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MOMENTS OF AWARENESS

by

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INTRODUCTION

I

The history of writing would be enriched if it were known who wrote or told the first story. Yet, it hardly need be imagined that the first story was short, and that the first art form -- the transformation of reality through means of the imagination -- was the tale or brief story. It is one genre that has had many changes and any effort to classify it rigidly spells failure, for immediately there is the discovery of some classic which defies the rules. But this is not unusual; any attempt to catalogue forms of artistic expression is post facto; hence, more for the critic than for the creator.

The Bible, God's archive, is filled with wondrous and wonderful short tales: Eve's temptation, Ruth's love for her mother-in-law, the Prodigal Son, the Good Samaritan, to name a few. The Greeks were great story tellers; their gods passion-ridden like mortals, their men valient, and their women wise. And, there was Aesop, with eyes for common sights, seeing sermons in flies, foxes, and fools; short fables that endure despite their object lessons.

There is a wide gap between the ancient tale and the modern short story, which is just a little over a hundred years old. Washington Irving is looked upon by some as the father of the short story in America. It was Poe, the first great master of the modern short story, however, who published the first and most famous pronouncement on the short story in his famous review of Nathaniel Hawthorne's Tales (1842).

One basis for classifying a short story is the extent to which actual events and perceptions have been revised and arranged by the author. Today there seems to be a lessening gap between autobiography and fiction, but the demands of the short story -- close knit structure and logical climax -- must be maintained, else the piece becomes journalistic or anecdotal.

Judged by orthodox rules of form -- point of view, stream-of-consciousness, unity of time, place, and action -- current tendencies seem to represent a back-sliding from the standard short story, which became too stylized or standardized. This does not mean, however, the discarding of the ideals of unity, economy, and craftsmanship of the short story. The differences lie chiefly in the type of effect conceived by the author, and the means by which he strives to achieve it. Very often instead of facts being conveniently set out at the beginning, they may be picked up, bit by bit, as in real life. For in life much remains untold and the imagination fills in the vacancies. And the reader today often finds himself in a new role; his passive enjoyment is gone; he too often must glean and fathom, if he can, the writer's meaning. Thus he may be able to find only a sketch in what was intended to be a short story, or, perhaps, a novelette in what was intended to be a long short story.

Often when I have stood on a high hill and felt the wind blow through my hair in a certain way, I have thought that I could hear the ancestors of men murmuring from their distant shore. We inherit other things from our begetters, why should we not inherit moments of awareness? Why should we not inherit, buried fathom-deep in the soul, certain

particular intensely vivid memories; moments that were experienced by men of old, hundreds, even thousands, of years before we were born; even before story telling or writing was an art?

But if what we inherit is only a capacity for response to such heightened moments, it is certain that, just as we add something of our own experience to the great familiar works of art -- the Bible, Homer, the Fables -- so all of us are allowed to reexperience in our own lives emotions and gestures that have recurred again and again down through the ages. Common sights and daily tasks become a mystery when eyes see, and minds feel.

I remember well a common sight that impressed itself on my mind as I was walking to school one bright morning. The memory has never faded, but, rather, has grown more vivid with the years, becoming for me what Pippa's song was for those who heard it.

It was a common sight in those days for women to sit in a window, with it pulled down on their laps, when it was being washed on the outside. On this particular morning -- I never saw her again -- I was attracted by a woman in a black cotton dress sitting in the tenement window she was washing. There was something lovely about the curve of her slender back, the pallor of her smooth skin, and the loose, heavy knot of dark hair on the nape of her neck.

As I continued toward school, I thought of her as a princess in disguise, who had been given a menial chore as a test of character, and who would be rescued, in storybook fashion, by a charming prince. I never saw her face, nor did I dream that she would become fixed in my imagination. I have told myself, in later years, when she has reappeared

before me, that she was probably a wanton hussy, the most frivolous in the tenement, but that does not suffice to banish her. A voice persists in telling me that that was only what she might have been superficially. And the voice goes on insisting that in essentials she was the embodiment of thousands of years of gathered-up emotions destined to haunt and waylay me through life.

I have given in to her. I let her live repeated lives of luxury and beauty, which certainly were not hers in the life in which I encountered her. This satisfies her for a time, and she goes away; but not for very long.

II

All this comes round to the essential thread in the stories presented in this thesis. No man knows his fate, whether in life or in the fancy of a chance observer. Yet, he lives, and no one can deny him his life, nor stop the pen that draws him.

It was in Robie Macauley's class that I was urged to turn from criticism to the short story. His encouragement and guidance gave me enthusiasm for a form of writing I hitherto had looked upon as hack writing which catered to rather low tastes in order to be salable. Mr. Macauley gave me an appreciation of it as an art form which has resulted in new enjoyment, in finding and reading the better type of short story. And in absentia, I have remembered his kindness and gone on to the goal I had set for myself -- but in this other field.

None of these stories, however, were written for Mr. Macauley or with his guidance; neither has he seen any of them.

There is a degree of subjectivity in every writer which inevitably affects the selection of his material, and his judgment of it, just as there are differences in men and their fair mindedness. In these stories, here collected, I have culled half-forgotten memories and old experiences to produce them. They have been arranged and rearranged many times over in my mind and on paper before coming into their present form.

A Russian tale told by Professor Alexandre Vasiliev, and his amusing discussion of Pope's "Every woman is at heart a rake," over a cup of tea, produced the idea for a witch -- new style. But Teresa did not materialize until later, not until I had read in the newspapers of the national convention of hairdressers. Being a foreigner in the shops of these modern wizards, their goings-on read like fancies to me, but when I was searching for a subject for a story, these two incidents combined to develop Teresa -- a witch with a difference; young, neat, and a reformer. The latter made it mandatory that she be lonely, possibly neglected, until the moment of liberation and recognition arrived.

It was easy to find the setting for Teresa. The mountains, of course, where belief in magic is a little stronger -- or used to be -- than in the cities. Familiarity with Little Switzerland, its general store, where gossip circulates when everyone gathers to collect his mail; its herb gatherers; its cats; its old men, who reminisce over the counter in the winter and over the gas pump in summer, supplied the setting for the "Witch of Fire Mountain." Since Tidy Tess was different, so must be her cat and broom -- the marks of the trade. Nightlife, therefore, was a normal, fun-loving cat; and the broom was for sweeping, not riding. It seemed proper to have type names for the lovers -- "Love" for the girl

and "Strong" for the boy -- and to give them a perfect farm where they would retire, away from life's misfits. The name of the mountain is fictitious, suggested by the witches' caldron in Macbeth.

Whimsy is attempted in "Sucker Gods." The two main characters, however, are not figments of the imagination, but very real dogs. They are not different from other dogs -- basically all dogs are alike, their environments differ -- they insinuate themselves into your affections until you become quite foolish over them, which gives them an enormous advantage over you. As Sissy imparted to Sally, this inherited trait was their gilt-edged preferred stock that had not failed to pay dividends since the corporation was set up in some primeval forest eons ago.

If there is more to "Sucker Gods" than entertainment, perhaps it is that dogs are better philosophers than men. They know their friends, and they leave their enemies to grumble and be disagreeable alone, but maintaining their guard in case a defense is indicated.

Mr. Macauley encouraged me to write whimsy, but something more serious was called for, and the next two pieces are handled differently. Both "A Yankee's Child" and "Nothing is Certain" are biographical; the facts were partially known to me but their plots are entirely imaginary.

In "A Yankee's Child" two themes superimposed themselves on the facts; the first -- "To die is less than to be born," the second -- "No man knows his fate." Both of these quotations are truisms, the latter probably more readily acceptable than the former, which can be argued on both sides, depending on one's belief in the purpose of man's creation. The story is told from Eva's point of view which seemed proper since it is a domestic situation. She is a victim of a system that did not prepare

women for life; it was passed on to her own daughter, then the circumstances of the system caught up with them, affecting everyone their lives touched.

The setting is a generation removed from the Civil War, but such a situation did arise, and can and does still arise from mixed marriages when ignorance and prejudice combine. I have tried to show that Eva and Jim have the stuff of survival with sanity and will make a go of it, but that Cary is unredeemable and will go on working ill; prejudice, power, and money being his tools. The child's fate is another story, and the reader can judge for himself whether "To die is less than to be born."

Once upon a time there was a professor like Paul **Martin**. He was young, handsome, and well endowed with notable ancestors and worldly goods. He came out of the east to a campus that had an arbitrary ruling about marriage, if a man were to succeed to the head of his department. This man, whom I call Paul, received the acclaim of the students, and year after year, was voted the most popular teacher in the Liberal Arts college. He did become engaged to a local girl, and the engagement was broken off by her father.

If I had known Paul when he first came to the University "Nothing is Certain" might have been written as a love story. But I did not know him until he was past middle age, when his romance was diminishing hearsay; however, his reputation as a teacher was as strong as in the days of his youth. And he was greatly beloved.

Because he was a dedicated teacher, and because his simple sincerity inspired everyone who had the privilege of knowing him as teacher and friend, it seemed fitting to try to portray him in a story. I have

tried to imagine him as he might have been when he was forced to make the major decision of his life. Thus Lucy becomes a pawn, and the story a contest of two men's wills. Which one triumphed will depend on which side the reader casts himself.

The last story, "By Indirection Find Direction Out," satirizes a domestic problem. Beneath the surface, however, is the deeper problem of understanding, or communication as it is popularly called.

Ora is a primitive type of individual, superstitious, ignorant when judged by the standards of the day, but cunning and able to solve her own problems without fear or hesitation, or feeling of obligation to her employers. The Allens, a well adjusted couple, enjoy life but feel no urge to add anything to community living. The Reverend Balyn does well the job expected of him, but, like the Allens, does no more than is called for. His mother represents the ornamental type of woman -- Mrs. Merriweather Post, in a lower economic bracket -- who is passing from the American scene. She is neither good nor bad in herself, but her static being is evil, as seen in Ora's interpretation of the fruits of her conduct. But Ora's interpretation of Mrs. Balyn is not as far fetched as might seem at first glance -- it is on a par with our imitation of Hollywood's brass, and we are not primitive.

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THE WITCH OF FIRE MOUNTAIN

Contrary to popular opinion the art of witchcraft is not dying out, nor is the number of witches diminishing. It can be stated, furthermore, that witches do just about everything average people do, only they are more intense in their doing.

In one of the vales of Fire Mountain, there is a small community called Tidy Gap. The name describes fairly well the place whose inhabitants are descendants of early English and Irish settlers. Through the years little change has taken place in the community or in the inhabitants; and that is how they want it.

One night an old villager, who had been gathering herbs later than usual, came into Tidy Gap's general store and told a strange tale. He said that when he was passing Fletcher Lane's place he had seen a witch come out of the old house; everyone knew that no one had lived in the place since Fletcher's death. The old man said that he had watched the witch sit on the stump by the door and tease a ringtailed cat with a bunch of herbs, which she dangled before it. He said that the cat did not catch the herbs often but when it did, it cried out, at which the witch laughed. He said that the cat's cry and the witch's laughter echoed in the brook that cascades by the place, making sounds like a fiddle and a flute tuning for a dance.

After this he spoke of the witch's eyes, which he said were as green as the eyes of the storekeeper's cat. The old man's listeners turned and looked at Rascal, who was sitting on the counter with his

tail wrapped round his feet. His wide green eyes returned their gaze without blinking.

Next the old man mentioned the witch's hair, which he said was blacker than Rascal's. Upon hearing his name mentioned again Rascal arched his back, stretched, and disappeared from the counter.

"Can't be blacker than black," said one of the villagers.

"Well, it were longer," said the old man; and no one disputed his word.

Tidy Gap had the distinction of having a witch but she lived on the far side of the mountain. It was a day's journey there and back for the trip had to be made on foot. The villagers called their witch Dirty Dotty -- but not to her face -- for they had never seen her any way but dirty and disheveled, and they assumed that this was the trade mark of witches. When they had cause -- their causes ran in streaks, so it seemed -- they went to Dirty Dotty for charms and potions, which they found beneficial. She always made them pay cash; there were no exceptions even in cases of great hardship, and it was reckoned by the villagers that she had more real money than anyone on either side of the mountain.

The old man's story of a new witch on the near side of the mountain caused everyone to talk. Supposition ran high as to who would be her first customer, and as to whether something new and untried could be as good as something old and known; it might be throwing good money away, and it might be unlucky to boot.

While speculation mounted in Tidy Gap, Teresa, for that was the witch's name, set about cleaning her house. No one had lived nor even

been in the place since Lane's death, three years before. No one but a mountaineer would have called the place a house for it had only two rooms — one for cooking and living, and another for sleeping. It was a typical mountain cabin and the most isolated one in Tidy Gap. The brook that cascaded beside it was the only source of water; on quiet nights its rustling was the only sound to be heard. Cobwebs hung from the ceiling and dust covered the furniture. Teresa swept and dusted and scrubbed; she was not satisfied until the cabin was spotless, then she hung her copper kettle with its mirror-like surface on the fire hook, placed her jars of herbs on the mantel, and put her books on the shelf. While she worked, she sang, "No matter how I roam there'll never be dirt in my home."

Teresa had but recently qualified as a witch. At the time she decided that she would be a new style witch by being neat and clean in every particular. She suggested to the sisterhood of witches that they give up being dirty sorceresses but they scoffed at her. Teresa realized then and there that if she were going to be a reformer she would have to go it alone; and, perhaps, be lonely.

It was not long after this that Tidy Tess, as she was known in her circle, heard of the place at Tidy Gap. She considered it a stroke of luck that her name and the name of the place had the same modifier, and she wondered what the good fortune would be. Being a witch, it was not considered ethical to cast her own fortune, and she had not had time to go to one of her sisters for a reading.

Every morning while the mist cleared, Tess swept and dusted her two rooms and not until they were spotless did she sit down to breakfast.

Nightlife, Tessy's cat, whom she affectionately called Nightie, sat on the stump by the door and cleaned herself while the work went on within. But as soon as she saw the broom being put in its place by the door, she sprang from the stump, her mistress' only piece of out-door furniture, and went into the cabin. They ate breakfast together being company for each other.

One morning while they were leisurely eating, a loud thumping sounded at the door. Nightlife jumped from her stool at the table and went to the hearth where she sat down facing the door. Her eyes, tiger clear, looked past the figure in the open door into the magic of distance, and reflected curiosity born of desire; her tail twitched, and occasionally swept in front of her as if she were brushing something unseen but present out of her way.

Teresa hastened to the door to see her first caller.

A young man, none too clean, stood outside the door. He enquired if she were the witch. Tess admitted that she was, and he said that he had come to buy a love potion.

Tess invited him to come in, although she was not at all pleased to have the dirty youth in her clean cabin. If he had not been her very first client, she would have turned him away. She motioned to the chair in which he was to sit, then she set about making the potion. She measured the herbs with her usual care and added a dash of extra strong powder for good measure. If this youth were to get his heart's desire, he would need a stronger potion than was customary. While she stirred the mixture she watched the youth's reflection in the mirror-like surface of the kettle. He was becoming restless; suddenly he jumped to his feet,

and blurted, "I don't want it after all." Then he darted out of the cabin.

Tess went to the door and saw that he hurried up the mountain. She knew that he was going to Dirty Dotty's place, and she sighed; undoubtedly he had more faith in the orthodox method. Teresa and Nightlife returned to their unfinished breakfast.

No sooner had they commenced to eat than another knock sounded at the door. Tessy hastened to see if the dirty youth had changed his mind and returned for the potion.

An old man stood at the door.

"I can't see very well," said the old man, "but if this is the new witch's place, I've come for a love potion."

"You're at the right place and you're in luck," said Tidy Tessy. "I have a potion that's been made only a few minutes. Come in while I bottle it for you."

As Tess poured the liquid into a vial, she thought, It's a good thing he's nearly blind or he might not believe in my powers. She knew well that it was going to take a lot of education to teach the public to accept a new style witch.

When Tess handed the old man the potion he pressed a five dollar bill into her hand. She did not know whether he was being generous or whether his sight was really bad. A dollar was the usual fee for inflation had not come to the mountains. She did not want to cheat the old man so she gave him a bunch of herbs which she told him would improve his eyesight, if he brewed them into a tea and drank it each morning as soon as he got up. He thanked her and with a jaunty step departed. Tess watched him head in the direction of the village before she and Nightlife

returned to the table to finish their interrupted breakfast.

Just as they were finishing their last morsel of toast another knock sounded at the door. Tess decided that there must be a particularly interesting vixen in the community, or else all the local girls had hearts of stone. The idea of the similarity between witches and marriageable women flashed through her mind as she hastened to the door.

A young man so clean, so blond, and so shining stood before her that Tess blinked her eyes in astonishment. She had never imagined in her entire life a person more attractive.

"Good morning ma'am," said the shining young man.

"It's a beautiful morning," said Tess, looking up at the sky. Then remembering that this was a business call, she asked, "What can I do for you?"

"I would like a love potion."

"I will be glad to fix one for you. Come inside and sit down."

Tess dusted off the chair he was to sit on lest it retain some of the grime of the dirty youth. And while she went about making the potion, measuring the herbs with extreme care, Nightlife came from her place on the hearth and gazed at the young man with searching eyes; then she rubbed against his legs. The blond young man stroked Nightie's back, which she arched in appreciation. Finally the young man stopped stroking Nightlife's back and centered his attention on Tess' back, which was turned to him. It was trim, finely proportioned, and all of her movements were graceful.

Meanwhile Tess watched the young man in the surface of her gleam-

ing kettle, wondering why anyone so young and so beautiful needed to resort to magic to gain the heart's desire. Never before had her heart been so in her work. She even took a little longer than was necessary to make the potion, so much did she enjoy looking at him in her kettle's polished surface.

At last the concoction was ready and Tess poured it into a slender vial. Then she held the mixture to the light; it was so clear it hardly could be seen, and she was satisfied that it was the best she had ever made.

"Here is your love potion," said Tess, and she handed the vial to the young man. Before he had time to say anything or offer to pay her, Tess said, "Excuse me one moment, I have some honey that I want to give you, just in case your lady friend has a sweet tooth."

She disappeared briefly; when she returned she proffered the young man a piece of wild honey comb, saying, "If you will eat this with your sweetheart, after she drinks the potion, it will seal the bond between you and you will have a long and happy life together."

Instead of taking the honey, the young man slipped a firm arm around the witch's waist and held her to him. "I want you to drink this potion. It is you I love." And he looked into Tessy's brown eyes, which were starbright, then he continued, "I have had time to look about your home. It is neat and clean. That is how I want mine to be. This gift of honey shows me that you are kind and thoughtful of others. That is how I want my wife to be."

Tidy Tess blushed, and her dark eyes looked into the blue eyes of the radiant young man, whose arm embraced her waist, and a strange, new

feeling surged over her. While she was enjoying the novel sensation the young man held the vial to her lips.

"Let us share this potion," he said.

Tess drank exactly half; the young man took the vial and drained it, then they shared the honey from the comb.

"My name is David Strong," said the young man, "and I have a little farm that you can see from your doorway, if you look to the right."

They walked to the door, their arms about each other and looked to the right. Through the morning mist David's neatly fenced farm could be seen.

"My name is Teresa Love," said the witch, "but I am called Tidy Tess because I like everything neat and clean."

"That is only part of the reason why I love you," said David. "The other part is that you are the most beautiful girl in all the world."

Tess knew then, without a doubt, that the love potion had been perfect, since beauty cannot be removed from the eyes of one who loves. But she asked, "What of the girl for whom the potion was intended?"

"Her name is Vera Vane," replied David. "She considered herself too good to be the wife of a farmer. I foolishly thought that I wanted to make her love me; now I wonder why."

The next morning Tess went about her cleaning as usual and Night-life sat on the stump and licked her stripes to a fine gloss; when the work was done they had breakfast. After the dishes were washed and put away, they went into the woods: Tess to gather flame azalea and dogwood

blossoms; Nightie to sit beside the brook and admire her shimmering reflection. When Teresa had enough flowers for a circlet for her hair, she joined her companion by the brook, and wove the flowers together. When the crown was finished, it was placed in a nest of ferns so that it would stay fresh until she was ready to wear it.

In the cool of the afternoon, David arrived, handsome in spite of his high collar and mail order suit. Tess was waiting for him in her store bought dress; she was beautiful too. The wreath was gotten and placed on her dark hair, then hand in hand, Teresa and David walked to the village.

All but three of the villagers were present for the marriage of the witch and the youth with the neatly fenced farm. The three who were absent were Vera Vane, the old man, and the dirty youth.

Prior to the wedding, Vera Vane, wearing an old dress and dark glasses, left the village with the old man, whose eyesight miraculously had returned. Their elopement was reported by the same villager who had first seen Tessy playing with her cat at Fletcher Lane's old place. When the villagers heard that the old man's sight had been restored, they said that it was no miracle but surprise at being accepted by the proud beauty.

The dirty youth arrived at dusk, just after David and Tess had gone to the clean little farm, and all the wedding guests were returning home. He was the most astonished person in Tidy Gap when he heard what had happened during his absence. He looked at the love potion in its dirty glass and wondered what he should do with it since the object of his desire had married the old man. It had caused him to miss the

excitement of the marriage and the elopement, and had cost him his entire fortune; he decided to sell it at half price.

When the storekeeper was locking up for the night, he could not find Rascal. He called his name repeatedly; finally the old herb gatherer, the one who had reported seeing Teresa and her cat, recollected that as he was hurrying down the mountain on his way to the wedding, for which he was late, he had seen Rascal playing with the witch's cat in the clearing before Fletcher Lane's old place.

THE SUCKER GODS

They sat on the back porch, side by side, watching the delivery boy carry in trays. A deliciously tantalizing smell wafted down to them each time he passed by, and they twitched their noses and inhaled the aroma as long as it was in the air. From the smell and look of things, there was going to be another of those parties at which people drank more than they ate; and food would be taken for politeness sake but uneaten because of dieting, lack of interest, or some equally unaccountable human foible. They were glad that they had no inhibitions.

The younger, who was the larger, looked at the older, who was her mother, for some indication of what their conduct was to be on this occasion, especially since they were not invited to the party. But the mother, who was an old hand at parties, preferred to watch the delivery boy, who was getting into his truck. Her nature was to put first things first; her job to watch the activities of strangers around the house.

Now she strained her neck to keep the boy in view until he and his vehicle had slipped down the driveway and out of sight. Then she turned to confer with her daughter, but before this could be accomplished Maude brushed unceremoniously by them on her way to spring the latch on the screen door, which had been unlocked so the delivery boy could come in without disturbing her.

Both mother and daughter looked at Maude in their friendliest manner but this seemed to antagonize her.

"Don't you dogs git no notion you is comin' to this party!"

Maude looked disdainfully into their trusting eyes, and putting her hands on her lumpy hips for emphasis, she continued, "And if you so much as puts you' heads inside this door, I'll git you good!" Then she shook a crooked brown finger in their direction, which looked like an unwholesome, mouldy sausage.

Despite Maude's outburst, they continued to look at her in their friendliest manner. Their tender gazes seemed to rile her for after she had turned to go into the house, she stopped at the door and said, "An' don't you come in my kitchen neither! An' don't you look like you don't know what I mean, fo' you do!"

After this uncalled for rudeness, she disappeared and began to make a noise in the kitchen with the glasses and dishes.

The dogs Maude hoped she had insulted were Sissy, a wirehaired terrier, and her daughter, Sally, of otherwise uncertain ancestry. They were the property and friends of Mr. and Mrs. Smith, and as dearly beloved as if they were genuine Salukies. They often took advantage of the Smiths' blind spots, just as many less devout worshippers do, when it is discovered that their gods have a weakness for flattery. But as for Maude, she was no god, not even a demi-god, and Sissy, with the wisdom of the ages that had developed her kind, was teaching Sally to ignore Maude for what she was -- a person of no importance in the family, for like parties, there would always be another Maude.

Sissy's wisdom was predicated on the six years she had lived with the Smiths. She could remember four cooks; not all were called Maude but they might have been. They all did the same things; they all ended the same way, while she, Sissy, remained the darling of the family after

numerous misdemeanors. But these things she did not brag about to her offspring, for like all good mothers, she desired above all else to be worthy of emulation, and in most patterns of conduct she was.

When Maude had finished her remarks to them and disappeared, grumbling to herself, Sissy indicated to Sally that there was time for a nap before dinner. This would have the advantage of allaying any suspicion that they were planning to come to the party; also it would simplify their efforts to get into the library while the hors d'ouvres were being served, food they found more appetizing than their own. Sissy lay on the floor in the sun, just outside the shipping box, which was their house. She stretched, yawned, and closed her eyes. It would not be safe to say that she was asleep.

Sally lay down also, but she did not close her eyes. She fought off sleep just as long as she could. Finally, when nothing happened, her eyes closed and she was asleep.

Promptly at four o'clock Mrs. Smith, bubbling with devotion for her pets, came to the porch with their suppers. This was their main meal. The book by which Mrs. Smith was raising them stressed that after one year a single meal in the late afternoon was best, that a regular time established good habits, and that dogs slept best on full stomachs. Four o'clock was the hour Mrs. Smith had established for them and she was seldom late.

"Wake up angels; here's your dinner."

Mrs. Smith spoke with enthusiasm and put their bowls in opposite corners of the porch. There had been a time when Mrs. Smith thought she could persuade them to break with their heritage of solitary eating. She

thought it unfriendly, particularly for a mother and daughter not to eat in close proximity. But Mrs. Smith had to be taught, just as Sally had to be taught after she was weaned, that eating was a serious business and never taken lightly or passed up except in case of illness.

As for eating together, when Sally was six weeks old, Sissy told her to "scram," and Sally did for she knew that her mother was not fooling. It took Mrs. Smith longer to learn, but after two or three fights in which it looked as if Sissy would not have recognized Sally if she were wearing her birth certificate, Mrs. Smith did learn, and forever after put their bowls at respectful distances from one another.

Mr. Smith had to learn also that civilization is all right for a dog if not carried too far. His lesson antedated Mrs. Smith's, since up to that time they had been a one-dog family. The change, and Mr. Smith's better understanding, came about in a way that, for a time, upset the family.

It happened on a chilly but moonlit night in March. Mr. Smith was awakened by Sissy, who sometimes slept between him and Mrs. Smith and sometimes cradled in Mr. Smith's arms. This night, his darling, looking more like a toy he used to pull by a string when he was a little boy than a real live and knowledgeable dog, indicated to him that she would be more comfortable if given a moment or two in the backyard. Such demands were not frequent, and Mr. Smith obligingly put on his slippers and sleepily trudged down the stairs and to the back porch, where he opened the screen door and allowed her to go out alone to enjoy her privacy, while he thought of his warm bed. Minutes later and thoroughly chilled, he opened the screen and called, "Baby, it's time to come in."

When baby did not come, and as Mr. Smith's eyes adjusted to the darkness, he was astonished to see his darling cavorting with another dog. Sternly he called, "Sissy! come here this instant!" This time he was confronted with indignant stares from four glinting eyes. He started toward them with a rush of indignation of his own. They vanished into the outer darkness. He called frantically and would have raced after them protected only from the chill night air by his loose-fitting pajamas, but he did not know how far he would have to go.

Then the awful truth smote him as only tragedy can -- baby was vulnerable!

Mrs. Smith was awakened by her husband bounding up the stairs two steps at a time. He came into the bedroom with such speed that he had to clutch the door jamb to keep from plunging headlong into a rocking chair.

"Whatever is the matter?" asked Mrs. Smith sleepily.

"Sissy is gone!"

"Gone! Gone where?"

Then the terrible truth smote Mrs. Smith. "Good heavens, I thought you knew she was still that way!"

"Knew! Of course I knew. Haven't I guarded her like a father for three blessed weeks on our walks through the park, from wolves that not only whistled but tackled her like football players! I just didn't think she would do such a thing to me. The idea of not coming when she was called!"

"But what are you doing now?"

"I'm dressing. I'm going after her."

"You'd better come to bed and get your sleep." Mrs. Smith turned her face to the wall and her back to her husband.

Mrs. Smith fell asleep, but almost immediately, or so it seemed to her, she was awakened by the sound of her husband's footsteps on the stairs accompanied by the familiar tapping of Sissy's toenails. Mrs. Smith turned toward them as they entered the room.

"Where did you find her?"

"She was waiting at the back door."

"What a relief! Nothing could have happened in so short a time."

Mr. Smith put Sissy on the bed and quickly got back into his pajamas. Soon all three were sound asleep.

Six weeks later the Smiths realized that it had been long enough. Their darling could no longer disguise her condition, nor did she seem to care that she had lost the look of a woolly toy; nor did she seem concerned that her companion of love never returned. Her composure was maddening to the Smiths and as her time drew near she ate ravenously, bit and clawed the pillow in her basket until the ticking was torn and the feathers scattered about. Also she was less willing to sleep with the Smiths, who never let a day pass without asking each other, "What do you suppose they will look like?" -- just as if they might acquire something other than dogs!

The first time Mr. Smith asked, "What do you suppose they'll look like?" Mrs. Smith replied, "Didn't you see what was with her?"

Mr. Smith answered, "It was too dark and besides ... "

And Mrs. Smith said, "Yes, I know."

The puppies, four of them, arrived on a day in May, all looking

remarkably like their mother. It was a new experience for Mrs. Smith, as it was for Sissy, whose instinct deserted her just when she most needed it.

Maude was the only one in the house who knew what to do and she was totally uncommunicative, but could be heard muttering to herself in the kitchen next to the utility room, the place Sissy had chosen for her lying-in. Mrs. Smith would have preferred her to use the bassinet she had prepared but, when the moment came, Sissy chose the more intimate atmosphere of mops, pails and cleaning cloths.

Now in desperation Mrs. Smith called to Maude. "You must come and tell me what to do. Something has arrived wrapped in cellophane and Sissy won't go near it."

Maude clumped to the doorway and looked in. Sissy was walking about and looking miserable. A glistening oblong was struggling on the floor. Maude walked to it, inserted her finger in the covering membrane, and out squirmed a little white thing with tan ears and a tan patch near its tail. It gave a powerful, high pitched cry as it took its first breath, and blind though it was, slithered in the direction of its mother, who seemed terrified by it and got out of its way.

"Ain't it cute," Maude said, forgetting her avowed distaste for dogs.

"Is it a boy or a girl?" asked Mrs. Smith, with maternal yearning.

Maude reached down and turned the crying, writhing mite over. "It's a girl! Just another trouble maker." There was disgust in Maude's voice.

"Oh, we won't keep any of them," Mrs. Smith assured her.

That was a year ago. The Smiths had not gotten rid of Sissy's first born, and the other three puppies died, sparing the Smiths the ignominy of being unmitigated pushovers for dogs. Sissy's child was named Sally, and the Smiths were as proud of her as if she had been a planned puppy.

Now as Mrs. Smith watched and waited for mother and child to eat their meal she thought of the pleasure it was having two dogs. Sissy's devotion to Sally during her first six weeks of life was an inspiration of self-sacrificing mother love. She left her for short intervals only returning eagerly to feed and bathe her. She washed Sally's eyes and face so vigorously that she whimpered and tried to squirm away but her mother held her firmly but gently until the job was thoroughly done. And when weaning time came, Sissy was just as thorough. It took a few nips for Sally to learn that when her mother said "scram" she was not fooling.

Sally was a little resentful at first, but being a smart babe, she decided she had a career of her own and would get about it. Now there was little jealousy between mother and child. Their joint careers as watch dogs and worshippers of the Smiths assured them all the comforts of modern living.

As soon as their bowls were licked clean, they exchanged positions and examined each other's bowls, making sure nothing remained that could be eaten. Occasionally Sally left something, not an oversight but a primitive desire to put-by for a rainy day. Sissy being better bred and thoroughly adapted to city ways knew this instinct to be out-moded, and

had discarded it. Sally would have to learn it for herself and that their god, like man's God, is a god of love, who would provide.

The routine check made, they bounded joyously toward Mrs. Smith, announcing that they were ready to accompany her to the park. They returned from their exercise as Mr. Smith drove into the driveway. Sally ran to greet him barking her welcome. Sissy walked sedately beside Mrs. Smith until they arrived at Mr. Smith's side, then she, too, made a fuss over him.

After a few words passed between Mr. and Mrs. Smith, they went to the back porch where the dogs got into their box as if turning in for the night. Mrs. Smith made a sign to Mr. Smith that he was not to say anything to them, and when they were in the house, well out of hearing, she said in a subdued voice, "I don't think they know there's to be a party, so don't raise their hopes. Maude says she'll leave if they mess up this time."

Mr. Smith nodded knowingly.

The consultation which took place between Sissy and Sally, as soon as the Smiths were out of sight, was silent but meaningful. The only noise came from Maude clattering about the kitchen, until the doorbell rang, about an hour later. Then the house became alive. Mr. Smith, who had been upstairs dressing, bounded down the stairs to answer the door. Mrs. Smith entered the kitchen to give last minute instructions to Maude. The dogs, as if trained for the moment, sprang through the screen door, which the Smiths had failed to lock. They rounded the house at top speed and secluded themselves behind the boxwoods in front of the house and watched the chattering couples arrive. Sissy knew from

experience that the early arrivals caused a lot of commotion but that eating did not begin until later. She cautioned Sally, who was quivering with excitement and anticipation, to be patient.

After the third car arrived and the people had entered the house, they emerged from their hiding place and went near the steps. They sat close together, their feet primly braced, their heads proudly raised, and their expressions angelic. Sissy was calm and utterly unmoved by Sally's nervousness. She knew that it would take time for Sally to learn the ways of dogs with men, and that it was a tradition not to be discarded. All-wise Nature had given them mastery over man thousands of years ago, when the first dog saw the first man roaming the forests with only a club for protection and no clothing. The dog had watched the two-legged creature, observed that he was going somewhere, and decided to go with him. The man had been so flattered by the companionship that he fed the dog and protected him from larger animals. The dog was quick to recognize a good thing when he saw it and man became his sucker-god; a mutually beneficial arrangement that had lasted.

When the fourth car drew up and parked behind the others, a lone man got out, Sissy sensed that this was the last arrival, and just as her original ancestor had gone forth to conquer, so would she. Sally looked at her mother to see if she recognized the man, but there was no sign on Sissy's face, or in her tail, that she was acquainted with him. Every nerve in Sally's body was bursting for action as she watched her mother sizing up the man, but Sissy did not move a muscle until he was almost upon them, then she stepped calmly into his path.

"Hello, little doggie," the man said, leaning down to pat Sissy's head.

Just as he reached for her, she sat up on her hind legs and raised a paw, as if to shake hands. The man reached for her paw. She withdrew it; so the man patted her head and she showed her pleasure by nuzzling, then licking, his hand. Sally, who had watched closely her mother's success, raced over, and she, too, went into a sitting position waving her paws to attract attention.

"Two of you! Well, I never!" exclaimed the man, patting Sally. Then he went to the porch. The dogs accompanied him and sat beside his feet while he waited for the bell to be answered. As soon as Sissy and Sally heard Mr. Smith approaching, they turned tragic eyes on the man, indicating plainly that they would kill themselves then and there if he did not take them inside.

Mr. Smith greeted his friend, and was about to close the door, when the man asked, "Can't the dogs come in?"

"Sure, they can come in. They usually do." Mr. Smith had forgotten all about Mrs. Smith's admonition.

Sally hurried into the library where her nose told her the food was being served. Completely ignoring Mrs. Smith, she got between chairs that were occupied by a man and a woman, who were talking cozily together. Not being noticed at once by them, Sally sat up and raised her right paw to her ear, as if saluting the woman.

"What a cute dog," the woman said. Sally nodded her head in complete agreement.

"I believe she knows what you say," replied her companion.

Showing that she understood, Sally rose from her sitting position to her hind legs, turning toward the man in appreciation of his understanding remarks, and nodded her head at him, lightly sniffing the air.

Sissy's entrance had gone unnoticed, but she had no intention of letting her offspring steal the show; since her earliest puppy days Sissy had considered herself an actress with a future. Now she walked deliberately to the center of the room, sat up on her hind legs and belched, with the éclat of John Barrymore in an unpredictable moment; then she demurely folded her paws, as if apologizing, and coyly turned her head to one side. After this, Sissy and Sally divided the room between themselves and ate a great many of the caterer's sandwiches.

It seemed like minutes to Sissy and Sally but in reality it was over two hours before the guests prepared to leave for the Country Club, where they were to have dinner. While the guests were getting their things together, Mrs. Smith took the uninvited ones to the back porch. They followed her like dutiful children down the hall and past the kitchen where Maude was grumbling to herself. They got into their box without being told, glad for the opportunity to rest on their full stomachs.

Mrs. Smith did not say a word to rebuke them, but she was not in a trusting mood for she went to the screen door and tried the latch. It was unlocked. She sprung the lock and tried it, making sure that it had caught. Sissy and Sally watched her from the doorway of their house. As far as they were concerned her precaution was needless. They had no intention of going out again that night unless forced to when the Smiths returned from the Club.

When Mrs. Smith left the porch, Sissy and Sally turned round and round on their pillows, then settled down side by side. Sally looked at her mother, before closing her eyes, to see if she had any communication to impart. Sissy did. Her message was brief and in keeping with their distinguished heritage, and it was spoken in a language Sally knew and understood: "Perhaps there's no ambrosia at the feasts of the sucker-gods, but caterers' sandwiches are better than scrounging for a living on a cold night!"

A YANKEE'S CHILD

The moment the letter was in her brother's hands, Eva regretted it. Cary had argued that it would be for Sara's good, as well as of benefit to her sons. Now she was not so sure; and the thought of Sara being taken from them -- particularly the effect on Jim -- threw her into a kind of panic. And the fact that she did give in to Cary's threats convinced her that she was afraid of the future, more afraid than she had admitted, even to herself.

It was ten days ago that Cary took the letter, and although he had not been to see her since, Eva knew that he had wasted no time getting to the Post Office. So there had been ample time to have heard from Harry, if he were in Boston when the letter arrived; he was good about answering her letters. But he might be away on business, and if he were, it could be months before she would know what was to happen.

The thought of an interminable wait made Eva physically ill. But the only one who knew that she was daily growing thinner and more nervous was old Henry, their sole remaining servant. The boys and Sara were too young to notice; Jim was too removed from the happenings around him; and Cary, of course, showed too plainly that he did not care.

As each long day dragged to a close, fear taunted Eva. Over and over again, she asked herself, How could I have done it? How am I going to tell Jim when the time comes? But the nights were worse than the days, for then she lay awake during endless hours looking on

darkness such as the blind know, while before her sightless eyes passed the scenes of the terrible years that had destroyed their happy, prosperous family.

They lived in the old Lloyd house, which was one of the show places of Highboro. After many renovations -- as generations of the family prospered -- it was a fine example of Greek revival architecture: two-story Corinthian columns on three sides, a deep verandah, and over the front door a balcony, from which during the long summer months hung baskets of geraniums. Inside, a wide branching staircase distinguished the center hall. The rooms were spacious, light and airy, and the flooring -- random width planking, polished to a satin finish -- was something to admire. The furniture was old, too, having been in either the Lloyd or Mason families -- Eva was a Mason -- as long as anyone could remember.

The news that was to be their Nemesis came on a warm night in late May. The French windows in the library were open and a breeze swayed inward the long lace curtains, bringing with it the scent of roses from the garden.

The family was in the library, all but Sara Lynne, who was completing her third and last term at the Boston Conservatory of Music; but she would be with them soon, and it would be a long time before the family would be separated again. Not until the boys were ready for college, and that was years off.

When Eva, with her two young sons, had come into the room, Jim

was reading the RICHMOND JOURNAL. It was the newspaper he brought home each evening, going carefully through it for items to reprint in the HIGHBORO GAZETTE, the family-owned paper he inherited when his father died. Jim's fine features were silhouetted by the lamplight. Everything about Jim was vigorous and manly, strong and fine, and, Eva thought, He grows handsomer all of the time, just as my love for him has increased during the twenty years of our marriage.

After the boys settled at the table where they did their school work, Eva turned to her mending in the sewing stand beside a low armless rocker which the Lloyds called the nursing chair. As she wove her needle back and forth, filling the yawning gap in one of Walton's long black stockings-- she did his first; they always had the largest holes -- she occasionally looked at her husband and sons.

These little boys, their faces serious above their Buster Brown collars and black bow ties, were a constant pleasure to her. They had been born when Sara Lynne was eleven, when she and Jim had begun to think of her as an only child, and, indeed, Jim still seemed to think of her as something special. Eva wished that he were more aware of the boys, for they were beginning to need a stronger hand than hers.

Because their daughter was so constantly in Jim's thoughts, Eva was not surprised to hear him say, before he had finished reading the paper, "Only two more weeks, and Sara Lynne will be home; home to stay."

"And school will be out. Hurrah! Hurrah!" Ashton said, tapping with his pencil on his arithmetic book.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" Walton always echoed his older brother,

and now his brown eyes were as bright as a puppy's.

After the boys had settled down again, Eva said, "You know I have the hardest time keeping the secret of the new piano from her when I write."

"She made the old one talk; what will she do with the Steinway! You don't regret now the hours you had to sit with her to see that she practised, do you?"

"Of course I don't. But who would have thought then that she would turn into a really fine pianist, or that a man like Albino Gorno would take her for his pupil."

"Will I be allowed to practise on the new piano?" Ashton asked.

He was the born musician of the family. He had to be kept from the piano, not driven to it.

"We'll get a practise piano for you," Jim answered.

Later, in her own room, after hearing the boys' prayers and tucking them in bed, Eva hummed contentedly. Her gray eyes were wide-set, serene; her face and figure well preserved. When she had gotten out of her dress and gone to her bureau to brush her long, dark hair, she said, "I think I'll open the house at the shore early, and have a party so Sara Lynne can get in with her group right away."

"That's a good idea. She's been away from them too long."

"We can take care of ten couples comfortably now that we have the extra cots for the boys." Eva visualized the young people who were to be invited.

She was braiding her hair into a long Chinaman's cue, when Jim asked, "Do you think she is seriously interested in Pem Polk?"

"I shouldn't be surprised." There was pleasure in Eva's voice. She liked Pemberton, and would welcome him as another son.

Jim was the last to get into bed, and when he flicked out the light, Eva was almost asleep.

Moments later the door bell rang. Eva roused herself and found Jim already gone to the door. She turned on the bed lamp, pushed a pillow behind her back, and waited. On rare occasions men came to Jim at home, purposely late -- after the lights were out -- to beg him to keep their names out of the paper because of some scandal. She wondered who it could be this time. She knew everyone in Highboro, and almost everyone in the county, and it was always a shock to learn of any of them being in trouble.

It seemed ages before Jim returned, although the usual distant hum of low voices was entirely absent. When he did, the very marrow in her bones chilled. She had never seen him so grief stricken not even when his parents died. And he had come into the room without speaking; he just stood in the middle of the floor, as if stupified.

"Jim, darling, what in heaven's name has happened?" Eva asked, running to his side.

There was a crumpled telegram in his hand, and when Jim did not answer, she said, "Jim, Jim, tell me what has happened."

Perhaps it was the alarm in Eva's voice that brought Jim to himself, for he put his arm around her, and in a broken voice, said, "Sara Lynne has eloped with someone named Harrison Todd."

"Eloped! Sara Lynne married?"

Eva's voice was incredulous, as it came in muffled tones from

the folds of Jim's pajamas, where she had buried her face.

Two weeks later, on the day they had expected their daughter originally, Sara Lynne and Harrison Todd arrived in Highboro. But during those two weeks of waiting, Eva and Jim had imagined every unpleasant thing possible for their daughter's future -- except the thing that did happen, a little over a year later.

And none of their imaginings about Harrison were true, either. They had seen him as an undeserving fellow, who had taken advantage of their daughter's youth and innocence. As it developed, it was Sara Lynne who had suggested that they elope.

"But why?" Jim asked.

"I was afraid you wouldn't let me marry a Yankee."

"You foolish child, you know we would have permitted you to marry anyone you loved."

"Dear, sweet Papa," Sara Lynne said, going to Jim and kissing him on the cheek.

Harrison Todd's background was the counterpart of Sara Lynne's, only in a Boston setting. His father headed a family owned business -- a textile firm -- which had been built up by three generations of Todds. Harry, an only son, would inherit it. He now was working for his father, not in an executive position, but in the factory.

Talking with her mother, one day toward the end of their visit, Sara Lynne said, "New England parents are more strict than Virginian. You'll not believe it Mama, but with a degree from Harvard and another from a textile school in Philadelphia, Harry has to start on the looms

just like a labourer."

Eva detected a note of pride in Sara Lynne's voice as she spoke of her husband.

"And, Mama, isn't he the handsomest thing you've ever seen?"

"Yes, he's very handsome..."

"He's so dignified, too. But he gets that from both his parents. They're lots older than you and Papa."

"Really." Eva wondered if age and dignity were synonymous in her daughter's mind. Then she asked, "But, darling, why did you elope? You know how we looked forward to seeing you married in the church. You would have been such a beautiful bride."

"Mama, I really was afraid you wouldn't let me marry anyone from the North. Look how Uncle Cary is acting. He won't even meet Harry. But you've been dears! And you must see that Harry is a thousand times more wonderful than Pem Polk."

Sara Lynne left her chair to sit on the floor by Eva's feet, and putting her face on her mother's knee, smiled up at her.

Eva put her hand on her daughter's soft blonde hair and looked fondly at her pretty face, so girlish, so fresh; and now she was a married woman!

"Your happiness is the most important thing, of course, Darling, but you should have confided in us when you found yourself falling in love; you know your father would have refused you nothing."

"I'm so sorry I hurt you, Darling Mama. I'll never do it again."

Sara Lynne snuggled closer to her mother's knees.

It was almost a year later when the news came that they were

going to be grandparents.

"I wonder if she would come home to have the baby," Jim mused. Then he said, "Write and ask her to have the baby here. Since we weren't with her when she married, perhaps we can be with her when her first child is born."

As her time drew near, Harrison brought Sara Lynne back to Highboro. Eva could not help thinking how different this homecoming was -- how the days passed in pleasant anticipation, instead of dreadful torment.

The baby was born in the bed in which so many Lloyds had come into the world. It was a little girl, and she was named for her mother.

Jim was the happiest man in Highboro. He even wrote an editorial on the joys of being a grandparent -- an ancestor of an ancestor! On the Square, as he ran into people, he said, "I wish you could see that baby. She's as pretty as her mother; she's good -- never cries -- but in Sara Lynne's arms -- well, you're looking at two angels."

Eva agreed that the baby, young though she was, looked as her mother did at that age. Laughing, she said, "But why are we taking on so over how she will look; with two parents as good-looking as Sara Lynne and Harry, she'd just have to be beautiful."

All went well, and at the end of a week Harrison Todd returned to Boston. Sara Lynne and the baby were to remain a month, then Harry would come back, and take his family home.

But it did not happen that way.

On the ninth day, Sara Lynne became feverish, and by nightfall

Eva and Jim knew that their darling daughter would die. She had child-bed fever, for which there was no cure. Harry was summoned; the baby was sent to a neighbor; and Eva and Jim sat anxiously by the bedside, helpless to ease their daughter's pain or to save her life.

Sara Lynne's young body wasted before their eyes, and during the five days that she lingered, Jim would not leave her room. He bathed her hot face and body with moist cloths; he held her in his arms and tried to comfort her as he had done when she was a little child. And he prayed -- imploring God to give him back his only child.

Eva came into the sick room at dawn the morning Sara Lynne died. The room was so still, she thought a miracle had been wrought during the night. Sara Lynne was sleeping quietly, and Jim was standing at the open window breathing the cool, fresh air of the new day. The grey sky was giving way to the first rosy tints that precede the sun; fluffy clouds were drifting aimlessly amid deepening color; birds were twittering in the trees; and, somewhere in the distance, a dog barked.

Eva did not speak, but stood at the foot of the bed, and she also prayed for the return of their daughter.

As the sun burst into the sky like a flaming ball, Sara Lynne stirred. Jim hastened to her, and took her hand in his. She looked at her father with wide open eyes. There was something of their former gaiety in their sunken depths, Eva thought.

"Papa, I am coming home," Sara Lynne said, in clear, distinct tones.

Then she slept.

Jim refused to believe that Sara Lynne was dead, even after the

body was taken to the parlour and put into its white casket. Eva tried to get him to go with her and see how sweet and peaceful she was; but nothing would induce Jim to leave the room.

And he refused to go to the funeral. He repulsed everyone who tried to talk to him, everyone but old Henry, who brought him his food, which he scarcely touched. And Henry was able to coax him to rest on the couch by the windows for short periods -- Jim seemed to spend his time, pacing about the room and muttering. "I killed her. It wouldn't have happened in Boston. I murdered my daughter."

After the funeral, if the baby had not been returned to her weak and ailing, Eva would have gone to Jim, then and there. But, since Henry was caring for him, and that was the way Jim wanted it, she turned her full attention to little Sara, who needed constant care, day and night. Each time Henry came from Jim's room, however, Eva questioned him.

The old man could not give a coherent account of what was going on, or tell how Jim's health was holding up. Eva worried about him, but she worried more about the baby. In all Highboro, it seemed, there was not a wet nurse whose milk agreed with the infant. Eva and Harry, who had remained with her, were despairing of the baby's life, when early one morning, a young, healthy negress from the country, came to the house. She was the blessing Eva prayed for; at her breasts the baby began to thrive. Now, she could go to Jim.

Eva realized afterwards that nothing Henry might have said could have prepared her for what she saw when she opened Jim's door and stepped into the room. This man could not be Jim: white-haired, gaunt, stooped,

and walking back and forth like an animal in a cage too small, he presented a terrifying spectacle. All of his features were moving, his eyes, his lips, even his nose. But his eyes frightened Eva most. They looked as if they would jump from their sockets and burn whatever they touched; yet, Jim ignored her, and she wondered if he were blind, too.

How long she stood staring Eva did not know, but Harrison, who was sitting with the baby, heard something fall, and a door slam, and came running to find Eva lying on the floor beside Jim's closed door.

When Eva had recovered from her faint, Harry asked, "Did you go in the room, or did Jim come into the hall?"

"I went in," Eva answered, and covered her face with her hands and wept.

Jim was in a sanitarium, near Richmond, for several months. When he returned to Highboro, he had recovered his health, and his appearance would have been little changed if his hair had not been white. It became his patrician features, and friends told Eva that he was more handsome than before. That was pleasing to hear, but Eva worried about Jim's changed attitude. He was no longer friendly with people, but secluded himself in his office, seemingly busy, but seldom writing an editorial or producing anything to account for his time. Decisions were left to others, and Cary's eldest son was gathering the news and reporting it to Jim's assistant.

Jim's chief interest became little Sara, and as soon as she was able to follow him about, they became inseparable companions, until,

quite by accident, she was locked in the office one night, when she was about three years old. This frightened them all so badly that even Jim discouraged her visits after that, and Henry was delegated to see that she played in their own yard. But there were times when she evaded him and wandered into town.

When a dog was gotten for Sara -- Ashton and Walton wanted nothing to do with her -- Henry's job became easier.

Eva worried constantly over Jim these days, but she had no cause to suspect that he was in financial difficulties until the house began to need repairs and he failed to have them made and, until, one by one, the servants left. Jim always had paid the house servants, except while he was in the sanitarium. The night the last maid left, Eva asked, "Why haven't the maids been paid, Jim, dear?"

"Right at the moment, I'm out of funds. Henry will have to help you out until things get better. It'll only take a little while," Jim reassured her.

Eva's greatest pleasure during the first years after Sara Lynne's death had come from Harry's frequent visits. But as time went on he assumed more of his father's duties and his visits became fewer. Eva missed him, but, even if he had come regularly, she would not have told him that Jim was in need of money. That would be unthinkable.

Money was something Eva knew very little about. She had grown up in a family where there had been plenty and she thought there always would be enough. If Jim were short for the time being, there was nothing to worry about, because the situation was not permanent but soon would be over, just as Jim had said. And when he did not talk of

finances again, she assumed that things were improving, although the house continued to be neglected and no new servants were hired.

When Sara was four years old, Harry's parents invited Eva to bring the child to Boston for a month's visit; with the invitation was a round trip ticket. Eva welcomed the opportunity to get away, although she had misgivings. Sara was terribly spoiled, and she remembered Sara Lynne had said, "Mama, New England parents are very strict." But the Todds had not seen their grandchild since she was a baby -- they had stopped in Highboro one spring on their way home from Florida -- and they had a right to see her.

There was another complication, which Eva feared would be embarrassing. Sara called them "Papa" and "Mama." She doubted that the Todds would like that. But in spite of misgivings, she went.

Almost the first discussion Eva and Mrs. Todd had revolved around Sara's understanding of who she was, and of who was her father. Sara called her father "Harry Daddy." Eva did not know how this had come about. At home, however, everyone thought it cute.

Mrs. Todd thought it vulgar; but she was not unkindly, as she said, "Perhaps she is too young to understand about death, still she'll have to know sometime that her mother is dead, and that she is a Todd. And she should know now that our son is her father."

There was more than a hint, Eva thought, that it would be better sooner than later.

But the trip was more of a success than Eva had anticipated, and she returned to Highboro with renewed zest.

Things had gone well at home, too. The boys had gotten into no

difficulties, according to Henry; and Jim was in better spirits than when they left. His old charm is coming back, Eva thought, and she rejoiced.

When Jim asked Sara how she liked the big city of Boston, she said, "It's got cahs, an' niggahs, an' ---," she paused, "an' ladies with feathahs in thei'ah hai'ah."

Eva explained: "Mrs. Todd gave a tea to introduce Sara and me to her friends, and most of the ladies wore big hats with plumes that bobbed each time they moved their heads. Sara was fascinated with them."

"And, Jim, I wish you could have seen her. She was adorable in a new white dress and pink sash. Mrs. Todd bought it just for the occasion. You'll see her in it Sunday, when she goes to Sunday School. But something really funny happened, although Mrs. Todd didn't think so. You know, Mrs. Todd is considerably older than I am, and her friends are mostly her age, or older -- well, anyhow, one of them -- she looked like the oldest and most dressed up to me -- had on a diamond brooch and the biggest hat, well, she touched Sara's little cross, and asked, 'Are you a little Catholic?'"

Jim chuckled, and asked, "What did our angel say to that?"

"She stomped her foot, gave the old lady a beady look -- you know how she does it -- and screamed; she really did scream Jim -- everyone heard her -- 'I'm a big V'ginian.'"

Jim laughed. Eva had not heard him laugh so heartily since before Sara Lynne's marriage. She loved to hear Jim laugh.

"I understand how she's proud of being a Virginian." he said,

"but does she know what a Catholic is?"

"Of course not. I don't think she had ever heard the word before. But listen to this: She was walking with Mr. Todd one afternoon on Beacon Street, and they had to stop for a street car that was blocking their way -- Jim, you should have heard Mr. Todd tell it -- Sara dropped his hand when she saw a Negro getting on the car, rushed into the street, and called to the conductor, 'Conductah, conductah, niggah on you'ah ca'ah!'"

Eva spoiled the story because each time she said, "Negro," she had to aim at the word, herself, but she went on, "When Mr. Todd got home with her and told me about it, he said that he was glad no one could understand her for -- and this is what he said -- 'We say Negro up here.'"

"A child's mind is so innocent, so guileless, so lacking in deceit," Jim observed. There was a far away look in his eyes, as if they beheld one of life's mysteries.

Life was going along fairly smoothly for Eva until, one day, Mr. Shelverton, the grocer, came to the house and told her he would have to cut off her credit, if their bill were not paid.

As soon as Jim came home, Eva said, "Our credit at Shelverton's is being stopped. He says that our bill hasn't been paid for over a year!"

"Darling, I'm about over the hump, but until I am, ask Cary for the money. He won't mind giving it to you."

Eva did not like to go to Cary, although he was rich by now, but he had gotten two-thirds of their father's estate, while she got only

one third. That had seemed a fair distribution, at the time, for Cary had to make his way at the bank, while she was married to a man of means. But now the situation was reversed, and her need desperate. Still, it was galling to go to him after the way he had treated them ever since Sara Lynne's marriage; and her death had not softened him a bit.

But, something had to be done, and Eva did not think very long over her hurt feelings; they had to eat.

Cary was more agreeable about giving her the money than Eva had expected; she did not even have to explain to him about Jim. All she said was, "Cary, I need about five hundred dollars, right away, and a hundred for a couple of months -- or until I tell you I don't need it any more."

As she walked home, after paying Mr. Shelverton, Eva thought, Going to Cary was like waiting to meet Harry the first time; awful in anticipation, but wonderful afterward. Cary was a good brother after all.

The money came in regularly each month; Eva failed to keep account of the length of time, and she was quite surprised one afternoon, when Cary paid her an unexpected visit. It was hot and she was sitting in the hall, where it was coolest, sewing lace on Sara's petticoat.

Eva greeted him warmly, but Cary was cool and got to the point of his visit immediately. "Not another penny until you send that child to her father." He seemed to hate both Harry and Sara too much to mention them by name.

"You are mad!" Eva said in a shocked voice.

"I'm not mad, but I'm not going to support a Yankee's child. I mean it, Eva." There was steel in his words.

Eva looked at the tall, lean, carefully groomed figure of her brother, pacing back and forth before her, and tried to imagine what really was in his mind. They had been very close when they were growing up. He was her ideal until she met Jim; and until Sara Lynne's marriage, he had been like a brother to Jim. How could he hold against them the impulsive conduct of a child! Yet from that time on, he had changed toward them.

While Eva was still reaching into the recesses of her mind, Cary said, "That child goes to school in six weeks. This is the time to get rid of her."

"You don't have to support Sara. I'm sure Harry Todd wouldn't want you to."

"And will he support all of you?" Cary asked contemptuously.

"Just what do you mean by that?"

"You don't know that Jim is going to lose the Gazette? He's wasted his inheritance, yours, and your sons' -- and why? All because your spoiled daughter married a Yankee!"

Eva looked aghast. Cary was obsessed.

"That's not so," she said defensively. "If Sara Lynne had not died, he'd be all right. You know that as well as I do."

"Say what you like; the truth is that Jim is broke. He's been losing money ever since that marriage."

Cary walked to the front door and looked at the flaking columns,

and at the rotting verandah, before striding back to stand before his sister.

"You owe it to your sons," he said, in a quieter voice.

Eva looked at Cary with unbelief. He was despicable; he had no more feeling for her than if she were a stranger. He was standing again, looking out into the yard. Enjoying my suffering, Eva thought.

When Cary finally turned toward her again, Eva could scarcely believe her own ears, for she heard herself saying, "I'll write the letter, but you know it will kill Jim."

A faint smile flickered for a moment in Cary's eyes.

Eva went out just as little as possible for she had begun to notice that people looked at her oddly. Shocked, surprised expressions came into their faces. She knew that a drab, sunken-eyed creature was what they saw. And she had been known for her fine eyes and good figure; age had overtaken her, just as it had Jim, not in years but in days.

There was work to be done, but she let it accumulate. Henry did what he could, and without being told, but his chief job was to keep an eye on Sara. He and the child made a daily trip to the Post Office, and this appeased Sara somewhat; yet, if he took his eyes from her, she vanished, and he had to spend hours hunting for her.

Meanwhile, Eva often sat just looking into space, only to be taunted by the creatures who came from the shadowy reaches of her mind. Sometimes she mustered enough will to try to drive them away,

but they eluded her, and played their miserable never-ending parts.

Eva was surrounded by these vagrant players late one afternoon when Sara came into the hall. Eva was startled by her demand to be dressed, because she wanted to go to the Post Office.

Eva looked at Sara, standing just inside the doorway. The child really did need to be bathed. Her face was dirty, her hair-ribbon untied, and her hair, a tangle of blonde curls, tumbled over her eyes, while her dress, too, was torn and dirty. Poodles, the nondescript dog that was her companion, stood beside her, his tongue hanging out, leaves and twigs clinging to his shaggy black and white coat.

When Eva did not answer, Sara repeated, "I want to go to the Post Office, Mama."

"But, darling, you went to the Post Office with Henry this morning. Have you forgotten?"

Eva's voice sounded weary.

"But I have a Post Office, Mama; and I want to go to it. I'm going to dress Poodles, and take him in the buggy with me to get the letter, and ..."

"Letter -- where did you get a letter? What letter are you talking about?"

"The letter Henry and I got this morning when we went to town."

Eva was aroused now.

"You've a letter that came through the mail?"

Sara nodded.

"Darling, get it, and let me see it. It might be for me. It might be important -- very important." Eva became agitated and

realized that she was alarming the child, so she said more quietly, "If it isn't for me, you may have it back for your Post Office."

Sara ran from the hall, followed by Poodles. When they returned, even at a distance, Eva recognized the envelope by its size and shape, and her heart almost stopped beating.

After Sara had given her the letter, she said, "Sara, dear, this is for me. Get another letter from my desk and put it in your Post Office."

While Sara went into the library, Eva hurried to her bedroom, and closed the door. She had to be alone with the news that Harry's letter brought.

The message was brief: they were delighted that she was willing for Sara to come to them for her schooling. He would come for her at the end of August, when he would be terminating a business trip down that way.

Eva had imagined such an answer many times; but it did not diminish the shock to her frayed nerves now that the reply was in her hands. The horrid images that nagged her began to emerge from their hiding place in her mind. They hopped up and down before her and accused her of being a murderess. She closed her eyes, but they did not go away. A feeling of dizziness came over her, and she gripped the arms of her chair to keep from falling.

A voice began to echo about her ears until it rose to a piercing scream. She shook her head to rid herself of it, but it grew louder. The sound became more distinct. One of the children was calling her. Eva opened her eyes and found Sara standing beside her screaming,

"Mama, Mama!"

After supper, Henry was sent to Cary with Harry's letter. In less time than Eva thought possible for the feeble old man to walk the distance and back, he was before her with an envelope in his hand.

There was a check for one thousand dollars; but not a word from her brother.

"Money to salve my wounds. Cary is contemptible!" Eva said to herself.

This was the night of Eva's Gethsemane. During sleepless hours she suffered again the agony of guilt, but when morning came she was calm. A peace that she had not known for many years was with her, and she was able to say, "My strength cometh from the Lord, He will not fail me."

The day Harrison Todd arrived, Sara was playing with Poodles under the elms that shaded the walk. The gnarled roots of the old trees raised up like giant claws out of the sandy soil furnishing cradles and benches for Sara's make-believe house. Sara sat on one of the roots preparing Poodles for a nap -- Henry was dozing on another nearby, when a car drove up.

Poodles tried to leap from her arms to see who was arriving. But Sara, more interested in holding on to him than in seeing who was coming, did not take her eyes off the dog. And it took all her strength now to hold him, he squirmed so violently.

"You're strong," a voice said.

The stranger's nearness excited Poodles and he struggled even more. Sara almost strangled the dog now in her determination to hold on

to him.

The man tried again to get Sara's attention.

"Are you Sara Todd?"

Sara shook her head without looking up.

Harry was baffled, but it had been over a year since he had seen the child.

"Shu'ah, she Sai'rah," Henry said.

Harry was wondering what he should say next when Sara said, "My name is Sara Lloyd. What is your name?"

"Oh, excuse me! I should have known. You are Sara Lloyd Todd. I'm your father, Harrison Todd."

Sara's father spoke as if he were playing a game with her.

Sara turned and gave her father a shy smile. "I know you. You are my Harry Daddy."

"You're right," Harry replied, as if he were continuing to play the game, and she should be rewarded for giving a right answer.

"I've some presents for you. Wouldn't you like to see them?"

Sara nodded, and said, "Bring them to me," while continuing to hold Poodles, who had not stopped struggling, although he was not as violent as he had been.

"I think we'd better go to the porch, where I can open my bag."

Without answering or glancing at him, Sara carried the dog up the steps of the porch and sat down in the swing.

Eva had watched her son-in-law's arrival and the scene between him and Sara, but she did not come to greet Harry until he was on the porch. The quick, surprised look he gave her did not escape her. She

knew that he, too, was shocked at her appearance.

"What train did you come on that got you here at this hour?" Eva asked, assuming a gaiety that was hard to muster.

"I missed the connection in Richmond and had a boy drive me over. He must have known a short cut. It didn't seem half as long as on the train."

"You must have flown. You beat the train by an hour."

"Where are my presents?" Sara's voice was petulant.

"Of course," her father said, opening his suitcase and taking out a doll and a book. As Sara reached for the things, Poodles leapt from her lap and began sniffing about Harry's feet.

While Sara turned the pages of her book -- the doll did not interest her -- Harry went into the hall with Eva. As quickly as she could, she explained the situation to him, concluding, "If you let Jim think it your idea to take Sara, so that she will have the benefit of the Boston schools, I think it will make it easier for him to part with her. We both love her dearly but the separation will be harder on Jim; I expect you realize that without my telling you."

Harry nodded in agreement.

It was not long before everybody in Highboro, and nearly everyone in the county, knew that Harrison Todd had come for his daughter. He and Sara spent some part of every day around the Square sitting in the rocking chairs in front of the Jefferson Hotel. Sara introduced her father to all the passersby -- white and Negro alike -- she knew them all, saying, "This is my Harry Daddy, Mr. Todd." But when she was questioned about going away with him, she would hang her head

and not answer.

Jim surprised everyone during this time. He began frequenting the Square, and there seemed to be something of his former friendliness in his manner. He seemed to enjoy the attention Sara was getting. But his old friends shook their heads.

Old Mr. Barksdale, who had handled the newspaper during Sara Lynne's illness and while Jim was in the sanitarium, said to the preacher when they met on the Square, "Why, I thought he'd carry on something awful if this ever came to pass."

The Reverend Binns answered, "No man knows his fate, or woman either. Have you seen poor Miss Eva lately? I feel real sorry for her."

At home, Eva was going through the heart-breaking task of packing Sara's few belongings. Henry had dragged the trunk from the storage room under the eaves; it was the trunk that was used for their Boston trip. Eva held back the tears as she put the dolls and the Teddy Bear, books and an Indian suit, in the bottom of the trunk, but old Henry dabbed at his milky eyes with his dirty handkerchief.

"I sho' is goin' to be lonesom' without little Miss," he said, before he shuffled away.

Eva understood, and nodded. There was a gnawing pain in her heart, for she felt that she would never see Sara again. But she was astonished at Jim's calm. What did it mean? Didn't he care or didn't he understand?

With the boys, it was different. Ashton and Walton were openly glad that the little pest was leaving. Their mother referred

to her as their "sister," but she was not their sister! She was a Yankee; and they watched the expressman take the trunk with enthusiasm, chanting, "Goodbye to Yankee rubbish."

Sara stuck out her tongue at them, and put her arms around Poodles, kissing him between the eyes and on the nose.

Poodles sensed the excitement and got under everyone's feet as he tried to escape from Sara's affection. And when she suddenly realized that she was going to be separated from her most faithful playmate, she began to cry and would not be comforted until her father promised that the dog could be shipped to her.

The car that took them to the station was hired from the livery stable; they had a car, but it had been sitting unused in the barn for years. Eva had hoped that Cary would send his Buick to take them, but it was a vain wish. She went with them to the car, which had pulled into their old carriageway and parked beneath the low-hanging limbs of the elms, where there was shade. But when the back door was opened, she knelt beside Sara, taking the child in her arms and kissing her passionately; then she said, "I'll tell you goodbye here, darling," and clasped her to her bosom again.

Eva was not urged to go to the station; the men seemed to sense that this was a great struggle for her. Now again, after Sara was settled between her father and grandfather, Eva reached in the car and kissed her. Then she watched them back into the street, and waited until they were out of sight before going into the house. Her last glimpse of Sara was of her clutching the little satchel containing her overnight things with both hands, and drawing up her

feet under it, as it hung between her knees.

The automobile went swiftly along the familiar streets dappled by the sun trying to penetrate the dense foliage of the elms that formed cathedral arches over their heads. Occasionally someone recognized them and waved. But soon they were at the cheerless, treeless station.

The train was in, and while Harrison Todd went to arrange for the tickets, Sara and Jim walked toward the engine to see the trainmen and tell them that she was going to ride with them to Richmond.

As they neared the snorting, hissing monster, Sara held Jim's hand tightly and he felt a tremor go through her small body. The engine was making too much noise for them to stay and talk, so they went back to the coaches. Jim swung Sara high, as he lifted her onto the platform; then he climbed up. They went inside and sat down in the first empty seat. The minutes were growing fewer but they had nothing to say to each other.

Jim held Sara's hand, and, from time to time, gently squeezed it. She looked solemnly at her new patent leather Mary Janes sticking out in front of her. A fly buzzed about the toe of one but she did not try to drive it away.

Finally, in a low voice, Jim asked, "Sara, do you want to go to Boston?"

Without a moment's hesitation, Sara threw herself across her grandfather's lap and sobbed, "Papa, take me home."

Harry got on the train and walked through the coaches. When he was convinced that Jim and Sara were not in either section, and

knowing that the train was about to leave, he asked an old woman, who was eyeing him, "Did you see a gentleman and a little girl in here?"

The woman pointed out the window. Harry followed the direction indicated by her crooked, rheumatic finger. There, walking toward the town, were Jim and Sara. The child was skipping ahead; Jim was carrying the little bag. His shoulders were straight, his step firm; and he was looking up at the fleecy clouds that drifted aimlessly in the bright August sky.

The train started with a jerk. As it passed the station house, Jim and Sara were obscured from Harry's view and he rushed to the door and threw it open. It banged above the clanking of the wheels on the rails. The speed was not yet too great for him to jump safely, but the banging of the door brought back the memory of a door that had closed in violence, just six years earlier; and he hesitated.

The train gained speed. Harry let the door slip from his hand and it cushioned to a close. He walked slowly back to an empty seat, thinking, We cannot always understand God's way but we must accept it.

The conductor came for his ticket. Harry handed him his and returned Sara's to his pocket. He must remember to send Eva a check as soon as he reached Boston.

NOTHING IS CERTAIN

Paul Martin lit his pipe and tilted back in his chair. He had almost finished reading the examination papers of his seniors and was relaxing for a few moments before returning to them. He glanced about the large corner room which was his study, at the high ceiling and dingy walls, at the rough green curtains at the windows, billowing out as if a giant breathed on them, and at the worn rug on the floor. His was the only office at the college with curtains and a rug, and he was the only professor at Lladnar who had his students drop in one day a week for tea and informal discussion. It was because of this that he had tried to give the room a cheerful atmosphere despite the sooty walls and dirty windows. The rug helped, although it was worn in places.

Comfortable chairs, retaining the contours of their last occupants -- he could have told you whose each was -- were grouped about the low round table on which stood a pewter tea service, reminding him of student days at Oxford; and on a shelf, handy to the table, was an odd collection of cups and saucers, many of them brought by students, after his supply gave out.

The students had not taken readily to the idea of coming to his office for tea. It was an innovation at Lladnar, and they had appeared suspicious of a professor, particularly one in Political Science, having anything worth while to offer after hours; it was bad enough having to take courses in government for credit. It had been almost a year before they changed their minds, but now they

seemed to look forward to his Tuesdays, for they came in increasing numbers as his classes grew, and he was glad that he had persisted in the idea.

As Paul's dark eyes travelled to the shelves containing his books -- some in fine bindings -- which he had bought at bookstalls and in old shops while a Rhodes scholar, he found it hard to realize that seven years had passed since his own student days. And five of them had slipped by with incredible swiftness at Lladnar, in the Welsh Hills of Ohio.

While he idly reminisced, his parents' discussion of his decision to leave the East came back to him. His mother had asked, "Paul, do you think you can adjust to that locality and be happy?" He smiled as he thought of his mother; she was one of those charming women who travelled yearly abroad but had seldom been west of Philadelphia. And his father, tall, stooped, and with eyes as clear as a Dutchman's, had said, "Of course, if it is a community of sparrows a Martin won't live among them. Let him try out his wings there. The state has an interesting political history." His father was a native of Maine but had gone to Princeton as a student, married his mother, whose ancestors had helped found the community, and now was Professor of American History at the University.

Paul had no regrets for his choice to settle in central Ohio. The students liked him. They spoke of his courses as tough but interesting, and of him as fair in controversial matters -- and there had been some. He smiled now in recollection. But the thing that pleased him most was the marked improvement in his students' ability

to think, and, which was more important, to express their thoughts. They needed only slight guidance now and no longer were afraid to disagree with him. Their conversations over the teacups were a series of lectures to each other without their knowing it, and it was gratifying to know that they were getting ideas that would give them pleasure long after they departed from Lladnar. Happiness might not be their goal, still they would have more of it because of their association with each other here in his study.

Just the past Tuesday there had been a lively discussion from his question: Is a Utopia possible?

Answers flew at him, but it was Robert Ford who caught his meaning best, for he had said, "It's not only impossible; men being what they are, the idea of a Utopia is downright injurious. Every false idea is dangerous. Dreamers are thought to be harmless. That's foolish; they do great harm."

And that from the boy who, just a semester ago, had given the entire faculty trouble!

But this was living teaching. These students would resist slogans and the notion that money is a cure-all. They would go into the world with a sense of responsibility. Paul knew that he worried more than he should over them, but what they became would be a measure of his success as a teacher. And since to be a good teacher was his goal, it was impossible for him to brush aside lightly the responsibility he had assumed in electing teaching as his career. Furthermore, the country needed men of high moral character -- it could be fostered in the classroom -- especially now that it was no longer a

representative government but a democracy, which would not last much longer, either, unless a leader with courage and greatness of character emerged. Where would Britain be today, or we, for that matter, had there not been a Churchill?

He knocked the ash from his pipe, but before returning to the bluebooks, Paul took the picture of his fiancée from his desk and looked at it. Lucy was another reason for being glad that he had come to Lladnar. She was a shy girl, with hair the color of polished bronze, and it curled naturally about her small, perfect ears. He tried to think how she would look when she matured -- she was only eighteen, twelve years his junior -- but he could not imagine her changing or aging. She was like Nefertiti whose bust was on his desk.

The difference in their ages, as well as the difference in their backgrounds, worried Paul. Lucy had only a finishing school education. There was a saying -- Persian, he believed -- educate a youth and you educate a man; educate a woman and you educate a family. Would Lucy grow as she matured? There would be means for her development through the cultural aspects of the college. But would she?

He wished that he had not thought of this possible shortcoming in his fiancée; it distracted him when he began the reading he wanted to finish before going to meet her. He **kept** at it, however, and, from time to time, Paul's expressive eyes glowed with satisfaction as he came upon a particularly good answer.

It was Robert Ford again who had the keenest expression: A politician should never precede public opinion. It is a mistake

to see things too quickly. The voter may like a thinker, but the party -- nothing but political hacks -- never! Robert Taft was a thinker and it prevented him from becoming President, although the time was right and the country needed him.

What would this Robert become? Would he be a leader? He had the makings of one. But was he too intelligent for his own or his country's good? It was too bad that intelligence was depreciated as it was. And it was an odd phenomenon considering the vast amount of money that was spent in pursuit of learning. But it would be interesting to follow Ford's career after he left Lladnar. If times changed, he might fare well; if not, he would have his fine mind with which to enjoy the unspoiled things in Nature.

Paul was reaching for the last examination book when his telephone rang.

"Professor Lowry would like to see you right away." It was the saccharine voice of Miss Wilson, secretary to the department head.

As Paul walked down the quiet, dimly lit corridor that smelled of pungent cleaning oils, he tried to imagine what it was that could not wait until Monday. It was not often that Lowry stayed in his office on Friday afternoons, especially now that he was retiring in June. But whatever it was, he hoped he would be brief. He wanted to finish that last paper, record the grades, and meet Lucy on time. This was an important weekend.

"Sit down Martin but don't get too comfortable. What I have to say won't take long." Professor Lowry's voice boomed at Paul before the door had closed behind him.

Paul liked this angular old fellow with the look of a lost Basset hound but never at a loss for words. Some of the faculty thought him too hardy and disliked him for his blunt manner. But most of it was a pose. He would have made a good actor.

Paul took the chair in front of the flat-topped desk, cluttered with papers, books, and framed snapshots of grandchildren. The seat was warm. The person who had vacated it had not been hustled out.

"Paul, my boy, you've decided to marry in the nick of time."

Professor Lowry hesitated, and Paul wondered what this remark could possibly lead to; then the head of the Political Science department continued, "Else we'd have to look farther than the campus for my successor."

As he spoke, Professor Lowry's eyes lit up like a dog's; one who had been found by his master. Wrinkles ran down the furrowed face, stirring the lips and the prominent, short chin. It was plain to see that he was enjoying the astonishment on the sensitive, serious face across from him.

"How's that?"

Paul knew that he had heard correctly but he was going to make this plucky old dog pitch again. He was not going to be tricked into striking at one of his curve balls, even if it took more time than he wanted to give to the game.

Obviously pleased with Paul's ability to wait him out, for his eyes continued bright with anticipation, Professor Lowry paused before he said, "There's a strict rule at Lladnar -- straight from the Board -- that all department heads must be married. The reason should be clear

to a bright young man like you."

Paul's face had been grave but now his straight eyebrows knit together in a frown. This was the most unexpected thing that ever had happened to him, and he was not sure that he liked it. He certainly could not understand it right off. Everyone had expected Professor Gordon to get the post.

Meanwhile, with mock deliberation, Professor Lowry rubbed the end of his nose, which was as mobile as a dog's, while looking over his knuckles at the perplexed face of the young professor, who had taken him at his word and was sitting on the edge of his chair. Then, as casually as if he were looking at his watch, Professor Lowry said, "By the way, there'll be an additional hundred dollars for the chore, or honor, however you choose to look at it. It's not much, but it'll help. A married man always needs more money than he's got."

"But Dr. Gordon! He's the man for the job."

"Now don't you worry about my decisions. When you take over everything will be in good shape. You trust me, don't you?"

Absent-mindedly, Paul agreed that he did, although more than one objection arose in his mind.

"Then let's shake hands. And good luck on your engagement to one of our most beautiful young women."

Back in his own office, Paul reached without zest for the student's paper he had been reading and doggedly proceeded to finish it. All the while an inner voice persisted in telling him that it was not right to by-pass Ian Gordon. As for himself, he did not want the promotion. It would be a chore for him, and it would cut into his teaching time.

If he had wanted an administrative office, he would have gone to Washington. With their senior senator's recommendation, and his degrees, he could have gotten places in the State Department, but he wanted to teach and that was what he was going to do. He had been stupid not to have talked it out with Lowry.

Without being certain just what he would say, Paul hurried back down the hall to Professor Lowry's office. The door was locked. Still he rattled the doorknob and knocked on the door, hoping to arouse someone, if only twittery Miss Wilson. But she had gone too.

Paul walked back slowly, each step magnifying the misfortune of this happening just at this time. Lucy was expecting him that evening; the next two days would be taken up with parties because of their engagement, and there would not be a chance of talking to Lowry before Monday. But, by then, the damage might be done.

Thinking of how muddled his affairs had become in a moment of time, Paul began gathering up his things, dropping the bluebooks in his bottom drawer and locking it, before going out to meet Lucy in front of the lions of Macmillan Hall.

Feathery green leaves were appearing on the birches, ashes, and maples that were being stirred to a staccato dance by the capricious breeze. Paul fancied that he could hear the music to which they moved, and while he was looking upward, a flock of purple martins swooped and settled on the overhead wires. They spaced themselves like beads on a rosary; perhaps this was their hour of prayer. The martlet was on his father's coat-of-arms but the artist must have drawn the bird from memory, and a bad memory at that, for it had none of the beauty of

these fleet creatures.

He glanced at his watch. Lucy was late; usually she was very punctual. To while away the time, Paul lit his pipe, and began to stroll along the walk before the three main buildings of the college. The town with its rolling hills and the river with its covered bridge unfolded before his eyes as in a slow motion picture. There was just one speck that figuratively marred the setting, but one that could not be overlooked, because it was Lucy's father.

Charles B. Kriger was a self-made man and like so many had failed to acquire even a veneer of refinement, although he had surrounded himself with beautiful and expensive things. His rise -- from butcher to banker -- in less than twenty years, was a remarkable story. Little luck and much hard work were responsible for his great wealth, and the richer he became, the more he desired the social recognition which was denied him. He was president now of the second largest bank in Columbus, which he had started as a convenience for the employees of his expanding chain of self-service markets.

A great many stories circulated about him, for he had become something of a legend in Central Ohio. Before Paul had met Lucy, the faculty wives had vied with one another in telling him about Mr. Kriger, little dreaming that he would marry his daughter. Kriger, they said, was a seducer of young girls, chiefly his clerks; and he was sadistic, especially with his wife, who pretended invalidism. But the story they told most often, and laughed over most heartily, concerned him and his rival, the president of the largest bank in Columbus.

One day, shortly after Mr. Kriger opened his bank, Mr. Hill, the

president of First National, passed him on the steps of the Post Office. Mr. Kriger held out his hand. Mr. Hill, a born snob, and not knowing Kriger from Adam, refused to shake hands, saying, "I don't believe I know you." Thinking he was being purposely snubbed, Mr. Kriger said, with great indignation, "Then you don't know money when you see it!"

This incident was sufficient to cause Mr. Kriger to move his family to Lladnar, fifteen miles east of Columbus, where he hoped his money would be more impressive. He even gave the college a large endowment, hoping he would be appointed to the governing board, but the college and the townspeople left him strictly alone.

It was the house that Kriger wanted to build for them on a site near his own that was bothering Paul. It would be pleasant to live in the country, and the section Kriger had bought up was the most beautiful in the region, but it would not work out for them. It would cut him off from the students, and it would separate him from the faculty in a manner that would be harmful. As it was, he was on good terms with them, and he wanted to keep it that way. He knew that he was in for an argument with Lucy's father, and he did not relish the idea of tangling with the stubborn, vain little man.

"Hello, there."

Paul had become so preoccupied with his thoughts that he had not heard Lucy's car stop beside him. She was hatless; the top of her car was down, and her auburn curls had been whipped by the wind into little cones that stood out from her head in a rather comical manner.

Despite her appearance and the reminder that she was still just a girl in her teens, Paul said, "You look very pretty. The wind has

painted your cheeks; but where have you been?"

"I've been to Columbus to get the pictures. Traffic was terrible this way; I'm sorry to be so late. Pyne thinks you chose the best of the proofs."

"I'm flattered."

"He says my character shows in yours."

Paul thought for a moment before he asked, "What of the one your father liked?"

"Pyne said that's just like any other young girl!"

"He's very outspoken. It's plain to see he has all the business he wants."

"Oh, he didn't say that before father; just to me."

Lucy's eyes were on the road, and she could not see the pleased expression in Paul's eyes. He had thought the same thing when looking at the proofs, but saw no reason to argue over such an inconsequential difference of opinion.

"And you agree with Pyne now?"

"Yes. Now that they're finished, and the one for the paper is awful."

"No picture of you could be awful. It's because it's a glossy."

"No. It's in those finished for the family," Lucy said dejectedly.

Paul patted Lucy's right hand which rested on the package on the seat between them, and said, "The one for the paper doesn't matter dear, and if Pyne can't fix the others to suit you, have another sitting; or, get a copy of mine, if you like it well enough."

"But the one we're getting does suit father!"

There was despair in Lucy's voice, and Paul soothed her as if she were a small child. A moment later the car stopped before Paul's building.

"If you can untie this package, I'll give you your picture now."

Paul struggled with the knot tied tighter than most parcel post packages, and when it was yielding to his fingers, Lucy said, "Yours is on top. Don't look at it now, and you can see the others tonight."

"Not just a peek?"

Lucy smiled her little girl smile and shook her head.

"I'm late. You know how father is when we're not on time. See you about eight."

She drove away rapidly, her bright hair caught by the breeze like tendrils on a vine. When the car was out of sight, Paul turned and entered his apartment. He collected his mail before going to his rooms on the second floor, but as soon as he had put the mail on the table beside his chair, he opened the large cream colored folder containing Lucy's engagement picture.

The pose, the expression, the charm of youth, and Lucy's certain kind of beauty were fixed. Time could not erase them. And the sepia finish, rich and warm, was just right for her coloring. After Paul had held the picture in his hands for a long time studying the expression, he propped it on the mantel and looked at it from the distance of his chair. Strangely, the eyes avoided him just as Lucy's did when they were together. It was only on rare occasions that she looked directly at him. It was a small thing but it annoyed him. It had been part of

his training to look at people when he was spoken to, as well as to address people by name, rather than beginning to talk to them, as was the custom around Lladnar. But these critical thoughts should not be popping into his mind.

The Krigers lived in a large, pretentious house. It sprawled along a ridge that looked down on the surrounding hills. The house was pointed out to strangers who visited Lladnar, and always their comment was: Is it really a home? It looks like an Inn.

Paul thought the same thing as he glimpsed it from the road as he drove toward it and tried to recall Marianne Moore's poem in which her father said that their home was not an inn, and it was not to be treated as one by their guests. But big houses, run by a staff of servants, tended to be that way. His parents would be certain to think that no house as large as the Kriger's could be a happy home, and in this case, they would be so right.

Lucy came to meet him as he swung his car onto the parking circle. She wore a moss green dress with a scarf looped through the belt that matched the color of her hair. There was a strand of small pearls around her neck, and a gold charm bracelet hung from her wrist and made a tinkling sound as she walked. Lucy was followed closely by a Great Dane, whose shining coat was almost the color of her bright hair.

Paul took Lucy in his arms and kissed her. She never was very responsive, and tonight he had the feeling of acting a part, or as if he were kissing his sister or mother. But he was going to have to get rid of this critical attitude. It was the wrong way to be approaching

one of the great moments of his life.

He looked down on Lucy's close-clipped hair, and felt that somehow it represented the bashfulness of her love. She had never said that she loved him but had yielded when she found herself loved. At the time, that had seemed enough. And, as for him, it had been love at first sight, something he had not believed in until it had happened to him.

Now feeling Lucy tremble in his arms, Paul lifted her face so that he could look at it in the bewitching haze of the early evening light. She permitted him to raise her face, but her eyes, which he wanted to see, remained lowered, the dark lashes lying still on her smooth, fragrant cheek.

"Is there something bothering you, dearest?"

Hesitating before she answered, and with her eyes still lowered, Lucy said, "I'm nervous tonight -- I don't know why -- I just am."

"Would it help to talk about it?" Paul asked, coaxingly, as if he were speaking to a small child.

"Not tonight," Lucy said with unexpected finality.

It was annoying to find that on the brink of their engagement she would not confide in him.

They walked toward the house, stopping on the steps to look at the moon, which had climbed the ridge across the valley.

"Look, dearest, how the hills seem to be moving; they are like elephants linked together, trunks to tails. And above them, do you see how the trees seem like thin-legged insects reaching to feast on

the timid stars? Isn't the night beautiful?"

Lucy broke into girlish laughter and said, "You have too much imagination. I would never have seen or thought of the hills and the trees that way, and I have looked at them hundreds of times from this very spot."

Paul pressed her arm. She was still a child.

"Where is everyone tonight?" he asked, abruptly.

"Father and I are the only ones at home. The girls went to the movies; Charles is with his horse; it went lame this afternoon; and Bernie is on the river, but Father doesn't know it. He would be furious if he did."

It was not necessary to mention that Mrs. Kriger was at home. It had been years since she had left her own bedroom. Paul knew in a vague way that it was her defense against her husband, and each time he saw her he felt that he was face to face with a mystery, but one he was determined to ignore. It filled him with anxiety and apprehension for the effect it might have on Lucy; still, he could not help feeling respect for this lonely woman of indomitable will.

"Would you like to go to a movie or anywhere? It's a nice night for a drive."

"Mother wants us to come to see her tonight. Do you mind?" Lucy spoke as if it were not her wish to go, but she would let him decide.

"It's always a pleasure to talk with your mother; we'll go, by all means."

"Then let's go up right away. You know she goes to bed rather

early."

They entered the vast, shadowy hall, which was softly lighted with silver wall sconces. The deep-pile oriental rugs absorbed their steps as completely as if they were entering by stealth. On the stair landing they came face to face with Mr. Kriger, so preoccupied that he would have passed them without speaking if Paul had not said, "Good evening."

Mr. Kriger glanced up, and, as if giving Lucy an order, he said, "When you leave your mother, come to the library. I want to see both of you." Then, as if an afterthought, he added, "Don't stay long with her."

Mrs. Kriger greeted Paul warmly as they came into her room. Her smile and the way she threw up her head when she was pleased was just like Lucy. They looked so much alike; there hardly seemed enough difference in their ages for them to be mother and daughter. How did she keep her bright outlook, living secluded as she did?

"Come, take this chair beside me. There's so much I want you to tell me. Lucy and her father have talked of nothing but the party for days. I long to hear something practical."

Paul took Mrs. Kriger's thin, delicate hand and asked, "What is it you want to know?"

"Oh, tell me where you think you will live -- the house, I mean; just talk about anything but the party!"

"Mother, you know father wants to build a house for us."

"That's something we have to talk about, Lucy," Paul said quickly, adding, "I don't know how you feel about it, dearest, but one too

far from the campus would handicap me with the students, and one big and costly, as I think your father has in mind, would put us in a bad light with the faculty. You can see that, can't you? We have to think of my position as a teacher both in relation to where we'll live and how we'll live, if we're to get off on the right foot. I can tell you some hilarious tales of mistakes made by newcomers to Princeton; we don't want to be the butt of unnecessary jokes."

"Paul's right," Mrs. Kriger said, as if she were anticipating an objection from Lucy.

"Well, if we're going to talk seriously about where we'll live, we'll have to get father."

"Wait a minute, dear. You and Paul should have your minds made up first, then you can tell your father what you want and why. Your happiness depends on your making your own decisions."

Lucy's delicate, wing-shaped eyebrows drew together in a way Paul had never seen them before. And Mrs. Kriger's vehement but happy mood was equally surprising. Little wrinkles puckered up around her deepset blue eyes forming crow's-feet that laughed all by themselves. Her happiness seemed to come from the hope of Lucy escaping from their house of gloomy splendor and her father's domination.

"There're two houses, just off the campus, on the market now. I was going to tell you about them tonight, Lucy, and ask you to go with me to see them next week."

"Which houses?" Mrs. Kriger asked, adding, "I know every old house in Lladnar."

"One, I'm told, belonged to the Howland family; the other to

the Kennedys."

"You know the Howland place, Lucy; you used to visit their daughter."

"It's a lovely old place," Lucy said.

"Do you think you'd like to live in it?"

"I don't know. The idea of living in town hadn't occurred to me. Father wants us to live out here -- I can't say," Lucy ended helplessly.

"Well, you know how I have my students come to my office, and how crowded it is. I'd hoped that we could have a house with plenty of room, and near the campus, where I could fix up a place for them. Would you mind having them come to the house?"

"Oh, not at all. I'd love it. I've enjoyed the times I've listened to them. It would be fun having them."

"Do you think the Howland place would be suitable?"

"Yes. There's a large library with an entrance from the porch; and there's a powder room off it. Mr. Howland was always so fussy about washing his hands because the books were dusty, but he'd never let the maids come in to clean."

"Then we'll go through it the first of the week?"

Again a frown appeared between Lucy's eyes, and almost fearfully she said, "I hope father doesn't mind too much."

"Well, you let me talk to him," and turning to Mrs. Kriger, "It's over the teacups that the best teaching is done. I'm sure Lucy will enjoy sitting in with my group. Perhaps she'll even find time to take a course or two at the college."

"I just can't tell you how happy I am that she is going to share your kind of life."

Paul looked at Mrs. Kriger's happy face; she was like an artist who had been searching among arpeggios for a certain key, and, finding it, resolved the dissonances of all her years in one smashing, soul satisfying chord.

They knocked on the library door before entering. Mr. Kriger did not look up or speak as they came into the room. He sat at a large antique desk examining a paper spread before him. In his wiry fingers was a thin gold pencil, which he twirled nervously. Paul and Lucy slipped noiselessly into the two chairs before the ornately carved desk, and waited like well mannered children to be noticed.

Paul let his eyes wander around the beautiful room, lined from floor to ceiling with handsomely bound books. He wondered how many had uncut pages. He had never seen a single book out of place nor any member of the family reading anything but current magazines. From time to time he looked at the nervous little man, who kept them waiting, and, in spite of himself, felt sorry for him. Plainly he had no inner life. Nothing bound his acts together; meditation was foreign to him, and all of his ideas were centered on making money, which he hoped would give him power over others. The beauty with which he surrounded himself seemed out of place, it was so out of keeping with his nature.

Mr. Kriger's faded little eyes finally looked up at them. There was a glimmer of a smile on his puckered face, but as it faded the lines of his mouth settled into their accustomed sagging creases.

"About tomorrow night. Lucy has told you of the arrangements?"

He spoke without any preliminary greeting and as curtly as if he were addressing a board of directors over whom he held complete sway.

"Yes, everything is clear."

Paul answered tersely. Without realizing it, he had imitated Mr. Kriger's tone and manner. He had not intended to mock the older man, and he had to suppress a smile that played beneath the surface of his face when he became conscious of his acting.

"Well, now that that's settled, suppose you make a note of this."

Mr. Kriger examined his calendar. "I want to see you in my office at two o'clock next Tuesday. I'll have the architect's drawing of the house then."

Paul glanced at Lucy. She looked like a frightened tawny kitten trying to hide behind a green willow shoot. But it was a good thing for her to witness his resistance to her father, and this looked as if it would be the real thing.

"It won't be possible for me to come on Tuesday. In fact, every Tuesday is taken up with my students; and, as for the house, right at first, it won't be possible for us to live far from the campus..."

"To hell with that! If you marry my daughter you'll do as I say. Remember, you're not married yet; and I'll be paying the bills."

"This is a matter of principle, Mr. Kriger. I want Lucy to be happy after she's married. If my work as a teacher is handicapped, as I think it would be by this house you talk of, then it will hurt our

relationship, and that must not be."

"That's enough of that. And another thing, I want you to give up teaching. This would be the right time. There's no money in it. I'll make a place for you at the bank and double your salary to begin with. You'd make a good front man."

"Now, just a minute," Paul cut in. "Lucy can live comfortably, and I hope happily, on my income."

Paul almost blurted out that he was getting a promotion, and a hundred dollars a month more than he had counted on, but he held it back. There would be other times when he could tell the arrogant, blustering old fool about it; now the important thing was to let him know that he wanted only enough money for a temperate man to spend wisely; that wisdom was wealth; that happiness could not be bought.

But it was obvious that Mr. Kriger was not listening. And it was just as obvious that the idea of Lucy finding happiness in marriage had never entered his mind. What did he know of things that could not be bought! Lucy's marriage meant to him one thing: an ostentatious display of his new and glaring wealth. Beyond that he had not gone, and would not go.

Paul glanced helplessly at Lucy, hoping to get support from her, but her eyes were averted, and she nervously ran her finger down a seam of her dress. She was dreadfully afraid of her father -- all of the Kriger children were afraid of their father -- but Paul wished Lucy would show some confidence in him. She could, easily, by upholding him now. If she would only remember her mother's admonition of the past hour, but there was no sign from her.

"Have you nothing to say about the chance I'm giving you to get out of teaching and into something that pays?"

Mr. Kriger's voice was filled with open contempt.

"I like teaching," Paul spoke with pride and dignity. Then in a blunt, matter of fact voice, he said, "I have no interest in banking, and even less in great wealth." It would be foolish to waste philosophy on this man.

"Are you saying you will not leave your two-penny job?"

Mr. Kriger's little, close set eyes, sunken behind wrinkled lids, looked at Paul with contempt.

"Will not, if that is the only way you can understand it."

Mr. Kriger jumped to his feet with such quickness that he had to grip the edge of his desk to keep from falling. His complexion turned livid, and the veins on his forehead knotted and pulsated like little rivers disturbed by ground swells.

"Paul Martin!" That was all he seemed able to utter for a moment, but it was in a voice that Saint Peter might have used when questioning the arrival of an interloper at the gates of heaven on the last day. Catching his breath, and in the same voice, Mr. Kriger continued, "You will never enter this house again, and you will never see my daughter again!"

Although Paul retained his outward composure, his heart was beating violently. He looked again at Lucy to see how she had taken her father's edict, but she had covered her face with her hands. Paul went to her but at his approach she turned away from him and like a child tried to bury herself in the chair.

"Lucy, dearest, listen to me."

Paul had seated himself on the arm of her chair. She was tired and overwrought, and desperately afraid of her father, but certainly she was not rejecting him too.

"She will not listen to you. Now go."

"Mr. Kriger spoke with the confidence of a hypnotist. But Paul paid no attention to him and again spoke Lucy's name and tried to take her hands from her face. She stirred and whether she would have answered or not Paul did not know, for at that moment her father said, "No one has a second chance with me. Now get out!"

"Please, please go!" Lucy cried hysterically and turned completely away from Paul.

"Lucy, you're not a child. Listen to me. I love you. Don't let your father ruin your happiness or complicate it with material things. And don't be afraid. Let me take you to your mother now, and, in the morning, I'll come and take you from this place."

Paul's voice was soft and pleading, but his mind was in turmoil, and his confidence in Lucy shaken. It was almost for her mother's sake now that he insisted in urging her to fly from her father.

Lucy did not answer, and Mr. Kriger, with his lids hanging limply over his milky eyes, smiled.

Paul waited a few moments longer before walking into the hall. It was the same quiet place he and Lucy had entered happily, or so he thought, a few hours earlier. By the stairs, he hesitated. Mrs. Kriger in the strange prison she had made for herself -- her defense against this unnatural father and husband -- would be hurt most by

what had happened. He understood now her anxiety and longing to have Lucy removed from the influence of her father. He wished that it might have been, but with no response from Lucy, it was foolish to hope for a reconciliation. His mother no doubt was right; Lucy was too young for marriage. And he could hear his father laugh -- not unkindly, but with knowledge of the ways of men -- and say, "Well, well, sparrows can't live with martins either! It will hurt for a while, but all wounds heal, even though the scars remain."

Eric, the Dane, was lying on the porch, and, with no prejudice, accompanied Paul to his car. Before getting in it, Paul put his hand on the dog's massive head. The whip-like, jay tail swung back and forth showing that he bore him no ill will.

"Goodbye, old fellow, we're not to meet again, unless by chance, I suppose."

Paul drove slowly the winding, six mile road into Lladnar. Again, in the same day, and in a moment of time, his well ordered life was standing on edge. He laughed ruefully as he thought of the upset this would be to Lowry, who could not argue with him now.

The town was beginning to go to sleep as he drove into it, and, as he passed through the quiet, peaceful streets, they seemed to keep faith with him, and a surprising sense of relief crept over him. The hopeful, expectant faces of his students clustered about him, and he dedicated himself anew to a life of teaching. He was where he was before he met Lucy: duty was his reality; love was his dream of a fair woman -- who probably did not exist.

The clock on the campus struck eleven. He turned his car into Hanna Street, where Professor Lowry lived. A light shone from his study. It was not too late to go to him, to tell him -- Paul was almost happy for the valid excuse -- that he had not found his successor after all.

BY INDIRECTION FIND DIRECTION OUT

Ellen started to go in the kitchen but stopped in the doorway. She wanted to caution Ora about the importance of having everything just right for dinner; still, she hesitated to mention it.

Ora had been with the Allens almost six months. But on her first day, she had said to Ellen, "Ain't no kitchen big enough for me an' somebody else, if I'z cook."

Ellen was happy to turn the kitchen over to Ora for her own aptitude and training in that department had been neglected, but she did not like Ora's manner; however, by the end of the first week, she realized that Ora's performance was good enough to overlook her way of expressing her sovereignty.

On her side, Ora had been doing some thinking, and, by the third day, had quit asking, "What YOU gonna want for dinner?" and instead, asked, "What WE gonna have for dinner this evenin'?"

Ellen was told that this was a sure sign of attachment. And it was like heaven, after the war years with the succession of changing faces and near calamitous incidents, to have a maid that both she and Charles liked. Ora left something to be desired; she was set in her way, bossy, and indifferent about her personal appearance; but, on the other side, she was honest, cheerful in her fashion, and willing to live on the place. Not that the latter was necessary, still it insured her presence in time to serve breakfast.

Ora talked to herself as if she were a second party, and it was by eavesdropping on these intimate discussions that Ellen learned of

Ora's personal problems. There was a 'no good' son, Sam, who was in and out of jail with the constancy of a rabbit on the jump. And there was a 'persecutin'' male admirer, Moz, who was as persistent as a bee around a honey pot, but not for righteousness sake, if Ellen understood Ora's monologues, which had all the qualities of dialogues.

As Ellen watched the preparations for 'company' dinner and listened to certain coherent mumblings, she wondered if she dare mention that the aspic was not to be taken from the icebox until the last minute; also that an inch of petticoat hung beneath the grey of her uniform.

The situation was solved for her before she made up her mind.

"Why don' yo' go set?"

Ora had not bothered to turn around.

"I am, but just two things, Ora..."

"What?"

Ora stopped stirring the biscuit dough and turned to look Ellen squarely in the eye.

"Oh, just that we haven't met the Reverend Balyn's mother, and we want her impressions of us to be good. You know how fond of the rector we are."

"Shu', I know'z. We'z th' same. Always try'z to make folks think we better than we is."

Ellen suppressed a smile. Ora was a philosopher but probably would not like to be called one. But this was an auspicious moment to say what was on her mind.

"Be sure you don't get the aspic out until the very last minute;

wewant it to be nice and firm, Ora."

"Yez'um."

There was not the slightest hint that she had any recollection of the melted pink liquid she served their guest, just the week before, which only could be eaten with a spoon. And no one touched it. If it were a fiasco again; oh, it could not be, but if it were, she hoped Mrs. Balyn would be understanding. As for the petticoat, Ellen decided not to mention it.

The clock in the hall struck five-thirty as Ellen went into the parlor. She drew the curtains and looked about the room. The roses had begun to open slightly. In their white vases on the end tables, on either side of the couch, they looked like ballet dancers waiting in darkened wings for their cue to go on stage. She loved pink roses in white vases, and these, from her garden, looked like those grown by a professional gardener. She had fought aphid and beetle to bring them to perfection, but it had been worth the trouble.

There were no cigarettes on the tables. She and Charles did not smoke; it was easy to forget them. John Balyn was a chain smoker. She had noticed it the first time he called. Now that she knew him better, when she offered him a cigarette, she sometimes said, "Have a cancer." And he would laugh and say, "Thanks, I believe I will." He was a bachelor; perhaps that was how bachelors felt, even bachelor preachers.

John Balyn was in his early thirties and looked younger. He wore his black curly hair cut close, and his figure was slight an boyish. He had been living in Glendale just a month longer than they,

and every mother with a marriageable daughter and some of the eligible spinsters had done their best to change his status. Some actually had had their feelings hurt by his resistance and talked unkindly about him. But he was taking it good-naturedly. His mother would be a kind of protection against the more persistent. He needed someone with him in the rectory. It was big and gloomy, built in the days when even Episcopal ministers had large families.

No one in the community knew anything about Mrs. Balyn, other than that she was a widow. She had slipped in and out of town in the spring, without a soul meeting her, probably to see what the town and the rectory were like. Nevertheless, it had set the gossips' tongues wagging, and several had said to Ellen that they were surprised that she had not met her. Church-going in Glendale was a serious social affair, and no one wanted an anti-social influence pervading his church, or even the community. Mrs. Balyn would be under watchful eyes for some time, and not just the Episcopalians would be watching.

Ora frequently remarked upon the Allens sporadic church attendance. When they did go, she gave herself credit for it; when they did not go, the following Monday morning she would say, "That preacher of yours causin' tumults at yo' church yo' don' go to. Lots of people goin' who ain't been goin'. Why don' yo' git up an' go?"

John did preach good sermons. They were refreshingly different, even stimulating; but the habit of devoting Sunday to reading the accumulated papers and magazines and walking in the woods with the dogs was a habit hard to break. John understood and did not urge them to come; furthermore, he usually dropped by their house during the week,

and sometimes they asked what his text would be, and their discussion of it seemed to give him ideas which he worked into his sermon, they later learned.

Ora was singing her favorite hymn, "Jesus, lover of my soul," and had gotten to 'let me to thy bosom fly,' when Charles Allen came in the house by the back entrance. He paused at the kitchen door, and said, "It's a wonder the angels don't drop out of heaven and into your kitchen, Ora. What smells so good?"

"Aw, go long Mist'ah Charles! This kitchen ain't fittin' fo' angels; not my angels."

"What's wrong with your angels, Ora? Aren't angels angels; or don't yours eat? That can't be much fun."

"Don' bother me now 'bout a serious subject. I got work to do!"

He was dismissed, and Ellen was glad. Ora must not be rattled. Charles knew how unpredictable she was. When he looked in at the parlor door, Ellen said, "They'll be here in ten minutes, better hurry. You know John is never late."

"That your new dress? You look good in blue," Charles said, before bounding up the stairs.

When the doorbell rang, exactly ten minutes later, Ellen went to meet her guests. In the hall she collided with Ora, also on her way to the door. She was a schooner sailing into the wind that said, in passing, "You git back. I wants to see her befo' I feeds her!"

What on earth could that mean! Ellen side-stepped Ora's passage but not without looking at her hemline -- a whitecap moved with the ship.

Back in the parlor Ellen looked at herself in the mirror over the mantel-piece. She liked the way her hair had been cut and shaped to her head, and she was glad that she had worn her new blue dress. It made her eyes bluer and complimented the clearness of her skin. She listened for voices from the hall -- the door had been opened -- finally, she heard, "Come right in. Come right in. Miz Allen in th' parlor; Mist'ah Allen ain't dressed yit." Ellen shook her head; Ora must have liked Mrs. Balyn's appearance but she also must have stared at her long enough to have imprinted her on her memory for life.

John's mother swept into the room with easy grace, going to Ellen with outstretched hands. She was tall, dark haired, and looked like the original Gibson Girl. She was dressed not so much 'in style' as stylishly and seemed more like the mother of a business executive than the mother of a village parson.

"You are Ellen. John has talked so much of you." Then looking about the room, Mrs. Balyn said, "What a charming room this is."

She was admiring Ellen's roses when Charles came in. He was introduced and as soon as he could get Mrs. Balyn's attention, he asked, "What would you like to drink? I know John only takes beer."

"I can't account for his taste. He certainly doesn't inherit it from me. I'll have Scotch."

"Soda or water?"

"Oh, on the rocks, and only one little rock, please. I like the woodsy taste."

"Martini, Ellen?"

"Yes, and Charles, don't get in Ora's way. Fix them in the

pantry."

Ellen explained that their maid disapproved of liquor in any form, and Mrs. Balyn said, "I'm glad you don't let her influence you in that regard. A bossy servant can be very annoying."

"I told mother she could be herself here, but she usually is anyhow," John said.

Mrs. Balyn looked indulgently at her son as if being the mother of a minister were more fun than being just a mother. Ellen was impressed with Mrs. Balyn's outward charm and hoped more than ever that the rumor were true that she was coming to live in Glendale.

"We hear that you're thinking of making your home with John. I hope it's so, but I'm afraid you may find it dull in a place as small as Glendale."

"Dull? I don't know the meaning of the word. It will be a new experience, and I thrive on them."

Mrs. Balyn spoke with a cultivated accent, almost as if she were English, but the tone was low and musical. Ellen thought that she had never seen more beautiful, expressive eyes.

"Mother's an adventuress," John said. "Even when father lived she was never conventional. Between babies, she travelled, wrote poems that were published, and brought home all manner of people."

"Interesting people," Mrs. Balyn corrected, then she added, "You know John is my favorite son; he never disapproved of me."

"How many sons do you have?"

"Three; and all ministers! Why such a rash of preachers, I can't tell. There hadn't been any in the family for generations until my

three took up the ancient tradition."

It was plain to see that Mrs. Balyne was amused by her sons' choice of profession.

Before Charles had finished in the pantry, Ora came and stood beside him, looking dourly at his activities. She did not speak but she was breathing audibly. When she saw the old-fashioned glass with its one lonely cube being anointed with a double jigger of whisky, she asked, "Who gittin' that one?"

"The preacher's mother," Charles said, without looking away from the glasses into which he was dropping olives before pouring in the pale liquid he had carefully concocted. He surveyed his work before getting the beer and chilled glass from the icebox.

"Shameful business."

Ora spoke loud enough to be heard in the parlor, if they had been listening.

"Why shameful, Ora? There's nothing wrong with a sociable drink before dinner. You ought to try it sometime."

"It's shameful doin' for the mother of three preachers."

"Who're you talking about now?"

"Her, in there!" Ora tossed her head in the direction of the parlor.

"Where did you get your information?"

"I been list'nin'. I hear her say it hu'self. And she run with men, too!"

"You hear too much. Maybe a drink would help you with your boy. Do you know he's in again?" Charles spoke sharply, but he regretted

his reference to Sam the moment the words were out of his mouth.

"No. I di'n't know 'bout Sam. But is you recommendin' I be bad to make Sam good?"

"Of course not! Forget it."

"Well, look what it don' fo' huh," Ora said stubbornly, again tossing her head in the direction of the parlor and muttering, "three sons, all preachers, an' she drink an' run aroun', and don' even look bad."

Charles left the kitchen, and Ora continued her muttering. Should he warn Ellen? But what could she do or say to convince Ora that she had not understood what she had overheard? Once Ora got hold of a notion, it took the Lord, himself, to shake her from it.

Mrs. Balyne sniffed her glass appreciatively when Charles handed it to her. Then he put John's glass and beer tin on the table before him for him to pour for himself, and as he handed Ellen her Martini, he said in a low voice, "Watch out for Ora; she's in a mood." Then with his own Martini in his hand, Charles proposed a toast to John's mother.

After it was drunk and she had tasted her drink, Mrs. Balyne said, "No doubt about my liking Glendale if the Allens are a sample of what to expect."

"Mother, you're optimistic. The Allens are the exception, even to their whisky. Most people here drink corn."

"Corn! I thought that was something you ate, if it agreed with you. It doesn't with me."

Ellen gave thanks that none was being served for dinner, and, at

the same time, wondered if she should go to Ora.

"You've been out of the South a long time if you've forgotten white lightning, Mother."

"You know very well that only the Negroes drank such stuff in Memphis, unless it was triple distilled, and precious little was allowed to stay in the barrel long enough for that." While she spoke, Mrs. Balyn's eyes seemed to etch time and place on her memory.

"I'm told that pure malt whisky is its progenitor." Charles said.

"Could be, but you've got to have the stomach for it, and I just haven't," John said, as he sipped his beer.

While the men talked about brews, Mrs. Balyn turned to Ellen and asked, "How do you like it here?"

"We've had to adjust to small town life. It was pretty deadly until we met John. He and Ora are making Christians of us."

"I heard you, Ellen."

"It's true. It would be intolerable here for both Charles and me if it weren't for your society. But perhaps I am taking too much credit for a stir of conversion in our breasts."

"Still I'm flattered."

"You needn't be," Mrs. Balyn said quickly. "You're a good preacher to the intelligent." Then she said to Ellen, "John tells me you're just back from the Cape."

"Yes, we had a lovely vacation there with old friends, and I stopped off in Cambridge for a few days. I had the good luck to find one of my old professors giving a summer course in Church History. I

sat in on three of his classes, and I don't know when I've seen so many left-handed people. I believe a third of the class was left-handed!"

"Ellen thinks the world is fast turning to the left," Charles said, and began to pick up the empty glasses.

"Do you mean politically? If you're going to talk politics you'll have to count me out. I know nothing about politics." Mrs. Balyn's voice expressed her distaste for the subject more eloquently than her words.

"Charles is kidding me because I have a theory about left-handedness." Then to reassure Mrs. Balyn further, Ellen said, "You'll not have to worry about politics here. No one votes. It's not even nice to get into political discussions -- ever!"

"Let's not lose track of this left-handed theory. I want to hear it," John said.

"Oh, there's nothing to it."

"Don't make me coax you," John persisted.

"Either of you left-handed?" Ellen asked, looking from John to his mother.

"No. Go on and tell us," John answered quickly.

"Well, you've noticed how many colored people are left-handed."

"Can't say that I have," Mrs. Balyn said.

"Most of those I've had have been; you notice it especially when they're ironing."

Ellen looked at Mrs. Balyn for a sign of agreement, but seeing none went on, saying, "As infants, Negro children are left alone a great deal -- parents work, no one trains them and they grow up in a natural

state, and, you know, it's said that by nature we're inclined to be left-handed. Now, relate this to the present college group, and those younger. They fit a similar pattern -- children of the depression, and the war. But don't ask me to explain how we have a right-handed world when by nature we're supposed to be left-handed!"

"I thought you were going to blame it on the progressive schools," Mrs. Balyn said.

"You don't hold with the notion that it's dangerous to change a child over?" John asked apprehensively.

"No. That's poppycock. We're victims of too many silly ideas, most of them thought up by psychologists to support the advertising in women's magazines. We're dupes for low grade propaganda. If parents would train their children as nature intended, and not according to childless psychologists and quacks, we'd be better off, and so would the rest of the world. It's all habit, and bad habits in children come from neglect. Oh, I almost forgot. There's the middle child -- the neglected child always.

"What about the middle child?" John asked.

"What about another round of drinks?" Charles asked. He had been standing by the door waiting for Ellen to finish.

Before anyone could respond, Ora appeared in the doorway, and, ignoring Mr. Allen, said, "Miz Allen, you all come to dinner now."

Ellen had completely forgotten about Ora. Now she looked at her for signs of disturbance, but her face was quite blank. She had taken off the little cap and frilly apron she wore for company. She hated both. She probably intended to put the apron back on and had forgotten

it, and it really wasn't worth reminding her of it.

As they went in the dining room, Mrs. Balyn remarked, "I never take more than one drink before dinner, but I do like it. So good for the digestion, you know."

"Ellen wondered if she intended for Ora to hear her.

"Mother isn't so moderate about everything. Food and drink are the exceptions, at least, that is the way I remember her."

During the meal Mrs. Balyn was encouraged to talk about herself. She had grown up in Memphis, and while in her teens had married a wealthy landowner, thirty years her senior. Shortly after her first son was born she developed a desire to travel amounting almost to lust, which her husband indulged. His only demand was that their children be born in the ancestral house at Grands Ormes, and dutifully she had returned for the birth of two more sons.

"Three children was the respectable number for educated people -- people of taste -- to have in those days," Mrs. Balyn said, as if she disapproved of today's uncontrolled production.

"Mother brought home some of the strangest people."

"That's not quite right, John. They followed me home, and I must say away from their natural haunts they were not always interesting. At Grands Ormes, the artists invariably seemed cheap and tawdry. I could hardly wait until some of them left."

"Sometimes you didn't wait. You left first," John reminded.

Mrs. Balyn laughed, seeming to see the vagrants of her past.

"Mother, what was that stuff you used to drink -- I mean when you were convalescing after Cade's birth? I always wanted to taste it,

and Pansy wouldn't let me."

"Why, it was nothing but eggnog, sweeted, of course. I wish you had, it might have saved you from your low taste for beer."

The dinner was a triumph for Ora, and if the conversation was not to her liking, she did not let it affect her efficiency of her service, until Ellen said, "Ora, you are serving Mr. Balyn on the wrong side."

As if she had been containing herself beyond her point of endurance, Ora exploded, "Lawd, Miz. Allen, if I don't he spill things. He left-handed!"

Mrs. Balyn looked at her son as if she were seeing him for the first time. Ellen acted as if she would like to run from the room. Charles burst into laughter, while John smiled sheepishly. Ora stopped in her tracks, and looked as if this were the last thing she could or would cope with before she moved on to the kitchen.

"I'll explain. I fibbed because I wanted to hear Ellen's theory. Tell the truth, Ellen; you wouldn't have been so out-spoken if you'd known I'm left-handed -- would you?"

"You know right well I wouldn't have been." Ellen felt her face burning, although she knew no offence had been taken.

"Perhaps I should have been more of a mother and stayed around to train my boys and not let a left-handed mammy do it all. Poor John! You're the middle child, too; the neglected one. I'll have to try and make it up to you now." Then suddenly remembering her two other sons, Mrs. Balyn asked, "Are the other boys left-handed?"

"No," John said.

They returned to the parlor for coffee, a custom Ora resented. She said that no one else in Glendale did it; however, when there was company, Ellen had prevailed upon her to do it her way. And because she was sometimes slow, Ellen prolonged the conversation at the table to give her time to have it ready without being hurried. But when they reentered the parlor, the coffee was not on the table. The incident in the dining room accounted for the delay, no doubt, and Ellen allowed a few more minutes before excusing herself to go to the kitchen.

Ora was not in the kitchen, and the coffee had not been started. The old porcelain pot, which she preferred to use, sat grim and cold on the drain board, as if Ora had started to get it ready and been stopped. Ellen went through the butler's pantry to the dining room. It was just as they had left it; the candles still burned, and the dishes had not been touched. Ora was nowhere about, and, stranger still, she could not be heard.

Ellen went back through the pantry and kitchen to Ora's room, at the end of the hall. Never neat, it was in confusion. The drawers of the dresser were like jagged teeth, with one missing. It was upside down on the unmade bed, along with distorted clothes hangers. A stocking hung limply from the waste basket, its foot dirty, a gaping hole in the toe that was rimmed with a crustation of pink nail polish.

Greatly perplexed Ellen turned to leave the room when she noticed a piece of paper lying on the dresser top, a stub-end of pencil beside it, rusty bobby pins in a halo around it as if pushed there by the writer. It was addressed to no one, and there was no signature.

As well as she could make out, the blurred, phonetically spelled words said something about going to make Sam good by going away with Moz, and being bad like the preacher's mother. What on earth could she mean!

Laughter from the parlor startled Ellen and, with a wry smile, she hurried to the kitchen and started the percolator before returning to her guests.