The Wisconsin literary magazine. Volume XXV, Number 2 November 1925

Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin, November 1925

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The Wisconsin Literary Magazine

November, 1925

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Volume XXV | November, 1925 | Number 2

THE PRODIGAL

By

L. L. SCHOONOVER

ON A STAGE hung midway between the deck of a large freighter and the water line two men swung chipping hammers with ceaseless monotonous strokes against the ship's side, while the quarter inch of rust reluctantly chipped off, covering them with a red debris a little coarser than sand. It was not interesting work. The younger of the two — by comparison he seemed hardly more than a lad—thought vaguely of home and college and all the old life that now seemed so far away. The drabness of port work galled him, and the romance of the sea that he had run away to find did not seem to exist at all.

To the casual passer the position of the stage would have seemed precarious, but one of the men had years of similar experiences behind him, and the other had—two weeks. Perhaps that explained why he held the stage line so tenaciously with his one free hand, and glanced apprehensively now and then at the water thirty feet below him. The older man stopped to roll a cigarette.

"Say, kid, what's your name?"

"Harry. What's yours?"

"Heine's good enough. Gonna make the trip?"

Harry grinned. "Guess so—if I don't get canned."

"We sign on tomorrow."

"What's 'sign on'?"

"Aw, the commissioner comes down, and you sign the articles, and then they can't can you in a foreign port."

"Oh."

"But if you get in Dutch, they log you till you haven't any pay, and then they put you in irons, and then—"

"Hey! Vot der hell's der matter vit youse down dere? V'y don't you make some noise? Sving dem hammers, or I'll can the both of youse, you lazy, dirty sons of ——!" The noise of chipping hammers was music to the mate's ears, and when it stopped he indulged in all the profanity of a sailor's vocabulary.

The pounding was quickly resumed, but Heine's great voice rose above the din:

"The old fool's afraid of his job, so we gotta work hard!"

At five o'clock the bo's'n stuck his yellow Scandinavian head over the rail.

"Now ve eat!" he shouted, and disappeared.

"Can you climb a rope?" asked Heine.

"I think so," replied Harry. "You go first."

"It's easy. See." Bracing his feet against the side, Heine clambered up, his body horizontal to the water. Harry had not yet mastered this art, but his arms had strengthened from the hard work, and he climbed up hand over hand. He reached the top, panting, but immensely proud that they had not had to heave him a rope ladder.

They "fed" aboard that night, and Harry had a chance to meet the men who were to be his ship mates for the next six months. They were not a prepossessing lot. Gathered from the waterfronts of half the nations of Europe, they formed a heterogeneous mixture of ignorant, shiftless nobodies who would have been beggars ashore. They talked in a sort of pidgin English that was almost unintelligible, each with a different accent. A few had scraped some of the dirt from their hands, but for the most part they came directly from their work to mess. The little room, crowded with sweating humanity, reeked with the stench of poor cooking and worse food which would have turned Harry's stomach a month ago. Now he was used to it—almost. At any rate, he ate heartily; he had worked hard.

Next morning, over the pilot house, floated the "blue peter", the sign of departure. Harry breathed a sigh of relief. At last he would see the world.

He approached Heine. "Heine," he asked, "what is there to see in South America?"

"See! Women and booze, Harry. They've got some hot Spick women down there that'll make your American *frauleins* look sick. And a lot of liquor just for a couple of pesos, and—"

"Yes, but—"

"And the women ain't such gold diggers, either. They're cheaper 'n the devil, and—"

"But I mean, aren't there any interesting places to go, or theatres to see, or things like that?"

"Aw, there you go springing your education stuff!! I s'pose there are, but what good are they? Wait till you've been at sea a long time. Then you'll want a little—what do you call it?—re-cree-ashun. Hey, Steve! This college kid's learning me English!"

Steve was a Norwegian, profusely tattooed, with many gold teeth in front, one of which was decorated with a large diamond whose brilliance was shaded by a scraggly, tobacco-stained mustache that hung down over his lips. But Steve gave the same answer to Harry's question.

"Dere's a lot of vimmen down dere. I ain't seen much of da place."

"What do you live for, anyway?" asked Harry.

"Vimmen and booze, of course. Do you t'ink I'm a fool? I can spend a month's pay in one night—easy." And the diamond gleamed as he made his boast.

Harry grinned back. "Well, then, I'll see the women and booze. I'd like to anyway. I don't know much about either."

"Ya, only you vant to be careful. Most of dem vimmen is all—vell, you ain't like us. You got a home and folks and all dat, so you gotta go easy."

"Sure, Steve, sure I will; but you'll show me around when we get there, won't you?"

"Ya, but Lord! Ve ain't out of 'Frisco yet."

II

That day the ship cleared the Golden Gate, and the long voyage began. These days were not unpleasant ones. After the second day out, Steve taught Harry to steer, and thereafter he had a regular wheel watch. He felt very proud and sailor-like high up in the pilot house with the great wheel in his hands, that beautiful, shiny wheel which turned so easily that a child might have handled it.

Days passed like lightning. From

eight to twelve, morning and night, he stood his watch. Half the time at night was spent on the fo'c'stle head standing lookout. He liked this best of all. It gave him a chance to star-gaze that he would not otherwise have had. The sea was beautiful at night. Tiny atoms of phosphorescence gleamed in the water like chips of sapphire on black velvet. Often a dim, hazy cloud of light came floating by. Suddenly it would blaze into a brighter brilliance as the thousands of fish that formed it would startle at the ship's approach and scurry off in all directions, leaving long trails of light behind them.

Two weeks passed, and Panama rose green and lovely on the port bow. Harry was tired of the monotony, tired of watch and watch, tired of ship's food. He wanted to get ashore.

There was much to be done at Balboa. Fuel oil had to be pumped aboard, water to be taken on, and many supplies of fresh food loaded for the long trip south. The ship was scheduled to pass the canal at seven in the morning. Harry would have to work fast.

That night Harry, Heine, and a big Lettish fellow named "Ted" went ashore. (Nobody could pronounce Ted's Lettish name.) Ted was six feet three, with a chest like a barrel, and an enormous capacity for anything from vodka to kerosene. The three hailed a cab and rode into Panama City, situated just outside the canal zone in the old Republic of Panama.

In the deeping twilight Harry saw strange frame houses built on stilts, queer old government buildings reminiscent of Castillian occupation, and a dusky race of jabbering Panamanians, that lazy, shiftless mixture of Spanish adventurers, aboriginal Indians, and Negro slaves. But darkness fell, leaving him only a hazy impression of this new land.

"I don't wonder you never see anything if you always tie up at night," he said.

"You'll see plenty," answered Heine enigmatically.

The scrawny nag wheezed and panted, the uneven wheels bumped and creaked, the Negro driver perspired and cursed, and in time they descended on 19th Street, Panama City.

It took Harry's breath away. It was a bit too evident, and somewhat revolting.

"They'd never allow this in the United States," he ventured to say.

Ted laughed. "Naw, but it goes on under cover. Let's go to the Chink's *cantina* on the other side. He gave me good drinks when I was here last trip."

So they all went in. Under the influence of the liquor Ted sang Lettish songs and expounded the blessings of Santos and Montevideo. "Wait till we get there," he said. "This is nothing. There's sixteen blocks of 'em in Santos and nearly as many in Montevideo. Real life down there!" And under the influence of the same liquor Harry blissfully went to sleep.

The other two bundled him into the waiting carriage that had brought them, and the beaming African drove back to the ship; while Heine and Ted crossed to the other side of the street.

Next day, dazed and stupefied, Harry saw little of the canal. He was too conscious of a painfully aching head to appreciate the marvellous feat of engineering that could lift a huge ship into a lake in the hills and set it gently down in another ocean. He had only a vague memory of blocks of bars, painted faces, and open doors. It was not an especially wholesome memory, and Harry felt almost ashamed. "But it's all part of life," he thought, "and that's what I left college to see."

III

Day after day, day after day, the old monotonous grind of watch and watch. Through the Caribbean, down the coast of Venezuela, past the Guianas—and not

a glimpse of land. Once in a few days a faint pencil of smoke on a far horizon proved that they were not the only humans alive in a strange shifting world of restless water.

The great solitude of the sea weighed down upon them. The continual hiss of the breaking swells, the torturing heat of a blazing tropical sun, the foul smells of the ship spread a blanket of discontent over all. Speech was forgotten except the low grumble at mess.

"The food on this pile of rust ain't fit for a dog!"

"Hey, Julio! Ain't you ever been to sea before? Take the cockroaches out of the butter before you put it on the table!"

"But, Steve, are all ships like this?" asked Harry.

"All are bad, some are rotten, but this is the worst I ever seen," he answered.

"Something will happen," thought Harry. "It's got to, or we'll all die of melancholia."

IV

Something did happen. One day, just after rounding Pernambuco Harry heard the bells in the engine room. The ship slowed to half speed, the steering engine roared frantically outside his door as the helm was brought hard over. Harry ran out on deck.

Not far away was a little open boat with a crazy mast where hung the Brazilian flag, inverted and at half mast. A man with a shirt tied to an oar stood waving it frantically in the prow. When the steamer stopped the Brazilians rowed alongside.

Twelve men, evidently fishermen, were cramped in this crazy craft. Their few clothes consisted of many colored patches; their beards were stubby, their hair uncut; not one of them wore shoes. They looked wild and uncivilized, and their raucous voices aggravated the impression. "Pao, pao, agua, agua!"

The captain came down from the pilot house and hailed them in several languages; but he knew no Portuguese, and they knew no other.

"Call Alameda!" he shouted, and the one Brazilian aboard came out of the engine room, sweating and covered with grease.

Leaning over the rail he shouted down to the fishermen in the same rasping language, and translated their replies to the captain.

"Pao, bread; dey mus' have; no have for four day'. Eat raw fish. Make seek. Agua, water. All gone. Drink sea water. Make seek. No get wind. You tow to Rio?"

The old sea tradition that sailors must help sailors has entered the codes of all nations. The captain, fretting at the time he was losing, heaved them a line and took them in tow. That night he dropped them twenty miles from Rio de Janeiro, while his own ship steamed steadily southward.

It grew colder. The southern cross rose high at night in a firmament resplendent with strange constellations. Southward and southward for endless days they steamed, while the crew grumbled again and longed for the liquor of Montevideo.

Then one night they struck a storm. Wind and sea roared and howled and tossed the huge vessel about like a piece of driftwood. The receding seas exposed the screw, and the whole ship trembled with its mad revolutions. Over the bow swept great green combers, filling the forward deck with three feet of water that sluggishly drained through the overtaxed scuppers. The ship seemed leaden. Harry grew worried.

"Heine," he said, holding fast to his swaying bunk while things flew around the room, "Heine, this is an awful storm!"

Heine took his pipe out of his mouth and laughed so long and so hard that somebody threw a sea boot at him.

"No, *kleine,* this ain't a storm. It ain't a storm till it carries away the booms, smashes the boats, and rips off the ventilators. Y'ought to see the storm I got into down in the Bay of Biscay. That was a storm! She blew two weeks steady, and piled us up on the coast of France. Nine men drowned the night we ran ashore, and the rest of us were picked up in the morning by some Frog fishermen." The mate was not there to stop him, and Heine rambled on at length telling of first one experience and then another, while Harry listened and forgot the rough weather.

Next day the sun rose bright and clear. Only a heavy smooth swell remained to remind them of last night's blow.

"Montevideo, tomorrow, *kleine,*" said Heine one day as he stopped "soojing" for a moment when he saw Harry going on watch. "Now you'll see some fun. Montevideo's a swell town."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah!"

"I'll be glad to see land again. A month's a long time to be at sea."

"Oh, it's not so long . Once I was on a wind-jammer from 'Frisco to Antofagasta, and it took us ninety-two days. Then we hit a squall that blew us two hundred miles up the coast again, and it took another week to—"

"Hey! Vot der hell's der matter vit youse? V'y don't youse get to work? You lazy Dutch son of a ——! Harry, get der hell out of here! V'y ain't you at der v'eel? Dis ain't no place fer a damned, four-eyed school kid anyway. Git! Or I'll—" But Harry was already on the bridge, and Heine had resumed washing the white paint work, stoically, without a word.

Next day they dropped the hook in the slimy waters of the Rio de la Plata. Up went the yellow quarantine flag. Port officials in resplendent uniforms came aboard and inspected the crew.

The work of the day over, Heine and Steve piloted Harry up to the "Anker Bar" in the heart of sailor town. Over the door hung a sign in English, "Served From Girls." Inside they were given huge steins of beer, served as promised, "from" a stertorous Teutonic lady who seated her great bulk beside them at the table, and sang "Ja, Ve Haf Kein Bananen" to prove she spoke English. Harry, who liked neither her voice nor the beer, set out to see the town.

He walked slowly up through the waterfront district along the "Calle Juan Carlos Gomez" and into the "Avenida 25 de Mayo"; through bewildering but beautiful plazas, where pines and palms grew side by side, and into the "Avenida 18 de Julio." "Name their streets after the days of the month," he mused. "Queer custom. It's all civilized, too. Street cars, autos, theatres! But for the Spanish architecture and dark skinned people this might be an American city. Hell! I wonder why there are so many police around? And where are all the women? Golly! Is this a fight?" Two men were standing on a corner, gesticulating madly and speaking in loud voices. Suddenly they linked arms, and went into a cafe. Harry did not yet know that a friendly conversation in Uruguay looks like a fist fight to an American.

What styles! Tight, short trousers, form fitting coats with velvet collars, spats, lace handkerchiefs and walking sticks! His own baggy trousers and sack coat caused astonished stares and poorly concealed smiles.

He dropped into a cafe to get a bite to eat, and suddenly remembered that he could not speak a word of Spanish. Still, as people do eat in cafes, they ought to know what he wanted.

A trim, dark waiter with curled mustachios approached him.

"Senor?"

"Do you speak English?"

"No, senor."

"Parlez vous francais?"

"No, senor."

"Sprechen Sie Deutsch?"

"Ja, mein herr. Was wollen sie?"

Harry tried to think of something to eat in German, but the best he could do was to order a leberwurst sandwich and a cup of coffee.

"Do all Uruguayos speak German?" he asked.

"Many do," answered the waiter. "There are many Germans in Uruguay."

"And no Americans?"

"Very few, herr."

"They show good sense," said Harry in English, and the polite waiter smiled back a "Si, senor" without understanding a single word.

Once more on the street, Harry realized that he was lost. Not that it worried him, but he had to "turn to" next morning. Still, the night was young, and *terra firma* felt good to feet long accustomed to a swaying deck.

He wandered aimlessly about glancing into cafe windows where he saw men wearing hats and coats, gesticulating frantically around tables laden with fantastically shaped bottles of multicolored liquors. "It looks as if conversation here was an athletic contest," he mused. "And they must drink oceans of liquor, but nobody seems drunk. I don't suppose Americans really know how to drink gracefully." And he thought of a night in Panama.

Suddenly the brilliant cafes and shops were gone, and he found himself in a crowded street half lighted and full of laughter. He gazed up at the windows whose sills just cleared his head. Painted faces peered at him, and black eyes invited. Harry smiled, and the smile was answered. In the next house were similar faces. A raucous voice cried out.

"Oh, meester Ingles! You like see me?"

"No, thanks," said Harry, "I'm too busy."

"Go to hell, then," screamed the voice after him.

"Nice lady," said Harry to himself. "I always did admire reserve."

All of a sudden he felt his hat lifted from his head, and heard a loud laugh from the window above him.

"Hey!" he cried, "what's the big idea up there? Give me my hat!"

"Come get," said the lady in a voice that had once been soft and feminine.

It was too good a hat to lose, so Harry went in. A fat, painted creature with a heavy bunch of keys in her hand and an air of prosperity met him.

"What you want, meester Ingles?"

"My hat, please!"

"Your hat! Oh, I'm so laugh. Ruby, she take. Ruby very nice girl. You like see Ruby?"

"Yes, yes; Ruby's lovely; but give me my hat!"

"But just one little drink first, no?"

"Sure; soon as I get that hat!"

"You get. RUBY!"

Ruby and the hat appeared from a side door, and Harry planted the cause of all the trouble squarely on his head, and glared at madame.

"Now, what you have for drink, meester Ingles? I'm got Benedictine, Kummel, Creme de Cacoa, Anise del Mono, Johnnie Walker—"

"Some Anise, please."

"RUBY! Anise!"

"Si, madame."

"Soda, meester Ingles?"

"Yes."

"RUBY! Soda!"

"Si, madame."

Harry drank the liquor with about the same enjoyment that he would have gotten out of so much nitric acid. Madame noticed it.

"You no like?" she asked.

"It is excellent, madame," he lied.

"Si, si; I'm always got the best of everything. And now you like—"

"Sorry, madame. Your Anise is strong, and I've got to get back to the ship."

"Oh! Do you be sailor?"

"Yes."

"Then you stay! RUBY!"

But Harry left. Foul sailor profanity followed him as he walked away.

Madame was a business lady and hated to lose trade. When he came to the end of the street he saw the sign "Calle Yerbal."

"Good Lord! So this is the notorious 'Calle Yerbal'! No wonder the fellows are always talking about it. Wonder if I'll meet any of them. I've got to get back to the ship somehow."

He walked another block farther and saw sailors everywhere in various stages of inebriation. How well he knew them—the hard eyes, foul breaths, tattooed arms and hands—sailors, and the females of the species. He felt very sick at heart.

"Wish I'd meet—why, Heine! I thought you'd be around here. How do we get back to the ship? I'm sleepy."

"Jus' one li'l' drink firs', eh, Harry?"

"Too sleepy, Heine."

"I'm shleepy, too. Dam' shleepy. Tha'sh cussin', ain't it? Gosh, I'm shleepy. Only I can't go aboard yet. I gotta have jus' one more drink, an' then I'm goin' up and see Jenny the Turk. You wanna see Jenny the Turk?"

"No, thanks! One of these she-devils just stole my hat. Come on, Heine. You've had a bit too much. Let's go back to the ship."

"Aw ri', Harry, aw ri'; you go jus' one block over, an' you fin' Gomez street, an' nen you turn, you turn—aw, I dunno where you turn."

Taking him by the arm, Harry guided his staggering foot-steps till they reached the "Calle Juan Carlos Gomez." He recognized the street, and turned in the direction of the docks.

As they passed the "Anker Bar," a chair sailed through the window, and one of their ship-mates rolled out of the door into the gutter. The enormous Ted followed with a childish grin on his drunken face.

"I'll kill you, you son of a——!"

"Naw, he won't," said Heine, "Ted's playful when he'sh drunk. Hate to shee a man drunk."

As a matter of fact, Ted picked the recumbent figure up from the gutter, and carried him with one hand into the bar, where they drank together.

Next day there was no Ted to be seen; nor the next day, nor the next. At five o'clock on the morning of the fourth day there was a horrible screaming in the mess room—hideous, idiotic screams that woke the crew from their drunken sleep and brought them rushing to the scene. There was Ted, his eyes wild, his face drawn with terror and plastered with bloody filth, writhing on the deck in a paroxysm of fright.

"He's got the snakes!" said one in a hushed voice.

They knocked him unconscious, hog tied him, and ran for the captain. But the captain was too drunk to wake, so they brought the mate. He put Ted in irons and sent for an ambulance. Timid men in gorgeous uniforms took him to the marine hospital.

Montevideo was growing disgusting to Harry, and he was not sure he liked the sea.

VI

A week passed, and the ship let go for Buenos Aires across the broad mouth of the Rio de la Plata.

Harry grew to love Buenos Aires—except that the freezing July winds gave him a bad cold. In the long stay there he became reasonably well acquainted with the "Paris of the New World," from the exclusive sections of Palermo to the sailor dives of the Boca. The fourth of July he spent in the art galleries, not because he liked art, but because he wanted to get away from sailors; "for," he reasoned, "when asses read Aristotle, sailors will visit art exhibits, and not until then."

On the ninth of July, Buenos Aires

closed all places of business, put on gala attire, and celebrated the independence of the Republic. A spirit of carnival gripped the people, and they indulged in all the spontaneous gaiety so common to the Latin races. There was music in the air from a score of martial bands; all was laughter and mad frolic. Colored lights played on the fountains of Plaza Mayo, and the blue and white banners of Argentina floated gaily in the chill wind. Lips are red, and mustachios carefully waxed; and black eyes fearlessly meet black eyes when masks are donned.

Through the happy crowds Harry wandered, himself elated, yet sorry that he was alone. His ship-mates were haunting the saloons of the Boca.

A month in Buenos Aires was all too short for Harry, and all too long for the sailors, whose hearts yearned after the flesh-pots of Montevideo or Santos.

"Just wait till we get to Santos," said Heine. "Santos has 'em all beat. This town's dead. Too many policemen."

VII

Santos, Brazil, is a thousand miles north of Buenos Aires. Five days the ship steamed over a sea like glass, and with each day came the increasing warmth of a more northerly latitude. But with all the pleasant weather Harry grew restless. He hated the sea; he hated sailors; he longed for home.

They took coffee aboard at Santos. Thousands upon thousands of sacks bobbed up and down on the endless leather conveyors, and slid down slick chutes into the hold. It was pleasant to know that at that rate they would not stop long in port.

That night he ate ashore. The food had finally become so nearly inedible that he fled from the ship with its foul smelling mess room to get at least one good meal before he sailed . He ate at the little "Cafe Odeon," where the plate was china, not tin, and the table was covered with linen, not greasy oil cloth. There was much red steak smothered with mushrooms, and many other delectable foods whose memories often tantalized him as he munched sour bread or picked the hair off underdone pig's feet. And it was all washed down with sparkling old chianti, which he doted on and could seldom afford.

Then, feeling immensely superior to the whole "Estados Unidos de Brasil," he walked across the little town to see the sights. There were no sights. It was only ten o'clock.

High on a hill commanding a view of Santos and the sea stood an ancient church, grey and moldering. Its stern air of eternal dignity contrasted strikingly with the laxity of Harry's usual atmosphere and drew him up to it. He climbed the steep, rocky ascent, and, breathless, reached the summit. Widely scattered far below him, the lights of the city gleamed fitfully up through a thin haze like the soft twinkle of stars in Indian summer. All was peaceful and silent—silent as the wooden figure that hung from the massy cross before the church. Overhead the southern cross shone faintly through the haze; he saw no other stars. How long he lingered he did not know. The great silence, the feeling of aloofness from the city and the ship made him quite forgetful of the passage of time.

It was with a heavy heart and very slowly that he retraced his steps.

Here it was again—the most pitiable of evil, pitiable because it was unconscious. Harry had a vague thought that the devil must have laughed here sometime—if there was a devil.

"Oh well," he thought, "it's the last port, and probably the last night ashore. I'll take a good look at things."

The "Calle Yerbal" of Santos is "Rua Martin Alfonso," and another street whose name he did not know, and made no effort to find out. It was enough to note the cold facts that they comprised sixteen blocks in all.

He went back to the ship. Thank God, tomorrow was sailing day, and the next port was San Pedro. That was comforting even if it was a month away. He would get some sleep and be ready for work in the morning.

Sleep! Ha! He forgot what the word meant when he came aboard. Ted was in his cups again, and his besotted brain was set on homicide. As Harry walked up the gang plank he saw Ted's enormous bulk hurtle across the midship's deck. But that was nothing. Ted was always prowling around. He took no notice of it and went aft to his bunk.

Ted crept into the captain's cabin where the Old Man lay sleeping. He struck him a fearful blow in the face and tore his shirt off. Dazed and smarting, the captain sat up, switched on a flash light and played its yellow circle on Ted's face. There was the gigantic Lettisher, eyes blood-shot, teeth grinding, cursing the captain in the vilest of sailor profanity. The Old Man's blood was up. Jumping from his bunk he grabbed a flat-iron and hurled it with all his might at Ted's head. It struck just above the ear, cutting a great gash. Then the captain booted him out of the room—retaining his shirt as a sort of poetic justice.

When Harry saw Ted come aft, shirtless and covered with blood, he grew worried, and ran up on the poop where he could watch and not be seen. Ted ran into the mess room and grabbed a butcher knife. "I'll kill that son of a ——! I'll kill him!" Harry did not feel in a mood to stop him. But Ted made too much noise. Several of the crew woke up. Steve grabbed a fire axe and ran after him. Ted saw the shining axe, and forgot the captain. Still bleeding profusely, he ran wildly around the after well deck brandishing his knife and screaming like a damned soul. Heine saw Steve and grew anxious. "Steve's drunk! I gotta stop him!" So he picked up a two-by-four, waved it around his head and began to chase Steve, shrieking that if he didn't drop that fire axe, he'd grease the deck with his dirty Norwegian brains. The others saw these three running in circles and waving weapons, and thought naturally that it was a free-for-all. They joined the fray with empty bottles as weapons. Harry watched aghast, thinking they would exterminate themselves.

But they did not. The captain appeared suddenly on the midship's deck with several policemen, who descended en masse upon the fighting sailors. They were all thrown in irons. Ted had fainted from loss of blood. Other than that, there were no casualties except a black eye here and there, and a cut or two from broken bottles.

To Harry's surprise none of them were arrested. They slept in irons on the ship. In the morning they were sober, the handcuffs were removed, the fire axe was replaced in its holder, the cook received his butcher knife, the glass was swept from the deck, and the whole matter was forgotten. Even Ted turned to with a bandage on his head, and seemed none the worse for his adventure.

That afternoon the ship left Santos.

VIII

Up the coast of Brazil, faster now, for the trades were strong astern, 'round Pernambuco, past the Guianas, and into Panama steamed the ship. Time passed swiftly again. It always does at sea. The immutable round of watch and watch sinks one into almost a state of coma. Through the canal — which Harry took great pains to see—and up the western coast of Mexico. Nothing but one little squall in the Gulf of Tehuantepec marred the perfect weather of the return trip.

Then — that glorious night when Harry saw the lights of San Pedro growing ever and ever brighter, until he could distinguish places that he knew. The stopping of the engines—the roar of the anchor chain—the splash of the anchor —and the ship is steady as a cathedral in the harbor of San Pedro, UNITED STATES.

YELLOW ROSES

By

GERTRUDE MACMASTERS SMITH

THE TRUTH? Of course, Sir, all the truth
And nothing but the truth. *He* used to say
It made life pleasanter oftentimes to lie;
But then, I never could lie plausibly,
And so I'll tell you to the very end
Just how the whole thing happened.

'Twas a day
So glorious, so clear; it did not seem
That such a thing could be on such a day,
I went into the garden early, Sir,
As was my custom. Bright the jewelled grass
Lay sparkling in the sun's long urging rays.
I did not lift my skirt, but let the dew
Be brushed against it as it rustled through:
And round me were my flowers, my lovely flowers;
And everywhere the hidden thrushes sang.
It was so glad a morn the whole world sang.
Here would I stop to pull a daring weed,
There pause to fling afar a strayed-in stone;
Then pause to listen, and to look about
At all my radiant fairy-flowers abloom.

And then I came to what I longed to see:
A bush of yellow roses that a friend
Had sent me, as he knew I loved them so,
And we had been dear comrades long ago.
Three buds it had, tight-closed the night before,
Now nearly opened wide, all cream and gold.
Then, as I bent to nearer ecstacy
And singled out each tiny curve and grace,
I heard *his* step upon the stony path.
He did not often ride so early, Sir,
Unless he had been up the whole night through,
When he would ride until outspent for rest.
He whistled gaily, seemed in merry mood,
And breathed as if he found the morning good.

He came on slowly, up the terrace steps,
And pausing at their summit by my side,
He stopped and looked soft-smiling at my flowers.
"And so," he said, "Your rose has bloomed at last.
What say you, will you give me one to wear?"
I told him, trembling, no. He frowned, and said,
"What are you, then, my wife who loves me well,
That you refuse a foolish flower to me?
But oh, I mind me how your eyes grew bright
The day it came. Now tell me, if you dare,
Why do you find no other rose so fair?
I see some here, much gayer, pink and red."
He moved to look around my garden space,
And on my rose-bush crushed his hard-spurred heel.
The frail stem snapped, and there my roses lay.
I screamed, and flung myself with all my strength
To push him back—the steps were there—he fell—
I hid my eyes, and when I looked again,
The thrushes still were singing all around,
All else was still—as death. I saw him there,
Sprawled out upon the stone. Oh, Sir,
I did not mean to push him quite so hard!
He'd spoiled my yellow roses, don't you see?
They lay, all smeared with earth—and he, too, lay:
He and my roses lay so quietly.
And yet I—I could move—the thrushes sang—
Oh, Sir, my flowers were all bruised and torn.
My lovely flowers that I treasured so!

That's all then, Sir. I think that *he* would say
I've talked too much and yet not said enough.
You see, he spoiled my yellow roses, Sir;
My yellow roses, and I loved them so!

GRAY DISTANCES

By

GEORGE C. JOHNSON

THE HOUSE was high and narrow, gray of aspect, and stood, sombre, decrepit, and severe, between Lepkowsky's meat market and Katz's shoe repair shop. In numerous places the roof lay bare of shingles, exposing the beams of the studding. There were no front windows above, though I did glimpse the sill of a second-story window on the right side of the house. The wall of the first floor was taken up almost throughout its entire width by two windows, the shutters of which creaked dismally as they swayed on their rusty hinges, and by a heavy black door with a tottering stoop. At closer view, I perceived that the stoop was still wet from a recent scrubbing. Instinctively I glanced at my shoes for a trace of dirt, urged, I suppose, by a sense of the unsightliness of the place and this simple, ineffectual attempt at cleanliness. Satisfied that my shoes would leave no marks, I stepped up to the door and rapped. No answer came. Again I rapped, with more vehemence, and pushed the door open. A damp odor of soap swept toward me.

The hallway in which I found myself was bare and narrow. A much-worn staircase leaned against the right wall, its steps glistening in the light that filtered through the chinks of one small shuttered window. On the left was a door made fast by three thick boards nailed across the jambs. I concluded from this fact that the woman from whom I was to collect overdue payments lived on the second floor. Accordingly I ascended to the top of the stairs, where I found a single low door. I rapped, but could hear no sound within save that of a rocking chair in motion. Again I rapped.

"Come in," sounded a thin, dull voice.

Opening the door, I stepped into a tiny kitchen, where the cracked gray walls and low ceiling frowned darkly down upon a pool of sunlight flooding in through an unshaded window, brightening the faded oilcloth-covered table in the middle of the room. Beyond the shaft of light, on the wall, hung a half-filled cupboard; and on the opposite side of the kitchen stood an oft-repaired cooking range. Beneath the sink, on the farther side of the room, shrouded in shadow heavier than the heavy grayness of the walls, stood a scrubbing pail still unemptied. On the floor, which had been newly scrubbed, lay many newspaper sheets, some American, others foreign, in lieu of carpets. No one was about.

I coughed loudly to attract attention to my presence and was answered once more by the low, inert voice that I had heard a moment before.

"Come in here."

I glanced hastily about me and perceived, for the first time, in the far corner of the room, a door that stood slightly ajar. Through the opening I could discern the figure of a small woman slowly swaying back and forth in an armless rocking chair. I paused for a moment, then pushed the door wide open and strode into the room, which, as evidenced by an iron bed, a dresser, a scarred center table, and a worn tapestry sofa, served the double purpose of bedroom and living room. The sunlight, streaming in narrow shafts through the shutters, lay in bright patches upon the red, worn carpet.

The woman did not lift her eyes from the floor nor move from her slouching, weary attitude. A frayed, faded wrap fell from her stooped shoulders to her ankles. She rocked herself slowly, im-

passively, pushing backward with a bare, unlovely foot. I paused at sight of her, somewhat abashed at having intruded upon her privacy; but, emboldened by the indifference with which she seemed to regard my presence, I spoke.

"Mrs. Angelici?"

She nodded an affirmative reply.

"Mrs. Angelici," I continued with habitual carefulness, "I have come from Feldman's Clothing Store to collect payment on the suit which you bought some time ago and for which you agreed to pay four dollars every Saturday. It is now three weeks since your last payment. Perhaps you have good reasons for this oversight?"

I paused to note the effect of my words. The stark tenseness of her face remained unchanged; her gaze did not shift from the floor. The rocking continued. "Come now," I thought to myself, "why all these careful words? Frankness is the only thing here." So thinking, I began again with simpler words that conveyed their intention briefly. She raised her head; the thin, compressed lips relaxed and parted; the propulsive foot missed a beat. Her heavy-lidded eyes turned slowly to a garment that had been carefully laid out upon the sofa. She extended toward it a lean, white arm encircled several inches above the wrist by a gray, wet ring.

"Yes, I know," she said, passing her hand over the smooth brown cloth. "It must be paid. I try, but what can I do? Money comes not easy . . . I will pay . . . I must keep the suit. I will want it when I'm well."

The woman looked up at me and smiled wistfully.

"She is young," I said to myself, "but how old she looks! What a mass of hair she has! But her mouth . . . She must be old."

Again she spoke.

"I must pay for my pretty things: it is right. I want to have them always. But I am not as I used to be. See: I work too much. My hands—are they white? . . . They used to be. But why do I talk? You want money, yes? I give you four dollars. You will please give me pocket-book on table? I am tired." She indicated the center table with a heavy-knuckled forefinger.

I handed her the purse.

"Is four dollars all you can pay?"

She looked away, closed her eyes, and began to count on her fingers.

"I give you five dollars—no more."

"But, Mrs. Angelici, it is three weeks—twelve dollars."

"I know. But what can I do? Here I am sick; no money; and doctor bill, groceries, meat, rent. I must work for myself and I am sick. You can see it? You understand? . . . It is hard. No more can we save. My man get cut in pay last week. Money come; money go—like this."

She lifted her hand in a quick, expressive gesture. The wrap slipped away from her throat, exposing an emaciated and singularly white shoulder. Another quick motion and the shoulder was once more covered. Her face drew into a shy smile. Only beautiful young women can smile like that.

"Maybe next time I pay more."

"I shall expect you to," I replied.

"If you come to the house each week, I give you money. I am sick and must stay home. My man, he work late. You come to house for money, yes? Here, five dollars."

"That isn't much, you know, when twelve dollars are due. You must be sure to pay more next time."

"I try, but money goes not far. See this house. I work so hard to make it nice. No use: I am not strong and can't keep the house as I want it . . . I like pretty things . . . Some day I will be well and pretty again. I will go to picture show in my new suit. My man, he will like it, I know. He say if only I get well, he give me everything

he can buy . . . I will be well again, yes?"

A distant, plaintive look crept into her eyes. I felt uneasy at sight of this woman with tightened lips and low, yearning voice.

"Yes, oh yes," I said hastily, thrusting a receipt into her thin hand and stepping quickly out of the doorway.

A week later, when I called, I found the outer door locked. It bore a large "For Rent" sign. Having been specifically instructed to record and report all the movements of delinquent customers, I sought information of Mrs. Angelici's whereabouts from people in the neighborhood. Lepkowsky, the butcher, and Katz, the cobbler, gave me enough information to direct me to her new lodging. Both my informants spoke at considerable length upon the integrity of the Angelicis.

"Well," said Lepkowsky, throwing open his register of accounts, "here you see the bills I'm holding for her. I know she can't pay and I'm not pushing her for back money. But I must look out for my business. That's why I don't sell any more to her. She's good, I know. But I can't kill my business, can I? You don't kill yours, I see. Well, I hope you have luck, but I think you'll have to wait."

Katz expatiated upon other matters, particularly the domestic life of the Angelicis, of which he seemed intimately informed.

"For three years I know this woman and her husband. For three years I see how they live—like a man and woman should. Only once they quarrel—just a short time ago. He wants she should buy a new dress; she wants a suit, but it costs too much. He says they must save for the baby. I remember how she comes to me crying, not because she is angry with him; no, only because she wants to be pretty and wear fine clothes. One day she comes into the shop and says, 'Mr. Katz, do you know who is the greatest man in the world?' I said no. 'Here he is.' Then she hands to me a picture of this man Garibaldi. 'My mother saw this man once. Back home there,—ah . . . well, who knows? My boy will be like this man. I know.' 'But,' I say to her, 'if you have no boy?' 'Oh, then my girl will be like this.' She gives me an old magazine picture of —who is it? —yes, Eleanora Duse. Three years have done much, but I tell you, Mrs. Angelici does not change; inside she is always the same . . . You follow the streets I told you and you will come to the house."

I roamed the city for several hours, but found it at last in a muddy, steaming hollow near the creek that flows past the tannery. The waters of the stream were sluggish, thick, the color of unclean blood. The marsh surrounding the house was littered with all manner of refuse, cans, cast-off clothing, barrels, kitchen scraps. The house itself was almost black with soot. It sagged at the roof. Four crumbling pillars of concrete raised it above a green pool of stagnant water. There was no means of approaching the front door of the lower flat, for the steps had long since collapsed and were mouldering in the mud.

I made my way cautiously down the littered slope and through the foul-misted flat to the front door, upon which I tapped with a barrel-stave which I had found lying nearby. In a moment it was opened, and a large, broad-shouldered woman with unkempt hair stared down at me.

"What do you want?"

"Does Mrs. Angelici live here?"

"You mean the Italian? Sure, she lives here; upstairs, around the back."

At the rear of the house I found a stairway to the second story supported by two narrow pine props. I climbed the structure slowly. Finding the door at the top open, I rapped loudly and stepped at once into the room, a low-ceilinged, makeshift kitchen with battered plaster walls, grimy floor, and the stench of many odorous meals. The

cooking-range alone of all the furniture had been set up for use. All else was piled in promiscuous confusion in the corners.

"Who is it?"

I recognized Mrs. Angelici's feeble voice.

"The collector."

"Come in."

A heavy blanket hanging in an open doorway served to shut the kitchen off from the room occupied by Mrs. Angelici. I hesitated a moment before entering, fearing to intrude as I had done before, but a short deliberation on the explicit and rather unpleasant instructions given me by the manager put an end to my hesitation, and I pushed aside the blanket and stepped into the room.

Mrs. Angelici lay in bed covered with many quilts and a ragged portiere. The windows were darkened by rag rugs. Save for this, the room was utterly bare. Mrs. Angelici looked up at me out of her white, twisted face, thin-lipped and leaden eyed.

"I got no money now," she said. "The doctor must have money each time he come. You have to wait. Come next week, yes?"

"But you promised to have money for me this week," I protested.

"Yes," she replied slowly, "but what can I do? I must have money for doctor. The rent in other house was too high; so we move here. It is not a nice place, but it costs not so much. Work is not good; my man work only four days a week now. You see how it is, yes?"

"But you must pay regularly on your account," I persisted, mindful of the ordeal of explaining Mrs. Angelici's unpaid installment to the manager. "The devil," I thought, "I wish he were here so he could see for himself."

Mrs. Angelici began again laboriously to explain the reasons for her delinquency.

"Do not think I try to cheat you. No, no; I could not do it. I must pay for my pretty things. I want to keep the suit, but I got no money. My man, he must work, so I am alone all day. After while I pay. I must keep the suit . . . It is nice, yes? See, there it is, on foot of bed, where I can always see it. When I'm well I will wear it and look nice for my man." Despite her white face and quivering lips, she spoke rapidly. "I will be glad when I'm well. There will be the little one to make us both glad . . . I will be young and pretty again, yes? But now I am sick. Maybe next week I have money."

"Remember, I'll expect something next time. Goodbye."

It was a week later when I called again. As I picked my way toward the house, I perceived the dark form of a tall man at the edge of the creek. In one fixed position he stood, his eyes upon the blood-colored waters that flowed into the lake to be cleansed. I paused and gazed for a moment at his rigid figure and, being completely absorbed in conjectures as to his identity, I did not notice the white crape on the door of the second story until I had ascended halfway up the staircase. I stopped and debated with myself the advisability of going further and had decided to continue when a window in the lower flat was noisily thrust up and the woman whom I had first encountered on my previous call leaned far out of the casement, shouting in a raucous voice:

"Are you the collector?"

"Yes," I replied, "I am."

"That's good. Mr. Angelici left a little money with me—said he doesn't want to be disturbed."

She handed me two silver dollars, and, while I prepared the receipt, entered upon a recital of her experiences with the new neighbors.

"It beats me how these people have the nerve to buy on credit when they haven't enough money for rent. An-

other thing, I don't understand how Mr. Angelici can take these things so hard. The baby, you know, died yesterday. It isn't so bad when they die so soon. I can't for the life of me figure out where they're going to get enough money to bury her. It seems to me that in a time like this he should go to work to keep himself out of debt. But these foreigners never look ahead. And—do you know?—for the last two days he's been wandering around like a half-wit muttering to himself, hours at a time. I was up to see the Mrs. yesterday, but she wouldn't have me there—ordered me out of the house. Of course, I didn't pay any attention to her; I knew she was out of her head. I was talking to the doctor this morning. He said the baby died because Mrs. Angelici hadn't ever taken any rest. Well, I'll give this receipt to Mr. Angelici when he gets over his crazy spell. You might call in a week or so. I'll see to it that you get your money."

I made my way back to the street. Glancing over my shoulder, I saw the man on the bank of the creek shake his fist at the sky.

The manager received my report that evening with a frown of disapproval. Did I think he was conducting a charity organization?

"This won't do," he said, indicating the duplicate of Mrs. Angelici's receipt. "We can't accept payments as small as this. I'm going to send you back in a few days. Go to Mrs. Angelici personally. We've got to have more money. She's not as sick as she says. Get the money or take the suit back. That'll bring her to time.

It was useless to remonstrate with him. He could comprehend only the fact that the payments were not being met. I could not explain to him my personal reactions to the task, for he would have construed the words as an admission of my incompetency. Thus, in spite of my sympathy for Mrs. Angelici's condition, I held my peace and, two days later, went again to the house in the hollow.

With unwilling steps I walked slowly around to the rear, climbed the swaying stairs, and rapped softly on the door. A minute passed, then the door opened noiselessly. A tall man appeared before me, his hair in wild disorder, his hands continuously moving in tremulous confusion.

The smell of medicines swirled about me.

"Mr. Angelici?"

He nodded.

"I've come for a larger payment on your wife's suit. Unless I get it, I have orders to take the suit back."

"Ah, my wife's new suit . . . Well, here are three dollars . . . She always wanted to look nice, and this suit she never could wear; but now—three dollars . . . It will cost much to bury my wife and the baby."

THE Creator looked down
Upon the earth,
And saw a great soul
Cramped in too small a body,
So he gave that soul
A violin.

—*Vera Root.*

AN ESSAY

By

WILLIAM L. DOUDNA

Here it is—but I haven't named it. I'll appoint you godfather (or whatever it is that does babyhood's titling) and leave the rest to you. The only bright idea I possess in the matter is the thought that it's the "solution of an unimportant problem."

W. L. D.

FOR a long time I have been searching for a medium of expression which is suited both to the things I want to say and to my individual temperament. The latter is, of course, by far the most important: Its consideration involves the fact that I can think best, and write best, when I am being prodded by an intellect other than my own. In this search—often vague and uncertain—I have attempted a hundred vain experiments in the manner of loosing my thoughts.

Today, during a lecture to which I should have been listening attentively, a thought that has been half-formed in my mind for some indeterminate time occurred to me. It followed from a series of notes which I and the young lady at my side had been scribbling during the progress of the lecture.

The thought itself can hardly be put into words, but the result of it was the discovery of my ideal form of writing. And that is what I think I shall call a "conversational essay." In structure, it is nothing new—it is much the same as that of Plato's dialogues. The manner of writing, however, is distinctly different. Instead of consisting of what can be remembered of a conversation, my essay will be written by the two persons whose talk is recorded in it. The idea works like this:

The lecturer mentions "charm in writing." And the partner in my essay writes on a slip of paper, or in a nearby notebook:

"Don't you think Arlen is the best example of that charm of style?"

Below this I write:

"His mode is charming, but so charming that it becomes, to me, boring. And I think that's one reason he won't live. He is so brilliant he almost blinds."

Comes the answer:

"I adored *The Green Hat*. Arlen's language enchants me—it's soft, musical—and his shameful, shameless lady was delightful."

"But," I write, "my objection is to that language, that style, not to the actual content or ideas. I, too, found Iris altogether delightful. Perhaps, though, I objected to *These Charming People* more than to *The Green Hat* on these grounds. I insist that the shafts of wit are so frequent and so sharp that, by the time one has read a volume or two, he is so pierced by them that his ability to appreciate them is well-nigh gone."

"Doesn't much of this depend upon the reader?"

"Of course—that is always true; it is too obvious for comment. But this is doubtless true, too, in the matter of Michael: if one fails to appreciate every sally, he probably appreciates the others more."

That, naturally, does not strike my collaborator as being entirely courteous, so I start on a new tack:

"Some day, when I feel brilliant enough, I shall write about the girls I've loved, or thought I've loved, which amounts to the same thing at the time."

"How many?" she scribbles.

"Not too many."

"That," she returns, "is neat."

"The deuce of it is the small amount of reciprocity concerned."

That is the first attempt at these new essays. But, like most first attempts, it has left nothing in the reader's mind, and (what is more important to me) has left nothing constructive in my own. Nevertheless, you can readily see the reason I

like them: they make me say things that probably would never occur to me in a formal essay, or even in a spoken conversation. They lead to fantastic ideas like this:

"So few men nowadays wear hats, and so many wear glasses, that we may some day watch them tip their spectacles to ladies."

In another lecture, the speaker was talking of Montaigne's lack of a sense of humor, and, with a note more or less personal, a new partner and I conceived this:

"One way—a sure way—to make a man hate you forever is to tell him he has no sense of humor (especially if it's true)."

She became more or less complimentary:

"No one dares say that of you, does he?"

"I'm not so sure," was my modest answer. "Not at all *a propos*: Some students simply go to classes; I sit on a glory seat, and curse professors and classmates with equal diligence and discourtesy. (That's not true—I am only developing into what someone has said of somebody, a 'maker of phrases')."

"The new type of humor has gotten away from professional shams, don't you think?" she answered. "It is the 'maker of phrases' who is the true humorist."

"I should say, emphatically, no. For my idea of humor is that it lies not so much in the words as in the ideas. For that reason I have a high regard for the epigram and the caricature—because they require that one make his point in a few words or a few lines. There is, I think, an inverse ratio between the number of words and the humor of a remark. Which is just a long way of saying that brevity is the soul of wit."

"Another thing," she said, "humor that is unkind is not my idea of good humor. I don't like the sort that 'slams' or hurts anyone."

"That's true," I replied. "To me, no wit is good which is not good-natured; that is the chief thing I hold against Oscar Wilde, and constitutes the chief part of my Twain-love."

A pause arrived in the progress of our conversation when the lecturer insisted upon being heard, but soon I resumed the writing, from an entirely new angle:

"I like this sort of writing—I get a number of ideas that would otherwise never make themselves known. Some day, I shall find someone with whom I shall write a series of these little conversational essays. The other will be brilliant, but not so brilliant that he will outshine me. That's my egoism."

"What do you call egoism?"

"It consists in the ability to stand outside oneself, to analyze one's mind, and to pass on, with due humility, the results of the research."

"That has nothing to do with your fear of being out-shone."

"That's true—but it makes a rather neat definition, doesn't it? I think I meant to put a 't' in the word the first time I used it—that fear was a phase of *egotism*, just as is this sentence, and the preceding one."

Then I returned to our former topic:

"I am a hedonist. That is, I believe that I was created to step into a world which was created, in its turn, to make me happy; and if I find happiness, or fail to find it, it is my duty to aid in giving others joy—either as a philosopher, a listener, or a buffoon."

"You are paving the way to make yourself the happiest man in the world. Don't we get our real happiness from making others happy, and, incidentally, from making them laugh?"

And so, in these jotted paragraphs, I have started to formulate, with the aid of a willing accomplice, a philosophy of life. I may have missed the points my lecturer has made, and toegther we may have failed dismally in the vaunted unity of a perfect essay—but haven't I learned something about myself?

And to know himself is the first duty of man.

THE NEW THING

By
VIOLET R. MARTIN

ELEO, tall, powerful, and proud of his power, quieted the group of men about him.

All of them, hairy and excited, knew themselves wily and strong. They, too, were capable of surely and neatly killing the boar; but it was to Eleo that they turned in the final issue. Even the brown, lithe women, with the skins of animals hung, lightly caught, from their shoulders, held him in awe. For all his strength, Eleo seemed quieter than the others; and his words, though fewer, were more forcible than theirs.

Today he said almost nothing, but contracted his heavy black brows in contemplation and looked steadily at little Imm, of the eight summers, who played busily, seated on a fallen log beside the water. Two long sticks in his hands, Imm poked gleefully at a heap of dried leaves and brush beside him and laughed a strangely musical laugh when a tongue of bright light darted in and out. Totally absorbed, he prodded and poked and dug among the leaves until the everescent thing which he watched finally attached itself in some magical fashion to the end of his sticks. These he lifted carefully and brandished aloft, in ecstatic surprise, drawing huge circles of light and calling aloud into the air, "It is like water, but it flows the other way. It is a new kind of water I did not know about." And then, with abandon, half-skipping, half-running, dropping the sticks, he waded a few feet from the beach. With his bare brown toes, he kicked sprays of water upon the leaves; and he gurgled with laughter when the light completely disappeared.

With the transformation of the blazing pile to a sodden heap, the group of men straightened up, relieved, as though a great fear had been taken from them; but they were seized again with awe and fright when Imm piled together three bunches of brush from beneath the trees and again took up his place upon the log. His brows were wrinkled into a frown and his lips puckered to a worried pout. Two small stones in his hands, his little arms, lean and brown, worked vigorously backward and forward, rubbing the stones together, until brilliant points of light flew out from them. In a moment, the brush he had gathered was transformed into a single tongue of yellow. All the while, he called to Eleo or chanted absent-mindedly to himself, in a sing-song manner, "It is a kind of water that I can make with stones! It is like the lightning, and I am like the maker of the lightning!"

The men crowded closely together again, arguing with one another. "He is an evil spirit," said Eo, the hairy one, of the short, stunted legs, who climbed trees as nimbly as the apes themselves and whose face was sullen from constant brooding. "We must crush his head with a stone before he destroys us with his light."

At his words, many in the group nodded and looked fearfully at one another.

"But what has he said?" grunted Ter, in a matter-of-fact, accepting tone. "You have seen what the lightning does to the forest and how the trees are nothing but blackened sticks after it rages through them. What is he but a god, after the manner of the Maker of the Lightning? We had best hold ourselves aloof and give him the respect that he deserves. Perhaps he will be pleased with an offering and will not destroy us."

"But he is only very small," mused Eleo, who had begotten Imm. "He is like the thin aspen tree on the side of the hill. His body is so frail and slender that I could twist it to nothing in my

two hands. He is only a little boy, like Irr, his brother . . . But, after all, it is very strange—" There was no fear, but only wonder and awe, upon his face. "Besides, I cannot say truly that Imm is like his brother—"

Nor indeed was Imm like Irr; nor, for that matter, was he like any of the rest of them. Born of Iris, the blue-eyed one, he had shunned the perils of the hunt and even the games with arrows, that his brothers played; and he had contented himself with the bright stones at the water's edge or with building mounds in the sand. He had frightened Irr with stories of strange things he had seen in the brush; and he had been laughed at for saying that once, when the others had wandered away into the forest and had left him alone by the water, a faun had come and nuzzled its head against him, in the sand. They had scoffed, too, when, on seeing a dying elk, he had run away, with a pitiful sob, saying that the look in its eyes made him hurt, somehow, up by his throat. Often, at night, huddled close against Iris on a mat of fur, he had cried aloud, until Eleo had checked him; and he had given for his reason that white hares had pressed soft, wet paws against him while he slept and had left blood upon his face. Iris alone tried to comfort him, at times like this, and pleaded with Eleo not to strike him, when he cried, in the dark.

"It is very strange," said Eleo again, silencing the awed murmurs of the group and the excited grunts of Eo, the stunted one. "But I do not believe that he is an evil spirit. He is, as Ter says, much like the Maker of the Lightning. We would do well to give him respect." He was thinking, perhaps, of Iris, who stood aside, watching him with a cold, speculative look, and who was like the water, quiet and beautiful and calm when she was pleased, and a turbulent, unrestrained creature of storm when she was angered. Eleo looked shrewdly at the men about him. "Is it not so—that we should respect him who is like the Maker of the Lightning?" His voice carried conviction. Eo alone looked sullenly away, but he said nothing.

A wave of assent, following Eleo's speech, passed through the group; and the men dispersed, purposing to hunt the elk in the forests and to bring Imm an offering worthy of his greatness. Eleo made no move to go with them, but remained behind, arms folded, grimly watching the little, preoccupied boy.

Three times Imm went through his cycle of movements, rubbing the stones together, sending the tongue of flame leaping eagerly through the leaves, and then quenching the flame with water that he kicked upon it with his feet. He accompanied his movements with a clear laugh, or with his little, chanting song. Leaves and brittle twigs were everywhere in abundance, and Imm had no difficulty in dragging from beneath the trees and out from the little open spaces where the wind had blown them, as huge armfuls as he could carry. The piles grew larger with each successive attempt, until, the third time, he had constructed a mound four feet in diameter and taller than himself. He paid no attention to Eleo standing apart, nor to Iris and the little group of frightened women who huddled farther in among the trees; but he sent the tongue of light leaping through this heap as it had through the others; and he laughed to hear the crackling sound that it made as it whipped high into the air.

Not only did the flames leap skyward, but they began to spread to the side of the pile and to bridge the gaps from one leaf to another on the ground. Imm, all the more pleased, began building a circular wall of brush. He did not see Eleo, transfixed, unable to say anything to the women who now crowded about him. Gradually the line of the circle was extended to meet its starting point in one

great sweep; and the flames, playing upon the wall, leapt to the very branches of the trees in their path and wound themselves hungrily against the trunks. Eleo and the women uttered cries of fear and sought refuge in the water. Their small portion of the forest became, in a moment, a raging storm of sound and fury and heat.

The women had scarcely begun their lamentations, when the men returned, running frantically from the interior of the forest and calling, terror-stricken, that they would all be destroyed with the light. Little Imm alone seemed utterly unafraid; and he called to Irr who had returned with the men and who stood trembling and panting on the beach, "Look how the light plays among the tree tops! Look what I have made with my two stones!"

Gradually the flames increased in fury and strength, spreading out in broad bands among the trees, licking and whipping their way farther and farther over the water and deeper and deeper into the forest. Once, twice, from within, came an awful scream, very close at hand, but hidden by a wall of flame. The men looked about them and saw that Ter was missing. The women sobbed and waded out up to their necks in water. Eo, the stunted one, stood closer toward the shore, his face black with rage and fear. Eleo drew Irr out into the deeper water and called to Iris who stood alone on the beach.

Iris, strangely silent, watched Imm as he played alone in the small remaining semi-circle. She did not make any move to answer Eleo or to obey his command. Nor did she approach Imm, whom she regarded with a look of fear and unbelief. But as the flames crept closer about him, Iris bounded, like a cunning tiger, to drag him away with her to safety. She had scarcely reached him when a great moan arose from the mouths of the people and the light closed tightly about Iris and Imm, hiding them completely in its arms. None of the long-haired women, nor any of the dark-skinned, dark-eyed men,—not even Eleo with Irr upon his back—made any move to rescue Iris from her fate; but they stood rigid, shuddering only when a piercing cry, like the tremulous sound from a silver string, rose and died away again to nothing . . . . .

For the remainder of the day and far into the night the fire raged close to the beach, receding, as the time went on, farther into the forest. With the first break of dawn the people stumbled upon the sand and fell asleep almost where they stood. Even Eo, with his bitter look, could no longer bear the strain but closed his eyes and nodded over a fallen blackened log. Eleo alone could not sleep. He stood beside Irr whom he had laid motionless and stiff as a stone, upon the sand. The eyes of the man were wide and burning, like the charred embers that still smouldered here and there on the ground. He stared continually, almost without blinking, at the little semi-circle, in which Imm and Iris had stood when the flames had closed about them. On the very spot were the charred bones of a woman and of a little boy . . . . The little boy whom they had thought a god . . . . or an evil spirit . . . .

While the people yet slept, Eleo sought out two stones; and he set to rubbing them together, as Imm had done, until a tiny spark flew into the air. Then he laid the stones carefully down beside him and waited until the people awakened and began to talk excitedly with one another as they ran about and examined the place of desolation.

Finally Eleo called the people together and took them to the spot where Imm and Iris had stood. "If he was a god," Eleo said, "he could not save himself; and if he was an evil spirit, he has been destroyed by his own evil. And

Iris is dead beside him." Then he led them back with him to the place where his two stones lay on the sand.

"I shall harm no one," he said simply; and his eyes sought out the brooding, cunning ones of Eo, the stunted. "I have been at all times just, as you shall see; and afterwards, you shall kill me, if you will. I have discovered a new thing, that is all." The old-time quiet and the conviction in his voice held the people silent. He sat down upon the log, and picking up the stones, rubbed them together vigorously, as Imm had done.

"Look at the light," he said, as the sparks flew. "That is the new thing." And then, noticing the look of cunning and treacherous speculation in the eyes of Eo, he spoke quietly to him. "Come here, Eo," he said to him, "and rub the stones together. You, too, can make the light." At the murmur of assent that went up from the people, Eo took the stones in his fingers and angrily plied his short, muscled arms to the task.

"See," said Eleo, when Eo, too, had caused the sparks to fly; "it is an ordinary thing. We can all make the light; and we can all kill it with the water. Besides, the light is warm and comforting, when it does not grow beyond the water. I knew that, too, at last. Imm was not a god, then. He was not even an evil spirit. He was only a little boy, like Irr, and he could not have known about the bigness of the light. It was a new thing that he found, as we sometimes find a strange new animal in the woods."

The people were silent at his words and made no attempt to touch him, but they walked thoughtfully away. The men wandered about, with puzzled looks upon their faces; and the women sat with their heads upon their knees, silently mourning.

And Eleo, standing apart, looking into the water, murmured, "It is a new thing, like a strange animal. But Ter will not come back again, and Imm and Iris are dead. Even Irr does not awaken from his sleep."

WONDERS

By
GLADYS FELD

I SAW a moon tonight
Of alabaster tinged with gold.
I saw a million wisps of cloud
Caressingly unfold.
I saw a web of stars
Against the blackness of the sky,
I watched the white foam of the lake
Laughingly float by.
I saw a world of wonders,
Was thrilled, not at their sight,
For the wonder of my love is gone.
My soul is mute as night.

The Wisconsin Literary Magazine

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The Wisconsin Literary Magazine is published three times a semester by the students of the University of Wisconsin. The price of the magazine is twenty-five cents per copy; year subscription, one dollar twenty-five cents. Those who wish to submit manuscripts for consideration by the editorial board may leave them in the manuscript box, third floor Bascom, with a stamped return envelope or send them to 722 Langdon St.

Entered as second class maill matter at the Postoffice at Madison

EDITORIAL

WHATEVER may be the the popular opinion regarding the uses of literature in a life so complex and so materialistic as our own, we take as our stand in the question that literature in its finest manifestations serves the noblest ends to which men can direct their efforts. We do not countenance the dilettante attitude, which finds in literature a subject eligible for tea-table talk, a pastime for an idle hour, an excuse for avoiding the cares of a serious life. We cannot see it categorized, outlined, classified into this, that, or the other movement; we cannot see it dismembered in unappreciative classrooms, crammed into the throats of a people, who take it as children take an ill-tasting medicine, profaned in the mouths of unimaginative, dry - as - dust scholars. For what good have our Platos, Dantes, and our Keatses labored, if their works fall upon the barren ground of a graceless people? Literature is not the euphonious collocation of words or the expression of wayward fancies; it comes from life, finds its origin in experience, and takes its lodging in the secret places of a man's mind; it is steeped in the purest, noblest, most unselfish spirits that have arisen amongst the peoples of the earth.

This is the proposition to which we subscribe our efforts; faith alone can serve as our defense. G. C. J.

THE EXAMINATION

By

STUART PALMER

IT WAS eleven o'clock when Philip returned from the show, and dropped into the stiff chair before his study table. He always went to a show on the eve of an "exam," partly because it cleared his mind of the jumble of facts and fragments that follow "cramming," and partly because this bravado gave him a measure of self-confidence. Tonight he had hardly noticed the dance of the silver shadows on the screen. He had rested there in that darkened auditorium, and amused himself by odd fancies about the people who sat near him. But now, as he stared at the impassive face of his watch, he realized with a dull certainty that only sheer luck could bring him more than a "con," at the best, in the French 1B examination scheduled for the next day. After starting a letter home, he jammed it absent-mindedly in a drawer and went to bed.

His dreams that night were heavy and slow, and it was with a sort of gratitude that he opened his eyes to see the sunlight streaming across the room. His roommate was still asleep; on the floor Philip could see a scattered assortment of clothing, which looked singularly unattractive. His pyjamas were twisted around his neck, he found, as he stretched sleepily. Then came the realization that this was the day of the "exam." He remembered all the glorious days of the spring, when he had cut classes with a magnificent indifference. He remembered the warnings of his well-meaning but colorless instructor, not with any degree of remorse or regret, but only with a kind of self-accusation. He knew that what was to come he had earned twice over. He shook these thoughts from him as a collie dog shakes off the dripping water after a bath, and hurried into his clothes. He searched for a clean shirt, and carefully tied his newest and gayest tie around his neck. Something of a desire to die game inspired this gesture of youth.

The room in which the examination was to be held seemed larger and dustier than usual. Here and there groups of early and worried girls looked up the "irregulars" for the last breathless time, or asked each other questions about the grammar. Into a seat near the back of the room he dropped, and stared moodily at the instructors in charge as they prepared the blue-books. Several students were reading newspapers; one was whistling with a frightened, foolish smile on his face. In the row in front of him, Philip noticed a Gamma Phi whom he had known slightly since mid-years. She had always been careless and rather superior toward her instructor—now she was biting her lips and staring hopelessly at the floor.

Down the aisle he could see a girl carefully arranging a page of notes in the sleeve of her slicker, which hung over the seat in front of her. When she turned around, he saw that her face was drawn and white. There was nothing of the sneak or the cheat there, only a sort of hard, defiant carelessness. The pity of the whole system struck him suddenly, forcibly. The falseness and unfairness of the standard, the constant enmity between student and teacher, the impersonal dry cruelty of the whole business; these made him want to stand up and shout in front of the whole assemblage; made him want to hurl the blue-book which had just been passed to him into the faces of the instructors.

A sort of smile crept over his face as he read the questions. A third of the examination was translation,—idioms and straight text. This his fountain pen transcribed onto the first few sheets of the blue-book flowingly, without any

seeming effort on his part, for French translation was easy and interesting to him. Then he came to a long list of verbs, the famous "irregulars." He raised his head for the first time.

Down the aisle a smirking examiner had pounced on the girl who had concealed the notes. He was talking to her bitingly, sarcastically. In the midst of it, she rose to her feet and walked bravely up the aisle toward the door. She was smiling, the kind of a smile that makes one turn away out of respect and pity. Her eyes were red, and a tear had disturbed the powder on her cheek. Philip had an insane desire to jump up and take her arm, and to go out with her through the curious stares and the smiles. But he whispered, "I'm sorry," as she passed, and was rewarded by a touch of light on her face as she turned toward him in opening the door.

He turned again to the "irregulars", and went through them carefully. The few that he knew, he wrote in, leaving blank spaces for the others. A low whisper caused him to raise his head. The Gamma Phi in front of him turned a flushed face around and desperately inquired the translation of the second idiom. Without a compunction he wrote it out and passed it to her, watching the instructors with a cool contempt as he did so. They did not see.

He took up the grammar part of the questions. Here were some of the points he had reviewed during the last three days. But he could remember nothing of it all, and his mind searched tiredly among its shelves to bring forth only blank sheets. He made the best guesses he could in every case, and then read over the whole paper carefully. Here and there he made a change, but he knew that, while the paper was hopelessly a flunk, he had written all he knew.

Philip laid the blue-book aside and let his memory wander back over the memorable days and nights of the spring. He admitted to himself that he would not have, could not have done otherwise than he had, in regard to studying. He had done many things; his time had been full. On the writing and drawing he loved he had lavished hours. And there had been weeks when he had thought not at all of classes, but of girls whom he had half-forgotten now. If he had it all to do over again, would he act differently? He answered truthfully, "No." For no matter what mistakes he had made, he had always been consistently himself, and he had chosen what he desired, with his eyes open. Philip had no regrets.

But as he handed in the blue-book, the thoughts that wandered through his mind were not pleasant. He saw sentences — hard, brittle sentences — typewritten notices, and form announcements —". . . indicates that the standing in one or more branches. . . . . is unsatisfactory . . . . decision . . . . . . Junior Dean . . . . . communicate . . . . . . regret . . . . . is no longer . . . . eligible for . . . . staff activities . . . . . . respectfully . . . . . . yours . . . ." Philip shrugged his shoulders and walked down the hill. The sidewalk was wet with last night's rain, and several angleworms had lost their way and were wandering across the cement. The exam was over.

PRIZE TRANSLATION

By

MARY B. HOUGHAM

HORACE: BOOK I, ODE 9

SEE tall Soracte standing there,
And how the lab'ring forests bear
Their heavy load of glistening snow,
While ice has locked the stream below.

With wood piled high upon the hearth
Dispel the cold come from the North;
And freely pour, Thaliarchus mine,
From Sabine jar, the mellow wine.

As for the rest, leave that to Heaven,
For not to men, but gods, is given
The power to still the winds that lash
The sea, the cypress, and the ash.

What lies beyond, nay, do not ask!
But in the suns Fate gives thee bask;
Oh, at sweet love look not askance,
Nor while still young refuse the dance.

Full soon comes age to mar thy prime;
But now thou shouldst keep trysting
time,
For love's soft whisper sweetly calls
From field and street as evening falls.

The pretty maid with laugh betrays,
To him who seeks, her hiding place,
And as from finger or from arm
A pledge he'd snatch, she feigns alarm.

BOOK NOTES

Announcement

TWO LIVES, by William Ellery Leonard. B. W. Heubsch; $2.50.

Readers of William Ellery Leonard's poetry have eagerly been waiting for the publication of *Two Lives*, which was written in 1913. In 1922 it was printed privately, and a few copies were issued to Mr. Leonard's close friends.

At last the book has been published, from the presses of Heinemann, London, with an American edition by B. W. Heubsch, publisher of Mr. Leonard's other verse.

Two Lives made its appearance in the book shops October 28. It is a long sonnet sequence, and is considered by its author as his best work. It recounts "the exact fates of modern men and women in terms analytic and creative, epical and lyrical, precise and yet heroic."

Much praise has been accorded the poem already, and it is sure to draw the sympathy and good feeling of all who read it. Certain opinions of critical readers may be found in the back of Mr. Leonard's *Tutankhamen and After*, a book of poetry published at the end of 1924.

Every student should read *Two Lives*. Its setting is the university, the hills and lakes, and the city, which all learn to love, even though their stay be short. The story is one of poignant beauty, the rhythm is music itself, and through the whole is a note of unutterable sadness and pain—the tragedy of life and of death—and the beauty and reason of living.

C. G. S.

GLORIOUS APOLLO, by E. Barrington. Dodd, Mead & Co.; $2.50.

A glorious Apollo, pale, beautiful and romantic: that was the Lord Byron who became the rage of London society after he came back from his pilgrimage to the Mediterranean countries, Greece, Spain, and Portugal. An Apollo who had swum the Hellespont. His meteoric and dazzling rise as a favorite poet and beau, only to fall from public approval amid ugly rumors, is depicted by Edith Barrington in *Glorious Apollo*, a biographical novel of Byron's life. His exile from England to roam the continent a bitter and cynical Don Juan, and his not unglorious death in Greece is told with sympathy.

Of the three women who exerted such an influence upon Byron, Augusta Leigh, Caroline Lamb, and Anne Milbanke, much is told. His love affair with the beautiful, petulant Lady Caroline Lamb, who exclaimed, after she met him at Melbourne House, "That face is my fate—my fate!" is described with keen understanding by the author, and one realizes why Byron determined to marry the charming, untouched Anne Milbanke, after Lady Caroline's amours shocked London society and kept it gossiping for months. But London women idolized the young poet, with a face which was "marble pale, the clear features chiselled into lines of almost unearthly beauty, cold and disdainful, with a kind of dark dignity upon him." There was "something new in its quality, fierce, rebellious, clouded with care, the forecast shadow of ruin." Their flattery and worship accentuated his vanity, but he felt the stabilizing need for a wife and a home.

Anne Milbanke, an heiress, "all grace and delicacy," was Byron's choice as a wife. His proposal was refused, but finally after two years, she consented to marry him. From the very beginning of the "treacle-moon" as Byron jeeringly called his honey-moon, their marriage was a failure. He flaunted his conquests with women to Anne's face, but the unhappy and desolate girl, with tremendous courage, moved through this episode of her life in an unreproachable manner. The birth of their daughter, Ada, did not alter Byron's attitude toward her,

and bewildered by his strange actions, Anne had him examined for insanity. The doctors found no trace of the disease. Returning home for a short visit, broken, worn and unhappy, the very antithesis of the bright girl who had left two years before as a bride, she heard ugly rumors concerning Byron's relations with his half sister, Augusta Leigh, which strengthened her resolve never to return to him.

Public disapproval over Byron, when the cause of their separation was made public, forced Byron to leave England, an exile, never to return alive. He visited the Shelley's—Shelley and Mary Godwin, and became the lover of Mary's half sister, Claire Clairmont, but soon tired of life in Switzerland, and went on to Venice. In Venice, he led the most ignoble part of his life, living openly with women of the streets, and becoming lax in all morals. He finally took the Countess Teresa Guiccioli as his mistress, but found constant association with her wearisome, and in a final effort to recapture all that which had stirred the imagination of England before, when he visited Greece, he enlisted in the Greek army, and died at Missolonghi, a broken man, at the age of thirty-six, calling for his wife, whom he had used so cruelly, his daughter he had seen but little, his sister Augusta, and the country which had exiled him.

The attempt to present Byron, the man, has been successful, because the author has emphasized not incident nor action, but characterization, the essential in a biography. While the dialogue at times might seem stilted, it has genuine touches of authenticity.

Sympathy is the predominant emotion which the book calls forth, sympathy for the wild Lord Byron, and his unfortunate wife. It is here that the author excels, but never does the book stir the imagination as did Maurois' *Ariel—The Life of Shelley.*

E. S. M.

FIG LEAVES, by Mildred Evans Gilman. Siebel Publishing Corporation; $2.00.

"What pitiful fig-leaves,
What senseless and ridiculous
Shifts are these?"
—SOUTH, *Sermons.*

In the story of Lydia Carter of Grand Rapids, Michigan, who came to the University of Wisconsin, enrolled in the Course in Journalism, and was rushed and pledged Chi Alpha Gamma, Mildred Evans Gilman shows how the fig-leaves of glamour covering the more unpleasant aspects of college life were removed.

Lydia was at a loss to understand why she had been pledged, until it was brought to her by the repeated admonition, "We're counting on you to make Phi Bete, dear." Her feeling of awe for the sorority soon wore off. The sorority did not satisfy her; it seemed narrow. She became identified with a small radical group. "She has queer friends," said the girls at the house. Lydia grew farther and farther away from them, and the dreamy illusions in which they lived, so it was quite natural that she should become a leader of the seventeen girls who decided to leave their sororities in the period following the war. Their reasons for leaving, the motives and ideals which inspired them the author wants to make very clear.

The book is undoubtedly sincere and seems to have been written with the intention of clearing up some of the misunderstandings that surrounded certain events in which the author had a part. It is, perhaps, the memory of these misunderstandings and of the "senseless and ridiculous shifts" that makes the tone of the book rather bitter. If it seems exaggerated, it is because during the war everything was exaggerated.

Although the story may not be of great interest throughout the country, it is interesting to us because the scenes and the author are ours. Mildred Evans Gilman, who graduated in the class of 1919,

is the only woman who has ever been editor-in-chief of THE WISCONSIN LITERARY MAGAZINE. In her writing as a student, Mrs. Gilman's work was better done and more mature than that of her contemporaries. *Fig Leaves* is well written and has many clever touches. It shows a certain satiric and cynical vein in the author that may come out better developed and to a better advantage in another book. We can await with interest the next novel written by this graduate of the University. L. B.

THE BREAD GIVERS, by Anzia Yezierska. Doubleday, Page & Co.; $2.00.

"I had just begun to peal the potatoes for dinner when my oldest sister, Bessie, came in, her eyes far away and very tired. She dropped on the bench by the sink and turned her head to the wall.

"One look at her and I knew she had not found work. I went on peeling potatoes . . . ."

Thus the book begins, and in the same tone it continues. The first chapter is the description of their wretched home, the second the fight with the landlady, the third the cruel father turning away his oldest daughter's lover, the next turning away his second daughter's lover, then his third daughter's lover. He then gets for them husbands who are either cruel, dirty, or who gamble. The rest of the book is devoted to Sara, who ran away.

This monotonous one, two, three, collection of sordid incidents is *The Bread Givers,* by Anzia Yezierska. It is amusing to note the author striving to get the most horrid, realistic details into her descriptions — "His black, greasy beard was spotted with scales from the fish. He had a big wart on his nose, and his thick, red lip was cracked open in the middle. It smelled from him yards away, the fish he was selling. And he breathed thickly from stuffing himself with too much eating."

The incidents all follow in the same hopeless fashion. Sara leaves home, goes to college, becomes that much envied and respected personage, "the teacher." But even here we are allowed no lightening of the heart. Sara says in conclusion:

"But I felt the shadow still there over me. It wasn't just my father, but the generation that had made my father, whose weight was still upon me."

L. B.

THE WIND BLOWETH, by Donn Byrne. The Century Co.; $2.00.

The Wind Bloweth, one of Donn Byrne's earlier books, is filled with Celtic beauty and wisdom. Around the shoulders of Shane Campbell has been thrown the rosy cloak of magic and romance. The author took great pains to make this cloak cover all the harshness of realism, and in doing this beautifully, his tale is not as clear-cut as is *Messer Marco Polo.*

The book has almost an Epic quality, following the growth of the soul of Shane Campbell through the whole of his life. Donn Byrne has been able to "touch the mainspring of humanity, that elusive, unbearable ache" through his knowledge of the Celtic mind, with its rare flashes of humor and imagination, and its deep sense of beauty. He has brought back some of the romance of the slowly dying past, and has refreshed these parlous times of realism with his fresh spring rain of beauty.

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