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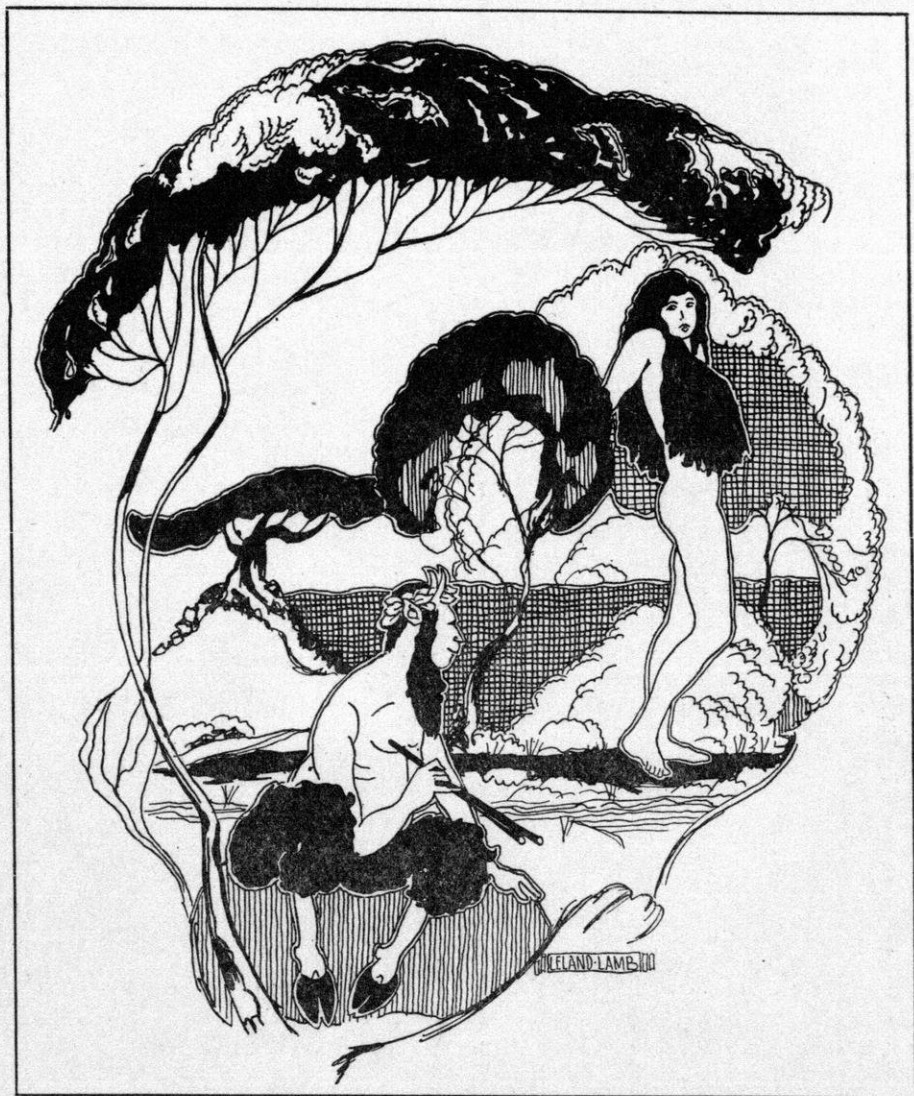
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The
WISCONSIN
Literary Magazine



APRIL, 1928

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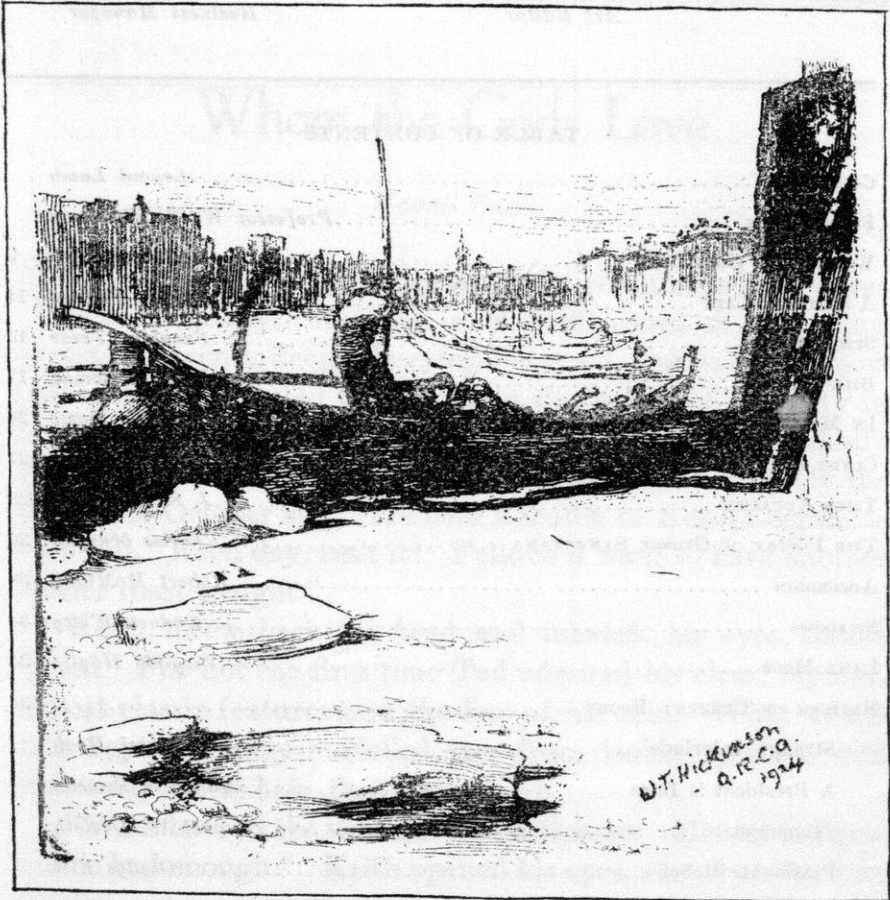
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WISCONSIN LITERARY MAGAZINE

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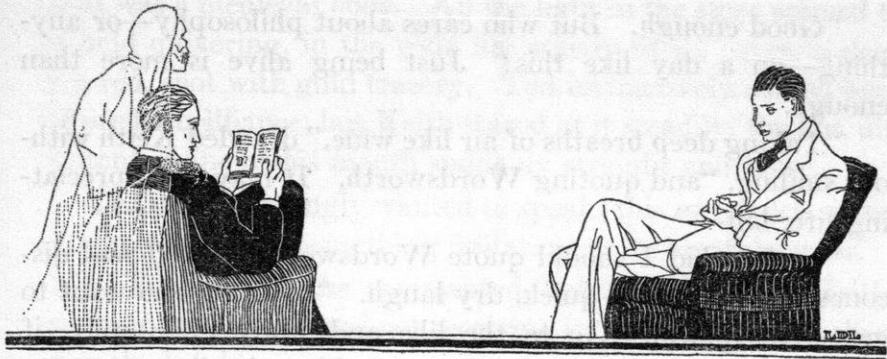
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Whom the Gods Love

Naomi Raab

TED looked over the campus, at the red and yellow leaves floating gently, constantly in the still warm air, splashing across pavements, deeply burying the grass, and wondered how one could be expected to care about death and immortality in this blaze of Indian summer. Off toward the right, seen dimly through the trees, the smooth lake reflected more intensely the deep blue October sky. He held a match to Keith's cigarette and said, "Keen day, isn't it? Fellows'll want to have another wiener roast tonight."

Keith threw back his head and inhaled, his eyes almost closed. For not the first time Ted admired his clear, regular, almost classic features and the line of his chin. What was it that kept his finely modelled face from looking girlish, with that curly blond hair, that clear skin?

"Wish to God the weather would change. Mental indigestion is bad enough." Keith opened his eyes, stared at the lines of girls and men passing them at the door and flowing on across the campus, to other buildings or down the hill to the street. "Let's go down to Smith's. I want something to read."

Ted forgot him as they began to walk down the stairs. Against the blue horizon, across the smooth vista of hills, the sky-line of the city fairly shone.

"Good lecture, didn't you think?" asked Keith's voice. It sounded dull and timbreless. Ted glanced at his roommate quickly and then again to the sky-line; Keith's face was smooth and empty of expression.

“Good enough. But who cares about philosophy—or anything—on a day like this? Just being alive is more than enough.”

“Taking deep breaths of air like wine,” drawled Keith without smiling, “and quoting Wordsworth. It may be appreciating life, but—”

“God forbid I should quote Wordsworth.” Ted was disconcerted by Keith’s quick, dry laugh. “It’s you who want to get philosophical. Go to the libe and study philosophy, if you’re afraid of getting drunk on air like wine.”

“I learned to hold my liquor long ago.” The end of Keith’s sentence dropped, as if he were bored, but he went on after a pause—“The lecture was interesting, just the same. I never thought the old geezer cared about anything so immediate as dying. Calculus is his idea of really deep philosophy.”

Ted shrugged. “Why the sudden burning interest in philosophy? You’ll pull an Ex anyway.” They walked silently down the street to the bookstore. Purple and pink paper covers spotted the window; black letters spelled meaningless words across their faces. Books held no enchantment today, and Ted followed Keith in with not even a stir of interest. The university in general evidently felt the same way; there was no one in the bookstore except Mr. Smith, unpacking some wooden boxes near the door. He cast aside another handful of excelsior and rose as they came in.

“Hello, Russell! What can I do for you?”

“I want something, but I don’t know what. Tell you later.”

“Help yourself.” The old man bent over the wooden box again. Keith half turned toward the long rows of books and then looked back at the box with a sudden gleam of interest. “What have you got there?”

“You ought to be interested in this,” Mr. Smith said, straightening slowly as he discarded the last shreds of excelsior. He held, hugged to his narrow chest, some sort of a square flat object, wrapped in yellow tissue paper.

“Picture?” asked Ted, following the bookseller and Keith to the counter near the window, where the light was good. Mr. Smith began to unshroud fold after fold of tissue paper.

“THIS had to be packed very carefully,” he said with relish, “because it’s ab-so-lute-ly authentic.” The last layer of tissue slipped off and disclosed what Ted realized after a mo-

ment was a medieval book. All the light in the store seemed to be held quivering, in the wide flat square of its cover, a deep rich red, shot with gold tracery. Ted instinctively moved back before its brilliance, but Keith stared at it steadily, the lax, discontented line of his mouth suddenly straight and tense.

Ted overpoweringly wanted to speak; this awestruck silence of admiration had something irritating in its breathlessness.

"Very pretty," he commented lightly, expecting Keith's contemptuous smile and not receiving it. His friend bent closer over the bright square.

"You can read old French, can't you?" said the bookseller. "What does it say?"

"The Secret of Death," Keith read. His voice was rapt and deep. "But underneath, there in the middle of the page, it says—'Whoever reads this book must die'." His voice caught at the last word.

"And it's authentic?" asked Ted. "Sounds like someone trying to play a joke."

"Oh no," said Keith, "It's easily explainable. You see, in the middle ages it was dangerous to write anything except orthodox opinions, and it was very easy to acquire a reputation for magic. The author of this book probably had a hunch he was going to be immortal and wanted to keep his book—and himself—from purification by fire. Is my theory right, Mr. Smith?"

"I don't know anything about the book except that it's authentic and very valuable. We're exhibiting it here for awhile. It belongs to a member of the firm back in New York. I think it dates from the sixteenth century."

"Not for sale?" Keith's blue eyes were gleaming, Ted saw, and his fingers twitched excitedly as he gently opened the book. A strange, fine script covered the yellow parchment pages rather pale but legible.

"I thought all medieval books were illumined," said Ted. "You don't really want this, Keith. Let's go."

"This is plain but neat." Keith's voice was pitched higher than usual, and it vibrated queerly. He closed the book again and stared at its cover. "How much?"

Ted tried to argue, across the bookseller's protests of not wanting to sell, but Keith waved a slender careless hand. "Why shouldn't I have it if I want it?" He took out his checkbook

and unscrewing his fountain pen, smiled sweetly at Mr. Smith and waited.

“YOU won’t be able to take Doris out for years,” protested Ted, “Even you.” As he spoke he saw for an instant Doris Taylor’s dark slimness beside Keith’s blond height, her light charming laugh punctuating his deeper voice. Keith’s smile disappeared, and he looked down at his fountain pen. Was he tired of her at last too?

“I wouldn’t worry about that.” His words were heavy and his mouth sombre. Through his thrill of surprise—someone had actually thrown Keith over!—Ted felt a distinct sense of discomfort as he saw Keith write out his check and hand it across the counter; a constriction in his throat. What did Keith want with that old stuff? Sixteenth century books were for museums.

As they came out of the store, Keith holding his package firmly under his arm, Ted felt the sudden rush of sunlight like a physical blow. It was hard to adjust his eyes to the vivid firm colors. He remembered the soft rich red and gold of Keith’s book; then he wrenched his eyes away from the package and looked down the street. The people, the rattle of voices, everything seemed for a moment to recede; then the sense of unreality passed and he was walking with Keith down Blair Street, on a warm bright day in October; Keith had bought a book and they were going to the house.

He looked at his roommate; the indefinable depression of the last few days was gone. There was something of determination in the straight glance of Keith’s blue eyes and the set of his mouth, and his teeth flashed brilliantly when he smiled. He was certainly not thinking about the trivialities of which he spoke, although his voice was lively and interested. Perhaps there was nothing to it, Ted thought; he had imagined the whole thing; everyone had moods—

They turned the corner and saw the lake shining at the end of the street. Ted was again thankful their fraternity house overlooked the lake. He was looking into its blueness so intently that he turned his head barely in time to see Doris Taylor across the street, with a man he did not know. She waved to them as they passed, smiling carelessly and radiantly.

KEITH'S expression did not change. Ted had never known just how serious was this affair, and he wished now he had not been such a privacy-respecting roommate. You could not question Keith directly, but there were ways—Why this sudden inquisitiveness into things that weren't his business? Well, he had never pried into Keith's affairs, but he had always understood him perfectly. Keith was not so hard to understand. Ted glanced at his profile; its cool, classic line remained undisturbed, and the mouth was still tight and resolute—and silent, now.

In their room, when Keith had unwrapped his book and seemed engrossed in it, Ted smoked and continued to think about his friend. It seemed all at once very important to know what Doris Taylor meant to him, as if it were the key to understanding him. Doris was probably the first girl who had thrown him over. Everything he wanted had always come to Keith, without any fuss—much as he had bought the book he was reading. People stooped and picked things up for him when he smiled. It wasn't only in social life, either; Keith was known among professors to be a brilliant student, and so far as Ted could see he never worked. He could do whatever he pleased, and no one would blame him. Had he gone too far with Doris? Did he care? He probably did; the coincidence of these last few days of silence and discontent—wasn't it since his last date with Doris? Ted could not remember. Well, it was undoubtedly good for him to be crossed for once in his life. Ted looked regretfully out of the window at the lake and the green line of the opposite shore, took out his French grammar, and succeeded in forgetting Keith. But every once in a while, in turning a page or mumbling a conjugation he would find himself staring at the wine-colored cover of Keith's book, hiding his face. And he would lose his conjugation in trying to trace the gold script on its cover. What was it Keith had said it meant? No matter.

The next day the sun was still shining. The lake was smooth and blue and silvered under its light. Keith, paddling bow, said "Why work so hard? We sure don't have to to keep warm. When we get closer to shore let's just drift." Against the cloudless sky, the back of his head was almost as round and gilded as the sun.

"Sure," said Ted. "But don't forget to paddle till we get close to shore. If a storm came up while we were out here—"

Keith turned his head to smile sardonically. "Believe in being cautious, don't you?"

"Well, I don't care about either us or our only canoe, of course, but it would be a shame to drown that gorgeous book of yours after you shot the roll on it."

"Darn nice of you," said Keith slowly. His paddle hovered above the water long enough to put them out of time. "Incidentally, it's a damn good book," he added almost hesitantly.

"Too bad," said Ted, "but I'll have to take your word for it. Philosophy is hard enough for me to plough through if it's written in English."

"Don't pose. It's your ambition to be the typical Joe College. And you've got too many brains to kid yourself—or any one else."

"Thanks." Ted was angry for a moment, then realised there was bitterness in Keith's voice. "Can't you forgive me?" His paddle grated on the lake bottom, and he saw the gentle green slope of the shore gliding close.

"Oh—'tisn't you. Particularly. Only it infuriates me for you to pull that ignorance-is-bliss stuff when I want to talk to you." Keith's words came in fragments as he slid his paddle across the top of the canoe and climbing over the wale, sat down in the bottom facing Ted. His eyes were even bluer than usual, Ted noticed; they looked past him, to something in Keith's own mind probably.

"Never saw the lake so smooth," said Ted.

Keith's eyes focussed suddenly, with almost a startled expression. "Oh—isn't it. Got a cigarette?" Ted offered his case silently. As he lit the match for Keith, their eyes met suddenly, and held.

"What do you live for, anyway, Ted?" asked Keith. Then he looked away again and shrugged, as if he were sorry for his unaccustomed spontaneousness. Beyond his head, the grey-blue surface rippled and shone.

"What does anyone live for? The things that happen every day—I suppose—things there always are to look forward to—"

Keith looked down at his fingers, and his mouth was bitter. "I suppose so. Things you always expect to bring you something new, something worth looking at. Don't you ever stop expecting?"

"Why should I? There's plenty worth looking forward to,

worth living for, if I have to put it that way. There's—"But if Keith would not see and feel the warm beauty of the day his words would not help. Keith of all people should be sensitive to beauty. "Don't you enjoy this sort of thing?" Ted ended lamely.

Keith glanced over the water impatiently. "It's pretty enough. But God, it's always the same, just like everything else! Don't you get tired of even looking at the sky?"

"There are other places to go, of course, though you've been to most of them. But I'm afraid you'll have to put up with the sky."

Keith leaned back against the cushions, gazing up, his face drawn and blank.

"Stone walls do not a prison make," chanted Ted, "Nor iron bars a—"

"Shut up."

"But if you *are* free in your own mind—if you're interested in things like philosophy—"

"God knows what I'm interested in. Philosophy is an opiate—of course every experience is—shuts off your perception that what you're doing is worthless. Only none of the opiates seem to work any more."

Ted felt a throb of impatience. Keith might be sincere; this ennui of experience might be genuine, but there was so little reason for it! One who had tasted everything with such relish was not likely to lose appetite so precipitantly. Was Doris Taylor another of the things which remained the same?

"Afraid you're in a bad way," he said lightly, without looking at his friend. But as he took another cigarette he saw Keith glance quickly at him and away again, with a gesture expressive of disappointment. "You were interested enough in that book of yours yesterday," he suggested, wanting suddenly to be helpful.

KEITH reached under the leather cushion on which he was leaning and succeeded, after a series of contortions, in pulling out the crimson-and-gold square. A leaf dropped on Ted's hand from the maple which hung over the lake; as he looked at it, the cover of the book seemed to catch, centered and intensified, all the color of the October foliage, all in the day which was not blue of sky or water, Fascinated, he heard Keith's voice only after a few moments.

“—he proves, by dialectic, there’s no real reason why there shouldn’t be immortality. Something like Professor Thorne’s lecture yesterday. Only there’s a fascination in the style—it’s highly colored, like that cover.”

“Seems as if there’s enough in life for philosophy to bother about,” said Ted impatiently, “without worrying about immortality of the soul.”

“You have a materialistic mind,” answered Keith. “You don’t want to be interested in anything that isn’t ascertainable. I’m tired of things that can be found out about. Men, women, experiences, are so ridiculously easy to turn inside out and examine. I like to have the thrill of getting at things no one else has. It’s why I read old French I suppose—”

“And get more kick out of a medieval book that says just the same thing a modern one does, because no one else can read it.”

“Maybe, But it says some things that are different.” Keith’s voice was tired. His eyes closed, he lay there quietly, one hand trailing over the side of the canoe. He was handsome, there was no doubt of that. But was the droop of his mouth boredom or pain? Ted found he was remembering Doris Taylor’s brown eyes again, and the vivid gaiety of her smile.

“Interested me very much,” Keith drawled finally. “But it’s hardly enough to make life interesting. Well—I’m sorry if I’ve bored you—” Ted flinched; did he understand so little as all that? “Might as well go home now, don’t you think?”

As they paddled back the sun was setting over the university buildings. The white spires sparkled against the soft colors of the sky like a fairy land, or a mirage. The water was lucid and dark. Ted looked and caught his breath. There was nothing like it, nothing! He almost spoke and thought better of it. Keith paddled rhythmically, mechanically, his head bent as if his eyes were fixed steadily on the paddle. A vague sense of failure went over Ted, and then he shrugged his shoulders. He could not help Keith; everyone had to find his own solutions for life. Best not to worry. The happy, irresistible boy who had been his companion would come back. Until then—he could get along alone.

But for all his shrug, his disclaiming responsibility, he worried about Keith that night. The weather had changed. He could hear the pounding of the waves on the shore, and rain

rattled against windows groaning already in the wind. Keith had not come in, and it was two o'clock; but that was not in the least unusual. It was not infrequently that Keith felt like spending the night elsewhere. He might be anywhere of a dozen places; there was no conceivable reason why he should phone to say so. Suppose he was out on a tear; that had happened before too. But Ted turned and turned again on the thin mattress of his army cot. The chatter of the rain seemed to beat on his temples. He could not sleep, and he could not think of anything except Keith's face as it had looked that afternoon, his hair becomingly tousled, his lips straight and bitter—but the expression in his blue eyes had been not bitter; there was something strange about them, something impossible to name—Ted found himself going over their conversation again and again, as if he expected to find there the solution to the enigma of that expression. He was sure it was there, if he could only put his finger on it—But he only succeeded in hearing Keith's tired voice saying, again and again, "But it says some things that are different . . . I'm sorry if I've bored you." He had thought his roommate easy to understand, because Keith had confided in him! He understood no more than a stranger what Keith had meant that afternoon—oh, the words were plain enough, but the spirit beneath was as unknowable to him as the old French in Keith's book—how little, for instance, he understood the fascination that book held for his friend; to him dusty philosophy, if written in beautiful old French and encased in crimson, was still only dusty philosophy.

The rain beat harder on the glass; for an instant the room was a colorless blinding white before the thunder rolled. To Ted the flash and the rumbling were almost a relief; they gave him something tangible to worry about. He got out of bed and turned on the light to see if Keith had taken his slicker. It was nowhere around. But his anxiety only increased. He wished to God Keith would walk in and laugh at him for a damn fool; why in hell did he have to pick out a night like this for a spree?

There seemed to be no particular point in going to bed, so long as he could not sleep. He sat down at Keith's desk and stared at the neat surface on the brown blotter, so different from the confused mass of papers, books, and ink spots on his own. The crimson book was not there; it must be rather bulky

to carry around with one! Ted took out his trigometry book and tried to work, but he could not seem to think of mathematical formulas.

There was another flash of lightning, and the room was black and thick with wet darkness. Ted ran to the window and throwing it open, leaned out, so that slashes of rain beat on his head and shoulders. The cold wetness held him to reality, somehow; it kept away this strange throbbing terror which had sprung on him in the darkness. The occasional roar of the thunder shut out Keith's voice. . . . There was nothing to be done till morning, nothing. Whose voice was that calling "Keith, Keith?" Surely not his own. Exhausted, Ted clung all at once to the window sill, and dropping on the floor, buried his head in his arms. Finally the beat of the rain and of his own heart dwindled and went far away, and he fell asleep.

When he awoke, the rain had stopped and the lake stretched lustrelessly under the sky. The sun would rise in an hour, probably. His body was stiff and tired and lulled—Keith would be home in a few hours too, and they could really talk. But he did not want to go back to bed. Physical exercise would probably do him a lot of good and put him in trim for the day. Ted began to dress hastily, with nervous tired movements.

A breeze blew the curtains in at the windows, gently; it felt soft and warm. The storm was over, even the wind was still, and when Ted reached the lake shore he saw the sky glowing pink over the opposite bank. Only the trees looked miserable and bare, a few pale leaves clinging here and there to their skeletons.

Their canoe was not where it belonged; Ted shivered. Could someone—? He did not stop to think; he took the row-boat and began to pull swiftly, as if there were somewhere he had to be very soon. Something seemed to be driving him; his heart was beating very fast, but he was no longer either worrying or thinking. He only rowed with all his strength, to the spot where they had been drifting the day before. The lake was smooth and calm, as if it had not been raging last night in the wind and rain—but somehow Ted knew there had been no accident; he was not looking for an overturned canoe on the water.

It was not beached on that shore, or he could see it from here. He did not know whether it was disappointment or relief

he felt. His gaze never varied; the sky, behind the dark line of the woods, grew clearer and lighter. But Ted was looking at the clear space of grass which sloped gently down to the lake. What was that dark red spot on the green grass? As he rowed closer the certainty spread with the numb feeling along his back and arms; the spot grew and shaped itself until it was a wine-red square, shot with tracing of gold. Keith's was in his ears—"Whoever reads this book must die." And he could not breathe freely enough to tell this terror it was nonsense.

He did not remember landing, but here he was on the grass, looking down at the square. Its colors were brilliant; the rain had not even dampened it. Keith, then—? But there was no real hope in his heart as he looked frantically along the lake shore. He was not really expecting to see Keith.

Perhaps he would never have touched the book had he not seen a slip of paper protruding beyond its edge. He stooped slowly and pulled it out, leaving the book lying there on the grass. At that moment the sun rose above the horizon, and the lake glittered in the clear morning light. But Ted was reading, in Keith's handwriting:—

"Dear Ted:

I know you'll find this; I don't know why I know. Perhaps I've become a mystic—God knows what I've become. He will know, by this time, and so will I—perhaps.

This may seem a theatrical way to commit suicide. I decided to do it long ago—it was simply a question of a suitable night for the canoe to get wrecked. My family doesn't have to know, of course.

If you don't know why I've done it—and you probably don't—I can't tell you. For you there may be enough experiences left to fill the days; for me this was the only one. And somehow I think it's the only one that can't prove a disappointment. Heaven may be non-existent, but it can't be mediocre—I think. And this book bears me out. Too bad you can't read old French.

Doris Taylor can. You might give this to her as my only legacy. The crimson and gold would become her hair.

Keith."

Ted put the letter in his pocket and stood there, trying to feel . . . "Damn Doris Taylor! If I had only understood before!" The words echoed, mocking him. He flung himself full

length on the ground, sobbing. The grass was wet and grateful against his face—but there was a hard corner under his cheek.

He stood up again, trembling, and held the book high. Its crimson and gold glowed in the sunlight, pulsing with life. Ted spun it around his head twice and let it go. It fell far out on the lake, flashing under the blue enamelled sky, and sank below the surface of the gleaming water.

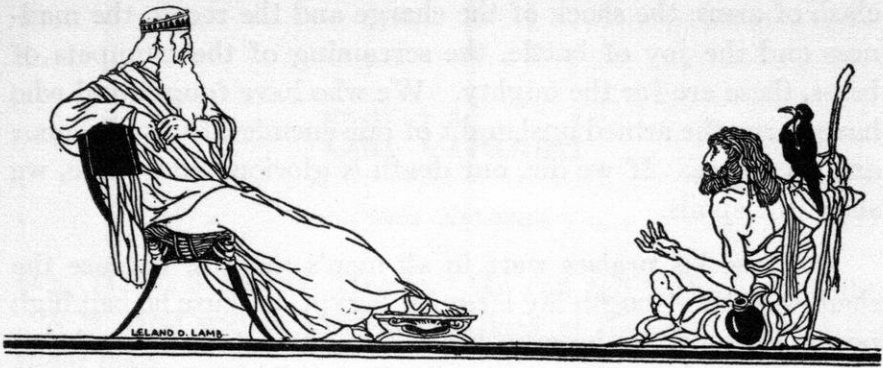
A Chinese Lady

Swaying Chinese lanterns 'mongst the swaying Chinese trees
swaying Chinese asters in the swaying Chinese breeze,
and a fitful clash of cymbals
and the wail of distant flutes,
the splash of sighing waters
and the moan of Chinese lutes.

In a swiftly stilted pattern, down the sea-shelled, pebble path
through the golden after-glamour of the hooded aftermath,
through the silence and the stillness where the dusk and dark-
ness meet,

comes a little Chinese lady on her stilted Chinese feet.

Tiny feet that patter
to the waters' chatter chatter
silk bound feet that leave a train
on the path of crushed leaves' train
silk-bound feet that long to dance
to the pale moon's woven trance;
lithe and swaying limbs and body
high held head and fingers curved
heart that feels the song of flutes
and the sighing of the lutes
all are bound by tiny feet,
silk-bound feet that can but patter
to the waters' chatter chatter—
Chinese maid whose life is pattern'd
like the pebbled garden paths.



Sesostris

Franklin Tesar

"If your own front door be shut, you'll swear the whole world's warm."—Kipling.

BECAUSE he had huge store of shining gold, because his jewels were larger than men's fists and flawless, because he had much cloth of purple and rich broidered tapestries, because his herds were countless and his lands were broad, Sesostris wrote:

"Lo, I have travelled far, even over the sea; I have seen the sun sink behind the hills of Greece and rise again above the towers of Persepolis; I have bought silks in India and sold them to the Scythians; I have gone by caravan far into Ethiopia; yet not in any place have I found poverty. There is no poverty, but only varying degrees of wealth. Why then, if a man be possessed of little, should he be envious of those with more? Has not Amenephet the son of Re twelve drachmas less than I, yet are not we the best of friends?"

Because he led the bright-mailed hosts of Pharaoh, because his banners were of flaming scarlet and of purple silk, because his sword was ivory handled and his shield was gold-inlaid, because he watched the battle from his chariot, surrounded by his guardsmen, Sesostris wrote:

"War is the work of men. The heavy beating of hoofs the rolling thunder of the chariots, the strong smiting and the

clash of arms, the shock of the charge and the recoil, the madness and the joy of battle, the screaming of the trumpets of brass, these are for the mighty. We who have fought and who have borne the armed onslaught of our enemies, to us all honor and all praise. If we die, our death is glorious, if we live, we share the spoils.

Because his praises were in all men's mouths, because the shadow of his strength lay large on Egypt, because he had high power in the state, because his will might not be crossed, because his word was law next to the King's Sesostris wrote:

"There came a poor man from Thebes before me where I gave judgment for the King, saying that the priests of Ammon had despoiled him and refused him all redress. Prostrate he lay, beating his head, and whined that he had sought justice in all the courts of Thebes and been denied.

Thus I answered that man:

'A Persian King with thrice ten thousand men-at-arms argued his cause before the judges of the Lord of the Two Lands and justice was accorded him. A merchant, whose splendor is like to that of princes and whose wealth exceeds all that the sea itself holds of treasure, found equality and fairness where you find only wrong and oppression. Did not I myself obtain my will against these very priests of Ammon? Be gone, the Courts are just!'

Because his camels were milk-white and fleet of foot, because their trappings were for comfort unsurpassed, because the bells upon their harness were clear-sounding and of silver, because he rode while others plodded in the dust, Sesostris wrote:

"Often have I seen the sun lift from the sea just as I began my journey, and sink beyond the endless western sands before I stopped for rest. I have crossed twice the space between the Blue Nile and sacred Lake Moeris and been not wearied. Without sleep have I traveled for a night and a day, and though my men were all exhausted, still could I have gone on until another noon. Small wonder that I rule these men who so soon feel fatigue."

Because he had great knowledge of all things, and little wisdom, Sesostris wrote.

Bill Unpaid

Paula Newman

“**N**OW, I like O. Henry. He can tell a story all right. And you’ve always got a kick at the end,” he told the other man.

“That’s what I kick at. Nobody’s ever surprised any more at his surprise endings. You know they’ll turn out just the way you don’t expect them to. That isn’t the way things happen when you hear about them in real life—”

“Listen here. And this is a true story. . . .”

Bill went to New York right after he got married, and I haven’t seen him for years. We’ve both got kids of our own now, and I doubt if we’d recognize one another any longer. An I don’t know that he’d care to see . . . Anyway, when we roomed together, he was studying law at Michigan. That’s what he wrote home anyway, when he did write, but really he was studying at being “our promising young lawyer” and a “man about town.” And he had to work the preliminaries in somehow. He practiced being called to the bar all right. I remember one time he got pitched out of Turkey Joe’s, and knocked his head open so that—But that’s another story. This all took place B. V. of course—B. C. too, for that matter, if you mean before the Charleston. So you needn’t be alarmed. This is an entirely moral story. It all took place long ago; so we can settle back and be comfortable.

Where was I at? Oh, yes. He’d been in on a round of strip poker the night before, and it turned out to be quite a skin game. So Bill was down to the excuse-me’s. At any rate, he was pretty bent if not broken. So he ran across this notice in the paper:

“Wanted: Good-looking young man interested in earning twenty-five dollars for a few hours, light work. Must be easy talker. Phone Banks 3470.”

Well, he thought he’d take a chance. A free show anyway, and a plugged nickel would have been worth its weight in gold just then. A girl’s voice answered him, and said, Yes, she’d

put the ad in the paper. But the business wasn't the kind she could very well tell him over the phone, and would he come up please. East Milford was the street she gave.

He was always a susceptible chap, all for the ladies, and he thought she sounded kinda good. Nice and gentle, just the way he liked his dogs. She sounded all blue eyes and brown hair, the sort of a girl your mother'd like, and your sister'd be sure to hate. Still, he didn't want to run any risks. So he didn't tell anyone about the lark, and he pulled all the tags off his clothes, and took everything out of his pockets, before he went up.

HE rang the bell, and waited on the porch till he was beginning to wonder if anyone was coming, when the inside door opened, and a girl looked out at him through the window of the storm door. He pulled that open, but she didn't make a move to invite him in. Just stood there staring at him, her blue eyes kind of shining and bright, and her brown hair all wavy and fluffy in the breeze, sort of. He noticed she would just about fit under his shoulder, and he wished he could try to measure her right.

Suddenly she stepped back, and laughed a bit. "You'll do, I guess. Come in," she said, blushing real nice according to Bill when he told me that evening. So they sat down in the front parlor, he facing her on a hard-backed chair, slightly peeved because the sofa was more than wide enough for two. She was real business-like, and wouldn't no more than let him mention the weather before she started in.

First of all she wanted to know his name, and how he had come to answer the ad. He'd calculated on giving her a phoney label, but she was so shiny and glowing, sort of, and so little and serious, that he outed with "Bill Edwards" before he thought. "I'm glad it's 'Edwards'," she said. An' he was all ready to say something, but she went on. "That may make it easier for you. 'Edwards' was the name of my husband. My husband that was, you know."

He nodded as if he knew all about it, though he was sort of taken back a bit. He hadn't figured a husband attached to her somehow, and he thought he'd better watch his step for a frame-up or something. "Husband that was," though. That was hopeful. She was too pretty to be wasted on a man who

couldn't appreciate her like he could. Bill was always pretty appreciative, even if he was my roommate.

Well, she blushed and fidgetted awhile, and Bill looked out the window so's not to embarrass her. There was a mirror hanging there anyway, and so he could decide again she was more than just lovely looking. "You're a real gentleman," she says finally. Bill grinned to show how glad he was she agreed with him, and pulled his handkerchief just a trifle more out of his breast pocket. "I think I can trust you," she says, and signed to him to hitch his chair a little closer. Which he did.

It seems she'd been visiting a friend of hers who'd married and left Kalamazoo to live in Ann Arbor. And she'd met a travelling salesman there, who certainly travelled pretty quick. Anyway, he persuaded her to run off and get married, and she did it. Bill said she blushed mighty red and beautiful here, and talked very fast. And he judged probably they never did get married somehow, but they had really. He was ready to wallop the chap, who must'a been a low-down dog, probably a real Dachshund, to treat such a sweet young thing like that. But she said the man Edwards—George Edwards, she said his name was. And Bill said yes, Edwards was sure a fine classy name. This George, anyway, had been awfully nice to her, and had taken her all over Chicago and everything, and had spent lots of money on her. Till she told him they were going to have a baby. So he left her a note, and said he couldn't be bothered with a baby. And cleared out of the picture for good.

THEN the girl cried a bit, and Bill jumped up and walked around the room, swearing under his breath sort of, and mad at the thought of anyone wanting to hurt the girl. Mary, he'd gathered her name was by this time, Mary Prince. So he sat down next her on the sofa, and bye and bye he absent-mindedly put his arm around her shoulder. She didn't seem to notice it much, and soon they was pretty comfortable.

Finally it developed that she wanted him to pretend he was her husband for one day. It seems she'd stayed on in Ann Arbor where they was when he skipped out and left her, not daring to go home and face her folks. She'd run off without telling them anything about it. And when she'd written later, they'd said they was through, and she needn't come home any more. So she hung around town, and got a job at some notions counter till the baby came. She was still ashamed to write, till

she read in the home paper that her mother was sick. So she wrote them a long letter, saying how pretty the baby was, and how much she looked like her grandmother. And never a word about how George had deserted her. So finally they had sent her a check for the baby, and an invitation for her and George to come up home for Christmas Day. Now she was scared to turn up without her husband, and didn't dare refuse for fear they'd never speak to her again. So she'd wanted to find a young man who'd go home with her for the day and act the husband for her family. Then she could go back to Ann Arbor, and write later that he'd been killed in an accident or something. And she could go back home as a widow, and go on living with her family like always.

WELL, the proposition sounded good and soft to Bill, and he thought he'd like it mighty well. He'd gotten over being doubtful about Mary and anything she might want him to do for her. She seemed just about right, and he noticed that the top of her head was all little gold hairs in the light. So he suggested he'd better practice up being her husband, but she sat right up an' said no, she didn't know him well enough—yet. That 'yet' listened fairly hopeful, anyway, so he straightened the corners of his handkerchief again where her head had rumbled them up, and heard a long account of her family an' history. And her adorable younger sister, and crazy kid brother, and Papa and Mama Prince, and the hired man. And he told her all about himself, so's she could know he was a man to be trusted, not like that sneak, the other Edwards. She was awfully interested in all he had to say. And insisted on touching the scar on the back of his head, which he guessed she thought came from the time he saved a little kid from a beating by his drunken father, and had got the cut on the head for it himself. That particular place was where he'd landed on his bean when he'd been kicked out of Turkey Joe's, but it had hurt anyhow.

Finally he said he'd better go now, and suggested that he come back the next day to learn more about her family and how he must act. But she said no, he'd learned enough to carry him through, and she could tell him anything else he thought he might need to know on the train next Thursday. So he grabbed a kiss when she was accidentally looking the other way, and

walked off down the street. Then he looked back; and she was still smiling in the doorway, as if she'd been watching him down the block, he thought. He went back and reminded her he hadn't seen the baby yet, and thought he ought to get acquainted with her before the train. The trip wouldn't be long enough to get him accustomed to the idea of her, and he doubted if he could act natural enough to look like he owned her. So Mary smiled and said to come up the same time the day after next, which would be Wednesday, the afternoon before they left. And to phone her beforehand, as she wasn't quite certain if she'd be in.

SO he went home, walking on air. And shoved an old lady's umbrella right down over her face without even apologizing for it. Which shows you can't be too careful when you're falling in love. Because she and her red-haired daughter ran the house where Mary was staying. And the old lady went directly home and wrote a letter to the paper. All about the manners of the young men of this day, and how much more polite and grand they had been when she had been young and beautiful. At least her mother had always said she looked real pretty sometimes when the light wasn't very high. Anyway, the letter wasn't published, but it might have been. And when she read it to Bill a long while later, he recognized the description, and was real ashamed of himself. But she might have known him when she saw him again. You can't be too careful.

He called Mary up the next afternoon, but another woman, an old woman from the sound, answered and said she was out, and would be out till about ten that evening. He felt real indignant, thought she should have told him she'd be gone, though her date with him was for the next day. He suspected she was out with another man, and felt all the pangs of jealousy that a good and virtuous husband ought to have felt. So he cheered up considerably when she told him over the phone Wednesday that she'd been buying Christmas presents for the family, and that she had a lovely one for him. And was so sorry he'd called just after she left the house, because she had so needed a big strong man to help her in the shopping crowds and carry her packages home.

And, oh! she was so sorry she'd had to let her landlady take the baby to the park for the afternoon. She just wouldn't take no for an answer, and Mary was supposed to be there now,

And the old lady thought she was a widow, and wouldn't understand it if Bill came along. And she wouldn't be able to go to the theatre with him on one of the two tickets a friend had so unexpectedly given him because there was a birthday party for her landlady's daughter that evening, and she simply had to be there because she had promised faithfully that she'd come. She'd see Bill tomorrow anyway, and be sure to be at the station early, so they could get comfortably settled, and she had so much to tell him!

He hung up feeling more like an injured husband than ever. Kinda smoothed down where he'd been rumped before, and kinda suspicious there wasn't anything he could cut up a rum-pus about without seeing right through him, and calming him down again. So he borrowed some money from my bureau drawer, and went out and bought her a real pretty ring for a Christmas present. And a doll for the baby, which he thought it could grow up to some day, even if it couldn't use it right then.

And he felt still more like a mistreated husband the next day when she blew in half an hour later than the time when she said she'd expect him. And stuck the baby and a bunch of packages and a suitcase in his arms without even bothering to say why she'd kept him waiting so long. He'd gotten there half an hour ahead of time so's he couldn't be late, but it was foolish for him to expect her to guess that. Anyway, she sailed off somewhere, and left him stranded in the middle of the platform. With the bundles dropping all over, and he wondering what she'd say if the baby cracked when he dropped it, as he was certain to do the next minute. The mob swooped down on him just as she came running back and saved the kid from I don't know what. I'd heard all about his plans, you know, and so a gang of us organized a grand—charivari, d'you call it? We'd waited round the corner for the right minute to begin the bombardment. Provided with a regular shower of rice and vegetables and all sorts of harder junk. Waited till he'd shoved his baby into Mary's arms and hustled them into the train before we started in. I tell you it just rained shoes and cabbages for a couple of minutes! We had the whole station laughing—it's the only one in town you know, and everybody was there going home for the holidays. Turned to shake his fist at us, and we all blew kisses. Then I hurled a lettuce, and knocked a par-

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cel out of his hand. He retrieved it quickly, the parcel I mean, and captured the lettuce on the way. Chucked it at me from the car platform, and was lucky enough to see it land squarely on my noble brow. Me, his room mate and former friend! Then I guess he thought he had achieved enough of a victory to let him retire with a sufficient amount of dignity to the safer interior of the coach. Where the lovely Mary had turned back one seat for the baby, and left a place for him by the window.

IT was a remarkable baby he found, and did not care at all what its parents were doing. Mary was kindness itself when he produced the ring and said he'd feel more like a real husband if She'd let him put it on her finger. And the kiss he got in payment satisfied even the old couple across the aisle, who beamed their approval of the affectionate young pair and their lovely baby. The train screamed slowly along, and stopped for every collection of eight milk cans.—for water, the conductor told him, which sounded peculiar somehow. He said finally that he hated stops, and Mary kissed him for every one. So the trip passed very pleasantly, and the baby acquired enough individuality for him to call her "Lulu" instead of "it", which was convenient, as it prevented confusion. And he carried Lulu proudly enough down the steps when the train finally coughed to a rest at Kalamazoo. The Princes surrounded them with a wild enthusiasm, and in the excitement Bess—that's the younger sister, with yellow hair and blue eyes, just the—Anyway, she kissed him several times over before she realized she wasn't embracing his young daughter. Who wouldn't have appreciated her anyway, and so it was pretty soft for Bill.

They had a swell Christmas Eve dinner, and he entertained the whole family with stories of their honeymoon. And the cute tricks of Lulu, who was to be "six months old tomorrow, and doesn't she love her Daddkens better than anyone else in the whole world?" And if he'd known what a delightful home Mary had, he certainly never would have dared to take her away from it. He realized now that they should have waited and had a big home wedding like Mary'd always planned on, but this homecoming made up for it all right. And wasn't it too bad they had to leave right after dinner the next day so he could get straight to work the morning after. And had Mary written that he was expecting a promotion next month, and would be getting a much bigger salary? And if there was any-

thing he could do for any of them then, please not to hesitate to let him know. So Mary beamed as if she had known all the time that he was a man of genius, and she didn't mind letting her family know what a great man her husband really was.

The husband had to bunk with her younger brother that night,—she was in her old room with the baby. But the warmth of her good morning salute made Bill wonder if maybe it wouldn't be a good thing if he went in for the husbanding business really seriously. Mary certainly was one peach of a girl, and Lulu a darned nice baby, considering the way babies are as a rule. And they would make a nice picture across a breakfast table of their own on a bright sunshiny morning. Perhaps he could wring some money out of his Dad so they could wangle it together, and he could like her all he wanted without any complications.

The complications began again once they were inside the Ann Arbor station. There hadn't been much chance for conversation that morning; she'd been with her mother, and he'd had to go over the farm with Bessie. Who was a remarkable grand girl, and loads of fun, even if she wasn't Mary. And they'd been at opposite ends of the table during that swell dinner, which didn't at all make him regret the one he would have had at home, or the fictitious one he'd written his family he was going to have at the frat house-party. And Mary had gotten still more confidence in him, he knew. She'd dozed with her head on his shoulders all the way home, and Lulu'd conveniently gone to sleep again too.

But when he wanted to get in the taxi with them, Mary said no, she was too tired. And the baby began to cry, so she wanted to get her to bed quickly. Bill was a dear, and she really liked him a lot. He really wouldn't care much leaving her—now. And he read the implication in her tone, "because, of course, you'll see me soon again." And her last kiss through the window certainly was—definite enough. He was glad she hadn't been so crude as to offer to pay him, though he certainly would have refused the money indignantly. She'd bought the railroad tickets. And he was wearing the new tie she'd given him. Bill told me he felt so good as he strode easily up-town that he even meditated returning me the tenner for the twenty-five he'd borrowed. And so he went to bed that night with wedding bells ringing in his ears.

“That’s a good place to end,” said the man to whom Bill’s room mate had been telling the story. “‘And so they lived happily ever after! Is good even if she did vamp him much too obviously, thought you wouldn’t be likely to see that. And I’m glad your story didn’t have any surprise ending. I was terribly afraid it’d turn out that he married her sister. Bessie, was she?’”

“He couldn’t have very well. Listen, young fella. . . .”

He was still feeling grand the next morning, and wanted to phone her right off. But I sat on him, and said he ought to give the girl a rest for a while. That it wasn’t fair to rush her so hard, and that she’d think him more of a gentleman if he didn’t use what he had done for her as a way of making her see him again right away. That was Saturday morning. He called her finally Tuesday afternoon, and the same old woman answered the phone again. No, Mrs. Edwards wasn’t living there any longer. She’d gone home to visit her family over Christmas, and had given up her rooms the day she went.

He was flabbergasted, and hung up with a funny feeling in his mouth. Then he remembered he hadn’t asked if she had left any forwarding address, and decided he might learn more if he asked at the house. A red-haired girl answered the door. It was awfully cold out, and wouldn’t he care to come in? He thought brown eyes were more honest than blue somehow, and he went in. He couldn’t find out a thing more about Mary, but he did learn that he might call again. And see if she had sent any message.

No, he never found her again. Never saw her, as a matter of fact. Wandered around town for a while hoping he’d meet her, but he never did. Had a wild idea for a time of tracing her through a detective, starting from back in Kalamazoo. Even went down there again. But he didn’t go in the house at all, and got away without anyone’s seeing him. Thought he saw Bessie in the distance, but he beat it so he wouldn’t have to meet her

“Gosh, I’m glad,” he interrupted. Awfully afraid he might marry Bessie after all”

Well, you see it was this way. I went down to the farm for him the next week. And inquired for my old friend Edwards, saying I’d heard he had married a girl named Prince, who came from Kalamazoo. And Bessie said he’d just been

killed in an accident—she's a darned pretty girl, you know. I wonder why I didn't tell him Mary was home, and running around with a hardware man, though—

“*You* didn't marry *Mary*, did you?”

No. Bessie was down there then, and I met her. And I knew Bill had gotten consoled by then. You never can be too careful when you're falling in love. He married the red-haired girl; and I married Bessie.

In My First Asking Childhood

In my first asking childhood they gave me a rabbit,
Round, white loathesome, unfinished he was,
Naked like an unbaked biscuit. Still I remember
Holding for the first time his fearful smoothness,
Feeling against the agony of my hand
(My hand like a small-curving sensitive leaf)
In quick awful beating of the life in him.
In a few days—it is still fresh with me
How the delight of his quick fur came to him.

There was a small round hole under the fence,
The way he and I had to put him back
Into his own yard at my bed-time. Suddenly
One night the hole had grown too small. Marvelous.

That night I lay an hour in the darkness,
Wide awake with the mystery.

—*Helen Howe*

Clyde Holt Enters Heaven

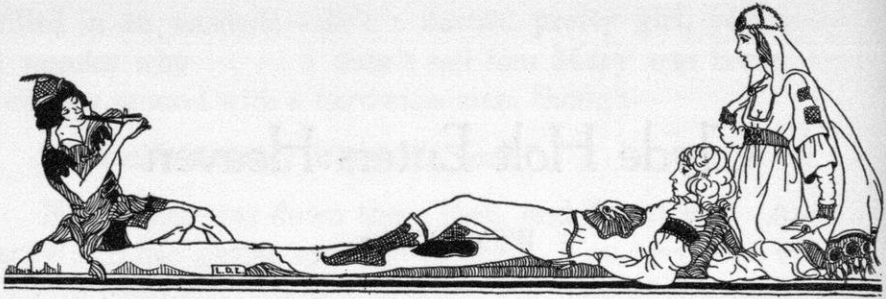
Wilbur Crane

Anyway he was dead. He was in his coffin. She thought he looked well in his coffin. His hair had taken on a reddish tinge. At any rate she fancied that his hair had taken on a reddish tinge. She moved away from the coffin into the darkness of the corners of the room. Clyde's face tortured her a little—it was too horribly frank. Like life. But he was dead. The frankness would pass from his face with the closing of the coffin lid—would be completely gone when the last shovelful of dirt was thrown into the grave. She would remember the flowers—the reticent flowers. His face might say to her now. You killed me, you damned broad! But the flowers would never make the accusation. The flowers said, he died—as we die—when the frost comes.

She stood against a closed door where she could see only the roses that covered his feet. She wondered if there were patent leathers on those feet. It was his last dance. Death had chosen another partner.

The clock struck and the music stopped on a minor note. And the minister began, "I am the resurrection and the life." And it went on. "Clyde Holt was born in Palmira, New York, July fourteenth, 1897, the son of Adam Holt and Hannah Beck Holt."

No one seemed to be listening. It would be different when the will was read. The long list of lodge affiliations. That Clyde Holt was an Elk in good standing and a Rotarian of solemn faith would not matter with God. And only God could take Clyde out of his coffin. When God opened the coffin Clyde might laugh at God. That tight, frank laugh of Clyde's. I've paid a month in advance, Clyde's laugh might say to God, and you can't throw me out without thirty days notice anyway. God might shudder too. She looked at the flowers—the reticent flowers.



Thus Aucassin

Thus Aucassin and Nicolette have wondered. . . .
and Peter Pan has searched the sun-set sky,
yet not those colours God has blent and sundered
could answer why.

Sad is the earth ere yet the Spring-time cometh,
sad is the day ere yet the day is done,
even so the young heart, ever restless, roameth
ere youth is gone.

Fold then my hands and let those soft lips linger
long on mine own and make an end of thought,
Life is a song and Youth the endless singer
singing unsought.

Question the gladsome as thou seekest gladness,
nought can I give save what the heart may hold:—
Youth to thy Youth, and solace to thy sadness,
ere we grow old.

J. S. M. Cotton

The Poetry of George Santayana

Charles Murphy

The poetry of Mr. George Santayana, late professor of philosophy at Harvard University, does not lend itself easily to popular exposition, and it has been, I think, for this reason, misrepresented by many of its critics. Miss Margaret Munsterberg, for instance, who has given us some very delightful reminiscences of Mr. Santayana's life at Cambridge, tells us of Mr. Santayana that "in his poetry and therefore in his heart, Santayana is a Catholic; the naturalistic philosopher and the devout poet stand gazing at each other across an abyss that cannot be bridged."

It is quite unjust, I think, to make this division of the philosopher and the poet in Mr. Santayana. Nothing would be more foreign to the classical temperament than to live at odds with one's self in such a fashion. There is nothing in Mr. Santayana's poetry that is incompatible with his philosophy of critical realism, and, as a matter of fact, most of the sonnets must be quite meaningless to one who does not understand the concept of the essence in his metaphysics. The most lovely sonnets are a product of the same intellectual discipline that is reflected in *The Life of Reason* and the *Realm of Essence*.

The confusion has arisen, perhaps, from the name of the philosophy. Critical realism suggests all that James would have called the tough-minded, and it seems very far indeed from the delicacy and spirituality of the sonnets. But critical realism, a scientific philosophy, enforced by logic and justified by formal dialectic, is a reconstruction of Platonism on a different ontological basis; and aesthetically, at least, Mr. Santayana's realm of essence is the equivalent of Plato's realm of ideas (reliance or the gratuitous theology of the *Timaeus*).

The whole misunderstanding leads us on to an examination of what we may call Mr. Santayana's Platonism, which will, I think, refute the notion that his poetry is something separate from his ontology. An essence in Mr. Santayana's philosophy

is a reality (intuited by everyone but appreciated only by the metaphysical realist) constructive of every quality and character embodied in existence, the world of Nature. But essences are non-material, eternal, and spaceless; and existence, the familiar world, is only an adumbration in matter, time, and space of one of the many possible worlds. It is the privilege of the human mind, although it is only an accidental product of nature, to look beyond the limits of the existential world through art and philosophy, and to behold essences themselves. Plato's ideal beauty, described in the following passage from *The Banquet*, is like an essence in the realm of being that Mr. Santayana posits; equivalent in the almost ascetic rigor that Mr. Santayana requires of a philosopher.

“It is eternal, unproduced, indestructible; neither subject to increase nor decay: not, like other things, partly beautiful and partly deformed; not at one time beautiful and at another time not; not beautiful in relation to one thing and deformed in relation to another; not here beautiful and there deformed; not beautiful in the estimation of one person and deformed in that of another, but it is eternally uniform and consistent, and monoeidic with itself. . . . When any one, ascending from a correct system of Love, begins to contemplate this supreme beauty, he already touches the consummation of his labor. For such as discipline themselves upon this system or are conducted by another beginning to ascend through these transitory objects which are beautiful. . . . arrive at that which nothing else than the doctrine of the supreme beauty itself, in the knowledge and contemplation of which at length they repose.”

A confrontation of this passage with the following lines on Nature from Mr. Santayana's second ode should make it apparent that here his poetic inspiration is Platonic, and consistent with philosophical realism:

“She hath not made us, like her other children,
Merely for peopling of her spacious kingdoms,
Beasts of the wild, or insects of the summer,
Breeding and dying,
But also that we might, half knowing, worship
That deathless beauty of her guiding vision,
And learn to love, in all things mortal, only
What is eternal.”

The spiritual tone of the love theme in the sonnets must not be looked upon as an aesthetic affectation, but as an expression of critical realism. The heightened sensibility of the lover, who does not see his beloved as others see her, but ideally and intuitively, as a penetration beyond the material and existential into the realm of being. One love sufficeth in eternity, for the love is not important in itself, for its worldly satisfaction, but because the lover is inspired to the vision of what is noblest and most profound in the realm of essence.

Convinced of the accidental character of the material universe, Mr. Santayana demands nothing of it as a right. Mr. John Dewey says of this attitude that it is good-natured acceptance which appreciates the comedy involved in the absurdity of confining essence within existence. The following lines may seem old-fashioned to a generation that lives (whether it admits it or not) by pragmatism:

“A perfect love is nourished by despair.
I am thy pupil in the school of pain;
Mine eyes do not reproach thee for disdain,
But thank thy rich disdain for being fair.”

This lover's indifference to any worldly satisfaction is not an outworn Petrarchan convention; this is the way a critical realist must love.

Mr. Santayana's Platonism has given him a classically serene outlook, sophisticated and humorous. In a *Minute on Reaching the Age of Fifty* we see the greatest gift of a life lived philosophically: a civilized poise which smiles at the terror of death and understands too well to let itself become distracted. Besides the energetic optimism of Browning, Mr. Santayana's equanimity may seem a little pale, but it is the only temper of mind that the rational spirit can aspire to and still be in consonance with the facts of life, whatever they may turn out to be.

To appreciate the ecstatic quality of Mr. Santayana's verse not only must we understand his metaphysics, but also we must remember that he is by birth a Spaniard, that in his childhood he was a Roman Catholic, and that he loves the arid and ascetic highlands surrounding his Avila, birthplace of those great Castilian mystics like Santa Teresa; and it is true that his poetry has always been colored and aesthetically enriched by an intimate acquaintance with the sublime ritual and art of the Catholic Church.

The two strains of his experience, the Catholic and the Platonic blend in his poetry; but it ought to be understood that Mr. Santayana does not believe in Catholic Christianity, and that his poetry never implies any aesthetic attachment to Catholicism that his realistic philosophy does not justify in *Reason in Religion*. That immediacy and earnestness are given to Platonic aspiration through Christian symbolism may be seen in these lines from Sonnet XXXIX:

“And might I kiss her once, asleep or dead,
Upon the forehead or the globed eyes,
Or where the gold is parted on her head,
That kiss would help me on to paradise
As if I kissed the consecrated bread
In which the buried soul of Jesus lies.”

Mr. Santayana's poetry has not as yet reached a wide reading public. In a certain sense, perhaps, his fame as a philosopher overshadows and obscures his fame as a poet; moreover, his literary musings are not always the sort that appeal to the lay mind. It seems certain, however, that the permanence of his appeal to a certain class of readers is assured. His style, although he follows the canons of good taste in English literary tradition, is strictly his own, for it reflects the chastened delicacy of his subtle thought, disciplined by the pursuit of philosophy and inspirited by a lifelong acquaintance with the classics, both ancient and modern.





Accordion

Just once each night the din is hushed,
The spotlight swings its white-hot ray upon the floor,
And Guido sings

a plaintive song, something about
A lady, and the moonlight, and a rose; in his deft hands
The pleated instrument glows black and white.

Once every night he plays, and only once. I love to hear
The high discordant sweetness that he weaves
Along the tinsel of the little wistful tune. Sometimes he comes
And goes when night has scarce begun; sometimes when it
Has wearied almost through.

I like it best when more
Than half the crowd has gone, when dawn's
Pale hands are groping at the door,
And Guido sings.

—Robert McMillan

Shadows

Even candle-snuffers rust—(snared in candle-smoke)
Inevitably—
Irretrievably—
Shadows are smeared into laughter,
Mountains die,
Dreams are smothered in their sleep,
And beauty goes out with the wind
Through the cracks in the night.

—*Eudora Welty*

Lake Mood

Wind-wild and frothing, crest crashes against crest
Like pluméd chargers plunging riderless
On some fell field of glitr'ing, ancient war.

Ten thousand sedge spears leap to shrill
Defiance at the whipping crimson wind.

God, make me the black gull that yonder beats
Blind passage through the maelstrom of his world!
Breasting frenzied its storm, and dark, and fear,
Now that the sun is gone!

—*Virginia Hoyles*

Review of Current Books

STRANGE INTERLUDE

—BY EUGENE O'NEILL

Boni & Liveright

"Strange interlude!" says Nina, the heroine of this nine-act play, on the last page of the ninth act—"Yes, our lives are merely strange dark interludes in the electrical display of God the Father!" The idea, so far as I can interpret it, is that all of our lives, like Nina's and those of other O'Neill characters, are strange interludes in an unintelligible melody, darkened rather than illumined by flashes of passion and a mysterious fatality. It is Nina's character which makes her fate to a certain extent; if she had not been an over-sexed neurotic the death of her lover in the war would not have thrown her into such a psychopathic state that she had to marry Sam, the nice boy whom she did not love, for peace. . . . But then it is fate in the person of Sam's mother, who tells Nina there is insanity in the family and she must turn elsewhere for children. She turns to their friend, Doctor Darrell, to save both Sam and herself, thereby complicating all their lives and ruining the young doctor's.

But it is O'Neill's philosophy of life which interests me much more than either the poignant characters of the highly dramatic story, if not plot. . . . "Life," says Nina in one place, "is just a long drawn out lie with a snuffing sigh at the end!" That is all Nina's life is; a lifetime of deceiving her husband and her son; and the snuffing sigh at the end is her final relapse into old age and the sentimentally soothing attentions of Marsden. He is one of the most interesting characters in the play; an nth rate novelist who has several assorted complexes and who takes the place of Nina's father in her consciousness.

As for love—the love of Darrell and Nina is not much more than physical passion, ennobled, as always in O'Neill, by its intense sincerity, and, in this case, by occasional outbreaks of

generosity toward Nina's husband—when Darrell cannot tell him his son is Darrell's, for instance. But the noble actions of the characters—or what may be interpreted as noble by standards of unselfishness—only complicate things further, and bring no solution for that dark mystery which is life—the twisted lives of these four people, of whom the only sane and happy one is the man who has insanity in the family.

WHAT this play really is is a novel told on the stage, told extremely well, with all the amplitude of development of incident the length of a novel allows, all the advantage of knowing what the characters are thinking as well as what they are saying. Its dramatic effectiveness can be measured only by seeing it on the stage, I suppose; this business of thinking out loud, or the revival of the soliloquy in an extremely modern drama, is not strikingly new on paper—and I'm not sure that it adds much to the development of the play—the scenes are charged with enough emotional power to stand alone. . . . The first part, the first five acts, up to the break where New York audiences eat dinner and wonder if Darrell will come back to Nina, is especially good; the scene where Nina's little son has Freudian thoughts is, I think, rather strained, because we doubt its truth. . . . But the outstanding tragedy of the play, the deterioration and bitterness of Darrell's life, would have been lost without those last four acts, showing what happened next and what a selfish woman Nina was; Nina, who says at one point, I couldn't find a better husband than Sam. . . . and I couldn't find a better lover than Ned. . . . I need them both to be happy. . . . And the complete story is needed to justify the title, to complete the strange interlude which is all of life that is living. . . . Life, which is to O'Neill's characters so bitter and passionate and inexplicable a thing—

“Life is a tale told by an idiot,
Full of Sound and fury, signifying nothing.”

Naomi Raab

A PRESIDENT IS BORN—By Fannie Hurst.

This new novel of Fannie Hurst's is much the best she has done. It is certainly far removed from such a blatantly foolish and sentimental story as "The Mannequin." The idea of the book, in itself, is original and striking and, on the whole, is quite well worked out.

The story is that of the boyhood life of a future President of the United States, set against a background of American family life that is particularly well done. Mrs. Hurst is clever in making David the child of his parents' old age—much younger than his brothers and sisters. Thus the way the story is made to center about him—the way they look towards him with particular consideration, is made to appear more natural.

David, it seems, has all the possible advantages any President could have. He has a broad and speculative mind to guide him through educational channels in the person of his brother Henry, and yet he does not suffer under the stigma of too easy a life. The reversal of the family fortunes while he is still a child makes it necessary for him to become a wage earner, a farm worker, a maker of his own way. What could be of greater appeal in the public eye?

David's older brothers, sisters and nephews somewhat overshadow him as far as interest is concerned. Bec and Henry especially are worthy of more than passing notice. Bec is rather magnificent in her self reliance and large sympathy and understanding. Henry is a most absorbing and likeable thinker and dreamer, entirely disinterested in self.

I think one could hardly realize David's potential power, in spite of his manifest intellectual curiosity, if it were not for the notes, which are another novel feature of the book. These notes give quite fascinating glimpses into the future, where David pursues his far-reaching policies for the betterment of humanity and where everybody worth mentioning flies about in his neat two passenger airplane. These notes are supposedly taken from Bec's diary but are somewhat too literary to sound quite as authentic as they might.

There is nothing very subtle or sophisticated about this book. It is pleasantly free from abnormal people, except in the case of Leslie, whose childishness is never unpleasant. It is a simple story, simply and vividly told, possessing the merits of some good characterizations and a not overworked realism.

M. D.

SALAMMBO by Gustave Flaubert (Mahlon Blaine edition). John Day Co.

A superb translation of Flaubert's masterpiece, with unique illustrations by Mahlon Blaine, and an excellent introduction by author-poet-critic-essayist-translator Ben Ray Redman, is an event to be hailed with joy by collectors. SALAMMBO, the monumental work that followed MADAME BOVARY, has appeared before in an English translation, but never before in an American edition such as this. The book is uniform with Ewers' SORCERER'S APPRENTICE, and is a handsome volume. Attractively bound, with an interesting paper jacket,

and with the added enhancement of Blaine's illustrations, of which we had a taste in *THE MAN WHO WAS BORN AGAIN* and the Ewers book, it is truly a beautiful book.

The eminent Redman, who seems at his best in introductions, prefaces the work with a history of *SALAMMBO*, and a sketch of the author's life during the time of the fight for the life of *MADAM BOVARY*. Flaubert worked unceasingly on *SALAMMBO*, the story of Carthage, which, Redman warns us, does not become interesting until the second and third chapters, when the reader has full entered into the spirit of the work. Blaine's illustrations, of which there are really not enough, embody that spirit. I am confident that sooner or later, Blaine will take his place permanently beside Harry Clarke, Kay Nielson, and John Vassos.

Collectors have fastened their attention to the John Day Company, and this corporation is not disappointing them. This excellent book serves as a perfect example of the widened scope of the present-day binder and printer. A.W.D.

A PASSIONATE REBEL—By Pamela Wynne. Doubleday Doran and Co.

The most outstanding characteristic of Mrs. Wynne's book is its triteness—a chauffeur, who is really a Lord in disguise, makes the scatter-brained heroine fall in love with him. Of course, he does not tell her that he is a Lord, until she loves him; this fact assures him that she is not marrying him for his title, but only for his virile self.

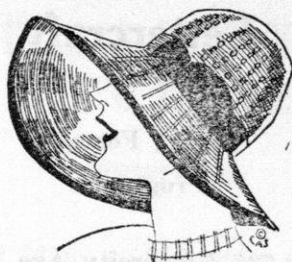
The heroine has to pass through various vicissitudes, including embraces from the odious Mr. Granger; being a heroine she remains unsmirched, for her hero saves her at all of the crucial moments.

If one is able to forget the plot, the book is, for the most part, well done. Mrs. Wynne's treatment of her minor characters, whom she develops simply, yet adequately is excellent. Mrs. Granger who has grown to a homely, but lovely old age, and the pious canon, stand out with startling clarity against the mediocrity of the rest of the book.

The merits of the novel do not overbalance the triteness of the plot, or the "made to order" effect of its hero and heroine. It is a story that will probably make a good movie, but even to attain passable goodness in a literary field will be impossible.

G. F.

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