat designs in white stitching, puffed out about their bony forms just like balloons all ready to rise, from which protruded a head, two arms, and two legs.

Characterization.

2. Some of the men were leading a cow or a calf at the end of a rope. Following close behind, the wives switched the animals over the back with branches still covered with leaves, in order to quicken their pace. The women carried on their arms great baskets from which the heads of chickens and ducks protruded,*Local-color by character description.* and they walked with a shorter, quicker step than the men—each

withered figure erect and wrapped in a scanty little shawl pinned across her flat bosom, each head done up in a white cloth, bound close about the hair and surmounted by a cap.

3. Now a wagonette passed, drawn by a nag at a fitful trot, grotesquely shaking up the two men seated side by side, and the woman in the back of the vehicle, who clutched its sides to lessen the rough jolting.

Local-color.

4. In the Goderville market-place there was a great crowd—a medley of man and beast. The horns of the cattle, the high, long-napped hats of the prosperous peasants, and the head-dresses of the women, rose above the level of the throng. And the voices—sharp, shrill, squawking—rose in a wild, incessant clamor, which was dominated now and then by a great guffaw of laughter emitted from the robust chest of some sturdy bumpkin, or by the long-drawn-out lowing of a cow tethered to the wall of a house.

5. Everything there smelled of the stable—the milk, the manure, the hay, the sweat, gave forth that acrid, offensive odor of man and animal so peculiar to dwellers of the fields.

Chief Character.

6. Master Hauchecorne, of Bréauté, had just arrived at Goderville, and was moving toward the square, when he observed a little piece of string on the ground. Economical, like a true Norman, *The Normans are said to be typically "ambitious, positive, bold, tricky, economical."* Master Hauchecorne thought that everything which could be used was worth saving; so he stooped down painfully, for he suffered from rheumatism, picked

up from the dirt the insignificant scrap of twine, and was just about to roll it *Foundation Plot Incident.* up with care when he noticed Master Malandin, the harness-maker, standing on his doorstep looking at him. *Chief Complication.* Once the two men had had a difference over the matter of a halter, and ever since they had remained angry with each other, cherishing their spite. Master Hauchecorne was seized with a sort of shame at having his enemy thus see him searching in the mud for a mere scrap of string. He therefore hastily *Resultant Complication.* hid away his find in his blouse, and then in his breeches-pocket. At the same time he pretended to be still searching in the dirt for something which he had not been able to find. Finally he moved on toward the market-place, his head thrust forward, his body bent double by his pains.

Local-color.

7. In a moment he was lost in the slowly shifting, noisy throng, agitated by its own constant chafferings. The peasants felt of the cows, turned away, came back again, much puzzled—always fearful of being over-reached in the bargain, never reaching a decision, watching the eye of the vendor, *See note on* ¶6. seeking ever to unmask the ruse of the man and the defect in his animal.

8. The women, having set their huge baskets at their feet, took out their poultry, which they laid on the ground with legs tied together, terror-stricken eyes, and scarlet combs.

9. They listened to offers, maintaining their price with a keen air but impassive face, or else suddenly deciding to take the counter offer, crying out to the slowly retreating customer:

10. “It’s settled, Master Anthime, I’ll give them to you!”

11. At length, little by little, the square became empty, and when the Angelus sounded noon, those who lived too far away to go home repaired to the inns.

Setting for main crisis.

12. At Jourdain’s, the large hall was crowded with diners, while the great courtyard was full of vehicles of every sort—carts, gigs, wagonettes, tilburies, traps, nameless carriages, yellow with mud, shapeless, patched, shafts pointing to heaven like two arms, or with noses in the ground and backs in the air.

13. Right opposite the diners at table, the immense fireplace, all brightly aflame, cast a lively warmth on the backs of those ranged along the right. Three spits were turning, laden with chickens, pigeons, and legs of mutton; and a delectable odor of roasting meat, and of juices streaming over the browned skin, rose from the hearth, kindled good humor and made everyone’s mouth water.

Note how the author gathers the people to witness the crisis.

14. All the aristocracy of the plough were eating there, at ***Maît’ Jourdain’s,****Maît’—colloquial abbreviation for Maître, equal here to “Mine Host.”* inn-keeper and horse-trader—a sly fellow who had made money.

15. The dishes went round, and, like the jugs of yellow cider, were emptied. Everyone told of his affairs: his sales and his purchases. They exchanged news of the crops—the weather was good for vegetables, but a trifle wet for wheat.

Approach of crisis.

16. Suddenly the roll of a drum sounded in the courtyard before the house. Instantly everyone was on his feet,*Typical of their class.* save a few indifferent ones, and ran to the door or to the windows, with mouth still full and napkin in hand.

17. After the public crier had ended his tattoo, he shouted out in a jerky voice, making his pauses at the wrong time:

Preparation for crisis.

18. “Be it known to the people of Goderville, and in general to all—persons present at the market, that there was lost this morning, upon the Beuzeville road between—nine and ten o’clock, a black leather pocketbook, containing five hundred francs and some business papers. You are requested to return it —to the mayor’s office, without delay, or to Master Fortuné Houlbrèque of Manneville. There will be twenty francs reward.”

19. Then the man went away. Once again was heard afar the muffled roll of the drum and the faint voice of the crier.

20. Then they began to talk over the incident, estimating the chances Master Houlbrèque had of recovering or of not recovering his pocketbook. Meanwhile the meal went on.

21. They were finishing coffee when the corporal of gendarmes appeared in the doorway.

22. He asked:

Closer approach of crisis.

23. “Master Hauchecorne of Bréauté—is he here?”

24. Master Hauchecorne, who was seated at the other end of the table, replied:

25. “That’s me.”

26. And the corporal replied:

27. “Master Hauchecorne, will you have the goodness to go with me to the mayor’s office. *Monsieur le maire* would like to speak with you.”

Note how throughout the author emphasizes physical characteristics as indicating character.
Minute observation.

28. The peasant—surprised, disturbed—drained his glass at a gulp, got up, and, more doubled up than in the morning, because the first steps after a rest were always particularly difficult, he started off, repeating:

29. “That’s me, that’s me,” and he followed the corporal.

30. The mayor was awaiting him, seated in an armchair. He was the notary of the place, a large man, grave, and pompous in speech.

Full Crisis.

31. “Master Hauchecorne,” said he, “you were seen to pick up this morning, on the Beuzeville road, the pocketbook lost by Master Houlbrèque, of Manneville.”

32. The countryman, speechless, stared at the mayor, already terrified by this suspicion which rested upon him without his understanding why.

33. “Me, me, I picked up that pocketbook?”

34. “Yes, exactly you.”

35. “Word of honor, I ain’t even so much as seen it.”

36. “You were seen.”

37. “They saw me, me? Who’s it 'as seen me?”

Note how the complication is involved by personal prejudice.

38. “Monsieur Malandin, the harness-maker.”

39. Then the old man remembered, and understood. Reddening with rage, he cried:

40. “Ah! he saw me, that cad! He saw me pick up this here string—look, *m’sieu le maire*.”

41. And, fumbling at the bottom of his pocket, he pulled out the little bit of cord.

42. But the mayor, incredulous, shook his head.

43. “You will not make me believe, Master Hauchecorne, that Monsieur Malandin, who is a man worthy of belief, has mistaken that bit of string for a pocketbook.”

44. The peasant, furious, raised his hand and spat to one side, thus to attest his honor, repeating:

45. “All the same it’s the truth of the good God, the holy truth, *m’sieu le maire*. There! Upon my soul and my salvation, I say it again.”

46. The mayor replied:

Circumstantial evidence. The miser’s character helps condemn him unjustly.

47. “After having picked the thing up, you even hunted a long time in the mud to see if some piece of money had not fallen out.”

48. The good man choked with indignation and fear.

49. “How can anyone tell—how can anyone tell—lies like that to misrepresent an honest man! How can anyone tell—”

50. However he might protest, no one believed him.

51. He was confronted with Monsieur Malandin, who repeated and sustained his affirmation. They railed at each other for a whole hour. At his own request, Master Hauchecorne was searched. They found nothing upon him.

Suspense.

52. At last, the mayor, greatly perplexed, sent him away, with the warning that he would advise the public prosecutor, and ask for orders.

53. The news had spread. When he came out of the mayor's office the old man was surrounded and questioned with a curiosity either serious or bantering, but into which not the least indignation entered. And he began to recount the history of the piece of string. No one believed him. They laughed.

Tone of story.

54. He went on, halted by everyone, stopping his acquaintances, renewing endlessly his recital and his protestations, showing his pockets turned inside out to prove that he had nothing.

Note Maupassant's use of the short paragraph.

55. They said to him:

56. "G'long, you old rascal!"

57. And he grew angry, working himself into exasperation, into a fever, desperate at not being believed, not knowing what to do, and always repeating his story.

58. Night came on. He must go home. He started out with three neighbors to whom he showed the place

where he had picked up the piece of string; and all along the road he kept talking of his adventure.

59. That evening, he made a round of the village of Bréauté, in order to tell everyone of the matter. He encountered none but unbelievers.

60. He was ill of it all night.

61. The next day, about one o'clock in the afternoon, Marius Paumelle, a farm-hand of Master Breton's, the market-gardener at Ymauville, returned the pocketbook and its contents to Master Houlbrèque, of Manneville.

Apparent resolution of the complication.

62. This man asserted, in substance, that he had found the article on the road; but, not being able to read, he had carried it home and given it to his employer.

63. The news spread to the suburbs. Master Hauchecorne was informed of it. He set himself at once to journeying about and commenced to narrate his story as completed by the denouement. He was triumphant.

64. "Wha' made me feel bad," he said, "wasn't the thing itself, you understand, but it was the lies. There's nothing hurts you like being blamed for a lie."

Tone of story.

65. All day long he talked of his adventure, he recounted it on the roadways to the people who passed, at the tavern to the folks who drank, at the dismissal of church on the following Sunday. *Foundation for Climax.* He even button-holed strangers to tell it to

them.

Resultant Complication.

Now, he was tranquil, and yet something else bothered him without his being able to tell precisely what. People did not seem to be convinced. He felt as if they gossiped behind his back.

66. On Tuesday of the following week, he went to the Goderville market, solely impelled by the desire to relate his story. Malandin, standing in his doorway, began to laugh when he saw him pass. Why?

67. He accosted a farmer of Criquetot who would not let him finish, but giving him a dig in the pit of the stomach, cried out in his face, “G’long, you great rogue!” Then he turned on his heel.

Peasant simplicity.

68. Master Hauchecorne stood speechless, growing more and more disturbed. Why had he called him “great rogue”?

69. When seated at table at Jourdain’s tavern, he again began to explain the affair.

70. A Montivilliers horse-dealer called out to him:

71. “Go on, go on, you old trickster, I know you, and your piece of string!”

72. Hauchecorne stammered, “But—they—found it, the pocketbook!”

73. But the other retorted:

Denouement as to the resultant complication.
Final Complication.

74. “Be quiet, daddy! There’s one who finds it, and one who takes it back. No one sees it, no one recognizes it, no one is the wiser for it.”

75. The peasant sat dumbfounded. He understood at last. They accused him of having returned the pocketbook by a confederate, an accomplice.

76. He tried to protest. Everyone at the table began to laugh.

77. He could not finish his dinner, and left amidst their mockeries.

78. He returned home, ashamed and indignant, strangled by his anger, by his confusion, and all the more thunderstruck because, with his Norman cunning, he was quite capable of having done the thing of which they had accused him, and even of boasting of it as a good trick.*Key.* It appeared to him confusedly as impossible to prove his innocence, for his trickery was well known. And he felt struck to the heart with the injustice of the suspicion.

Tone.

79. Again he began to tell of his adventure, every day lengthening his recital, advancing each time new proofs, more energetic protestations, and more solemn oaths which he conjured up in his hours of solitude—his mind was occupied solely by the story of the piece of string.*Key.* They believed him all the less as his defense became more complicated and his reasoning more fine-spun.

Complication summarized.

80. “Ha, they are liar’s reasons!” they said behind his back.

81. He realized it; he fretted over it; he exhausted himself in futile efforts.

82. He visibly wasted away.

83. The wags now made him recite “The Piece of String” for their amusement, as one persuades a soldier who has been through a campaign, to tell the story of his battles. His mind, attacked at its foundations, began to totter.

84. Towards the end of December he took to his bed.

85. During the first days of January he died, and, in the delirium of his mortal agony he protested his innocence, repeating:

Climax.

86. “—a li’l’ piece of string ... a li’l’ piece of string ... see, here it is, *m’sieu le maire*.”

COPPÉE AND HIS WRITINGS

François Edouard Joachim Coppée was born in Paris, January 12, 1842. He was educated at the *Lycée St. Louis*, and early attracted attention by his poetic gifts. He held office as Librarian of the Senate, and also Guardian of the Archives at the *Comédie Française*. The honors of membership in the French Academy and that of being decorated with the Cross of the Legion of Honor were given him in 1883 and 1888 respectively. He died May 23, 1908.

François Coppée was a poet, dramatist, and short-story writer. The collection *Poèmes Modernes*, published at the age of twenty-seven, contains some remarkable work which well represents his talent.

The plays *Madame de Maintenon* and *Le Luthier de Crémone* rank with his best dramatic work. Among his short-story gems are "The Sabots of Little Wolff," "At Table," "Two Clowns," "The Captain's Vices," "My Friend Meurtrier," "An Accident," and "The Substitute."

As a novelist, Coppée left no permanent mark upon his times, for in this field he was far surpassed by his contemporaries; but as a writer of little prose fictions, he stands well forward among that brilliant group which includes those immortals of the short-story—Maupassant, Daudet, and Mérimée. From the work of these masters, Coppée's is well distinguished. The Norman Maupassant drew his lines with a sharper pencil, and, by the same token, an infinitely harder one; Daudet, child of Provence though he was, dipped his stylus more often in the acid of satire; and the Parisian Mérimée, though nearer than any other to Coppée in his manner of work, was less in sympathy with his own characters than the warmer-hearted author of "The Sabots of Little Wolff" and "The Substitute"—which follows in a translation by the author of this volume. Coppée was almost an idealist—certainly he was quick to respond to the call of the ideal in his themes. Amidst so much that is sordid and gross in French fiction, how refreshing it is to read a master who could be truthful without wallowing, moral without sermonizing, compassionate without sniveling, humorous without buffooning, and always disclose in his stories the spirit of a sympathetic lover of mankind. Like Dickens, he chose the lowly for his characters, and like Dickens, he found poetry in their

simple lives.

> In common with other modern French writers, with Daudet, Maupassant, and others, Coppée excels in the writing of tales. His prose is remarkable for the same qualities that appear in his poetical works: sympathy, tenderness, marked predilection for the weak, the humble, and especially a masterly treatment of subjects essentially Parisian and modern.—ROBERT SANDERSON, *François Coppée*, in WARNER'S *Library of the World's Best Literature*.

> Compassion is the chief quality of this little masterpiece,—compassion and understanding of a primitive type of character. The author shows us the good in a character not altogether bad; and he almost makes us feel that the final sacrifice was justifiable. He succeeds in doing this chiefly because he shows us the other characters only as they appeared to Jean François, thus focusing the interest of the reader on this single character.—BRANDER MATTHEWS, *The Short-story*.

> More than Daudet, Coppée deserves the title of the French Dickens. A fellow member of the French Academy, José de Heredia, calls him "the poet of the humble, painting with sincere emotion his profound sympathy for the sorrows, the miseries, and the sacrifices of the meek." As an artist in fiction, says Heredia, "Coppée possesses preëminently the gift of presenting concrete fact rather than abstraction," and a "great grasp of character," enabling him "to show us the

human heart and intellect in full play and activity"—both of which endowments were the supreme characteristics of the author of *Nicholas Nickleby* and *David Copperfield*.—MERION M. MILLER, Introduction to *The Guilty Man*.

Contrast the touching pathos of the "Substitute," poignant in his magnificent self-sacrifice, by which the man who has conquered his shameful past goes back willingly to the horrible life he has fled from, that he may save from a like degradation and from an inevitable moral decay the one friend he has in the world, all unworthy as this friend is—contrast this with the story of the gigantic deeds "My Friend Meurtrier" boasts about unceasingly, not knowing that he has been discovered in his little round of daily domestic duties—making the coffee of his good old mother, and taking her poodle out for a walk.... No doubt M. Coppée's *contes* [stories] have not the sharpness of Maupassant's nor the brilliancy of M. Daudet's. But what of it? They have qualities of their own. They have sympathy, poetry, and a power of suggesting pictures not exceeded, I think, by those of either Maupassant or M. Daudet. M. Coppée's street views in Paris, his interiors, his impressionist sketches of life under the shadow of Notre Dame, are convincingly successful.—BRANDER MATTHEWS, *Aspects of Fiction*.

FURTHER REFERENCES FOR READING ON COPPÉE

Introduction to *Ten Tales by Coppée*, Brander Matthews (1890); *Books and Play-Books*, Brander Matthews (1895); *Literary Movement in France during the Nineteenth Century*, Georges Pellissier (1897); *Hours with Famous Parisians*, Stuart Henry (1897).

FOR ANALYSIS

THE SUBSTITUTE

(LE REMPLAÇANT)

BY FRANÇOIS COPPÉE

Translation by The Editor[27]

He was scarcely ten years old when he was first arrested as a vagabond.

2. Thus he spoke to the judges:

3. I am called Jean François Leturc, and for six months now I've been with the man who sings between two lanterns on the Place de la Bastille, while he scrapes on a string of catgut. I repeat the chorus with him, and then I cry out, 'Get the collection of new songs, ten centimes, two sous!' He was always drunk and beat me; that's why the police found me the other night, in the tumble-down buildings. Before that, I used to be with the man who sells brushes. My mother was a laundress; she called herself Adèle. At one time a gentleman had given her an establishment, on the ground-floor, at Montmartre. She was a good worker and loved me well. She made money because she had the clientele of the café waiters, and those people use lots of linen. Sundays, she would put me to bed early to go

to the ball; but week days, she sent me to the Brothers' school, where I learned to read. Well, at last the *sergent-de-ville* whose beat was up our street, began always stopping before her window to talk to her—a fine fellow, with the Crimean medal. They got married, and all went wrong. He didn't take to me, and set mamma against me. Every one boxed my ears; and it was then that, to get away from home, I spent whole days on the Place Clichy, where I got to know the mountebanks. My stepfather lost his place, mamma her customers; she went to the wash-house to support her man. It was there she got consumption —from the steam of the lye. She died at Lariboisière. She was a good woman. Since that time I've lived with the brush-seller and the catgut-scraper. Are you going to put me in prison?"

4. He talked this way openly, cynically, like a man. He was a ragged little rascal, as tall as a boot, with his forehead hidden under a strange mop of yellow hair.

5. Nobody claimed him, so they sent him to the Reform School.

6. Not very intelligent, lazy, above all maladroit with his hands, he was able to learn there only a poor trade—the reseating of chairs. Yet he was obedient, of a nature passive and taciturn, and he did not seem to have been too profoundly corrupted in that school of vice. But when, having come to his seventeenth year, he was set free again on the streets of Paris, he found there, for his misfortune, his prison comrades, all dreadful rascals, exercising their low callings. Some were trainers of dogs for catching rats in the sewers; some shined shoes on ball nights in the Passage de l'Opéra; some were amateur wrestlers, who let themselves be thrown by the Hercules of the

side-shows; some fished from rafts out in the river, in the full sunlight. He tried all these things a little, and a few months after he had left the house of correction he was arrested anew for a petty theft: a pair of old shoes lifted from out an open shop-window. Result: a year of prison at Sainte-Pélagie, where he served as valet to the political prisoners.

7. He lived, astonished, among this group of prisoners, all very young and negligently clad, who talked in loud voices and carried their heads in such a solemn way. They used to meet in the cell of the eldest of them, a fellow of some thirty years, already locked up for a long time and apparently settled at Sainte-Pélagie: a large cell it was, papered with colored caricatures, and from whose windows one could see all Paris—its roofs, its clock-towers, and its domes, and far off, the distant line of the hills, blue and vague against the sky. There were upon the walls several shelves filled with books, and all the old apparatus of a *salle d'armes*—broken masks, rusty foils, leather jackets, and gloves that were losing their stuffing. It was there that the "politicians" dined together, adding to the inevitable "soup and beef" some fruit, cheese, and half-pints of wine that Jean François went out to buy in a can—tumultuous repasts, interrupted by violent disputes, *Revolutionary songs of 1793.* where they sang in chorus at the dessert the *Carmagnole* and *Ça ira*. They took on, however, an air of dignity on days when they made place for a newcomer, who was at first gravely treated as "*citizen*," but who was the next day *Tu—thou—used only in familiar address.* *tutoyed*, and called by his nickname. They used big words there—Corporation, Solidarity, and phrases all quite unintelligible to Jean François, such as this, for example, which he once heard uttered imperiously by a frightful little hunchback who

scribbled on paper all night long:

8. “It is settled. The cabinet is to be thus composed: Raymond in the Department of Education, Martial in the Interior, and I in Foreign Affairs.”

9. Having served his time, he wandered again about Paris, under the surveillance of the police, in the fashion of beetles that cruel children keep flying at the end of a string. He had become one of those fugitive and timid beings whom the law, with a sort of coquetry, arrests and releases, turn and turn about, a little like those platonic fishermen who, so as not to empty the pond, throw back into the water the fish just out of the net. Without his suspecting that so much honor was done to his wretched personality, he had a special docket in the mysterious archives of *Police headquarters.* *la rue de Jérusalem*, his name and surnames were written in a large back-hand on the gray paper of the cover, and the notes and reports, carefully classified, gave him these graded appellations: “the man named Leturc,” “the prisoner Leturc,” and at last “the convicted Leturc.”

The California, a cheap eating-house in Paris.

10. He stayed two years out of prison, dining *à la Californie*, sleeping in lodging-houses, and sometimes in lime-kilns, and taking part with his fellows in endless games of pitch-penny on the boulevards near the city gates. He wore a greasy cap on the back of his head, carpet slippers, and a short white blouse. When he had five sous, he had his hair curled. He danced at Constant’s at Montparnasse; bought for two sous the jack-of-hearts or the ace-of-spades, which were used as return checks, to resell them for four sous at the door of Bobino; opened carriage-

doors as occasion offered; led about sorry nags at the horse-market.*In drawing lots for military service the higher numbers give exemption, and this he secured by drawing "a good number."* Of all the bad luck—in the conscription he drew a good number. Who knows whether the atmosphere of honor which is breathed in a regiment, whether military discipline, might not have saved him? Caught in a haul of the police-net with the younger vagabonds who used to rob the drunkards asleep in the streets, he denied very energetically having taken part in their expeditions. It was perhaps true. But his antecedents were accepted in lieu of proof, and he was sent up for three years to Poissy. There he had to make rough toys, had himself tattooed on the chest, and learned thieves' slang and the penal code. A new liberation, a new plunge into the Parisian sewer, but very short this time, for at the end of hardly six weeks he was again compromised in a theft by night, aggravated by violent entry, a doubtful case in which he played an *A receiver of stolen goods.* obscure rôle, half dupe and half fence. On the whole, his complicity seemed evident, and he was condemned to five years' hard labor. His sorrow in this adventure was, chiefly, to be separated from an old dog which he had picked up on a heap of rubbish and cured of the mange. This beast loved him.

Straw was stuffed into the sabots to cushion the feet.

11. Toulon, the ball on his ankle, the work in the harbor, the blows from the staves, the wooden shoes without straw, the soup of black beans dating from Trafalgar, no money for tobacco, and the horrible sleep on the filthy camp-bed of the galley slave, that is what he knew for five torrid summers and five winters blown upon by the *The northwest storm-wind from the Mediterranean.**Mistral*. He came out from there stunned,

and was sent under surveillance to Vernon, where he worked for some time on the river; then, an incorrigible vagabond, he broke exile and returned again to Paris.

12. He had his savings, fifty-six francs—that is to say, time enough to reflect. During his long absence, his old and horrible comrades had been dispersed. He was well hidden, and slept in a loft at an old woman's, to whom he had represented himself as a sailor weary of the sea, having lost his papers in a recent shipwreck, and who wished to essay another trade. His tanned face, his calloused hands, and a few nautical terms he let fall one time or another, made this story sufficiently probable.

13. One day when he had risked a saunter along the streets, and when the chance of his walk had brought him to Montmartre, where he had been born, an unexpected memory arrested him before the door of the Brothers' school in which he had learned to read. Since it was very warm, the door was open, and with a single glance the passing incorrigible could recognize the peaceful schoolroom. Nothing was changed: neither the bright light shining in through the large windows, nor the crucifix over the desk, nor the rows of seats furnished with leaden ink-stands, nor the table of weights and measures, nor the map on which pins stuck in still pointed out the operations of some ancient war. Heedlessly and without reflecting, Jean François read on the blackboard these words of the Gospel, which a well-trained hand had traced as an example of penmanship:

Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.

14. It was doubtless the hour for recreation, for the Brother professor had left his chair, and, sitting on the edge of a table, he seemed to be telling a story to all the *gamins* who surrounded him, attentive and raising their eyes. What an innocent and gay countenance was that of the beardless young man, in long black robe, with white necktie, with coarse, ugly shoes, and with badly cut brown hair pushed up at the back. All those pallid faces of children of the populace which were looking at him seemed less childlike than his, above all when, charmed with a candid, priestly pleasantry he had made, he broke out with a good and frank peal of laughter, which showed his teeth sound and regular—laughter so contagious that all the scholars broke out noisily in their turn. And it was simple and sweet, this group in the joyous sunlight that made their clear eyes and their blonde hair shine.

15. Jean François looked at the scene some time in silence, and, for the first time, in that savage nature all instinct and appetite, there awoke a mysterious and tender emotion. His heart, that rude, hardened heart, which neither the cudgel of the galley-master nor the weight of the watchman's heavy whip falling on his shoulders was able to stir, beat almost to bursting. Before this spectacle, in which he saw again his childhood, his eyes closed sadly, and, restraining a violent gesture, a prey to the torture of regret, he walked away with great strides.

16. The words written on the blackboard came back to him.

17. "If it were not too late, after all!" he murmured. "If I could once more, like the others, eat my toasted bread honestly, sleep out my sleep without nightmare? The police spy would be very clever to

recognize me now. My beard, that I shaved off down there, has grown out now thick and strong. One can borrow somewhere in this big ant-heap, and work is not lacking. Whoever does not go to pieces soon in the hell of the galleys comes out agile and robust; and I have learned how to climb the rope-ladders with loads on my back. Building is going on all around here, and the masons need helpers. Three francs a day,—I have never earned so much. That they should forget me, that is all I ask."

18. He followed his courageous resolution, he was faithful to it, and three months afterward he was another man. The master for whom he labored cited him as his best workman. After a long day passed on the scaffolding, in the full sun, in the dust, constantly bending and straightening his back to take the stones from the hands of the man below him and to pass them to the man above him, he went to get his soup, at the cheap eating house, tired out, his legs numb, his hands burning, and his eyelashes stuck together by the plaster, but content with himself, and carrying his well-earned money in the knot of his handkerchief. He went out without fear, for his white mask made him unrecognizable, and, then, he had observed that the suspicious glance of the policeman seldom falls on the real worker. He was silent and sober. He slept the sound sleep of honest fatigue. He was free.

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19. At last—supreme recompense!—he had a friend.

20. It was a mason's helper like himself, named Savinien, a little peasant from Limoges, red-cheeked, who had come to Paris with his stick over his

shoulder and his bundle on the end of it, who fled from the liquor-dealers and went to mass on Sundays. Jean François loved him for his piety, for his candor, for his honesty, for all that he himself had lost, and so long ago. It was a passion profound, reserved, disclosing itself in the care and forethought of a father. Savinien, himself easily moved and self-loving, let things take their course, satisfied only in that he had found a comrade who shared his horror of the wine-shop. The two friends lived together in a furnished room, fairly clean, but their resources were very limited; they had to take into their room a third companion, an old man from Auvergne, sombre and rapacious, who found a way of economizing out of his meagre wages enough to buy some land in his own province.

21. Jean François and Savinien scarcely left each other. On days of rest they took long walks in the environs of Paris and dined in the open air in one of those little country inns where there are plenty of mushrooms in the sauces and innocent enigmas on the bottoms of the plates. There Jean François made his friend tell him all those things of which those born in the cities are ignorant. He learned the names of the trees, the flowers, the plants; the seasons for the different harvests; he listened avidly to the thousand details of a farmer's labors: the autumn's sowing, the winter's work, the splendid *fêtes* of harvest-home and vintage, and the flails beating the ground, and the noise of the mills by the borders of the streams, and the tired horses led to the trough, and the morning hunting in the mists, and, above all, the long evenings around the fire of vine-branches, shortened by tales of wonder. He discovered in himself a spring of imagination hitherto unsuspected, finding a singular delight in the mere recital of these

things, so gentle, calm, and monotonous.

22. One anxiety troubled him, however, that Savinien should not come to know his past. Sometimes there escaped him a shady word of thieves' slang, an ignoble gesture, vestiges of his horrible former existence; and then he felt the pain of a man whose old wounds reopen, more especially as he thought he saw then in Savinien the awakening of an unhealthy curiosity. When the young man, already tempted by the pleasures which Paris offers even to the poorest, questioned him about the mysteries of the great city, Jean François feigned ignorance and turned the conversation; but he had now conceived a vague inquietude for the future of his friend.

23. This was not without foundation, and Savinien could not long remain the naïve rustic he had been on his arrival in Paris. If the gross and noisy pleasures of the wine-shop always were repugnant to him, he was profoundly troubled by other desires full of danger for the inexperience of his twenty years. When the spring came, he began to seek solitude, and at first he wandered before the gayly lighted entrances to the dancing-halls, through which he saw the girls going in couples, without bonnets—and with their arms around each other's waists, whispering low. Then, one evening, when the lilacs shed their perfume, and the appeal of the quadrilles was more entrancing, he crossed the threshold, and after that Jean François saw him change little by little in manners and in visage. Savinien became more frivolous, more extravagant; often he borrowed from his friend his miserable savings, which he forgot to repay. Jean François, feeling himself abandoned, was both indulgent and jealous; he

suffered and kept silent. He did not think he had the right to reproach; but his penetrating friendship had cruel and insurmountable presentiments.

24. One evening when he was climbing the stairs of his lodging, absorbed in his preoccupations, he heard in the room he was about to enter a dialogue of irritated voices, and he recognized one as that of the old man from Auvergne, who lodged with him and Savinien. An old habit of suspicion made him pause on the landing, and he listened to learn the cause of the trouble.

25. “Yes,” said the man from Auvergne angrily, “I am sure that some one has broken open my trunk and stolen the three louis which I had hidden in a little box; and the man who has done this thing can only be one of the two companions who sleep here, unless it is Maria, the servant. This concerns you as much as me, since you are the master of the house, and I will drag you before the judge if you do not let me at once open up the valises of the two masons. My poor hoard! It was in its place only yesterday; and I will tell you what it was, so that, if we find it, no one can accuse me of lying. Oh, I know them, my three beautiful gold pieces, and I can see them as plainly as I see you. One was a little more worn than the others, of a slightly greenish gold, and that had the portrait of the great Emperor; another had that of a fat old fellow with a queue and epaulets; and the third had a Philippe with side-whiskers. I had marked it with my teeth. No one can trick me, not me. Do you know that I needed only two others like those to pay for my vineyard? Come on, let us look through the things of these comrades, or I will call the police. Make haste!”

26. “All right,” said the voice of the householder;

"we'll search with Maria. So much the worse if you find nothing, and if the masons get angry. It is you who have forced me to it."

27. Jean François felt his heart fill with fear. He recalled the poverty and the petty borrowings of Savinien, the sombre manner he had borne the last few days. Yet he could not believe in any theft. He heard the panting of the man from Auvergne in the ardor of his search, and he clenched his fists against his breast as if to repress the beatings of his heart.

28. "There they are!" suddenly screamed the victorious miser. "There they are, my louis, my dear treasure! And in the Sunday waistcoat of the little hypocrite from Limoges. Look, landlord! they are just as I told you. There's the Napoleon, and the man with the queue, and the Philippe I had dented with my teeth. Look at the mark. Ah, the little rascal with his saintly look! I should more likely have suspected the other. Ah, the villain! He will have to go to the galleys!"

29. At this moment Jean François heard the well-known step of Savinien, who was slowly mounting the stairs.

30. "He is going to his betrayal," thought he. "Three flights. I have time!"

31. And, pushing open the door, he entered, pale as death, into the room where he saw the landlord and the stupefied servant in a corner, and the man from Auvergne on his knees amid the disordered clothes, lovingly kissing his gold pieces.

32. "Enough of this," he said in a thick voice. "It is I who have taken the money and who have put it in my comrade's trunk. But that is too disgusting. I am a thief and not a Judas. Go hunt for the police. I'll

not try to save myself. Only, I must say a word in private to Savinien, who is here."

33. The little man from Limoges had, in fact, just arrived, and, seeing his crime discovered, and believing himself lost, he stood still, his eyes fixed, his arms drooping.

34. Jean François seized him violently about the neck as though to embrace him; he pressed his mouth to Savinien's ear and said to him in a voice low and supplicating:

35. "Be quiet!"

36. Then, turning to the others:

37. "Leave me alone with him. I shall not go away, I tell you. Shut us up, if you wish, but leave us alone."

38. And, with a gesture of command, he showed them the door. They went out.

39. Savinien, broken with anguish, had seated himself on a bed, and dropped his eyes without comprehending.

40. "Listen," said Jean François, who approached to take his hands. "I understand you have stolen three gold pieces to buy some trifle for a girl. That would have cost six months of prison for you. But one does not get out of that except to go back again, and you would have become a pillar of the police tribunals and the courts of assizes. I know all about them. I have done seven years in the Reform School, one year at Sainte-Pélagie, three years at Poissy, and five years at Toulon. Now, have no fear. All is arranged. I have taken this affair on my shoulders."

41. "Unhappy fellow!" cried Savinien; but hope was already coming back to his cowardly heart.

42. “When the elder brother is serving under the colors, the younger does not go,” Jean François went on. “I’m your substitute, that’s all. You love me a little, do you not? I am paid. Do not be a baby. Do not refuse. They would have caught me one of these days, for I have broken my exile. And then, you see, that life out there will be less hard for me than for you; I know it, and shall not complain if I do not render you this service in vain and if you swear to me that you will not do it again. Savinien, I have loved you well, and your friendship has made me very happy, for it is thanks to my knowing you that I have kept honest and straight, as I might have been, perhaps, if I had had, like you, a father to put a tool in my hands, a mother to teach me my prayers. My only regret was that I was useless to you and that I was deceiving you about my past. To-day I lay aside the mask in saving you. It is all right. Come, good-bye! Do not weep; and embrace me, for already I hear the big boots on the stairs. They are returning with the police; and we must not seem to know each other so well before these fellows.”

43. He pressed Savinien hurriedly to his breast, and then he pushed him away as the door opened wide.

44. It was the landlord and the man from Auvergne, who were bringing the police. Jean François started forward to the landing and held out his hands for the handcuffs and said, laughing:

45. “Forward, bad lot!”

46. To-day he is at Cayenne, condemned for life, as an incorrigible.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Write a paragraph showing how character is affected (a) unfavorably and (b) favorably by the two tests, as shown by these two stories.

2. In your opinion, was each character changed or merely revealed by the crisis which occurred in each instance?

3. Which of these stories seems the more real to you?

4. Have you ever heard of a similar instance in real life? If so, cite it.

5. Write a paragraph contrasting the trivial and the important crisis in each story, though both led to important results.

6. Set down all the traits of character exhibited by the two leading actors in each story.

7. Select a character-study from some book or magazine and write a brief discussion of it.

8. Do the same for another character-study by (a) Maupassant, and (b) Coppée.

TEN REPRESENTATIVE CHARACTER STUDIES

"The Captain's Vices," François Coppée, translated in *Ten Tales by Coppée*.

"The Incarnation of Krishna Mulvaney," Rudyard Kipling, in *Soldiers Three*.

"A New England Nun," Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, in volume of

same title.

"The Old Gentleman of the Black Stock," Thomas Nelson Page, *Harper's Magazine*, Oct., 1894.

"The Sick-a-Bed Lady," Eleanor Hallowell Abbott, in volume of same title.

"The Insurgent," Ludovic Halévy, translated in *Short-Story Masterpieces*.

"Caybigan," James Hopper, in volume of same title.

"The Liar," Henry James, in *Short-Story Classics, American*.

"Editha," W. D. Howells, in *Harper's Novelettes*.

"Our Sermon Taster," Ian Maclaren, in *Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush*.

FOOTNOTES:

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VIII
PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDIES

Markheim.—ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

On the Stairs.—ARTHUR MORRISON

He [the author] can sometimes rouse our intense curiosity and eagerness by the mere depiction of a psychological state, as Walter Pater has done in the case of Sebastian Storck and other personages of his *Imaginary Portraits*. The fact that "nothing happens" in stories of this kind may be precisely what most interests us, because we are made to understand what it is that inhibits action.—BLISS PERRY, *A Study of Prose Fiction*.

PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDIES

A subtle distinction is to be observed between the character-study and the psychological study, but it will not be supposed that writers of short-stories plainly label the distinction, or that the two types are frequently, if ever, found entirely separate. In the character-study more attention is paid to the true natures of the actors, and the demonstration of their natures is shown in the action of the story; in the psychological study more stress is laid upon the actual operation of thought, feeling and purpose—it is a laboratory study of what goes on in the human heart, to use a somewhat vague but necessary term, under stress of crisis.

The psychological study is the most difficult because the most penetrating of all short-story forms, and in consequence the most rare in its perfect presentation. To show the processes of reasoning, the interplay of motive, the power of feeling acting upon feeling, and the intricate combinations of these, calls for the most clear-sighted understanding of man, and the utmost skill in literary art, lest the story be lost in a fog of tiresome analysis and discussion. In “Markheim” and “On the Stairs,” two master story-tellers are easily at their best, for they never obtrude their own opinions, but swiftly and with a firm onward movement the stories disclose the true inward workings of the unique characters, while from mood, speech, and action we infallibly infer all the soul-processes by which their conclusions are reached.

MARKHEIM

BY ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Introduction. Remarkable because it at once touches upon the external crisis of the story.

"Yes," said the dealer, "our wind-falls are of various kinds. Some customers are ignorant, and then I touch a dividend on my superior knowledge. Some are dishonest," and here he held up the candle, so that the light fell strongly on his visitor, "and in that case," he continued, "I profit by my virtue."

2. Markheim had but just entered from the daylight streets, and his eyes had not yet grown familiar with the mingled shine and darkness in the shop.*Note double reason.* At these pointed words, and before the near presence of the flame, he blinked painfully and looked aside.

See how daringly the author plays with the reader without arousing suspicion. Compare Stevenson's reasoning as to the reader's suspicions with Dupin's reasoning in "The Purloined Letter," pp. 91, 92.

3. The dealer chuckled. "You come to me on Christmas-day," he resumed, "when you know that I am alone in my house, put up my shutters, and make a point of refusing business. Well, you will have to pay for that; you will have to pay for my loss of time, when I should be balancing my books; you will have to pay, besides, for a kind of manner that I remark in you to-day very strongly. I am the essence of discretion, and ask no awkward questions; but when a customer can not look me in the eye, he has to pay for it." The dealer once more chuckled; and then, changing to his usual business voice, though still with a note of irony,*Markheim has been there before.* "You can

give, as usual, a clean account of how you came into possession of the object?" he continued. "Still your uncle's cabinet? A remarkable collector, sir!"

4. And the little, pale, round-shouldered dealer stood almost on tip-toe, looking over the top of his gold spectacles, and nodding his head with every mark of disbelief. Markheim returned his gaze with one of infinite pity, and a touch of horror.

Forecast.

5. "This time," he said, "you are in error. I have not come to sell, but to buy. I have no curios to dispose of; my uncle's cabinet is bare to the wainscot; even were it still intact, I have done well on the Stock Exchange, and should more likely add to it than otherwise, and my errand to-day is simplicity itself. I seek a Christmas-present for a lady," he continued, waxing more fluent as he struck *Insincerity evident.* into the speech he had prepared; "and certainly I owe you every excuse for thus disturbing you upon so small a matter. But the thing was neglected yesterday; I must produce my little compliment at dinner; and, as you very well know, a rich marriage is not a thing to be neglected."

6. There followed a pause, during which the dealer seemed to weigh this statement incredulously. The ticking of many clocks among the curious lumber of the shop, and the faint rushing of the cabs in a near thoroughfare, filled up the interval of silence.

Compare this setting, as it is gradually unfolded, with that of Gautier's "The Mummy's Foot."

7. "Well, sir," said the dealer, "be it so. You are an old customer after all; and if, as you say, you have the chance of a good marriage, far be it from me to

be an obstacle. Here is a nice thing for a lady now," he went on, "this hand-glass—fifteenth century, warranted; comes from a good collection, too; but I reserve the name, in the interests of my customer, who was just like yourself, my dear sir, the nephew and sole heir of a remarkable collector."

Analyse its nature.

8. The dealer, while he thus ran on in his dry and biting voice, had stooped to take the object from its place; and, as he had done so, a shock had passed through Markheim, a start both of hand and foot, a sudden leap of many tumultuous passions to the face. It passed as swiftly as it came, and left no trace beyond a certain trembling of the hand that now received the glass.

Contributory incident.

9. "A glass," he said, hoarsely, and then paused, and repeated it more clearly. "A glass? For Christmas? Surely not?"

10. "And why not?" cried the dealer. "Why not a glass?"

Forecast.

11. Markheim was looking upon him with an indefinable expression. "You ask me why not?" he said. "Why, look here—look in it—look at yourself! Do you like to see it? No! nor I—nor any man."

12. The little man had jumped back when Markheim had so suddenly confronted him with the mirror; but now, perceiving there was nothing worse on hand, he chuckled. "Your future lady, sir, must be pretty hard favoured," said he.

Note the working of Markheim's morbid conscience, not yet understood by himself.

13. "I ask you," said Markheim, "for a Christmas-present, and you give me this—this damned reminder of years, and sins and follies—this hand-conscience! Did you mean it? Had you a thought in your mind? Tell me. It will be better for you if you do. Come, tell me about yourself. I hazard a guess now, that you are in secret a very charitable man?"

First Moral Crisis.

14. The dealer looked closely at his companion. It was very odd, Markheim did not appear to be laughing; there was something in his face like an eager sparkle of hope, but nothing of mirth.

15. "What are you driving at?" the dealer asked.

16. "Not charitable?" returned the other, gloomily. "Not charitable; not pious; not scrupulous; unloving, unbeloved; a hand to get money, a safe to keep it. Is that all? Dear God, man, is that all?"

17. "I will tell you what it is," began the dealer, with some sharpness, and then broke off again into a chuckle. "But I see this is a love match of yours, and you have been drinking the lady's health."

18. "Ah!" cried Markheim, with a strange curiosity. "Ah, have you been in love? Tell me about that."

Note change of attitude.

19. "I," cried the dealer. "I in love! I never had the time, nor have I the time to-day for all this nonsense. Will you take the glass?"

Analyse the forces back of Markheim's parleying.

20. “Where is the hurry?” returned Markheim. “It is very pleasant to stand here talking; and life is so short and insecure that I would not hurry away from any pleasure—no, not even from so mild a one as this. We should rather cling, cling to what little we can get, like a man at a cliff’s edge. Every second is a cliff, if you think upon it—a cliff a mile high—high enough, if we fall, to dash us out of every feature of humanity. Hence it is best to talk pleasantly. Let us talk of each other; why should we wear this mask? Let us be confidential. Who knows, we might become friends?”

21. “I have just one word to say to you,” said the dealer. “Either make your purchase, or walk out of my shop.”

Note how quickly Markheim follows the unconscious lead.

22. “True, true,” said Markheim. “Enough fooling. To business. Show me something else.”

First External Crisis.

23. The dealer stooped once more, this time to replace the glass upon the shelf, his thin blonde hair falling over his eyes as he did so. Markheim moved a little nearer, with one hand in the pocket of his great-coat; he drew himself up and filled his lungs; at the same time many *Note all these.* different emotions were depicted together on his face—terror, horror and resolve, fascination and a physical repulsion; and through a haggard lift of his upper lip, his teeth looked out.

He was prepared for the crime.

24. “This, perhaps, may suit,” observed the dealer; and then, as he began to re-arise, Markheim bounded

from behind upon his victim. The long, skewerlike dagger flashed and fell. The dealer struggled like a hen, striking his temple on the shelf, and then tumbled on the floor in a heap.

First Minor Climax.

25. Time had some score of small voices in that shop, some stately and slow as was becoming to their great age; others garrulous and hurried. All these told out the seconds in an intricate chorus of tickings. Then the passage of a lad's feet, heavily running on the pavement, broke in upon these smaller voices and startled Markheim into the consciousness of his surroundings. He looked about him awfully. *Beginning of the internal action. Note how all external things now begin to play upon the internal man.* The candle stood on the counter, its flame solemnly wagging in a draught; and by that inconsiderable movement, the whole room was filled with noiseless bustle and kept heaving like a sea: the *Throughout, note Stevenson's rich imagery, and also his unusual vocabulary.* tall shadows nodding, the gross blots of darkness swelling and dwindling as with respiration, the faces of the portraits and the china gods changing and wavering like images in water. The inner door stood ajar, and peered into that leaguer *An unusual word.* of shadows with a long slit of daylight like a pointing finger.

Picture.

26. From these fear-stricken rovings, Markheim's eyes returned to the body of his victim, where it lay both humped and sprawling, incredibly small and strangely meaner than in life. In these poor, miserly clothes, in that ungainly attitude, the dealer lay like so much sawdust.*Evidence of premeditation.* Markheim had feared to see it, and, lo! it was nothing. And yet, as

he gazed, this bundle of old clothes and pool of blood began to find eloquent voices.*Note the interplay of the outward picture and Markheim's mind. Keep before you always the double movement of this study as both progress side by side, finally resulting in the predominance of the spiritual.* There it must lie; there was none to work the cunning hinges or direct the miracle of locomotion—there it must lie till it was found. Found! ay, and then? Then would this dead flesh lift up a cry that would ring over England, and fill the world with the echoes of pursuit. Ay, dead, or not, this was still the enemy. "Time was that when the brains were out," he thought; and the first word struck into his mind. Time, now that the deed was accomplished—time, which had closed for the victim, had become instant and momentous for the slayer.

27. The thought was yet in his mind, when, first one and then another, with every variety of pace and voice—one deep as the bell from a cathedral turret, another ringing on its treble notes the prelude of a waltz—the clocks began to strike the hour of three in the afternoon.

28. The sudden outbreak of so many tongues in that dumb chamber staggered him. He began to bestir himself, going to and fro with the candle, beleaguered by moving shadows, and startled to the soul by chance reflections. In many rich mirrors, some of home designs, some from Venice or Amsterdam, he saw *The old motive reasserts itself.* his face repeated and repeated, as it were an army of spies; his own eyes met and detected him; and the sound of his own steps, lightly as they fell, vexed the surrounding quiet. *Plot Incident.*And still as he continued to fill his pockets, his mind accused him, with a sickening iteration, of the thousand faults of his design.*As fear subsides craft returns.* He should have chosen a

more quiet hour; he should have prepared an alibi; he should not have used a knife; he should have been more cautious, and only bound and gagged the dealer, and not killed him; he should have been more bold, and killed the servant also; he should have done all things otherwise; poignant regrets, weary, incessant toiling of the mind to change what was unchangeable, to plan what was now useless, to be the architect of *A significant expression.* the irrevocable past. Meanwhile, and behind all this activity, brute terrors, like scurrying of rats in a deserted attic, filled the more remote*Contrast physical and moral fear. Consider how the two are related.* chambers of his brain with riot; the hand of the constable would fall heavy on his shoulder, and his nerves would jerk like a hooked fish; or he beheld, in galloping defile, the dock, the prison, the gallows, and the black coffin.

Note the primary use of the word "rumor."

29. Terror of the people in the street sat down before his mind like a besieging army. It was impossible, he thought, but that some rumor of the struggle must have reached their ears and set on edge their curiosity; and now, in all the neighboring houses, he divined them sitting motionless and with uplifted ear —solitary people, condemned to spend *Contrast.* Christmas dwelling alone on memories of the past, and now startlingly recalled from that tender exercise; happy family parties, struck into silence round the table, the mother still with raised finger: every degree and age and humor, but all, by their own hearths, prying and hearkening and weaving the rope that was to hang him. Sometimes it seemed to him he could not move too softly; the clink of the tall Bohemian goblets rang out loudly like a bell; and alarmed by the bigness of the ticking, he was

tempted to stop the clocks. *Study of fear.* *Impressionism.* And then, again, with a swift transition of his terrors, the very silence of the place appeared a source of peril, and a thing to strike and freeze the passerby; and he would step more boldly, and bustle aloud among the contents of the shop, and imitate, with elaborate bravado, the movements of a busy man at ease in his own house.

An important observation.

30. But he was now so pulled about by different alarms that, while one portion of his mind was still alert and cunning, another trembled on the brink of lunacy. One hallucination in particular took a strong hold on his credulity. The neighbor hearkening with white face beside his window, the passerby arrested by a horrible surmise on the pavement—these could at worst suspect, they could not know; through the brick walls and shuttered windows only sounds could penetrate. *Note how his reasoning becomes hyper-acute* But here, within the house, was he alone? He knew he was; he had watched the servant set forth sweethearting, in her poor best, "out for the day" written in every ribbon and smile. Yes, he was alone, of course; and yet, in the bulk of empty house above him, he could surely hear a stir of delicate footing—he was surely conscious, inexplicably conscious of some presence. *Forecast.* Ay, surely; to every room and corner of the house his imagination followed it; and now it was a faceless thing, and yet had eyes to see with; and again it was a shadow of himself; and yet again behold the image of the dead dealer, reinspired with cunning and hatred.

31. At times, with a strong effort, he would glance at the open door which still seemed to repel his eyes.

The house was tall, the skylight small and dirty, the day *Note force of "blind."*blind with fog; and the light that filtered down to the ground story was exceedingly faint, and showed dimly on the threshold of the shop. And yet, in that strip of doubtful brightness, did there not hang wavering a shadow?

Pseudo crisis.

32. Suddenly, from the street outside, a very jovial gentleman began to beat with a staff on the shop-door, accompanying his blows with shouts and railleries in which the dealer was continually called upon by name. *Contributory incident.* Markheim, smitten into ice, glanced at the dead man. But no! he lay quite still; he was fled away far beyond earshot of these blows and shoutings; he was sunk beneath seas of silence; and his name, which would once have caught his notice above the howling of a storm, had become an empty sound. And presently the jovial gentleman desisted from his knocking and departed.

33. Here was a broad hint to hurry what remained to be done, to get forth from this accusing neighborhood, to plunge into a bath of London multitudes, and to reach, on *Note "apparent."* the other side of day, that haven of safety and apparent innocence—his bed. One visitor had come: at any moment another might follow and be more obstinate. *Key.*To have done the deed, and yet not to reap the profit, would be too abhorrent a failure. The money, that was now Markheim's concern; and as a means to that, the keys.

Note subsidence of acute fears and rise of his true mood.

34. He glanced over his shoulder at the open door, where the shadow was still lingering and shivering;

and with no conscious repugnance of the mind, yet with a tremor of the belly, he drew near the body of his victim. The human character had quite departed. Like a suit half-stuffed with bran, the limbs lay scattered, the trunk doubled, on the floor; and yet the thing repelled him. Although so dingy and inconsiderable to the eye, he feared it might have more significance to the touch. He took the body by the shoulders, and turned it on its back. It was strangely light and supple, and the limbs, as if they had been broken, fell into the oddest postures. *Carefully consider the question of Markheim's sanity, judging only from the story as thus far told.*The face was robbed of all expression; but it was as pale as wax, and shockingly smeared with blood about one temple. That was, for Markheim, the one displeasing circumstance. It carried him back, upon the instant, to a certain fair day in a fisher's village: a gray day, a piping wind, a crowd upon the street, the blare of brasses, the booming of drums, the nasal voice of a ballad singer; and a boy going to and fro, buried over head in the crowd and divided between interest and fear, until, coming out upon the chief place of concourse, he beheld a booth and a great screen with pictures, dismally designed, garishly colored: Brownrigg with her apprentice; the Mannings with their murdered guest; Weare in the death-grip of Thurtell; and a score besides of famous crimes. The thing was as clear as an illusion; he was once again that little boy; he was looking once again, and with the same sense of physical revolt, at these vile pictures; he was still stunned by the thumping of the drums.*Reaction.* A bar of that day's music returned upon his memory; and at that, for the first time, a qualm came over him, a breath of nausea, a sudden weakness of the joints, which he must instantly resist and conquer.

35. He judged it more prudent to confront than to flee from these considerations; looking the more hardily in the dead face, bending his mind to realize the nature and greatness of his crime. So little a while ago that face had moved with every change of sentiment, that pale mouth had spoken, that body had been all on fire with governable energies; and now, and by his act, that piece of life had been arrested, as the horologist, with interjected finger,*Key. What caused this benumbed conscience?* arrests the beating of the clock. So he reasoned in vain; he could rise to no more remorseful consciousness; the same heart which had shuddered before the painted effigies of crime, looked on its reality unmoved. At best, he felt a gleam of pity for one who had been endowed in vain with all those faculties that can make the world a garden of enchantment, one who had never lived and who was now dead. But of penitence, no, not a tremor.

Plot Incident.

36. With that, shaking himself clear of these considerations, he found the keys and advanced toward the open door of the shop. Outside, it had begun to rain smartly; and the sound of the shower upon the roof had banished silence. Like some dripping cavern, the chambers of the house were haunted by an incessant echoing, which filled the ear and mingled with the ticking of the clocks. *Forecast of moral crisis.*And, as Markheim approached the door, he seemed to hear, in answer to his own cautious tread, the steps of another foot withdrawing up the stair. The shadow still palpitated loosely on the threshold. He threw a ton’s weight of resolve upon his muscles, and drew back the door.

37. The faint, foggy daylight glimmered dimly on the bare floor and stairs; on the bright suit of armor posted, halbert in hand, upon the landing; and on the dark wood-carvings, and framed pictures that hung against the yellow panels of the wainscot. So loud was the beating *Note harmony of setting with tone of approaching crisis.* of the rain through all the house that, in Markheim's ears, it began to be distinguished into many different sounds. Footsteps and sighs, the tread of regiments marching in the distance, the chink of money in the*Compare Stevenson's combination of fact and fantasy with Hawthorne's in "The White Old Maid."* counting, and the creaking of doors held stealthily ajar, appeared to mingle with the patter of the drops upon the cupola and the gushing of the water in the pipes. The sense that he was not alone grew upon him to the verge of madness.*Rise toward crisis.* On every side he was haunted and begirt by presences. He heard them moving in the upper chambers; from the shop, he heard the dead man getting to his legs; and as he began with a great effort to mount the stairs, feet fled quietly before him and followed stealthily behind.*Body and spirit.* If he were but deaf, he thought, how tranquilly he would possess his soul. And then again, and hearkening with every fresh attention, he blessed himself for that unresisting sense which held the outposts and stood a trusty sentinel upon his life. His head turned continually on his neck; his eyes, which seemed starting from their orbits, scouted on every side,*A notable passage.* and on every side were half-rewarded as with the tail of something nameless, vanishing. The four-and-twenty steps to the first floor were four-and-twenty agonies.

38. On that first story, the doors stood ajar, three of them like three ambushes, shaking his nerves like the throats of cannon. He could never again, he felt, be

sufficiently immured and fortified from men's observing eyes; he longed to be home, girt in by walls, buried among *Note the exception.* bed-clothes, and invisible to all but God. And at that thought he wondered a little, recollecting tales of other murderers and the fear they were said to entertain of heavenly avengers. It was not so, at least, with him. He feared the laws of nature, lest, in their callous and immutable procedure, they should preserve some damning evidence of his crime. He feared tenfold more, with a slavish, superstitious terror, some scission in the continuity of man's experience, some willful illegality of nature. He played a game of skill, depending on the rules, calculating consequence from cause; and what if nature, as the defeated tyrant overthrew the chess-board, should break the mold of their succession? The like had befallen Napoleon (so writers said) when the winter changed *Note how suspense in the reader is maintained by disclosing Markheim's suspense.* the time of its appearance. The like might befall Markheim: the solid walls might become transparent and reveal his doings like those of bees in a glass hive; the stout planks might yield under his foot like quicksands and detain him in their clutch; ay, and there were soberer accidents that might destroy him; if, for instance, the house should fall and imprison him beside the body of his victim; or the house next door should fly on fire, and the firemen invade him from all sides. These things he feared; and, in a sense, these things might be called the hands of God reached forth against *Key.* sin. But about God himself he was at ease; his act was doubtless exceptional, but so were his excuses, *Is this normal?* which God knew; it was there, and not among men, that he felt sure of justice.

Note action of auto-suggestion.

39. When he had got safe into the drawing-room, and shut the door behind him, he was aware of a respite from alarms. The room was quite dismantled, uncarpeted besides, and strewn with packing cases and incongruous furniture; several great pier-glasses, in which he beheld himself at various angles, like an actor on the stage; many pictures, framed and unframed, standing with their faces to the wall; a fine Sheraton sideboard, a cabinet of marquetry, and a great old bed, with tapestry hangings. The windows opened to the floor; but by great good fortune the lower part of the shutters had been closed, and this concealed him from the neighbors. Here, then, Markheim drew in a packing case before the cabinet, and began to search among the keys. It was a long business, for there were many; and it was irksome, besides; for, after all, there might be nothing in the cabinet, and time was on the wing. But the closeness of the occupation sobered him. With the tail of his eye he saw the door—even glanced at it from time to time directly, like a besieged commander pleased to verify the good estate of his defenses. *Remarkable relief in suspense period.* But in truth he was at peace. The rain falling in the street sounded natural and pleasant. Presently, on the other side, the notes of a piano were wakened to the music of a hymn, and voices of many children took up the air and words. How stately, how comfortable was the melody! How fresh the youthful voices! Markheim gave ear to it smilingly, as he sorted out the keys; and his mind was thronged with answerable ideas and images; church-going children and the pealing of the high organ; children afield, bathers by the brookside, ramblers on the brambly common, kite-flyers in the windy and cloud-navigated sky; and then, at another cadence of the hymn, back again to

church, and the somnolence of summer Sundays, and the high genteel voice of the parson (which he smiled a little to recall) and the painted Jacobean tombs, and the dim lettering of the Ten Commandments in the chancel.

40. And as he sat thus, at once busy and absent, he was startled to his feet. A flash of ice, a flash of fire, a bursting gush of blood, went *Powerful contrast.* over him, and then he stood transfixed and thrilling. A step mounted the stair slowly and steadily, and *Approach of moral crisis.* presently a hand was laid upon the knob, and the lock clicked, and the door opened.

Markheim perceives only a physical danger. Note how long he remains dead to any moral judgment of himself.

41. Fear held Markheim in a vice. What to expect he knew not, whether the dead man walking, or the official ministers of human justice, or some chance witness blindly stumbling in to consign him to the gallows. But when a face was thrust into the aperture, glanced round the room, looked at him, nodded and smiled as if in friendly recognition, *Here is a real though unrecognized moral crisis. Fear eventually leads to his moral triumph.* and then withdrew again, and the door closed behind it, his fear broke loose from his control in a hoarse cry. At the sound of this the visitant returned.

Note the symbolism of the closed door.

42. “Did you call me?” he asked, pleasantly, and with that he entered the room and closed the door behind him.

Key.

43. Markheim stood and gazed at him with all his eyes. Perhaps there was a film upon his sight, but the

outlines of the newcomer seemed to change and waver like those of the idols in the wavering candle-light of the shop; and at times he thought he knew him; and at times he thought he bore a likeness to himself;*This states the problem.* and always, like a lump of living terror, there lay in his bosom the conviction that this thing was not of the earth and not of God.

44. And yet the creature had a strange air of the common-place, as he stood looking on Markheim with a smile; and when he added: “You are looking for the money, I believe?” it was in the tones of everyday politeness.

45. Markheim made no answer.

46. “I should warn you,” resumed the other, “that the maid has left her sweetheart earlier than usual and will soon be here. If Mr. Markheim be found in this house, I need not describe to him the consequences.”

47. “You know me?” cried the murderer.

48. The visitor smiled. “You have long been a favorite of mine,” he said; “and I have long observed and often sought to help you.”

49. “What are you?” cried Markheim: “the devil?”

This is an important passage.

50. “What I may be,” returned the other, “cannot affect the service I propose to render you.”

Forecast of Markheim’s struggle with his better self.

51. “It can,” cried Markheim; “it does! Be helped by you? No, never; not by you! You do not know me yet, thank God, you do not know me!”

52. “I know you,” replied the visitant, with a sort of kind severity or rather firmness. “I know you to the soul.”

Does Markheim really know himself?

53. “Know me!” cried Markheim. “Who can do so? My life is but a travesty and slander on myself. I have lived to belie my nature. All men do; all men are better than this disguise that grows about and stifles them. You see each dragged away by life, like one whom bravos have seized and muffled in a cloak. If they had their own control—if you could see their faces, they would be altogether different, they would shine out for heroes and saints! I am worse than most; myself is more overlaid; my excuse is known to me and God. But, had I the time, I could disclose myself.”

54. “To me?” inquired the visitant.

Note the author’s name for Markheim.

55. “To you before all,” returned the murderer. “I supposed you were intelligent. I thought—since you exist—you would prove a reader of the heart. And yet you would propose to judge me by my acts! *Seek a cause for such reasoning.* Think of it; my acts! I was born and I have lived in a land of giants; giants have dragged me by the wrists since I was born out of my mother —the giants of circumstance. And you would judge me by my acts! But can you not look within? Can you not understand that evil is hateful to me? Can you not see within me the clear writing of conscience, never blurred by any willful sophistry, although too often disregarded? Can you not read me for a thing that surely must be common as humanity —the unwilling sinner?”

Note the distinction between the final importance of cause and effect.

56. “All this is very feelingly expressed,” was the reply. “But it regards me not. These points of consistency are beyond my province, and I care not in the least by what compulsion you may have been dragged away, so as you are but carried in the right direction. But time flies;*Contrast.* the servant delays, looking in the faces of the crowd and at the pictures on the hoardings, but still she keeps moving nearer; and remember, it is as if the gallows itself was striding toward you through the Christmas streets! *Minor Moral Crisis.*Shall I help you; I, who know all? Shall I tell you where to find the money?”

A test of Markheim’s consistency.

57. “For what price?” asked Markheim.

58. “I offer you the service for a Christmas gift,” returned the other.

59. Markheim could not refrain from smiling with a kind of bitter triumph. “No,” said he, “I will take nothing at your hands; if I were dying of thirst, and it was your hand that put the pitcher to my lips, I should find the courage to refuse. It may be credulous, but I will do nothing to commit myself to evil.”

60. “I have no objection to a death-bed repentance,” observed the visitant.

61. “Because you disbelieve their efficacy!” Markheim cried.

62. “I do not say so,” returned the other; “but I look on these things from a different side, and when the life is done my interest falls. *Key.*The man has lived to

serve me, to spread black looks under color of religion, or to sow tares in the wheat-field, as you do, in a course of weak compliance with desire.*Is this irony?* Now that he draws so near to his deliverance, he can add but one act of service—to repent, to die smiling, and thus to build up in confidence and hope the more timorous of my surviving followers. I am not so hard a master. Try me. Accept my help. Please yourself in life as you have done hitherto; please yourself more amply, spread your elbows at the board; and when the night begins to fall and the curtains to be drawn, I tell you, for your greater comfort, that you will find it even easy to compound your quarrel with your conscience, and to make a truckling peace with God. I came but now from such a death bed, and the room was full of sincere mourners, listening to the man's last words: and when I looked into that face, which had been set as a flint against mercy, I found it smiling with hope."

Markheim has judged the example.

63. "And do you, then, suppose me such a creature?" asked Markheim. "Do you think I have no more generous aspirations than to sin, and sin, and sin, and, at last, sneak into heaven? My heart rises at the thought. Is this, then, your experience of mankind? or is it because you find me with red hands that you presume such baseness? and is this crime of murder indeed so impious as to dry up the very springs of good?"

Is this true reasoning?

64. "Murder is to me no special category," replied the other. "All sins are murder, even as all life is war. I behold your race, like starving mariners on a raft, plucking crusts out of the hands of famine and

feeding on each other's lives.*Note the detached attitude.* I follow sins beyond the moment of their acting; I find in all that the last consequence is death; and to my eyes, the pretty maid who thwarts her mother with such taking graces on a question of a ball, drips no less visibly with human gore than such a murderer as yourself.*Note paradox.* Do I say that I follow sins? I follow virtues also; they differ not by the thickness of a nail, they are both scythes for the reaping angel of Death. Evil, for which I live, consists not in action but in character. The bad man is dear to me; not the bad act, whose fruits, if we could follow them far enough down the hurtling cataract of the ages, might yet be found more blessed than those of the rarest virtues. And it is not because you have killed a dealer, but because you are Markheim, that I offered to forward your escape."

65. "I will lay my heart open to you," answered Markheim. "This crime on which you find me is my last. On my way to it I have learned many lessons; itself is a lesson, a momentous lesson. *An unusual expression.*Hitherto I have been driven with revolt to what I would not; I was a bond-slave to poverty, driven and scourged. There are robust virtues that can stand in these temptations; mine was not so:*Note use of "of."* I had a thirst of pleasure. But to-day, and out of this deed, I pluck both warning and riches—both the power and a fresh resolve to be myself. I become in all things a free actor in the world; *Could that have been?* I begin to see myself all changed, these hands the agents of good, this heart at peace. Something comes over me out of the past; something of what I have dreamed on Sabbath evenings to the sound of the church organ, of what I forecast when I shed tears over noble books, or talked, an innocent child, with my mother. There lies my life; I have wandered a

few years, but now I see once more my city of destination."

66. "You are to use this money on the Stock Exchange, I think?" remarked the visitor; "and there, if I mistake not, you have already lost some thousands?"

Self-deception uncovered.

67. "Ah," said Markheim, "but this time I have a sure thing."

68. "This time, again, you will lose," replied the visitor, quietly.

69. "Ah, but I keep back the half!" cried Markheim.

70. "That also you will lose," said the other.

Moral crisis begins to appear to Markheim.

71. The sweat started upon Markheim's brow. "Well, then, what matter?" he exclaimed. "Say it be lost, say I am plunged again in poverty, shall one part of me, and that the worse, continue until the end to override the better? Evil and good run strong in me, haling me both ways. I do not love the one thing, *Self-deception still struggling.*I love all. I can conceive great deeds, renunciations, martyrdoms; and though I be fallen to such a crime as murder, pity is no stranger to my thoughts. I pity the poor; who knows their trials better than myself? I pity and help them; I prize love, I love honest laughter; there is no good thing nor true thing on earth but I love it from my heart. And are my vices only to direct my life, and my virtues to lie without effect, like some passive lumber of the mind? Not so; good, also, is a spring of acts."

72. But the visitant raised his finger. "For six-and-

thirty years that you have been in this world," said he, "through many changes of fortune and varieties of humor, I have watched you steadily fall. *Here the story is plainly didactic.*Fifteen years ago you would have started at a theft. Three years back you would have blenched at the name of murder. Is there any crime, is there any cruelty or meanness, from which you still recoil? —five years from now I shall detect you in the fact! Downward, downward, lies your way; nor can anything but death avail to stop you."

73. "It is true," Markheim said, huskily, "I have in some degree complied with evil. But it is so with all: the very saints, in the mere exercise of living, grow less dainty, and take on the tone of their surroundings."

Key.

74. "I will propound to you one simple question," said the other; "and as you answer, I shall read to you your moral horoscope. You have grown in many things more lax; possibly you do right to be so; and at any account, it is the same with all men. But granting that, are you in any one particular, however trifling, more difficult to please with your own conduct, or do you go in all things with a looser rein?"

Minor Moral Climax.
Markheim at last sees himself.

75. "In any one?" repeated Markheim, with an anguish of consideration. "No," he added, with despair, "in none! I have gone down in all."

76. "Then," said the visitor, "content yourself with what you are, for you will never change; and the words of your part on this stage are irrevocably

written down."

77. Markheim stood for a long while silent, and indeed it was the visitor who first broke the silence. "That being so," he said, "shall I show you the money?"

78. "And grace?" cried Markheim.

79. "Have you not tried it?" returned the other. "Two or three years ago, did I not see you on the platform of revival meetings, and was not your voice the loudest in the hymn?"

80. "It is true," said Markheim; "and I see clearly what remains for me by way of duty. I thank you for these lessons from my soul: my eyes are opened, and I behold myself at last for what I am."

81. At this moment, the sharp note of the door-bell rang through the house; and the visitant, as though this were some concerted signal for which he had been waiting, changed at once in his demeanor.

Full Moral Crisis.

Physical Resultant Crisis.

82. "The maid!" he cried. "She has returned, as I forewarned you, and there is now before you one more difficult passage. Her master, you must say, is ill; you must let her in, with an assured but rather serious countenance—no smiles, no overacting, and I promise you success!*Final test.* Once the girl within, and the door closed, the same dexterity that has already rid you of the dealer will relieve you of this last danger in your path. Thenceforward you have the whole evening—the whole night, if needful—to ransack the treasures of the house and to make good your safety. This is help that comes to you with the mask of danger. Up!" he cried: "up, friend; your life

hangs trembling in the scales; up, and act!"

83. Markheim steadily regarded his counsellor. "If I be condemned to evil acts," he said, "there is still one door of freedom open—I can cease from action. If my life be an ill thing, I can lay it down. Though I be, as you say truly, at the beck of every small temptation, I can yet, by one decisive gesture, place myself beyond the reach of all. My love of good is damned to barrenness; it may, and let it, be! But I have still my hatred of evil; and from that, to your galling disappointment, you shall see that I can draw both energy and courage."

Who was the visitant?

84. The features of the visitor began to undergo a wonderful and lovely change; they brightened and softened with a tender triumph; and, even as they brightened, faded and dislimned. But Markheim did not pause to watch or understand the transformation. He opened the door and went downstairs very slowly, thinking to himself. His past went soberly before him; he beheld it as it was, ugly and strenuous like a dream, random as chance-medley—a scene of defeat. Life, as he thus reviewed it, tempted him no longer; but on the further side he perceived a quiet haven for his bark. He paused in the passage, and looked into the shop, where the candle still burned by the dead body. It was strangely silent. Thoughts of the dealer swarmed into his mind, as he stood gazing. And then the bell once more broke out into impatient clamor.

85. He confronted the maid upon the threshold with something like a smile.

Moral Climax. Denouement.

86. “You had better go for the police,” said he: “I have killed your master.”

MORRISON AND HIS WRITINGS

Arthur Morrison was born in Kent, England, in 1863. After some experience as a clerk in the civil service, as the secretary of a charity trust in the East End of London, and as a journalist on the editorial staff of an evening paper, he settled down definitely to his career as novelist and writer on oriental art. He is best known as a journalist, however, and his familiarity with the East End has largely contributed to his success in depicting the sordid life of London's "mean streets," as the "remorseless realism" of his pictures testify. Mr. Morrison's literary work was in the nature of prose and verse panegyrizing bicycles and bicycling. His principal works, apart from several plays and magazine contributions, are *Tales of Mean Streets*; the several *Martin Hewitt* (detective) books; *A Child of the Jago*; *To London Town*; *The Hole in the Wall*; *The Red Triangle*; *The Green Eye of Goona* (published in America as *The Green Diamond*); and *The Painters of Japan*.

Mr. Morrison's best fiction is not large in bulk, for his detective stories are surpassed both in merit and in popular appeal by more than one writer on similar themes; but in his *Tales of Mean Streets*, which contains the appended study, "On the Stairs," he has attained a compressed power equalled only by the French realists and scarcely surpassed even by them. He has brought the art of suggestion to a high pass, his swiftness and firmness of delineation are equally effective, and though his subjects are sordid and often depressing they live before us as real folk.

The introduction to *Tales of Mean Streets* appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine* in October, 1891, where it was called simply, "A Street." This sketch attracted the attention of Mr. W. E. Henley, who gave the young writer the benefit of his own knowledge and criticism; and it is to Henley and to Walter Besant that Mr. Morrison makes special acknowledgment for help in the technicalities and mechanism of his tales. Most of these *Tales of Mean Streets* appeared in the *National Observer* (while Henley was the editor), and a few in the *Pall Mall Budget.—Book Buyer* (London), vol. 12.

If the modern novel about the slums, such as novels of Mr. Arthur Morrison, or the exceedingly able novels of Mr. Somerset Maugham, are intended to be sensational, I can only say that that is a noble and reasonable object, and that they attain it.... It may be ... it is necessary to have in our fiction the image of the horrible and hairy East-ender, merely to keep alive in us a fearful and childlike wonder at external peculiarities.... To summarize, our slum fiction is quite defensible as æsthetic fiction; it is not defensible as spiritual fact.—GILBERT K. CHESTERTON, *Heretics*.

Ever seeking the clean-cut, picturesque phrase and the vivid word, he produced a very striking picture of the East End. But, nevertheless, it was not quite satisfactory and convincing. Human nature does not alter so much with conditions as he seems to think. A little less or a little more morality

does not affect its elements.... Mr. Morrison's strongest gift in writing is a cynicism that is almost brutal. With it he elaborates the features of all his characters till the impression is produced that one savage, hideous, ugly coster and one gaudy-feathered, bedizened "Jonah" have acted as models for all his studies of Jagodom. Moreover, his success has been achieved in pictures of the brutal.—*Academy* (London), vol. 52.

The "mean streets" are streets in London.... [They] have found in Arthur Morrison an interpreter who lifts them out of their meanness upon the plane of a just claim to human sympathy. He lets us see the relief. Bill Napper, the drunken kerb-whacker, come into property and defending it against the rascally labor agitator, Scuddy Lond, mixing religious fervor and till-tapping with entire sincerity, Simmons and Ford, victims of their joint wife's "jore" and mania for trouser-making, even the Anarchists of the Red Cow group, appeal to us with a sense almost of kinship because we feel that the figures are real. They are capital character-studies besides. Dickens never made a finer than the thief Scuddy Lond, or than Billy Chope.... The art of these stories seems flawless. Mr. Morrison's gift amounts to genius.—JACOB RIIS, *Romances of "The Other Half," The Book Buyer*, vol. 12.

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FOR ANALYSIS

ON THE STAIRS

BY ARTHUR MORRISON

The house had been "genteel." When trade was prospering in the East End, and the ship-fitter or block-maker thought it no shame to live in the parish where his workshop lay, such a master had lived here. Now, it was a tall, solid, well-bricked, ugly house, grimy and paintless in the joinery, cracked and patched in the windows: where the front door stood open all day long; and the womankind sat on the steps, talking of sickness and deaths and the cost of things; and treacherous holes lurked in the carpet of road-soil on the stairs and in the passage. For when eight families live in a house, nobody buys a door-mat, and the street was one of those streets that are always muddy. It smelt, too, of many things, none of them pleasant (one was fried fish); but for all that it was not a slum.

2. Three flights up, a gaunt woman with bare forearms stayed on her way to listen at a door which, opening, let out a warm, fetid waft from a close sick-room. A bent and tottering old woman stood on the

threshold, holding the door behind her.

3. “An’ is 'e no better now, Mrs. Curtis?” the gaunt woman asked, with a nod at the opening.

4. The old woman shook her head, and pulled the door closer. Her jaw waggled loosely in her withered chaps: “Nor won’t be; till 'e’s gone.” Then after a certain pause, “'E’s goin’,” she said.

5. “Don’t doctor give no 'ope?”

6. “Lor’ bless ye, I don’t want to ast no doctors,” Mrs. Curtis replied, with something not unlike a chuckle. “I’ve seed too many on ’em. The boy’s a-goin’, fast; I can see that. An’ then”—she gave the handle another tug, and whispered—“he’s been called.” She nodded amain; “Three seprit knocks at the bed-head las’ night; an’ I know what *that* means!”

7. The gaunt woman raised her brows, and nodded. “Ah, well,” she said, “we all on us comes to it some day, sooner or later. An’ it’s often a 'appy release.”

8. The two looked into space beyond each other, the elder with a nod and a croak. Presently the other pursued, “'E’s been a very good son, ain’t 'e?”

9. “Ay, ay, well enough son to me,” responded the old woman, a little peevishly; “an’ I’ll 'ave ’im put away decent, though there’s on’y the Union for me after. I can do that, thank Gawd!” she added, meditatively, as chin on fist she stared into the thickening dark over the stairs.

10. “When I lost my pore 'usband,” said the gaunt woman with a certain brightening, “I give ’im a 'ansome funeral. 'E was a Oddfeller, an’ I got twelve pound. I 'ad a oak caufin an’ a open 'earse. There was a kerridge for the fam’ly an’ one for 'is mates—two 'orses each, an’ feathers, an’ mutes; an’ it went the

furthest way round to the cimitry. 'Wotever 'appens, Mrs. Manders,' says the undertaker, 'you'll feel as you've treated 'im proper; nobody can't reproach you over that.' An' they couldn't. 'E was a good 'usband to me, an' I buried 'im respectable."

11. The gaunt woman exulted. The old, old story of Manders's funeral fell upon the other one's ears with a freshened interest, and she mumbled her gums ruminantly. "Bob'll 'ave a 'ansome buryin', too," she said. "I can make it up, with the insurance money, an' this, an' that. On'y I dunno about mutes. It's a expense."

12. In the East End, when a woman has not enough money to buy a thing much desired, she does not say so in plain words; she says the thing is an "expense," or a "great expense." It means the same thing, but it sounds better. Mrs. Curtis had reckoned her resources, and found that mutes would be an "expense." At a cheap funeral mutes cost half-a-sovereign and their liquor. Mrs. Manders said as much.

13. "Yus, yus, 'arf-a-sovereign," the old woman assented. Within, the sick feebly beat the floor with a stick. "I'm a-comin'," she cried shrilly; "yus, 'arf-a-sovereign, but it's a lot, an' I don't see 'ow I'm to do it—not at present." She reached for the door-handle again, but stopped and added, by after-thought, "Unless I don't 'ave no plooms."

14. "It 'ud be a pity not to 'ave plooms. I 'ad—"

15. There were footsteps on the stairs: then a stumble and a testy word. Mrs. Curtis peered over into the gathering dark. "Is it the doctor, sir?" she asked. It was the doctor's assistant; and Mrs. Manders tramped up to the next landing as the door

of the sick-room took him in.

16. For five minutes the stairs were darker than ever. Then the assistant, a very young man, came out again, followed by the old woman with a candle. Mrs. Manders listened in the upper dark. “He’s sinking fast,” said the assistant. “He *must* have a stimulant. Dr. Mansell ordered port wine. Where is it?” Mrs. Curtis mumbled dolorously. “I tell you he *must* have it,” he averred with unprofessional emphasis (his qualification was only a month old). “The man can’t take solid food, and his strength must be kept up somehow. Another day may make all the difference. Is it because you can’t afford it?” “It’s a expense—sich a expense, doctor,” the old woman pleaded. “An’ wot with 'arf-pints o’ milk an’—” She grew inarticulate, and mumbled dismally.

17. “But he must have it, Mrs. Curtis, if it’s your last shilling: it’s the only way. If you mean you absolutely haven’t the money—” and he paused a little awkwardly. He was not a wealthy young man—wealthy young men do not devil for East End doctors—but he was conscious of a certain haul of sixpences at nap the night before; and, being inexperienced, he did not foresee the career of persecution whereon he was entering at his own expense and of his own motion. He produced five shillings: “If you absolutely haven’t the money, why—take this and get a bottle—good: not at a public-house. But mind, *at once*. He should have had it before.”

18. It would have interested him, as a matter of coincidence, to know that his principal had been guilty of the selfsame indiscretion—even the amount was identical—on that landing the day before. But, as Mrs. Curtis said nothing of this, he floundered down the stair and out into the wetter mud,

pondering whether or not the beloved son of a Congregational minister might take full credit for a deed of charity on the proceeds of sixpenny nap. But Mrs. Curtis puffed her wrinkles, and shook her head sagaciously as she carried in her candle. From the room came a clink as of money falling into a teapot. And Mrs. Manders went about her business.

19. The door was shut, and the stair a pit of blackness. Twice a lodger passed down, and up and down, and still it did not open. Men and women walked on the lower flights, and out at the door, and in again. From the street a shout or a snatch of laughter floated up the pit. On the pavement footsteps rang crisper and fewer, and from the bottom passage there were sounds of stagger and sprawl. A demented old clock buzzed divers hours at random, and was rebuked every twenty minutes by the regular tread of a policeman on his beat. Finally, somebody shut the street-door with a great bang, and the street was muffled. A key turned inside the door on the landing, but that was all. A feeble light shone for hours along the crack below, and then went out. The crazy old clock went buzzing on, but nothing left that room all night. Nothing that opened the door....

20. When next the key turned, it was to Mrs. Manders's knock, in the full morning; and soon the two women came out on the landing together, Mrs. Curtis with a shapeless clump of bonnet. "Ah, 'e's a lovely corpse," said Mrs. Manders. "Like wax. So was my 'usband."

21. "I must be stirrin'," croaked the old woman, "an' go about the insurance an' the measurin' an' that. There's lots to do."

22. "Ah, there is. 'Oo are you goin' to 'ave,—Wilkins? I 'ad Wilkins. Better than Kedge, *I* think: Kedge's

mutes dresses rusty, an' their trousis is frayed. If you was thinkin' of 'avin' mutes—"

23. "Yus, yus,"—with a palsied nodding,—"I'm a-goin' to 'ave mutes: I can do it respectable, thank Gawd!"

24. "And the plooms?"

25. "Ay, yus, and the plooms too. They ain't sich a great expense, after all."

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. What are the points of similarity between the Character-Study and the Psychological Study?

2. Define (a) Psychology, (b) Realism.

3. Does Markheim's change of heart seem to you to be genuine? Give your reasons.

4. Analyze his motives fully.

5. Is the supernatural element convincing?

6. Could conscience produce the same effect as the Visitant?

7. What impression did Stevenson seek to convey by "Markheim"?

8. Fully analyze the thoughts, feelings, and motives of the mother.

9. Can you detect Morrison's motive in writing "On the Stairs"?

10. Fully analyze one other psychological study, from any source.

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