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THE FLAMINGO



THE FLAMINGO

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SPRING, 1946

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C O N T E N T S

POST-WAR WOMAN	Joan Wansink	5
IF THEY SHOULD THEN BE RIGHT	Jeannette Webman	10
FROM <i>Those Were the Young Years</i>	Wesley Davis	11
SONNET	Ward Eshelman	18
DUSK	Joan F. Leonard	18
FINAL VICTORY	Zoe Vail Weston	19
THIS OUR DAUGHTER	Betty Miller Davis	36
I REMEMBER	Pat Meyer	37
THE HILL	Joan F. Leonard	39
ON LISTENING TO AN UNKNOWN VIOLIN	Phyllis Starobin	40
WORDS FOR SIMILAR EARS	Gordon H. Felton	40
A SHORT BUT NEVERTHELESS COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF THE AGE OF ELIZABETH TUDOR	Jim Anderson	41
JIM DAVIS—AMERICAN	Weston L. Emory	45
THE PYRE	Milton E. Schwartz	46
THE BEGGAR	Pat Meyer	47
JAZZ PIECE	Donald Sauers	48
NEW PERSPECTIVES IN POETRY, 1916-1946	Wesley Davis	49
MY LOVE DISSEMBLES SUMMER	Betty Miller Davis	53
STEINWALD	Weston L. Emery	54
DESERT SICKNESS	Arleigh Black	56
TWO SONNETS	Charles Gordon Rex	59
MARK TWAIN'S <i>Mysterious Stranger</i> and Modern Skepticism	Dan Paonessa	60
THE GREEN LEAVES KNOW	Wesley Davis	64
CIRCUS: NUMBER 8	Gordon H. Felton	65
TO PEG MANVEL	Donald Sauers	65
THE ARISTOCRATS	Jim Anderson	66
BREAKFAST IN BED	Dan Paonessa	69
THEY ARE DEAD	Wesley Davis and Betty Miller Davis	70
THE COMEDIAN	Henry Copps	71
LANDFALL	Raoul Salamanca	73
TONIGHT THERE STILL IS SILENCE	Jeannette Webman	73

Post-War Woman

BY JOAN WANSINK

A MORE jubilant G. I. never bounded out of a separation center—and into the first bar he saw. There'd be plenty of celebrating when he got home to his family, to two or three old girl-friends and his old boss who was holding his job for him, but he had to celebrate now and home was a day's journey away. He had to celebrate while he still felt like a soldier and could pinch himself now and then and say, "Look, Bub, you're a *civilian*." It'd be like setting the alarm clock so you could wake up, turn it off and glory in the fact that you didn't have to get up.

Besides, his feet, he used to wise-crack, just naturally turned toward swinging doors of their own accord; he hadn't a thing to do with it!

The bar-tender glanced at him casually: "What'll you have?"

A feminine voice rose over Johnny's "Scotch and soda" with "Rum and coke."

The man behind the bar looked again, a quick, probing look, common to bar-tenders, that detects all the facts about a man's pocketbook and his love life. "You with this guy, Daisy?"

Daisy hesitated, turned her round, innocent blue eyes to Johnny and giggled, "Who, me? Gee . . ."

With a what-the-hell grin, Johnny suggested, "It'd be nice if you were. May I buy you that rum and coke? I'm sort of celebrating tonight."

The bar-tender shrugged, mixed the drinks, and slid them across the counter.

It was several Scotch-and-sodas and rum-and-okes later, and they'd moved from the bar to a booth, when he started recounting "How Johnny Longworth Won the War in the Pacific." Daisy was enraptured. "Oooh, Johnny, how could you be so *brave*? Gee! Hey, lookit, look at me, Johnny, I'm gettin' all goose-bumps just listening to you And you killed 'em all yourself . . . ?"

Two more rum-and-okes and Daisy spouted her own theories on the rehabilitation of the veteran. "A man's got to have someone to listen to him. He's just got to talk these things out. It's like in those Bette Davis movies—somebody's got something on his mind, and he goes to a . . . a psychoanalyst, and talks it all out and then he's all right."

Johnny grinned. She didn't mean to toss off so lightly the

whole problem of a guy's re-organizing his life, his way of living, his philosophy and perspective. She was just awfully enthusiastic, and dead earnest about her theory . . . and a little drunk.

In fact, in her state of inebriation she was getting rather beligerent. Wouldn't do to cross her, he told himself . . .

"Okay, Honey. You be the psycho—something or other."

"Psychoanalyst," Daisy supplied smugly.

"Yeah, you be the doc, and I'll tell you one more thing that happened to me. It was on Leyte. We'd had things pretty tough for a hell of a long time. On this particular night, we were hiding in a school-house that we'd chased the Japs out of. The yellow devils had left us alone long enough for everybody to get really sound asleep. We must have been sleeping like we were dead . . . we dam' near were. And then just before dawn the siren started screaming. Well, Honey, maybe you've heard about old soldiers sleeping with their boots on . . . and dying with 'em on. Well let me tell you right now, those soldiers weren't on Leyte. No sir, Daisy. We kept our dog tags on, and that was all."

Daisy giggled. She'd kept her eyes glued on his face all through his account of his own personal war horrors and thrills. Her eyes were wide, her mouth opened in what she fondly believed to be an expression of wonder and amazement and rapt attention. But if the truth were known, it gave a very vacuous look to her pretty doll face. But in spite of her apparent intentness on his every word, her thoughts wandered. She was dreaming up vivid phrases in which to describe the success of her own original treatment for veterans with war nerves. She'd put it all down in her diary . . . "And after he'd talked and talked for *hours*—had shivers going up and down my spine—well, you could just see him relaxing. It was wonderful. He looked just terrible when I picked him up—she mentally crossed that out—when I met him. And after all, that's not so much to do, is it? For the men that fought for us? He was a nervous wreck when he came into that bar. Underneath all that joking and celebrating he was gloomy and utterly miserable. Just utterly. I know he was. *I* could tell. And in just a few hours with someone who'd listen to him and be sympathetic . . . That's what they need, sympathy and a little affection . . ." Daisy brought her mind back to what Johnny was saying.

He'd gone into a rather technical description of the Japs' planes, and at what distance their approach could be detected. ". . . so when the siren starts in you know you don't have a hell of a lot of time, and, well, like I was saying, we didn't sleep

in anything but our dog tags, so when it started screeching” Johnny began to laugh till the tears rolled down his cheeks and it was a few moments before he could go on. “. . . Men started jumping out of windows and swarming out of the door headed for the fox-holes and we sure didn’t bother to dress formal. In fact, everyone in the platoon stopped just long enough to get one thing—his helmet. There we went, out the windows and across the clearing in our dog tags and helmets and not another goddam thing. It was the funniest sight I ever saw, all those naked white bodies, dog tags glinting in the faint dawn, and helmets with some of yesterday’s camouflage still clinging to them. Never been so well dressed in my life.” Johnny laughed some more and Daisy joined him. It *was* funny—all those men in nothing but their helmets. She’d put it in her diary “That was the proof positive (as they say in the cigarette ads). That really was the proof positive, Dear Diary, when he could remember something funny about the war. And not just *force* himself to crack jokes he didn’t mean. He has his war experiences pretty well off his mind for good now, I’m sure. After this night, they’ll never come back to bother him and set his nerves on edge again after this night” Daisy was not really a *bad* girl. She was a hard-working stenographer, and not very intelligent; there’d never been anyone to impress a code of morals on her very strongly, and she did like men *so* much

How they got to her room, who suggested it, and when, Johnny never quite knew. It was not till he was finally home again, and that awful headache and the butterflies in his stomach were gone that he remembered what had happened there

The sun was just coming up when the siren blew, but there’d been a couple of sunrises in between that Johnny *hadn’t* seen. The first thing he knew there was an ear-splitting, nerve-shattering screech. In a brief, flashing nightmare he thought someone who was sawing logs had picked him up by mistake, and was pushing his neck up against the round, gleaming, screaming blade. Nightmare followed nightmare . . . It was Leyte an air-raid siren. Of course it must have been a fire siren or the police, but God! It had sounded like an air-raid on Leyte. He’d jumped out of bed, gone tearing blindly around the room like a wild bull. There were whiskey bottles everywhere, on the floor, the dresser, the chairs. He knocked over half a dozen with one wildly waving hand—with the other, he held his head, the top of it felt like it was about to explode. The crash of glass sent him under the bed, yelling to the other guys, “One of the ————— is here al-

ready." He'd just passed out again, when Daisy sat up in bed and screamed. At the same instant another siren pierced his ears. Again he was careening around the room. He didn't see Daisy, but he heard her shriek. "Get the women and children outta here," he bellowed. "Dam' natives s'posed to have evac . . . ev . . . vac . . . vac . . . got the hell outta here a long time ago . . ."

Daisy continued to scream, but not so loudly now. As a matter of fact, she was almost crying. "Quiet down, you darn fool. I'd gotten you all cured. Come back to bed, Johnny. You're dreaming. Johnny . . ."

But Johnny had forgotten the women and children; he was bawling to the guys again. "Hey, where's my helmet? Hey, which one of you guys took my helmet?" He accosted himself in the mirror, challenged himself to give his "helmet back, by—", but the guy looked awful tough, and Johnny backed down. Daisy, who watched the encounter through her tears, wrung her hands in apprehension, and tried at the same time to hold her sides that were aching with laughter. All in all, she darn near had hysterics.

"To hell with your clothes, men. The Japs don't care. Got my dog tags on . . . Where the hell's my helmet?" Of course it may not have been even that coherent, but that's the gist of it. He started out the window first, but to his half-focussed, bloodshot eyes, the railing of the fire escape appeared to be on the window. "Can't get out there, men, try the door."

Daisy could only hide her eyes and whine, "Johnny, come back. Come back to bed, Johnny, you're dreaming."

He'd never know how he got the door open, but suddenly he was out in the hall. He forgot about Leyte, then. These were barracks. Why, of course. Better get these guys out. "Hell, you guys. Wanta get bombed right in the sack? Hey, come on, grab your helmets. Hey, where's my helmet? He reeled back to Daisy's room, grabbed the wicker waste basket that was just inside the door, jammed it down on his head. "Yeah, you guys, think you're smart, don't you, hiding my helmet? Well, I found it see . . ."

By this time, quite naturally, a crowd was gathering; women were screaming, men were trying to be angry instead of guffawing. Somewhere in his carousing along the hall, Johnny had torn from the wall a fire extinguisher, and he carried it like a machine gun. The wicker basket came down over his eyes; he alternately muttered and yelled that, "Jeeze, this is the thickest goddam jungle I've ever been in." Possibly he looked as tough as he had looked to himself in the mirror, for, while the brave men

laughed, no one tried to stop him.

On the next floor down he challenged a colored cleaning woman, and began to bawl her out for not having evac—but again he had to resort to “get the h— out . . .” The poor woman quietly sank into a heap of starched blue uniform. Johnny was amazed. “Well, for — I didn’t even know I pulled the trigger.”

Like the waters parting, people stepped aside for this spectacle, naked and unadorned, save for his dog tags, a three days’ growth of beard, and a waste basket that came down to his bearded chin. Oh, yes, and his “machine gun.” He reeled, careened, and ran down five flights of stairs and—if you’ll pardon the pun—stares.

His wild voyage brought him to a side entrance of the building. The sun nearly blinded him as he stepped into the open street. But the morning air was exhilarating—Johnny, who, towards the last, had assumed the stealthy, alert tactics suitable for sniper warfare, in the bright sunshine remembered the air-raid and began bawling orders to his men. Down the road to his right, he spotted a man in uniform. He didn’t recognize the blue uniform, but the joe didn’t have slant eyes, so he must be an ally. He’d have to dodge an awful lot of vehicles to get to him. There were convoys going in every direction. ——— drivers drove their jeeps any place, nowadays. Just as the effort of watching the “convoys” proved too much, and he was about to collapse on the cement step, a helpful citizen, controlling his snickers admirably, brought over a bundle of clothing.

“Hey, wake up, fella. These were thrown out of one of the windows up there. Wouldn’t be surprised if they belonged to you. One of those windows right up there, they came from.”

Johnny opened one flaming red eye—the jungle had gone—and attempted to look in the direction the man was pointing. Just then from the same window, fluttered tiny shreds of paper—all the pages of Daisy’s Diary on which was the word, “Rehabilitation.”

IF THEY SHOULD THEN BE RIGHT

If they should then be right that you and I
Were never meant to be, that we would live
But never know the joy that comes to two
Who love, how surely I would here deny
The longing cries within my heart that give
Such endless pain and I would go from you.

We all are simple souls of earth. O how
Can they dare know as truth the things which are
To each man different? Go and tell them who
Is judge of sacred things and tell them now
That none so small dare stand before the bar
To weigh the worth of men of me of you.
That done, let us be off to go our way,
More strong to pass the darkest night of day.

—*Jeannette Webman*

From
Those Were The Young Years

BY WESLEY DAVIS

THEY used to walk to the outskirts, where the wilderness of the boom-time subdivision improvements lay wedged between the main highway outlets. Paved streets and sidewalks were slowly losing their identity before the scrub jungles. Tall black pines bent uniformly toward the west by the hurricane winds of '26, swayed over the brick lanes, throwing down their dead needles to bury the inroad on their sanctuary. Bermuda grass pushed aggressively between the bricks, locking and hiding them in a green fold. Sometimes the two boys would dig through six inches of vegetable mold to find the white sidewalks. Bill would say, "Yuh reckon people'll be diggin this stuff out of the ground some day like they do gold and silver, and think it just grew there?" At the intersections stood the cracked remains of the four-foot-square white stuccoed columns designed to mark the entrances to palatial residences. The boys pulled off heavy chunks of the broken surfaces and hurled them like rocks at the neighboring columns thirty feet away.

"Say, Bill, how come they built these roads and sidewalks way out here? There're no houses out here any place".

"No, but they thought there'd be houses all out in here. They did this during the boom. They thought all these towns around here would grow right into each other and join together, and there'd be houses in all these woods. Yankees up north bought this land without even seeing it first or knowing where it was. One time, they took an ole woman out to see her land, and it'd been raining steady for a week and she fainted dead away. They all thought you could just walk out here anywhere and spit on the ground, and a two-story house and an orange grove would just sprout up."

After following a fading street for awhile, they would pick their way through the scrub for a couple of hundred yards to another such street. The whole wooded section had been squared off into city blocks with only an occasional lake breaking the perfect symmetry. Most of the scrubby growth was not impenetrable. There were occasional spots of pure white sand with here and there balls of a moss species, looking like sponges thrown carelessly over the sand. There were clearings beneath

the big short-leaved pines, covered inches deep with the soft dead needles. The boys picked up the small pointed cones gnawed clean to the core by the little cat squirrels. They inhaled the fragrance of those that bore still the fresh yellow color of that morning's feeding. They chewed them once and sucked out the resinous taste of the pine gum and then sent them whistling away toward the trunk of a distant tree. Sometimes in one of these green havens not far from the deserted streets, they found on the soft needles an empty cigarette pack, a few butts and match stubs, and flung into the near-by brush a soiled, crumpled, white handkerchief.

* * *

The platoon of officer students double-timed into the company area, halted and faced left on command. Their faces reflected beneath the red Georgia dust the strain of the month's training called physical conditioning. In effect it amounted to a rat race designed to knock the guts out of a man, and then take him for a three-minute ride in an army C-47 to see if he still had enough in him to jump out on.

"Fall in at one o'clock. Don't load yourself down at chow; we take a 55 minute run this afternoon." A corporal approached the tactical officer, saluted and handed him a slip of paper.

"Lt. Jarrad, report to the orderly room immediately after this formation. Dismissed."

Almost half of the officers moved toward the barracks to spend the lunch period on their bunks. Few of those that went to the mess hall bothered to stop by the latrine to wash their face and hands. Ben Jarrad walked slowly toward the orderly room stretching his legs in a long natural stride. He enjoyed the change from the cramped 30-inch march step and the double-timing in step. Breaking his stride he lifted first one foot and then the other, wiping the toe of each boot on the back of his coverall legs. The coating of dust came off exposing the shining trademark of the airborne command. He wondered vaguely why he was being called in. Hell, they couldn't drop him now. Tomorrow was the day they made their first jump. Everything pointed toward the next day. For the privilege of stepping from the door of that airplane they had taken a liberal dose of concentrated hell. Here the instructor would sing out "just 25 more" when you had already reached the point where you felt it would be physically impossible to do one more deep knee-bend. The assistant instructor pacing through the ranks detecting one who faltered, "Lieutenant, drop down and give me 25 push-ups."

Twenty-five push-ups for not being able to do but a hundred deep knee bends. Jarrad mused over the past month. What a hell of a deal. He remembered lying on his back in the sawdust arena with legs raised rigidly to a 45 degree angle, spreading them apart and bringing them together at a slow cadence until the skin on the stomach was knifed through with a tearing, ripping pain and the pressure points in the groin bulged and jumped like faulty pistons. The outstretched arms pressed down and the fingers gripped for strength at the loose sawdust. You gripped your teeth until the jaws ached. Always the eyes narrowed toward the hot sky, beautiful and undisturbed. Then the instructor would halt the exercise, legs still raised to 45 degree angle, and tell a joke about the two Irishmen or the farmer's daughter. Failure of the prostrate group to laugh loudly, or lowering of the legs by anyone of the group, was cause enough for an extra twenty-five push-ups after the regular session. Then the day the lieutenant-colonel spat in the sawdust exercise pit. The sergeant instructor made him take the handful of sawdust containing the expectoration. and doubletime around the arena for ten minutes chanting over and over, "I am a naughty Lt.-Colonel; I spit in the sawdust pit." All of this and more pointing toward tomorrow: the first jump. What would it be like? Jarrad, like the others, had tried a thousand times to create in his mind the sensation of walking to the open door of an airplane and stepping into space. But there was nothing to compare it to in all the realm of ordinary human experience. Tomorrow afternoon there would be a rush to the telephones to tell mothers and sweethearts that they had done it. "It wasn't bad, Mama, and I'm not gonna get hurt. Yeah, I was afraid. Everybody's scared—especially in the sweat shed. That's where we sit waiting for our turn to go up." Tonight men would sit up late talking and reading mystery and detective fiction. Some of the men would go down to the latrine after the barracks lights were turned out. There would be a lot of men with a floating feeling of emptiness from the chest down. Breakfast in the morning would see men sitting close together and talking loud and laughing more than usual. Sometimes a man would pause and gaze quietly at nothing for several seconds. Some of them would not be able to step through the door tomorrow. There were always a few. They all knew that. Jarrad thought of what Jackson, one of the Negro officer students, had said, "Lieutenant, I figgah it's just a simple little mattah of taking just one step forward when I get to th' do'. Nothin's gon' stop me from taking just one little step."

That was it. Come hell or high water the right foot's got to move forward. Then it's all over. You're out the door—five days from now, if the good jump weather held, they'd be qualified parachutists. Jarrad thought he'd ask for a week-end v. o. c. o. then, and drive down to Jacksonville to see Bill. Bill wouldn't be surprised when he walked in with his pink officer's trousers tucked and bloused over the glittering jump boots. He thought of the brief smile of pleasure that would break the tight face, like the flicker of light on a whirling steel blade. "Had a notion you'd do something crazy like going into the paratroops." Jarrad laughed out loud at the thought, and scorning the steps sprang lightly to the little landing in front of the orderly room door. When he walked through the door, the top sergeant said, "Lieutenant, sir, the company commander wants to see you."

He halted before the captain's desk and saluted, "Lt. Jarrad, Sir."

"At ease, Lieutenant. Western Union telephoned a message for you."

He handed Jarrad a sheet from his memorandum pad. A few seconds later he spoke quietly. "Is it your brother, Lieutenant?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Was he older than you?"

"Yes, Sir, he was about 26."

"When you're ready to go, Lieutenant, I'll have an emergency leave ready for you. I'm sorry, Jarrad."

Jarrad walked out into the bright sunlight that glinted on the toes of his boots. Overhead the hot undisturbed sky prophesied perfect jump weather tomorrow. He continued to read and re-read the scribbled message hoping that somehow the words would change their meaning: that time would move back twenty-four hours and then move forward in a different way. But he knew that the message would be forever:

"Bill Jarrad died here last night. Pneumonia. Come at once."

Martha Maddox, Proprietress
The Lodge-Inn House

* * *

He came back from the graveyard, walked heavy-footed to a chair, ignoring the crossed brown legs of his wife. She glanced up without speaking; she was reading *Modern Poetry and the Tradition*.

He put it down: the bleakness of his brain in grey words;

a skeleton of stripped syllables. His vision blurred and the blue ink turned to red, but the red blood quickly ran white and then slowly thickened and shadowed to blue again; mild neutral blue (Pleasing, not disturbing.)

He stood by the grave. He stopped and clutched a handful of the loamy mound. Squeezing the clod, he smelled its dank fertility built on the organic dissolution of leaf green and love and hate and all of life. Soil made of wives and mothers and brothers! He was a brother and his name was Bill, and now on the dark mound the grass was beginning to thicken toward becoming a solid carpet.

A mocking bird sang its night song in three notes. He thought it was all right for the bird to sing here at night.

When he was four and Bill seven, they had seen a panther across the little creek quietly watching them and Cousin Joe cutting a cabbage palm. The panther hadn't bothered them and when they started home, Bill said, "Bennie, don't you tell Mama about that painter, cause she won't let us come down here again, and we wanta help Joe set the trap for that big old coon to-night."

In the early years Bill was strong. He could cross Bennie's wrists and hold them both with one hand. That was before the sickness had caused his leg to swell so that he couldn't walk for a long time. Then it moved into his back and settled in his neck and shoulders. That was why he, in his later years, could not turn his head without turning his body. Maybe that was why his eyes looked to the front and far away.

The undertaker had closed his eyes and that made things different. It was better because his features were so smooth below the yellow hair that his face had a peaceful look. A peaceful face didn't drive a nail into the brain and twist a wire around your heart. He was glad the undertaker had closed those eyes that stared at no near object but far away, old when time started. He gazed at the peaceful face in the plush of the steel gray coffin and said, "If I can remember you this way, it will be all right. You look peaceful now, and very beautiful, dear brother."

But, Bill, I have waded through the palmettoes and flushed the wild gobbler and waited after the quick shot for the wild cry. I have traced out the ruts, dim, fading in the jungle path. . . . From swamp to swamp and rise to rise, into the shadows, past the curves, along the creeks twisting and whir of woods ducks rising from the quiet sloughs. A good snap shot. Quick enough to make the speedy quail an easy prey. A two years' space of

time changed all movement to the natural shifting of rotting wood and settling earth. And the hard Cherokee cheeks that in the late years measured out a smile like heat lightning in the August night, covered and pressed to dust in the skull by the growing weight of the hair refusing to believe in death. The quick trigger finger and the hard leg are an oily black mess and the hair has pressed out the face the undertaker made you. The peaceful look destroyed and the cold twin fires burn forever, gazing at no near objects, but spanning the far running hills and the seas where there is no land. Tell me, why do you look so, and what do you see? Is there something beyond the deep pine and the grey cypress?

He laid down the pen and got up from the table. His wife dropped the book, sat up and drew her knees up, until her heels pressed against the full, bare thighs. She said, "Come sit down." He walked to the sink and washed his face in the cold water. After that he started taking his clothes from the nail behind the bedroom door; poplin shirt and the tie, pink officer's trousers, and green blouse. He pulled his jump boots, ox-blooded to mirror brightness, from beneath the bed. What he needed was the feeling of splendid seclusion; to isolate himself in a mental realm of superiority. The bright parallel silver bars on the shoulders of the trim blouse differentiated him from the rag-tag indistinction of civilian dress. The jump boots with pink trousers tucked and bloused, and the curled parachute wings made him elite in the military. This superiority was necessary to the complete breakdown of inhibition. He reached beneath the cot and picked up the shoe brush, which lay on the floor half hidden in the shadow. After dusting the boots, he placed first the left and then the right foot on the steel foot of the cot and used the wool O. D. Army blanket to put the final shine on the toes of the boots.

She said, "Are you going to see Annie again?" He nodded yes.

"What's the matter with me?" She was hugging her doubled legs resting her chin on the knees. Her dress had slipped down to her lap.

"Nothing. You're perfect."

He eased the car down the drive letting it flow like water across the rough spots. Approaching the street, he shifted to second and accelerated as he made the turn. The car leapt forward in a strained curve. He enjoyed the struggle of the physical laws.

He slipped the car into the parkway beneath the hanging

neon sign which framed the grinning gray head and shoulders of the old Negro bearing a tray laden with bottles and glasses. The neon blazed the glory of "Atlantic Beer, full of good cheer". Inside, the plate glass from the neon tube writhed across the front of the shop to spell "liquor".

The barmaid served him a double shot of rum and eyed his slick outfit and sad blue eyes and the high cheeks and the dark hair that fell down toward the left eye causing his hand to rise to push it up in an easy gesture. He looked straight into her face, but his face, remained expressionless. Her hair was sear and wiry from two many permanents. He thought of women in beauty chairs with towels on their necks and wire attachments bristling from their head and men passing on sidewalks and glancing in and smiling. Suddenly he laughed out loud. The girl looked up from the drink she was mixing and said, "What 'cha laughing at?"

"Humanity. Give me another double rum."

When he walked out, the warmth in his stomach had spread to his shoulders and head and out through his fingertips to soften the faces about him and reduce all sharp edges to soft smooth curves. There were no rough edges, no sharp lines, just a flow of shadowed softness.

Thus was solved the problem of living for at least one night: the problem of meaning: met by assigning significance to specific things—in this case the melon-breasted, blonde-thighed girl named Ann.

SONNET

Locked in the secret caverns of the heart
Lies passion, trembling, cowardly and mute,
But fired with lusts the brain cannot compute,
Which, swelling pride with calculated art,
Would stifle passion's strivings ere they start,
Snatch out unreasoned laughter by the root,
And preen itself for actions most acute.
Thus it is that men play the cynic's part.
O give our passion strength to burst its chains,
Defy the mind's cold logic with its tongue,
With unconsidered stress announce its pains,
And love that lately to a nipple clung,
Stand up, full grown, breathing the outer air,
And dance and sing to see a world so fair!

—*Ward Eshelman*

DUSK

The dusk walks slowly from the valley through
The woodlands. Spreading shadows on the ground,
It sweeps across the fields and creeps into
The smallest corner of the house. Around
The edges of the barn it turns to die
Within the trees and rise within the sky.

—*Joan F. Leonard*

Final Victory

BY ZOE VAIL WESTON

JACK and I had just fastened the robin around Bob's neck when Grandma called us the second time. It was a beautiful fat robin but it looked so sad because it was dead and would never sing again.

I took Jack's hand—he is only two and a half—and we went in to see what Grandma wanted. Bob went in, too, but with a meow he stayed in the back kitchen, because he felt ashamed.

Grandma was in the kitchen. She was in her chair where she can watch the road and the pond and the woodlot, and she had a letter in her hand. Grandpa was in his chair by the sewing machine with Utchie on his knees. Utchie is his little fox terrier. He had his back turned to Grandpa, and Grandpa was stroking him, and Utchie was trembling with pleasure. Grandpa is very deaf and Utchie listens for him.

My mother and Uncle Tom and Miss Dyke were in the kitchen, too. Uncle Tom has a big mustache and beautiful brown eyes, but he has never married because he says he has never got around to it yet. Miss Dyke is the school-teacher at Egbert Hill and she boards with us. Grandma wants Uncle Tom to marry her because she says that what our farm needs more than anything else is another woman, and then we can make real money with the chickens.

"Why didn't you children come when I first called you?" asked Grandma, trying to look fierce.

I told her that Bob was up to his old tricks, killing birds because there was no more liver in the house. As soon as he heard his name, Bob came running in from the back kitchen, holding his head up high to keep his chin away from the robin. But he had to bend down quick to go under the stove. Utchie watched him from Grandpa's knee, and trembled now with excitement as well as with pleasure.

"Serves you right!" Grandma shouted to Bob. "With beef liver at thirty cents a pound, and you too fine-mouthed to eat pig's liver, it's time that somebody put the clippers on you!"

All we could see of Bob was the end of his tail, and that was lashing a little. It wasn't lashing steady and it wasn't moving far. But every once in a while the end twitched, as unexpected as hiccoughs in church.

"Well, children," said Grandma, making a motion with the

letter in her hand, "we're going to have company. Your cousin Cora's coming to visit us to-day."

Cousin Cora is Uncle Eben's daughter, and was born the same month that I was, so she is nearly fourteen years old. Uncle Eben never liked the farm, taking after his great-grandmother Nan Spicer who had run away from great-grandfather Ephraim the year that all the wells went dry. Uncle Eben hadn't run away, but he had worked his way through college and after that he was an architect in Baltimore. Then he and his wife were killed one night by a drunken driver when they were coming home from a dance. They didn't leave any money and so their daughter Cora had gone to live in New York with her mother's sister who was very rich and lah-de-dah.

"Is cousin Cora going to stay long?" I asked.

"That all depends on how she likes it here," said my Grandma, setting her lips very tightly together, although that was partly because she didn't have her teeth in. "Her aunt is going to visit some of her fashionable friends in Watch Hill to-day, and on the way over, she's leaving Cora here with us. Then she says she'll pick her up on the way back if Cora wants to go."

"Have you any idea who the child takes after?" asked Grandpa, who has lived with Grandma so long that even if he can't hear her, he can nearly always tell what she's talking about.

Grandma walked over to his best ear, holding on to the table because sometimes she totters when she walks. "I don't know," she shouted, bending over Grandpa. "If she takes after Eben and old Nan Spicer, she won't like it here. But if she's a Bassett, you mark my words: she'll stay!"

II.

Grandma straightened her back and stood still to catch her breath, the way she has to do whenever she's been shouting to Grandpa. "There," she said, when all at once she caught it, "now we'll open up the front room. Whatever else she is, that woman isn't kitchen company."

Everything would have been all right if she hadn't stopped to look at Utchie who had jumped off Grandpa's knees and run to the stove. Under the stove Bob had started swearing and was trying to pull the robin loose with his hind legs. He had worked himself out to where we could see him, and we all stopped to look.

Jack was learning to count, and every time Bob brought up his hind legs, Jack kept score—"nine—ten—eleven—twelve—".

You could see that Bob hated to be watched, but he didn't have room enough to work where he couldn't be seen because there was a little pig under the stove that the old sow had laid on and broken its leg and Grandma had tied its leg between two pieces of shingle and was bringing it up on a bottle. When I got down to look, I could tell from the little pig's expression that he didn't trust Bob any more than he had to.

"Oh, good grief!" said my mother, stopping on her way over to shout something into Grandpa's ear and dropping her voice instead. "A big car just drove in the yard, and it doesn't belong 'round here."

"It's them," said Grandma, and she hurried into the pantry where she keeps her teeth in a little dish. My mother and Miss Dyke ran up to their rooms to fix themselves; and Uncle Tom slid out, too, always being shy at company. This left only Grandpa and Jack and myself in the kitchen. I guess Grandpa suspected that the others had gone to doll up for the expected visitors, so he slipped off his felt boots and started to put on his Sunday shoes which he keeps back of the treadle of the sewing machine.

There was a knock on the back door and Jack and I went to open it.

A beautiful lady with red hair was standing on the stones. She had a short fur coat, and her shoes had those peep-holes in front so her toes could see where they were going. And standing by her side was my cousin Cora.

My cousin Cora was nearly a young lady. She had white kid gloves. She looked older than I thought she would. She had black wavy hair and dark brown eyes. She had a black felt hat with a fuzzy feather in it, and under her navy blue coat she had a lighter blue silk dress with glass buttons. I think they were the nicest clothes I had ever seen anywhere. I can see them now whenever I close my eyes.

"Now let me see: you must be Amy," said the beautiful, red-headed lady to me. "And this is Jack. What a handsome little man!" She kissed us both, and walked into the kitchen, smelling lovely, with cousin Cora right behind her. "And you, of course," she said to Grandma who had just come out of the pantry with her teeth in, "you are Eben's mother. I am Joan."

She kissed Grandma, and over Aunt Joan's shoulder I could see my Grandma making terrible faces to Grandpa to hurry and get his shoes on.

"And so this is Cora," said Grandma after she and Aunt

Joan had talked about Uncle Eben for a while. "I'd know her in a million, though I can't quite place yet who she looks like. Nearly grown up, too. . . . Come and give your Granny a kiss, Queenie."

Cora kissed Grandma carefully, holding her white kid gloves out on each side. But Grandma kissed her as if she meant it, and then she went in the pantry again and left the entertaining to my mother and Miss Dyke who had just come into the kitchen. My mother had changed into her blue and white polka-dot and Miss Dyke had put on her peek-a-boo shoes, so that when she stood in front of Aunt Joan, their big toes seemed to be watching each other like four fat little roosters with their heads down that didn't know yet whether to fight or be friends.

"Now!" said my Grandma, coming out of the pantry.

She didn't even have a tray, but my Grandma was carrying three pieces of cake and a pitcher of milk, a dish of custard, three glasses, three saucers and three spoons. Also under her arm she had a clean red checker-board table-cloth which she set with a swish on one corner of the kitchen table. Then she pulled cousin Cora over to her and held her with her knees and her feet, and took off her coat and her hat and her gloves, and tousled her hair up for her. "That's the way I used to play with your daddy's hair," she said, "right here in this kitchen. All right now, children. Pull up your chairs."

"No, thank you. I never eat between meals," said cousin Cora, straightening her hair.

"Oh, but you'll get over that," said Grandma.

"It has always been one of our rules," said Aunt Joan.

"Poor child," said Grandma.

From where I was sitting I could see the way cousin Cora and Aunt Joan looked at each other, but it was a good thing that Grandma couldn't see it.

"Can I have her cake if she doesn't want it?" asked Jack.

The little pig must have smelled the milk then because he came scuffling out from under the stove with such a lot of quick, excited grunts that Bob came running out, too, with the robin still tied to his neck.

Cousin Cora spoke up then as if for the first time she had really seen something worth talking about.

"Aunt Joan!" she cried. "Look!"

Grandma beamed at Grandpa as if something had just been settled. Grandpa nodded and got Utchie's pipe out of the sewing machine drawer. Grandpa thinks the world of Utchie and

didn't want Bob and the little pig to get ahead of him.

"You'll stay and have dinner with us," said my mother to Aunt Joan.

"That's awfully sweet of you, my dear," said Aunt Joan, "but I have a luncheon engagement at Watch Hill. So if you are absolutely sure that you don't mind, I'll leave Cora with you now and stop for her on my way home to-morrow."

"But if she likes it here," said Grandma, speaking at last in her stern, family voice, "she's going to stay longer."

"If she likes it, yes," said Aunt Joan with a quick look around the kitchen. "So now, good-bye, Cora. Be a good girl and remember, I shall soon be back. If anything happens you have my telephone number at Watch Hill. 'Bye, everybody. So sweet to know you all. See you again to-morrow."

Uncle Tom came in as soon as she had gone. He had shaved and changed his shirt and put on his high cuts; and he had brushed his beautiful long mustache till it was soft and fluffy.

"Has she gone?" he asked.

"A good thing, too," said Miss Dyke. "You look so handsome, you would have broken her heart."

"You and the little pig together," said my mother. "Look. Here's your niece, Cora—Eben's child."

"Quite a young lady; isn't she!" said Uncle Tom. "Quite a young beauty, too!"

Cousin Cora looked at his long mustache and then she stepped forward and kissed him, which was more than she had done for any of the rest of us. By that time, Grandpa had Utchie sitting up with his pipe in his mouth.

"Hey; look here!" he called out.

Cousin Cora looked, standing by the side of Uncle Tom; but instead of laughing like Jack and me, she turned to Uncle Tom and said in a certain voice, "You have quite a menagerie here; haven't you!"

And then my Grandma did a funny thing. She sat down quickly, and her breath came fast as if she had just come hurrying into the kitchen to see if anybody had left a cake burning. And then I thought I heard her whisper to herself, "She's old Nan Spicer all over again, and me hoping she'd be a Bassett. Old Nan Spicer, dead and buried now for sixty years, yet here she is as spry as ever and ready to make what trouble she can—"

"What did you say, Grandma?" I whispered.

"I say, 'Take her upstairs, dearie, and change her clothes,'" said Grandma in a tired voice, "but before you go, I want you to

fetch my bottle of strengthening medicine, and a glass of water fresh from the well, and one of the silver spoons to stir it. Your poor old Granny isn't as young as she used to be, but she'll feel better by and by, as soon as she gets her strength back."

III.

Cousin Cora's pants were silk and her slip had hand embroidery around the neck and shoulders. I found her a pair of bloomers that my mother had made for me out of some blue checked gingham.

"Do you think I'm going to wear those things?" she said, stepping back and holding her knees together.

"Yes," I said. "You can wear them over your silk ones."

"But I don't want to wear them."

"That doesn't make any difference."

"Why doesn't it?"

"Because Grandma said you were to change your clothes. And when Grandma says to change your clothes, the quicker you change them, the better."

She held still for a while and I could feel that she was thinking of Grandma downstairs and how everybody went quiet when she spoke. Then Cora stepped into the gingham bloomers and pulled them up, though very slowly, and I brought her my nicest play-dress, the one with donkeys and palm trees on it, because after all she was my cousin and I didn't want trouble to start between us.

"Ugh!" she said, pretending to shudder. "Do I have to wear that kid thing, too?"

In our family we don't count ten. We say to ourselves, "Nobody has such a warty smile as Fred's fat frog." So I slowly repeated it to myself and then I said in a voice so quiet that it sounded a long way off, "Grandma wants you to change your clothes."

"I don't like your Grandma," said cousin Cora.

"She's your Grandma, too," I reminded her.

"Well, I don't care. I hate her."

"Do you want to go downstairs and tell her so?"

She had a hard time getting the dress over her head without mussing her hair, but when I went to help her she told me to leave her alone. So I left her alone and she struggled away, reminding me of Bob downstairs trying to get away from his robin, and although I couldn't see her face, I could feel that inside she was still fighting hard but didn't know what to do about it.

"I should think you'd hate it, living like a lot of wild animals in the woods, the way you do," she said, as soon as she had her mouth clear.

"Hate it? I love it," I told her. "I wouldn't live in the city, like a lot of cockroaches, the way some people do, not for all the money in the world."

"That's because you've never tried it," said Cousin Cora. "How can you tell if you like a thing when you've never tried it?"

"I've never tried cutting my head off," I said, "but I know I wouldn't like it."

"Other people might like it," said cousin Cora.

I didn't even bother to think about Fred's fat frog that time. I just stood there and was beginning to hate her nice and comfortable when I remembered that after all she was an orphan as well as my cousin, and I thought, "I didn't hate her yesterday, so why should I hate her to-day? She isn't any different to-day than she was yesterday."

"Was that your mother in the polka-dots with the old-fashioned hair-do?" she asked.

"Yes, it was," I said. "She wasn't all dolled up like your Aunt Joan, but you ought to see her when she goes to church on Sunday."

"Is your father dead?"

"Yes."

"And the other woman—the one in the funny sweater and the mole on her ear?"

"That's Miss Dyke, the school-teacher. She boards here so she'll be close to school."

"How long has she been living here?"

"Nearly three years."

"Doesn't Uncle Tom like her?"

I wasn't going to tell her all our family secrets because she might have thought that Uncle Tom was lazy. And he wasn't lazy. He just hadn't got around to it yet. So to make it sound better I said "Yes, he likes her all right, but Grandma doesn't want him to marry yet awhile."

As soon as I said it, I knew I shouldn't have said it, but she had no right to ask such questions, especially after the way she had talked about Grandma.

"Poor Uncle Tom," said cousin Cora, more to herself than to me, "If there was only some way I could help him—"

I began to know then how Grandma had felt when she sat

down quick and sent me for her strengthening medicine.

All at once cousin Cora must have seen something out of the window that she liked. She snatched a kerchief out of her suitcase and tied it over her head like a gypsy. So I went to the window to see what it was that she liked, and it was Uncle Tom. He had come out of the barn to water the stock, and he looked real handsome as he stood there pumping in his dark red shirt and high cut boots. Cousin Cora looked at herself very carefully in the mirror over my dresser, and then she skimmed downstairs and I heard the side door bang.

IV.

I stood at my window upstairs to see if I could find out what cousin Cora meant to do. She ran down the stone walk beneath the maples, and crossed the road, and the next thing I knew she had her hands on the pump-handle right by the side of Uncle Tom's hands.

I could hear her talking to him, and laughing real loudly with him, and I could see her throw her head back too, and smile up at him, as if they already had secrets together. And when the watering trough was full, and Uncle Tom went in the barn to let the stock out to drink, cousin Cora went in with him. Just before the door closed behind them, she took hold of his arm as if she was scared that some of the cows might jump their stanchions and try to bite her.

I went downstairs then and there was Grandma, leaning forward in her chair and looking out of the window.

"Did you see her, Grandma?" I asked.

"Yes, dearie," said my Grandma. "Did she say why she was going down to the barn?"

"Well, she did and she didn't," I said, because it was hard to be sure whether I ought to tell Grandma or not.

"Come now, dearie. Tell your Granny all about it. What did she say now?"

"Well, she asked me about Uncle Tom and Miss Dyke—and I wasn't going to tell her everything—so I said you didn't want Uncle Tom to marry yet awhile and she said, 'If there was only some way I could help him—' and the next thing I knew, she was running down to the barn."

"So she thinks I'm stopping Tom from marrying."

"Yes."

"And as much as anything else, she'd like to fool old Granny? She'd like to put a spoke in old Granny's wheel?"

"Oh, I wouldn't say that."

"Ah, but I would, dearie. I know that one. She pulls away every time I go to lay my hands on her. As you go through life, my child, you'll find plenty of women, both young and old, like your cousin Cora. They have no time for other women; but, oh, how they shine up to the men!"

Then bit by bit my Grandma started beaming to herself, and because her teeth were in the pantry again, her nose and her chin could have held a hickory nut between them. She beamed and she rocked. And every time her chair went back she threw up her feet a little and clicked her heels together. So I knew that her strengthening medicine had started to work.

"Eh, if she could only do something to get Tom married, whether to spite me or not," beamed Grandma. "For I've said it before and I'll say it again: What this farm needs more than anything else—"

We both put our fingers on our lips at the same moment, because we both heard Miss Dyke coming through the side hall.

"Yes, dearie; sixteen quarts of milk were every drop that came into this house yesterday," said my Grandma as if this was what we had just been talking about. "I don't know what the world's coming to."

Miss Dyke came through the doorway and glanced around the floor, even stooping to look under the table.

"She isn't under the table, Margaret," said my Grandma, shaking her head.

"Why, what an interesting riddle!" laughed Miss Dyke, and I saw that she had changed her make-up a little, so that it was more like Aunt Joan's. "But I've always loved riddles. So who isn't under the table?"

"Young Cora isn't," said my Grandma.

"If that isn't a good one!" laughed Miss Dyke, and her make-up now seemed darker and yet brighter. "But no, dear; you're mistaken."

"Am I, Margaret? Are you sure now?"

"Well, yes. You see I'm looking for my silver brooch. If it isn't here, I may have dropped it in the barn yesterday, when we went to see the new calf."

"So you'll just pop over now and see if you can find it?"

"Why, yes. I think I will."

Miss Dyke started humming and strolled down the stone walk under the maples. We watched her open the barn door and saw it close behind her.

"Ah," said my Grandma, clicking her heels again. "She knew she would and she did."

Now I can almost always tell what Grandma is talking about. Even if she's been quiet in the pantry for a long time, setting and skimming the milk, and then comes out and says "He'll catch it yet," I can generally tell who's going to catch it, and what he's going to catch. But this time when she said, "She knew she would and she did," I had to ask her about it.

"Who knew who would, Grandma," I asked. "And who did what?"

"Why, young Cora knew that Margaret would see her with Tom at the pump. That's why she laughed and made so much noise."

"And did she know that if she went in the barn with Uncle Tom, Miss Dyke would come over and go in the barn, too?"

"Eh, dearie," said my Grandma, "the Bassetts in this world can never be any too sure what's in a Spicer's mind; but doesn't it look that way?"

Whatever was in cousin Cora's mind she stayed in the barn with Uncle Tom until he had finished his chores, and Miss Dyke stayed with him, too. And when they did come out, they all came out together. They seemed to be playing some sort of a game, all of them laughing. Cousin Cora was hanging on to Uncle Tom's right arm, and Miss Dyke was hanging on to his left.

"Oh, Grandma," said cousin Cora, almost before they got in the kitchen. "Uncle Tom says he's going to drive down to the village in about ten minutes to get the mail. Can Miss Dyke and I go with him? Please, Grandma. I want to do some shopping, and I need Miss Dyke to help me."

Miss Dyke looked at Grandma, part comical and part pleading, and in a low voice she said, "Can I do any errands for you, by any chance?"

"I could do with another loaf of bread," grumbled Grandma, but I knew she was only grumbling for Cora's sake because there was plenty of bread in the pantry, "but I don't see why three people have to go to town just for one loaf of bread."

"Oh, please, Grandma," pleaded cousin Cora again. "I want to do some shopping, and I do need Miss Dyke to help me."

"Very well, then," said Grandma, and she made such a sour face that at first it fooled even me.

Cora ran upstairs to change, and when Miss Dyke knew what she was doing, she changed again, too. So she and cousin Cora looked very lah-de-dah when they got in Uncle Tom's coupe.

Cora had asked if she could sit next to the window because it would be such a treat, and Miss Dyke sat in the middle next to Uncle Tom.

It was half an hour later when the telephone rang and Miss Dyke said they would have to go to the city to get whatever it was that cousin Cora wanted, and we were not to wait dinner for them.

"Tell Grandma we're going to have dinner in the city," said Miss Dyke, all excited, "and I'm not sure yet, but I think we're going to a movie this afternoon."

It was the first time that Uncle Tom had ever even talked about taking Miss Dyke to a movie, and Grandma was so pleased.

"We'll change the granary over and have five thousand chicks next spring," she said. "Look in the newspaper, dearie, and tell me what pictures are playing in the city to-day."

They were Flaming Hearts, Pony Express and The Frozen North.

"You can leave the last two out," said Grandma as the little pig grew restless under the stove. "They'll take him to Flaming Hearts. Yes, and we might even handle seventy-five hundred if my knees don't get any worse. Flaming Hearts for your Uncle Tom, rusting knees for your Grandma Charlotte, and time for the little pig's bottle again. You'll find his saucepan in the warming oven, dearie. He likes it better with a pinch of salt."

V.

Uncle Tom being away for the day, there was all the more work for the rest of us. I helped Grandma get dinner and then I went to the brooder house and helped my mother, stirring paint and mixing spray, and doing whatever I could. She was terribly interested in what I told her about cousin Cora and Uncle Tom and Miss Dyke.

"But, mother," I said. "Cousin Cora's only a few days older than I am. I don't see how she can do anything to get anybody married."

"Sometimes it doesn't need much," said my mother. "If there's been no rain and the wind is right, it only takes one little spark to set the woods on fire."

After dinner Jack went down in the cedar swamp with Grandpa and Utchie to get a load of fence posts. Grandma stretched out on the kitchen couch to have a nap, and mother and I went back to the brooder house.

"Mother," I said after she had let me spray the nests for a while."

"Yes, dear?"

"Before people are married, do they always need some little thing to sort of push them into it?"

"Well, no; not always," said my mother, considering, "but it often is a little thing that does it. People can know each other for years and never even dream of falling in love. Then all at once some little thing happens—and there they are."

"Was it a little thing that made you and daddy fall in love?"

"Yes," said my mother after she had thought for a while. "He was telling your Grandpa about a big fish that he saw jumping in Speedwell Lake. He stretched his arms out quickly to show how long the fish was, and the back of his hand slapped hard against my nose and made it bleed."

"And for that, he married you?"

"In less than three months we were married. Yet up to that time we had hardly noticed each other, although we'd been neighbors all our lives."

For some reason this made me feel shivery, and I couldn't help thinking what terribly important little thing might happen, or might not happen, to me some day and perhaps I would never even know it. For instance, how was I to know that something important had happened when Utchie came up with the load of fence posts but couldn't go in the house because he'd been hunting skunks on the side hill next to the cedar swamp? Grandpa washed him and soaped him and scrubbed him down by the barn, but still he couldn't come in the house, and we were all so busy with Utchie that we didn't see Uncle Tom's car come past the pond. It was half way up our hill before we heard it, and I just had time to run to the garage to meet them.

"Oh, Uncle Tom," said Cora, getting out first, "I've had such a lovely time!" She threw her arms around his neck and kissed him hard, and then she picked up her parcels and skipped toward the house.

"And I, too, Uncle Tom," said Miss Dyke, getting out, "I have also had such a lovely time."

"Well," said Uncle Tom, beaming like Grandma, with his head on one side, "you saw the way the other one thanked me."

"All right," said Miss Dyke, "but please remember that you asked for it."

And with that she laced her arms around his neck, and for quite a while neither of them seemed to know whether I was there or not. So I pretended to be looking for a hammer.

"There," said Miss Dyke, breaking away at last, very short of breath. "How was that?"

"Just what I've been waiting for all my life," said Uncle Tom.

When we went to the house, Utchie was curled up on his mat inside the woodshed, pretending to be asleep so we wouldn't tell him what a foolish dog he was not to let the skunks alone. Inside the house, my Grandma was feeding the little pig and cousin Cora was showing off a bangle bracelet that she had bought in the city. Miss Dyke had bought an apricot pie and sugar cookies, but nobody paid any more attention either to the pastry or the bracelet when Uncle Tom had said what he had to say.

"Mother," he said to Grandma, "I didn't buy you anything in the city to-day, but I've brought you something just the same. I've brought you home a new daughter."

Grandma was so happy that tears filled her eyes, and when cousin Cora saw that Grandma was crying, she just seemed to stand there and gloat.

"Oh, hurry up," said Grandma to the little pig—not that she had to tell him, because he does that anyway—and as soon as his bottle was empty she set him down and stood up, and she and Miss Dyke first seemed to melt together, and then they cried and the little pig ran under the stove with such a scuffling of his wooden leg that Bob came running out with his ears flat.

Bob still had the robin fastened around his neck, and when Cora saw it she said in a loud, important voice, "That poor cat's suffered enough!" And before I could stop her she had slipped the robin loose from Bob's neck and had thrown it out of the back door.

"Listen," said my mother. "We don't have an engagement in this family every day. Let's have a party to-night and begin it with supper."

Grandma made one of her sour faces because she hadn't thought of this herself. But cousin Cora didn't know why Grandma looked that way. She probably thought her heart was breaking.

"A lovely idea!" exclaimed Miss Dyke, and grabbing Cora she said, "Come on, child. We must run upstairs and change. We've been gallivanting off all afternoon; there's work to be done now."

Cora came down a few minutes later wearing my old play dress that she didn't like, the one with the donkeys under the palm trees; and while Grandma and Uncle Tom were doing their

chores, we began setting the table and getting supper ready.

Miss Dyke was getting things ready for the hot biscuits when I heard her say to cousin Cora, "Now how do you like it here on the farm?"

"Well," said Cora, "it's been nice to know you, Miss Dyke, but I sha'n't be sorry when Aunt Joan calls for me in the morning."

"And you aren't the only one who won't be sorry," I thought.

By that time the table was beginning to look grand. Grandma had put on her best cloth, and the china that we only use when company comes, and the family silver which is cleaned some years more often than it's used. There was a platter of ham, a platter of cold chicken, a veal loaf, piccalile, India relish, chile sauce, little pickled onions, peach conserve, plum, strawberry jam and two big bottles of grape wine.

"They won't be through their chores for another twenty minutes yet," said Grandma, covering the meat with damp napkins so it wouldn't dry out. "You get your oven ready, Margaret, but don't put the biscuits in till I tell you."

Just then a truck drove in the yard.

"Sounds like that old fool of a Cliff Cleeland," said my Grandma from the pantry. "Hide the wine, and try to keep him in the back kitchen."

Mr. Cleeland is a chicken dealer, and although he is full of tricks and jokes and Grandma does a lot of business with him, he is a very close trader and Grandma says he would skin a gnat for its bones and tallow. He has eyes that pop out of his head and his wife got a divorce from him, some say for one thing, some say for another, but Grandma says it's because he never bought any meat for the house but tried to feed her nothing but giblets. Anyhow he's a grass widower, and one of his jokes is that all the women who aren't married are only waiting to be his Number Two.

"Good evening, ladies," he said after he had knocked and come in the back kitchen. He fooled for a while till he had my mother and Miss Dyke laughing, and then he said, "But something seems to be missing here. Is Mrs. Bassett, Senior, anywhere around this historic establishment?"

"She's in the pantry," shouted Grandma through the wall. "What do you want?"

"I'm going to the city tomorrow with a load of old roosters," he shouted back.

"Heh-heh-heh!" laughed my Grandma.

"But I've room for a few more—say fifty or a hundred."

"What are you paying?"

"Fourteen cents."

"I haven't an old rooster on the place," scolded my Grandma, "but if I had a thousand, I'd turn 'em loose in the woods before I'd sell 'em for that price. Fourteen cents!" shouted my Grandma through the wall, "You ought to be ashamed of yourself!" And although of course she meant to keep her next words private, I feel quite sure I heard her mutter, "You Old Giblets!"

But I don't think Mr. Cleeland heard this because he smiled as if he was having lots of fun, and then he turned to my mother and said, "That was only my excuse for dropping in to see you. How's my Number Two to-night?"

"Oh, you go on!" said my mother.

"All set yet to say the word?"

"Yes," said my mother. "The word is 'Scram!'"

"Gold, diamonds, honeymoon trip to Niagara Falls," said Mr. Cleeland, his eyes popping out more and more. "Don't any of these things tempt you?"

At that my mother opened the back door and nearly pushed him out, and although everybody else laughed, cousin Cora didn't. She stood there with her eyes big and dark and round, watching my mother in a certain way, and all at once I was sure what she was thinking. She was thinking that my mother was also a prisoner and would like to marry Mr. Cleeland, and she was already starting to figure on how she could help.

VI.

"Yes, and I wouldn't put it beyond her," I couldn't help telling myself with a sinking feeling in my stomach, "not after what happened to Uncle Tom and Miss Dyke."

If I needed one thing more to make me sure, it came a few minutes later when I heard my mother say to her, "Are you sure you want to go back to New York with your Aunt Joan tomorrow?"

"Why?" asked cousin Cora in a certain voice, and looking very closely at my mother she said, "Would you like me to stay a little longer, Aunt Jane?"

"I'm sure we'd all love it," said my mother.

But I knew very well that I wouldn't love it. I was already beginning to see Old Giblets as my father, with that old house of his back of the church with the roosters crowing so loud some Sunday mornings that Deacon Briggs has to close the windows on that side.

"Perhaps if I make her good and miserable, she'll want to go home tomorrow," I thought, "but what can I do that will do it?"

Then I remembered the robin which she had taken off Bob's neck, and that made me mad; and thinking of the robin I remembered a book which I had read where company had stayed too long and began to find strange things in bed. Then suddenly it came to me, "I'll get that robin and put it in her bed, and won't she holler when she feels it!"

I slipped outside and was looking between the woodshed and the milk-house when Jack came toddling up from the barn where he had been helping Grandpa by holding the cows' tails while they were being milked.

"What are you looking for?" asked Jack.

I told him what I was looking for, and why.

"I don't like her, too," said Jack, "but I don't think robins would make her go home. Why don't you put Utchie in her bed? Utchie would make anyone go home."

It was a grand idea, even if I didn't think of it myself, and Utchie was so pleased when we went to his mat in the woodshed and began whispering to him. He hates the woodshed, and he loved it when I picked him up and carried him toward the house. He just turned in my arms, and lay on his back, and looked up at me and trembled with thankfulness. He must have fought a long time with the skunk. I carried him around to the side door where they couldn't see me from the kitchen. Jack opened the door and we tip-toed upstairs without anybody knowing it.

I had meant to put Utchie down between Cora's sheets and make a little opening for his head, but when I saw her beautiful clothes lying across her bed, I guess that Satan must have whispered to me, and I didn't say "Get thee behind me." I made a nice comfortable nest right in the middle of the navy blue coat and the silk dress with the glass buttons, and then I laid Utchie in it and whispered to him to be a good dog and make no noise, or they'd put him in the woodshed again. Then I changed my dress, because the one I had carried Utchie in was making my eyes smart, and Jack and I tip-toed downstairs and went out of the side-door without anybody seeing us. We stayed outside till Grandpa and Uncle Tom came, and then we walked into the kitchen with them, talking loud as if we had all been down to the barn together.

It was about ten minutes later when everything was ready for supper, and my mother and Miss Dyke and Cora went up to

change. Jack began counting "One-two-three—" but he had only got to nine when Utchie came rushing down the stairs with cousin Cora right after him. She had her beautiful clothes in her arms, and she ran up to Grandma and hollered "Smell these things!"

"Why, you must have been playing with a skunk," said Grandma with surprise.

"I have not!" shouted Cora. "It was that fool dog, and I could break his neck! He was lying right on top of my clothes!"

"What a naughty dog he is," said Grandma. "We'll have to speak to him. He shouldn't have done that."

"How long will it take this horrible smell to come out?"

"Oh, not long," said Grandma. "A month or two—or three at the outside—and you'll hardly know the difference."

"But what shall I wear to-night?"

"Wear what you've got on," said Grandma. "Our Amy always looked good in it."

"Well, I don't like it!"

"Do you want to sit in your slip then?" asked Grandma, beginning to raise her own voice.

"Oh!" said cousin Cora, and I could almost feel her choking. She felt in the pocket of her navy blue coat and brought out a piece of paper with a telephone number on it, and a minute later we heard her in the hall, calling for a number in Watch Hill.

"What's been going on?" whispered Grandma.

"She was going to stay and see what she could do about marrying mother to Mr. Cleeland," I whispered back. "So I carried Utchie in at the side door and laid him down on her clothes."

"Ah, dearie," said my Grandma proudly. "You're a Bassett if ever there was one."

We listened then to cousin Cora asking Aunt Joan to come and take her away as soon as she could in the morning, and to bring her a new dress and a new coat because the others had met with an accident. And when we finally sat down to that beautiful party supper—everybody happy except one who was wearing an old dress with donkeys under palm trees on it—and Grandpa asked grace, "For what we are about to receive, and for all our other blessings, please make us truly thankful," I don't know whether my Grandma, or my Mother, or my Grandpa, or my Uncle Tom, or Jack, or Miss Dyke or myself said it the loudest but as many times as I have heard Grandpa say grace at our table I never heard such a loud, or such a deep "Amen!"

THIS OUR DAUGHTER

This our daughter
that our son
now are corpse
and skeleton.

Grown in a nutshell
fed from our bones
made a sweet kernel
for greedy ones,

Reign in a kingdom
on throne of ice,
over a graveyard
paradise:

King Corpse riding
in his princely palls
fingered his wasted
genitals:

Had he had daylight
to love and breed,
where would have fallen
his scattered seed?

Had he had weather
his seed to sow
where would the ripened
grain be now?

For their complexions
are more gray
than they were wont to be
yesterday,

O he's less smiling
she more drear
than they were ever
yesteryear.

—Betty Miller Davis

I Remember

BY PAT MEYER

I REMEMBER a December twilight in the serenity of my aunt's suburban home. Outside, big flakes of snow drifted through gaunt, skeletal trees and settled softly, obliterating the sled marks and foot prints which had marred the gracious whiteness of the ground. Within was warmth and love and music. A Tschaikowsky concerto was playing on the phonograph. Sprawled on the floor, absently fondling a black cocker spaniel, I let the gorgeous waves of sound wash over me. Desultory snatches of conversation drifted past me. But I was oblivious to these external details. Like the Pied Piper's tune, this melody had led me away to my private land of enchantment. Suddenly, I lived in a world of fantasy. Entrancing events went on around me, and a central theme ran through all the adventures. I was living new experiences—lovely, mysterious experiences. Then, abruptly, my prosaic everyday mind woke up, and I was dragged from my ecstatic moment, not even able to recall my dream. For the music had stopped, and

* * *

“ . . . I stood still,
Left alone against my will .
To go now limping as before,
And never hear of that country more.”

I remember a hot summer night, when a group of young people sat in the darkness of a screened porch. The air was warm and moist, and the country was so quiet that you could hear the night noises which man-made noises usually obliterated. A cricket chorus formed a persistent background for our conversation, and left a curious blankness in the night when it suddenly ceased. A pale moon silvered the leaves and made a delicate tracery of shadows on the grass. We listened to records—to Brahms and Tschaikowsky and Beethoven, to Victor Herbert and Gilbert and Sullivan, and, finally to the exquisite narrative of “The Snow Goose.” I sat there in the comfortable darkness and found myself suddenly crying, for the beauty of the story and the beauty of the night had the queer, inexplicable sadness of it all.

* * *

I remember a spring evening when we dragged out the ancient phonograph that had belonged to my grandmother, cranked it up,

and danced to the rather wheezy strains of "Beer Barrel Polka" and "The Blue Danube" and (newest of all) "Whispering." That was a hilarious night. We giggled over the peculiar sounds that sometimes issued from the old machine, and vied for the privilege of winding it up, and ended up around the piano, deciding at last that our own voices were better than that of the victrola.

* * *

I remember the night of the junior-senior prom. After the dance was over, we and another couple drove over to the beach in the moonlight. Uninterrupted by trees or buildings, the silver embroidered velvet of the sky stretched to infinity, over miles of solitary white sand and silver ocean. From the old phonograph, refurbished for the occasion, came the strains of Rimsky-Korsakoff's "Scheherazade", accompanying us as we set out our picnic meal and ate it in the vast shadow of the sky. The beauty of the music combined with the limitless peace of the outdoors to cause a slow, deep reverence to seep into our souls and fill us with sincere and abiding happiness.

* * *

I remember graduation night. After the exercises were over, we walked to Wes's home for the celebration which seemed fitting for so important an event. But, vaguely fearful for the future, and sad at the thought of the era that was over for us all, we couldn't seem to get into the proper spirit. Finally, someone put a record on the phonograph, and we were suddenly gay—a little forcedly at first, but with increasing naturalness as the music carried us along on its rhythmic tide. Swing music ebbed and flowed around us, and we danced to the latest tunes, finding ourselves suddenly completely happy.

* * *

Music, recorded music—it is bound up inextricably with my memories. It can mean joy or sadness, lethargy or activity, pleasant pain or painful pleasure. To me, it can mean God.

The Hill

BY JOAN F. LEONARD

WHAT do I remember first? The relatively big things? No, I think of family evenings at home—of a warm spring evening drenched with the smell of the sea; a thrush in our old apple tree and laughter and music among ourselves. Or I think of days when, outside the window, our giant elm stood with its feet deep in snow. The long field was covered white and etched by blue shadows from a few lonely trees. The sky was a great expanse of nothing. Inside we were safe, warm and happy because we were loved, protected and provided for. I know of no pleasure greater than the lazy security of being snowed in with those you love—especially if the food you eat comes from shelves of supplies that you helped grow and preserve, if the wood for an open fire to read by came from your trees.

Then, I remember the joyful relief of coming up the long steep hill to home. The time particularly I remember was when I scuffed dead leaves with my feet through a cold fall dusk. Wind cried over a meadow and poked its fingers through my coat. Gaunt branches rattled together and their solitude echoed deep within me. An old chimney of a house that had burned stretched desolate against a colorless sky. I was afraid: of oncoming night, of myself, of my thoughts, and of something greater than all of these or all of us. I placed one brown shoe in front of the other and tried not to run. Something was close to my back, about to spring, and my back was bigger than all the world. I thought of books I had read, of stories relating the danger of running from a stalking animal. Finally, around a corner, there was home. It seemed so far away. Against descending night the smoke rose warm in the sky. The windows winked. The thing at my back breathed nearer. But I dared not look behind to meet its eyes so close. I hurled myself forward. My legs felt weak and the wind cut sharper through my coat. At last I saw the old stone steps; then knew familiar wood in my hand as I flung open the door. "Mother, mother, where are you!"

"Here, little one, here."

ON LISTENING TO AN UNKNOWN VIOLIN

It played, and I was all I had not been,
And all around me rose a pale, sad smoke,
Dream-veiled shades of days I had not seen,
The whisp'ring ghosts of mystic, lonely folk.
There were no 'ifs'; all things of dreams were so.
A gypsy closed my eyes and sang to me;
A solitary flute piped weird and slow;
A wind blew gently to a murm'ring sea.
A thousand lives were mine; I was at one
With every breath and pulse and living soul,
With all that ever looked on morning sun,
With every tree and stone a heavenly Whole.
All time stretched back as far as I could see,
And God filled all of me, and I was He.

—*Phyllis Starobin*

WORDS FOR SIMILAR EARS

These are words spoken for similar ears:
the yesterday-listening minds
refuse to think these words to definition;
for time has walked with us
and beheld our fingers as we wrote,
and stopped our memories from haunting us.

Silence has not betrayed our lips:
words wander out onto the pages with confusion
and sink into the eyes of present circumstance;
the tumult of the mind today releases fear;
to spill its poison over hungry mouths.

Who will conceal the meanings of our dreams?
There is no single praise to welcome words
that emphasize the abstract knowledge we defy:
the similar ears will listen: understand:
and throw away their proud decisions to our ears.

—*Gordon H. Felton*

A Short But Nevertheless Comprehensive Study Of The Age Of Elizabeth Tudor

Dedicated To Dr. Rest Fenner Smith

BY JIM ANDERSON

ELIZABETH, queen of England, was born in the year 1553, and ultimately died in March of 1603. This in itself is not remarkable, but it is the fact that it was Elizabeth who did it that makes it so remarkable.

That she was born was probably a mistake; that she died is nothing more than a plain fact.

Elizabeth, being a Tudor, was possibly, even probably, connected lineally with the other Tudors, who ruled England in a vague sort of way in some time several years ago. One of the most highly advertised of this family was known as Henry the Eight. To prevent our theme from becoming doubly boring we shall exclude him, as he only too well deserves, and continue with our original subject—which, it will probably be remembered, was Elizabeth.

Elizabeth, being born, as has been shown, went through the usual process of babyhood and proceeded directly into childhood. However, as her activities were rather restricted and dull during this period, we shall leave her, for a short time as she paddles around her nursery and plays with whatever children played with in that remote time, and proceed to another personage who first appeared on page 443, *Universal History of England*, written by Page and Page.

Will Shakespeare, called Will because his name was William, was born in 1564 and he, too, died; but only after having cluttered up literature with quite a number of books and other writings, which have little or no connection with each other, with the possible exception of a series of articles on the lives of several notable ancients—which he plagiarized from Plutarch—and the personal lives of several of the former monarchs of England, which he plagiarized from the *Universal History of England*, Page and Page.

Shakespeare had a great social message. For that matter, practically everyone who has written, is writing, or shall write, has a great social message. If Shakespeare's message was to be found in his daily life he could easily have sent it to his friends

via Western Union, day letter, with not too much expense.

It is rumored that Shakespeare drank; and what is worse, drank beer and bad whiskey. His early life is somewhat of a mystery. His later life is also a mystery. Only occasionally is the curtain of the historical stage lifted, and then we catch glimpses of him as he scurries from stage to tavern, from tavern to stage.

He must have grown inordinately wealthy, for there is a record somewhere or other that he paid one of his debts. This established a precedent that is occasionally adhered to even in our own day.

Will's death is quite interesting. It seems that the Bubonic Plague appeared in the house of his next-door neighbor. Will rushed to the local tavern to tank up, as he thought this would protect him from the Plague. The Plague didn't kill him, but the whiskey did.

It having taken a great deal of time to write the preceding episode, we may turn our attention back to Elizabeth. We find that she has now bloomed into young womanhood. She cavorts around the palace with some show of alacrity and, on occasion, swears like a Crusader. This is a habit she picked up from a too-close association with the washwoman, with whom she liked to spend long hours playing gin rummy.

Other facts about her during these years are uninteresting and trivial, compared with her later activities; so we will for a brief moment turn our eyes to a new star that is to light the Elizabethan firmament.

Walter Raleigh was born in a stable behind the Cathedral of Canterbury, being the logical result of the marriage of Minnie Crackett and Joseph Alexievitch Raleighski, of Russian extraction, who served in the function of Assistant to the Stabler to the Queen's horses, when the Queen visited the Cathedral.

So, as can be seen, Raleigh was of quite humble birth, and at the proper moment the story of how his name was changed, and his subsequent rise to fame, will be related.

We return to Elizabeth, who, we found, has not developed as rapidly as we had hoped—being quite disappointingly slow. So we must leave her until she matures a bit more. To fill the interlude, let us examine another great actor who enters the already overcrowded Stage.

Ben Jonson was also a writer, but not so perfect an author

as Shakespeare. He never mastered the rudimentary rules of grammar, and frequently ended a sentence without placing at the end the necessary period consequently his meaning was not often clear, so he was immediately hailed as a most unfathomable genius.

When Ben was drunk he spoke a language which some designated as Latin, which gave him quite some reputation for learning; but which the more religiously minded termed an "unknown tongue". The author of this paper inclines to the latter view.

Ben never did write much. He had no paper. It seems that he had ordered a ship load of paper from Amsterdam, but the captain of the ship was not such a good navigator and missed England in the night. One of the captain's descendants finally turned up with the ship at Bombay, right at the tail end of the eighteenth century. Ben never could get enough money together again to order another load of paper, so he had to write his stories on the back of an old pinochle deck. Consequently, many of his works were lost in the shuffle.

By this time the Queen had grown into an unusually homely woman. She was also quite learned. When French ambassadors were received, she could speak Italian; and to the Italian emissaries she spoke Spanish. This spared her many times the responsibility of making decisions and repelling the amorous advances of various crowned heads who wanted her kingdom more than her person; but eventually it created no end of confusion in contemporary international politics.

Going back a few years, we shall take up the story of how Walter Raleigh was knighted.

"It came about in this wise," says the chronicler, who faithfully chronicled everything he possibly could. He has passed on to his reward; and it serves him right, too.

"Full late on Candlemas last but one day, one Walter Raleighski, in rented garments, set forth after bidding his mother a full fond farewell and pelting his goode father on the side of the pate so that his head rang so that he thought it was merry Christmastide in that he had never before heard so many loud and clangorous bells, so that he gave unto his son Walter all his money which was seven and sixpence. Whereupon Walter left and gat him upon his way which was down Surrey Lane which is hard by Troxham Road which is hard to find. It was eke dark and the mud in the Lane was eke deep. Now Queen Elizabeth was at this

moment returning from the pilgrimage which she had sworn to make which was to the Abbey of St. Milray which is many leagues off in some direction which is in many ways hard to determine for it has so many other directions with which it can be confused. Queen Elizabeth, coming to a puddle, had waded it straight through because it was so eke dark, and then sat she herself down upon a stone and began to weep bitter tears, for by the water and the eke mud was ruined her new dancing pumps.

Walter that was hight Raleighski at this time waded up and seeing that she wept bitter tears, offered that she may blow her nose on the cloak of his which was rented. This did she straightway and from gratitude wished to knight Walter. He, having no sword, but only a large battle-axe, she with the battle-axe tapped him on the dome so that when some time elapsed he opened his eyes and found that she misunderstanding his name had dubbed him Sir Walter Raleigh. She offered kindly to un-knight him and re-knight him but he said no, as the first dubbing was one too many."

Skipping ahead, to pick up the thread of our history, we find to our dismay that we have too long dallied by the wayside. Elizabeth has blossomed, ripened, dried up, and fallen from the tree of life. This is regretful, but somehow we feel somewhat relieved. There are other eras just as interesting, and we look forward with great expectations.

Jim Davis -- American

BY WESTON L. EMERY

JIM loved life. No one will deny that. Every second was pure Jecstasy, every day was a milestone on the highway of happiness to success. Yes, Jim Davis *was* American. His ancestors were English and Irish and French, with perhaps a dash of several other nationalities mingled in as flavoring. His family was comfortable enough, affording just enough luxuries to appreciate the value of the dollar and the value of genuine happiness. His dad owned a grocery store, his mother kept house, and his kid sister was in high school.

On warm sunny days Jim frequently wandered off, carrying his fishing pole and wearing his dad's fish-hook-bedecked old felt hat, to meditate on the bank of the stream just outside town. Sometimes he took a buddy, and they sprawled in grotesque positions, discussing the world, where they would travel, and the prevailing girl situation. Jim loved—even craved—to be alone once in a while, though he liked just as well to be with a gang. Oh yes, Jim was part of a gang. He could jerk sodas, whistle with two fingers, dance reasonably well, sail a boat, shoot a rifle—there weren't very many things Jim couldn't and didn't like to do.

A good joke found appreciation in Jim. Or a comic situation. Nothing that would hurt anyone, you understand, but Jim did have an excellent sense of humor. He took things seriously, but worried very little. Not that he wasn't conscientious, because he was about most things.

But most important of all, Jim knew the other guy had troubles, too. Over Jim's bureau he had erected a sign saying, "I had no shoes and complained, until I met a man who had no feet." So he realized, at that time, that he was well off. He didn't think so much about old man Van der Something-or-other down on Bay Shore, but he sort of worried about the families living in shacks down by the city dump, and he felt as if it were his own personal problem to help them. "Help a fellow when he's down." Jim's father used to say that to Jim. There's something in it, too.

You see, Jim was just a typical American boy, growing up in a friendly neighborhood with his gang, "slicking up" for church, playing hooky once in a while, fishing with his dad, or helping

Mother in the kitchen. He wanted to live and learn and be happy. That's all.

But Hans had other ideas of how Jim should live. Hans was quite misled. It was Hans that pulled the trigger on the sniper's rifle that killed Jim. Hans thought that all men should live for the State, he thought regimentation was infinitely more human than individualism, he thought that he was born to lead the world. Of course he did not realize that other people had problems like his own, because he had been taught that he, and hundreds others like him, would rule all men.

Hans did not kill Jim. Instead, Jim actually killed Hans. For Jim stood for something that Hans never heard of—the individual man, his rights, his happiness, his four freedoms.

THE PYRE

Everything was perfect
 The wood was cut
 The oil was poured
 And the air was still.
 The little men
 Played their scene
 Their audience too cold to applaud.
 (The moss will cover the rock
 The sea the sand
 And dust the chiseled records of time).
 Our world
 Is the naked clown
 Performing in a Universal amphitheatre
 Where watchful stars are seated in endless tiers
 To record the comedy.
 Away from its place, everything lasts—
 Even the burnt bodies.

—Milton E. Schwartz

The Beggar

BY PAT MEYER

IT was a gray day. Somber skies brooded sullenly over Chicago and its bustling, ant-like millions. Smoke-palled Loop buildings had a queerly hopeless look, as if resigned to eternal buffeting by malignant winds. So saturated with soot and moisture was the air that it seemed actually feelable.

Along the feverish corner of State and Madison streets an ancient beggar slouched. His seamed and ashy face was evil's own reflection, from the twisted, toothless gap that was a mouth to the narrow, cindery scar that drew up his left temple and heightened his indefinably sinister mien.

The beggar's gaunt, contorted body supported a thin head, to which a thick mop of mousy hair added an incongruous note. It spread in disheveled abandon, creeping low at both neck and forehead, and making his face appear oddly out of proportion. Through the enveloping layer of grime on his chin, gray stubble pricked its heavy way, adding yet another sorry note to the repellent picture. A final unhappy touch was a pair of large dark glasses which obscured the deep-set eyes and indented the sparse cheeks on which they rested.

Dangling from the frayed, dirty cord around the beggar's neck was a lop-sided placard, its straggling letters, B-L-I-N-D, a plea for sympathy. A bony, outstretched hand extended a battered tin cup, with its tinkling decoy of pennies and nickels.

His few intimates knew this derelict as "Four Eyed Ike". Exposed as an imposter by a South Side busy-body, he had recently been forced to vacate his former comfortable beat.

At five o'clock that afternoon, a determined, wind-driven drizzle combined with "smog" to make life miserable for the pedestrians crowding State Street's busiest corner. The estimable John C. Winthrop, Esquire, attorney-at-law, reflected bitterly on the perversity of fate as he strode along. Everything about this dreary day seemed in a conspiracy to rob him of his original pleasure in winning an important case and pocketing the subsequent fee. Now, to make his misery complete, no taxi would answer his hails, and he was forced to walk in the rain.

Making a mental note to write to the "Sun" about the cab

racket, he turned up his coat collar and bent his head against the wind. Impatiently he shouldered his way through State Street crowds; brusquely he pushed aside the soliciting arm of the blind beggar who impeded his progress. The beggar's cup was jarred from his hand, and its coins spilled into the sidewalk slush. Oblivious of the misfortune he had caused, John shoved his way to the curb.

Momentarily forgetful of his role, Ike craned his neck to gaze after the scornful plutocrat who strode unknowingly on his way. The evening rush had begun; State Street was jammed with cars. Impatient executives huddled over their wheels and blew their horns incessantly watching for the slightest gap through which they could hurl themselves to save split seconds on their homeward journeys. Ike watched John Winthrop start across the street just as one of these drivers saw his opening. A car leaped forward, and the oblivious pedestrian was doomed to be crushed between two cars going in opposite directions. There was still time to shout, but Ike hesitated a moment and remained quiet. In that moment, John saw his peril and realized the fate that was about to overtake him. His last despairing glance showed him with remarkable clarity the malevolent leer on the face of the "blind" beggar.

JAZZ PIECE

The honest voice of midnight
Fills the room
As silver cymbals whisper
To the gloom,
And muted trumpets tell him
Once again
Of sunshine, winter, daffodils
And pain.

—Donald Sauers

New Perspectives In Poetry

1916-1946

BY WESLEY DAVIS

THE ELEGANT, archaic, rarified sort of poetry that was being written at the end of the Nineteenth Century had about as much value to an industrial world as a spinning wheel. In violent reaction to this obsolete verse, the new poetry movement began. Poetry changed overnight from a dead or dying art into a violent controversial subject.

This movement was led at first by the Imagists, who insisted that verse be clearcut and sharp, with definite images. They forbade the use of "poetic diction" and made wide use of free verse. Among this group were Ezra Pound, Amy Lowell, and John Gould Fletcher.

Inspired by the new movement, not calling themselves Imagists, Carl Sandburg, Robert Frost, Edgar Lee Masters, E. A. Robinson, Edna Millay, and a host of others became prolific. However, the new poetry movement did not find its real voice until 1916. Then came T. S. Eliot, the brilliant star of the new poetry.

It was soon apparent that here at last was a significant figure, a highly individual poetic personality. The impact of an industrial age on the poetic sensibility is felt immediately in Eliot. No longer able to retreat to the stars and the nightingales, the poet is faced with the machine and all its implications. The question becomes: "Is there poetry in the dark halls of the tenement, in the bright, ugly glare of the electric bulb, in the garbage-strewn alleys, in the tired working man who spends his life tightening bolts or pushing buttons?"

Eliot treats those subjects with gripping reality, while adhering to the basic principles of true poetry. His effects are sometimes truly shocking. They strike the reader like an unexpected dash of ice-cold water. He begins the famous "Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock,"

"Let us go then, you and I,
Where the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherized upon a table. . . ."

Here we see the traditional beauty of evening linked with a graphic every-day hospital scene. We should have to drop back into history as far as John Donne and the metaphysical poets of the Seventeenth Century to find anything as subtle and complex as Eliot.

This clash of traditional beauty and modern images has become one of the most effective and widely used techniques in the repertoire of poets since Eliot.

Eliot has a way of transporting us to the heavens and then dashing us back to earth to make us aware that the world in all its sordid complexity is always with us. In a cynical summing-up of his "Preludes" he says,

"Wipe your hands across your mouth and laugh,
The worlds revolve like ancient women
Gathering fuel in vacant lots."

On the age old theme of the brevity of man's life on earth, Eliot says simply,

"I have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,
I have measured out my life in coffee spoons."
. . . I have seen the moment of my greatest flicker,
And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat and snicker,
And, in short, I was afraid."

It is impossible to exaggerate Eliot's influence in contemporary poetry. In 1921, in the "Wasteland", Eliot made a major thrust at the spiritual emptiness of our industrial civilization. The "Hollow Men" inhabit the "Wasteland".

"We are the hollow men.
We are the stuffed men.
Leaning together
Headpiece filled with straw
. . . This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but with a whimper."

The idea of the "Wasteland" captured the imagination of every poet writing since Eliot. It has become the potent symbol of the dearth, the cultural desert of the Twentieth Century life. Without a faith, with few ideals or illusions left, the modern man wonders over the earth seeking a spiritual home.

We must not, however, think of Eliot as merely an influence. He has given us passages that will stand among the most graphic

descriptive poetry in the language:

At evening,
 "the smell of steaks in passageways,"
 Six o'clock,
 "The burnt-out ends of smoky days. . . ."
 Morning,
 ". . . One thinks of all the hands
 That are raising dingy shades
 In a thousand furnished rooms."

Fortunately, for the sake of progress in the arts, a great man's influence is not always and forever positive. Though no poet since Eliot has escaped his influence; though we detect his influence even in prose writers such as Thomas Wolfe, William Faulkner, Erskine Caldwell, and John Steinbeck, the inevitable reaction begins. And so began the reform, modification, and advance from Eliot's mothering influence.

In the 1930's, there arose in America and Great Britain an energetic group of young poets, who refused to be "Hollowmen". In this group we find Stephen Spender, C. Day Lewis, Louis MacNiece, and their leader, W. H. Auden.

Auden recognises the "Wasteland", but he asks, "What is to be done about it?" Auden does not allow himself the luxury of despair. Making use of Eliot's techniques, he strikes an affirmative note and hymns a new hope:

"May I, composed like them,
 Of Eros and of dust,
 Beleaguered by the same
 Negation and despair,
 Show an affirming flame."

We see at once that Auden is at once the patient and the would-be physician. The world is still far from the best of all possible worlds; there are still the great wars and the great depressions, and to quote Auden's poem in memory of Yeats,

"Intellectual disgrace
 Stares from every human face,
 And the seas of pity lie
 Locked and frozen in each eye."

But he always asks, "What is to be done about it; where do we go from here?"

Beside leading the young poets from the negation and despair of the "Wasteland", Auden has proved himself a technical wizard. He writes excellent poetry on every conceivable subject. While not creating poems as nearly perfect as Eliot's, he shows far wider range. On the death of the great Irish poet, W. B. Yeats, Auden could write,

"Earth receive an honoured guest,
William Yeats is laid to rest.
Let the Irish vessel lie
Emptied of its poetry.
Follow, poet, follow right
To the bottom of the night.
In the desert of the heart
Let the healing fountain start.
In a rapture of distress
Sing of human unsuccess,
In your uncomplaining voice,
Still constrain us to rejoice."

In this discussion I have concentrated on Eliot and Auden, because, in my opinion, they are the most experimental poets of our generation. We are concerned mainly with new perspectives in poetry. If space permitted, we could say much of such poets as Hart Crane, John Peale Bishop, Robert Penn Warren, Dylan Thomas, Karl Shapiro, Marianne Moore, Robinson Jeffers, and many more.

I must treat briefly of the late Irish poet, William Butler Yeats. I have quoted already from Auden's tribute to Yeats. As far back as 1914, people were wondering if Yeats were through. He was not through. Until his death at an advanced age, he continued to amaze the world by his never-ending capacity for growth. He has been called by some "the last of the great bards."

There was nothing ostentatiously new or modern in Yeats, except the timeless modernity of an original mind. Yeats caught the rhythms of spoken language and used them to express the subtlest and most magnificent thoughts. His own lines will speak louder in his favor than anything I can say. On the death of pagan civilization he wrote:

"I saw a staring Virgin stand
Where holy Dionysius died
And tear the heart from out his side
And hold that heart within her hand

And bear that beating heart away.
 Then did all the muses sing
 Of Magnus Annus in the spring
 As tho God's death were but a play.
 Another Troy must rise and set
 Another lineage feed the crow
 Another Argos painted prow
 Drive to a flashier bauble yet.
 The Roman Empire stood appalled,
 It dropped the reins of peace and war
 When that fierce Virgin and her star
 Out of the fabulous darkness called."

If in much of contemporary poetry we find only negation and despair, with only an occasional note of optimism, I can only say, consider the world of today and of the last generation. These poets, the most sensitive human barometers, simply reflect the world in which we live.

MY LOVE DISSEMBLES SUMMER

My love dissembles summer in her look,
 Her eyes too hold a dim imagined spring
 And disregard the autumn's offering;
 My love's pretense is that her fingers pluck
 First blossomings, from off the dewy stem
 To supplement her paucity of hair,
 She postulates a mildness in the air,
 If cold winds blow, she pays no heed to them.

My love denies the handiwork of change
 And slaps the meddling fingertips of frost
 That seek by wintry weaving to annul
 The fiction of her summer fabric . . . Strange?
 And if it is, who says my love is lost
 Or that her blossoms are unseasonable?

—Betty Miller Davis

STEINWALD*

Each tiny twig of the tree
Was covered with a glove of ice.
The haze of early morning
Was slowly lighting, and shapes
Were becoming more distinct.
The grotesque figure of a man,
Lying on his face, arms outstretched
As if trying to grasp the meaning
Of all this, intercepted the horizon.
Beside him his companion,
In Death as well as in Life,
Lying face up scarlet face,
Suggesting that he would never shout
Encouraging words to his companions—
Distorted face—No need for expression.
He was even now expressing Love for God.

The snow gave a serenity to their death,
Softly covering sharp outlines,
Making a picture beautiful, unreal.
Occasional tracers gave red and green,
Yellow and orange tinges to the whole,
And far over to the right, a fellow
Ran at full speed, threw up his hands,
One clasping his closest friend . . . his rifle
The other pleading, "Why me?";
And he fell softly, so slowly and softly,
Outstretched at full length on the snow.

The sun was approaching
As if it were ashamed to meet this day.
I was, yet was thrilled by it!
As the sun's rays dissolved the mist,

More and more forms became visible.
Some were still, others convulsed
With sobs. Still others were crying,
"Mother! Mother! I need you!"
Another man screamed, "Medic!"
The scream hypnotic, startling, resigned.

Still the tracers drew
Their caricatures of death,
Taking the models to add to their album.
They took without prejudice
The good and the bad, young and old.
Soon the field, where lovers
Once had trod, was filled with hate.
I wanted none of it, yet I could not leave.

Evening came, and with it
The comfort of relief.
And each asked of the others,
"Just what started this slaughter,
And for what are we dying?"

—*Weston L. Emery*

*My company attacked Steinwald, a forest near Herrlisheim, France, on January 16, 1945. From dawn until noon, 99 men were killed, 27 were wounded from the company.

Desert Sickness

BY ARLEIGH BLACK

THE lonely desert is a reservoir of human thoughts. They collect and breed like monsters, never recognizing their masters. In this desolate country we were stationed. Two men to a tent. We tried to make believe that they were homes, but only a covering of cloth between the sky and our miserable bodies is a poor excuse. We were neither happy nor sad. Resigned to accept what came our way, we were grateful for any visitors. One day a British Sergeant wandered by and stopped to speak to the Americans. Several boys were grouped around one of the tents and he joined them with obvious pleasure. The conversation merely amplified each one's loneliness and after a while stopped altogether. The Sergeant was bored and began to look around for something to occupy his mind. Staring into our tents he asked a question:

"Why don't you blokes have a dirt ridge in the middle of your tents?"

Everybody stopped his mental ramblings and focused his mind on what he had said. They could not have misunderstood, for he repeated it again. Slowly the meaning matured in every mind and they looked around them with fear of not knowing what to say. No, it was not the problem of answering, it was the problem of convincing themselves that what he said could not exist. Each studied his companions: Ed was quiet; Jim was nervous; Tom looked sneeringly at all; Henry appeared to be very sad; and Kenneth seemed about to cry. The Sergeant was obviously surprised that his comment had caused such an effect. These Americans were unusual people, what was going on in their minds—they looked at him as if he had opened a door that they all feared to enter but knew some day they would be forced through.

* * *

Ed had been raised in the middle west and had entered the army after many adventures in various fields. Soon after finishing high school he had gone to New York to pursue a theatrical career. Although he had had a small amount of success it was not what he wanted and he had left it for the chance to go to France as a Red Cross director. There he had become quite "continental" and was accepted as a person who had been around. He had met beautiful women and had known the various dramas

of life. Yet all this experience was of no use to him now that he was faced with the Question of the British Sergeant:

"Why don't you blokes have a dirt ridge in the middle of your tents?"

Swiftly, for his intelligence was alert, it ran through his mind and gradually developed into another question, "Would he need such a protection from himself?" Remembering people and events he decided that he could never reach a stage of such desire. Life was too wonderful and had too much to offer for such a sacrifice of human dignity. He felt safe.

* * *

Nothing much was known about the history of Jim. He existed as a personality but his past was his own and he intended to keep it that way. His relationship with people depended on what they were to him. If treated with brutality he could respond the same manner and often did. Kindness was useful in that it offered a respite from himself and necessitated no oppositional force. At this moment when he knew what the others were thinking his own thoughts tried to probe and get the answers from those around him. They stared in a foreign manner and he knew they would never accept him as a personal friend. Rebelling with frustration at such treatment, he thought with prescience of the time in the future when he would be sought out with great eagerness. When such a time came he would speed up catalytic emotions and laugh when the destruction came. He felt neither safe nor weak. He was the hunter and here was his prey.

* * *

Tom had the body that inspires thoughts of the Greek Gods. Proud and domineering, his figure towered above all others. Not a brilliant mind but a physique that could not be ignored. He had always won his fights and was confident he could continue to do so. Now he was not even puzzled; arrogantly he faced everyone with the challenge, "Go on, I dare anyone to even try it". He refused to consider the future as a competent antagonist. He was sure.

* * *

The most respected and the most intelligent in the group was Henry. Finishing at a good university, he was early destined to someday be a success. Life had been difficult but he eventually came up with the right answer. Born a thinker, he had mixed in his soul a compassionate nature. He worried about his fellow-men and wanted to help those not so lucky as himself. He felt

that his future was closely inter-twined with the future of others and he had no desire to separate from both the evils and virtues of men. He could not disregard the fact that here was posed a problem ready to suck them all down into a depthless hell of the human mind. It was now in the thoughts of these soldiers grouped around him. At home with girls and the necessity for completing normal relationships present, it was far divorced from reality. Thrown as soldiers out onto the desert hundreds of miles from women, men could not forever remain pure. *Why*, not a dilemma; *when* was. Elements beyond his control could only be sought and he prayed for a solution.

* * *

The girlish laughter of Kenneth was now quiet. His slim graceful body was tensed with a frightful vision. Not too frightful, only new and somewhat unreal. Easily swayed into being agreeable about anything, he was only a friendly puppy. Some day he might grow up, but he would always be effeminate. Everyone teased him and stopped short of seeing his tears. Now he was not thinking about himself. Glancing at the different ones around him he reflected on the strength of Tom and the understanding of Henry. He realized that he had no objection to what would happen and that some day each individual here would hate him. This made him want to cry, because he could not exist without comradeship and tender expressions of affection. He wondered what he was and he did not know; it did not matter, he perhaps would suffer but he would always be looked after. He wished that someone would speak to him. They were strangers and he was only a tool.

TWO SONNETS

From here to there is measured by a span
Of time, or breath, or call it what you will;
It is the distance known by any man,
Who conscious of the now, but moving, still
Is cognizant of what may come, and goes
With slower tread, or wasteful of his stride,
As need may hasten or defer repose,
Like for a willing, or unwilling, bride.

And though defined, how can the judging eye
Reflect with any hope of certainty
The length of what may well be truth or lie,
Since here and there is vague proximity?
Far, far ahead we hope may be the mark,
And yet, another step, and all is dark!

* * * * *

Here, now, this very moment, let there be
A silence great enough for me to hear
Your voice; a silence that will bring it clear,
Distinct, and saying what it is that we
Have yet to tell each other; what we fear
To make too plain. And since you cannot see
That I am listening, hand cupped to ear,
Then say it to the wind, and so, to me.
And I will know whatever you may say
As true, and know it better than I knew
Your muteness when you were not miles away
Along an arc of earth; the merest breath
Of distance really, yet as great as death,
If parting us is all that death could do.

—*Charles Gordon Rex*

Mark Twain's
Mysterious Stranger
and Modern Skepticism

BY DAN PAONESSA

"It was in 1590—winter."

Among the works of Mark Twain is a romance, a story of most intense seriousness, far removed from his usual novels of American humor, a story steeped in melancholy and philosophical bitterness—*The Mysterious Stranger*. Twain, known the world around only as a funny man, was also a philosopher, who sometimes found it difficult to laugh at the injustice, suffering, and intolerance he found in the human race; and into this brief novel he released his soul.

The Mysterious Stranger could be compared favorably to Dean Swift's fourth book of *Gulliver's Travels*, as the people in Clemens' tiny Austrian hamlet behaved themselves essentially the same as Gulliver's savage Yahoos—who in turn are the prototype of the whole human race. Like Swift, Twain did not dislike humans individually. "He denounced, not one nation, not one particular people, but the whole Christianity-professing world as the greatest Vandals of all times."

Twain settled the blame for all the sorrow and pain existing in the world on *mob rule*—violent actions of the whole human race which are the result of the thinking of a few. Said the arch-angel, Satan, in the witch-burning scene in *The Mysterious Stranger*:

"Your race is made up of sheep. It is governed by minorities, seldom by majorities. It suppresses its feelings and beliefs and follows the handful that makes the most noise. Sometimes the noisy handful is right, sometimes wrong; but no matter, the crowd follows it. . . . Monarchies, aristocracies, and religions are based upon that large defect in your race—the individual's distrust of his neighbor, and his desire, for safety and comfort's sake, to stand well in his neighbor's eye. These institutions will always remain, and always flourish, and always oppress you, affront you, and degrade you, because you will always be and remain slaves of minorities. There was never a country where the majority of the people were in their secret hearts loyal to any of these institutions."

Twain's knowledge of lynchings in Missouri in his days as a newspaperman, his realization of the death and destruction resulting from mob rule prompted him to write this passage. He knew that the countless wars between so-called rational, Christian people were the result of mobs excited by a minority of Yahoos. Hate rules the people; it is the most powerful of all emotions; it can be easily aroused by a few, and once aroused, law and order and all of what is called civilization is shattered. He knew that a country's blunderings, wars, murders, and such infancies, are the result of a mob led about by the nose by a minority of fools.

"A loud little handful will shout for the war," said Satan. "The pulpit will—warily and cautiously—object—at first; the great, big, dull, bulk of the nation will rub its sleepy eyes and try to make out why there should be a war. . . . Then the other side will argue and reason against the war with speech and pen. . . . Those others will out-shout them; and presently the anti-war audience will thin out and lose popularity. Before long you will see this curious thing; the speakers stoned from the platform, and free speech strangled by hordes of furious men who in their secret hearts are still at one with those stoned speakers—as earlier—but do not dare to say so. Next the statesmen will invent cheap lies, putting the blame upon the nation that is attacked, and every man will be glad of those conscience-soothing falsities, and will diligently study them, and refuse to examine any refutations of them; and thus he will by and by convince himself that the war is just, and thank God for the better sleep he enjoys after this process of grotesque self-deception."

Twain emphatically denounced all romantic notions concerning that much glorified word—civilization. In this book we find Twain's mouthpiece, Satan, setting a mimic stage to show his two young friends the development of what is called civilization. On the stage was an endless procession of wars, murders, massacres; and as one "civilized" country died out, drowning in its own sea of blood, another "civilization" grew out of the ruins, only to continue the cycle of wars, murders, and massacres, and then in turn die out. Then Christianity was born, to march hand in hand with "civilization," "leaving famine and death and desolation in their wake, and other signs of the progress of the human race," as Satan observed.

“ . . . And what does it amount to? Nothing at all. You gain nothing; you always come out where you went in. For a million years the race has gone on monotonously propagating itself and monotonously reperforming this dull nonsense—to what end? Who gets a profit out of it? Nobody but a parcel of usurping little monarchs and nobilities who despise you; would feel defiled if you touched them; would shut the door in your face if you proposed to call; whom you slave for, fight for, die for, and are not ashamed of it but proud; whose existence is a perpetual insult to you and you are afraid to resent it; who are mendicants supported by your alms, yet assume toward you the airs of benefactor toward beggar; who address you in the language of master to slave, and are answered in the language of slave to master; who are worshipped by you with your mouth, while in your heart—if you have one—you despise yourself for it. . . . ”

In this great passage is the spirit of Mark Twain's patriotism. Wars *are* started by “usurping little monarchs,” economic as well as military. Men forget that they are individuals and listen to the hysterical nonsense of any group who can out-talk and make more noise than all other groups. Men talk of justice and hurl themselves at a smaller country in order to enlighten it with their own civilization. “And the gospel of Peace on earth *is* but idle talk, and the ego's desire of appropriation *is* boundless. And the sooner we realize it the better, for as things go a dead and ruined planet is our goal.”

Mark Twain wrote what is loosely termed “common sense”; but, fortunately, he was no common thinker. He wrote in the Gilded Age, in the days of “democratic triumph”—a period very much like the one we are living in. Today we look with suspicion upon every Russian “communist” (a fine, handy label, by the way), believing he is plotting to undo our government. We hate the French and fear the English; we feel sad because the Japanese surrendered before we were able to sink their island with atom bombs. Every day we commit fiendish acts in the name of “public opinion”; even in our small communities our thoughts fall short of generosity and understanding. This trend of thought is Twain's own; it is found in his *Mysterious Stranger*.

Nothing could have conveyed more clearly Mark Twain's attitudes toward life and death and God, and his skepticism of formal religion than *The Mysterious Stranger*. His God was a God

far removed from the lay figure of religious dogma, and of his own early teaching. His God was vast, boundless as the skies, illimitable as the stars. His God was a cosmic order, rather than the white-robed figure, mounted on a golden throne on some far-off cloud, ruling the petty lives of earthlings. In a document of his own religious belief he wrote:

"I believe that the universe is governed by strict and immutable laws. If one man's family is swept away by a pestilence and her man's spared it is only the law working: God is not interfering in that small matter, either against the one man or in favor of the other."

In other words, Mark Twain, like Jefferson, Lincoln, and Benjamin Franklin, was a deist, and not a theist.

But before continuing on Twain's religious beliefs, it may be well to say that although he did not deviate materially in his credo in later years, he was never dogmatic. He would not interfere with any one's religion, but held an amount of respect for it. On a fly-leaf of Moncure D. Conway's *Sacred Anthology* he wrote:

"The easy confidence with which I know another man's religion is folly teaches me to suspect that my own is also."

Twain held that the human race was not under the immediate jurisdiction of a personal God. He could not see why the Creator should trifle with our small lives, with insignificant humans.

Twain did not believe in reward and punishment by God, in life or after life. He did not believe that eternal punishment would accomplish anything. To chasten a man in order to teach him is well and good; but roasting him forever over the coals in hell is senseless and ridiculous. As for God's punishing man on earth—He would not interfere with the immutable laws of His own universe; and if He did, he would be a pretty mean, horrible God. In the words of Satan, the arch angel:

"—a God who could make good children as easily as bad, yet preferred to make bad ones; who could have made every one of them happy, yet never made a single happy one; who made them prize their bitter life, yet stingily cut it short; who gave his angels eternal happiness unearned, yet required his other children to earn it; who gave his angels painless lives, cursed his other children with biting miseries and maladies of mind and body; who

mouths justice and invented hell—mouths Golden Rules, and forgiveness multiplied by seventy times seven, and invented hell—”

Such an idea of God is fictitious. God invented a comet, equipped with man, and left it to shift for itself. When man breaks moral laws—theft, murder, rape—God is not injured, and God has nothing directly to do with it or them.

Mark Twain, philosopher, was not afraid of his ideas, for they were his own; yet he was reluctant to publish a certain number of his books. *The Mysterious Stranger* came out in 1916, six years after his death in 1910. He was wise in this matter; he knew how the public would react to this novel—a public who knew Mark Twain, only as the humorist, the innocent, the American funny man. A legend had been built around Twain; yet, the Twain of the legend was no more real than the Washington of the cherry tree story.

In these times, it would do one well to read—or reread, as the case may be—this great book of Twain's. If this book be skepticism, let us be skeptics. Let us know our faults, our littleness, our prejudices. Let us banish ignorance, and learn the truth about ourselves; for without truth, we can accomplish nothing.

THE GREEN LEAVES KNOW

The green leaves know
For the wind has told
My grief a thousand times.
How love was killed
While the town clock chimed
For the end of love
And the end of time.

The thin steel made
A three-cornered way
Between two ribs.
If you ask me why
I killed my love
At midnight in the park,
I will say, I found
Perfection, and feared time.

—Wesley Davis

CIRCUS: NUMBER 8

Here is a wonder: number 8
and yet it is the part of you and me
that is afraid.

Could you hang by your heels from a flying trapeze?
Zoom from a cannon into a net?
Trust your head to a lion's mouth?
Neither could I.
And if I were you (and we were a lady)
We wouldn't want beards on our face;
There is no thrill in turning to stone,
nor in having rubber legs.
Still the freaks of us are pleasant to see
and to rationalize in (perhaps) jealousy.
Could you dance with a dance?
Stand bare-back on a horse?
Could you twist your lips in an ugly smile
when your heart was ignorant of joy?
Neither could I.

So here is a wonder: number 8,
deciphered from the dreams of us
who sleep in static peace.

—Gordon H. Felton

TO PEG MANVEL

My heart is cold
A cell
 for dreams too old
To tell
 until the night
When out
 they burst in flight
To shout
 your name.

—Donald Sauers

The Aristocrats

BY JIM ANDERSON

SIR Basil Smythe-Eddington (pronounced Bahsil, and the Smythe rhyming with scythe) paused before the entrance of the Olde Absinthe House, inspecting the building with a critical eye. He struck the wall lightly with his cane as though to test its stability, straightened the carnation in his lapel, and walked majestically through the open doorway.

"I, sir," he announced to the startled bartender, "am Sir Basil Smythe-Eddington, of Cornwall, England. I am an authority on Dickens, a Knight of the Order of the Bath, a connoisseur of fine vintages, and I am thirsty. I should be deeply indebted to you, Sir, if you should convey to me a double portion of your best, driest, most palatable Scotch."

When he was furnished with this commodity, he sipped it thoughtfully, with appreciation. Turning slowly, with dignity he surveyed his fellow patrons. A man with a helmet designating him as a ship-yard worker sat talking to a faded, slovenly blonde who heard not a word, but stared drunkenly at the wall. A business man in a blue suit disputed about relations with Russia with a University student. At the table in the far corner behind a large potted palm an elderly gentleman with a white suit, white hair and a van dyke, scribbled in a notebook, occasionally sipping a large mint julep. A white hat with a large brim lay on the table, and against the potted palm leaned an ivory-headed cane, not unlike that of Sir Basil's.

At the other end of the bar an old man with watery eyes, stubble covered face, and a pair of soiled, torn overalls, was in turn inspecting Sir Basil Smythe-Eddington, from his white spats to his pearl grey derby, wondering whether there was a chance of a free drink. He started in the direction of Sir Basil, who promptly but unhurriedly proceeded to the table of the julep drinker.

"Good day, Sir, I am Sir Basil Smythe-Eddington, of Cornwall, England; scholar, author, archeologist, traveler, conversationalist. I am at present garnering data for my forthcoming volume, *Contemporary Folklore of the Southern United States*. I am interested in making the acquaintance of natives of the country, versed in the knowledge of the customs, etcetera of the people."

The Drinker of Juleps motioned to a chair with a generous air.

"Have a chair, Suh, (great accent on the Suh) and a bit of something to drink. I was just going to have the waiter ask you over, Suh, and in return for your introduction of yourself, I am Colonel Effington Carroll, of the not unknown Carrollton Carrolls; my Colonial ancestor being of some fame as having been one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. Having spent thirty years in the military service, I am now retired, and spend my time in managing my plantation, and in composing verse. As to your wish for information, I am not wholly unacquainted with the local inhabitants of the region. In fact, Suh, I may say that you may find me rather unusually well informed on the subject, as I am somewhat of an observant nature."

Had Colonel Effington Carroll been slightly more observant, he would have noticed the look of interest that flitted across the face of Sir Basil at the mention of "my plantation." But the appearance of two large juleps on the tray of the Negro waiter absorbed his attention for the moment. He gazed in silent admiration at the marvelous objects as they were transferred from the tray by the reverent hands of the Negro, to rest finally, gloriously before them. Colonel Carroll tossed a five dollar bill onto the tray. "You may have the change."

He watched with appreciation the humility of the waiter. Colonel Carroll believed that liberal investments brought liberal rewards.

"I am interested not so much in the masses," said Sir Basil, "as the upper classes; the aristocracy, if you please. I am interested in their ideas, customs, influence, and their home life. I wish to ascertain how their estates compare, say with my own in Cornwall, for example. You say you are a plantation owner?" Sir Basil had heard of the famous hospitality of the southern plantation.

"Oh, ah, yes, yes, I have something of a plantation, a few thousand acres, or so," said the Colonel vaguely, "not much, you know, just something to occupy my time, a place to keep my horses. By the way did you say your estate is in Cornwall? That's quite a coincidence. You see, I was just meditating a trip to London to tend to some business affairs, and I might run down to see you. Where in Cornwall is your estate?"

Sir Basil frowned slightly, drank deeply. "Southern tip, just a small place, country residence. Mainly for parties, and that sort of thing. Twenty or twenty-five servants. I forget exactly how many. Haven't been there myself in a year or so. Gathering literary material and all that. Is your home east or

west of here? Can't say I was ever on a southern plantation before. Have many visitors? I've heard a great deal about the hospitality of the Southern Gentry, you know, quite famous, world over. I met a gentleman in Cairo last summer who told me that if I ever came to this corner of the globe to be sure to spend a few days or so on a plantation. Wonderful hospitality, he said."

The Colonel, in turn, drank deeply. "Yes, there are a number of visitors," he said, "Number of them. I would ask you down, old man, but right now I'm having the whole interior redecorated, so I dismissed the help for a month, and ran over here for the symphony season, then to London. Maybe I could drop in on you in England. Then, next trip over you can stay with me for a while."

"Yes, of course, of course," Sir Basil had finished his drink. He looked suddenly at his watch, apparently remembering an important appointment. "My, I have a dinner engagement at seven, and I have only an hour to dress. Really I must run along. Glad to have met you, old man. See you around, later."

"Certainly," said the Colonel, "Certainly, you might look me up if you are over this way again."

Sir Basil gathered together his hat, his cane, his dignity, and leisurely carried them out the door. He walked two or three blocks, and having made sure that he was not followed, turned down a narrow street. A fifteen-minute walk brought him to his boarding house. Once in his room, on the third and last story, he carefully turned the key in the lock and, sitting on the bed, explored the contents of his wallet and change pocket. Two dollars and fifteen cents.

"Maybe I could entice the boys downstairs into a bit of a card game," he muttered. And, adjusting his cravat, he disappeared through the unlocked door.

In another room, of another boarding house, far across the city, Colonel Effington Carroll, of the Carrollton Carrolls, sat on the edge of his bed, darning his right sock, a small hole having appeared in the course of the evening. The door of his room was securely locked.

Breakfast In Bed

BY DAN PAONESSA

SWIFTLY and carefully he arranged the silver on a small tray; two spoons on a napkin on one side of the plate, and a knife and fork on the other. He poured orange juice from a can into a tiny glass and placed it next to the napkin.

As he spread butter on the toast with quick nervous strokes of his knife, he worked up a picture of his wife, Ellen, and how surprised she would be when he walked into her bedroom with a breakfast tray. He could hear her uttering senseless little sounds as he placed the tray on the mahogany bedstand, her eyes wide open as they looked at him questioningly. He could hear her say, in her small, fragile voice, "Why John!" And he would sit close to her, and kiss one ear and tell her that he loved her.

Of course she would know that this was one of the many little things he was doing to show how sorry he was. And she would be waiting for him to lean close to her to ask her forgiveness, and she'd say quickly, a little too quickly, "Don't be silly, I've forgotten all about it—" But deep down in her heart there would be a soft, sickening feeling.

He cursed himself as he remembered that letter. He had gotten it in the morning mail, just as he was sitting down to breakfast with Ellen. The light blue envelope and the small feminine handwriting made Ellen glance up quickly at him. He had scanned it and put it back in its envelope. His tone was matter-of-fact as he said to his wife, "Just a note from my secretary." Ellen smiled at him sweetly, and he knew that she believed him. Then he had tucked the note away somewhere in his coat and forgot it. He should have burned it; he knew that now.

Then there was that terrible scene that had followed. He had never seen Ellen like that before. "Are you tired of me after only two years?" she had screamed. "Are you tired of running through my money?" Then she had flown at him, drawing her nails across her face. He grabbed her by the wrists and forced her into a chair. He held her until she calmed down, and then he tried to explain. But how was he to explain? How could he tell her—

He poured the steaming black coffee into a small cup on the tray. It was hot and strong; that was how Ellen liked her coffee.

He was sure she would like this. He had fixed it especially for her.

He picked up the tray and started for the stairs. He stopped abruptly, set the tray down, and walked over to the fireplace. There he drew out a light blue envelope, touched a match to it, and watched it burn. No sense keeping *that* any longer, he thought. He ground the ashes with the toe of his shoe.

He picked up the tray again and walked slowly up the long staircase. How surprised she was going to be! He smiled, thinking. She would forgive him; he knew that. She really loved him.

He stopped before her bedroom door, suddenly remembering what he was still carrying in his hand. Balancing the heavy tray with his left hand, he slipped the empty bottle of potassium cyanide into his coat pocket.

THEY ARE DEAD

They are dead who sistered us,
Cousined us, befriended us,
They are dead, their bones are laid
In a land where fighting rages,
All the earth their burial ground,
All the world our orphanage.

Cousined by these snows and suns
In unrelenting family feud
We couple with incestuous nature
(They are dead who friended us)
And our griefs are put to pasture
On these barren slopes of land.

Beneath the sky, upon the ground,
Nomadic, diffident, afraid,
Each step desecrates a grave.
Death, peerless equestrian,
Turn in your saddle long enough
To applaud our desolation.

—*Wesley Davis and Betty Miller Davis*

The Comedian

BY HENRY COPPS

“Oh, Loret!”

The soldier called softly to the dark young lady who stood facing the street, nervously smoking a cigarette. She heard him, turned around, walked poisedly to the fence and extended her hand through two strands of barbed wire.

“Comment allez vous?” he asked.

“Tres bien, Joel, et vous?” she replied hoarsely, a slight tremor in her voice. “Pourquoi vous ne venez pas a ma maison pour longtemps?” That was blunt and it caught him unawares, for he had not expected her to come and had prepared no answer. He started to say that he had lost his money in a crap game and couldn't come because he was broke, but he checked himself in time. That was one with several interpretations, ugly ones.

“I had no cigarettes,” he stammered.

“Cigarettes,” she cried. “You mean to say that you didn't come to see me because you had no cigarettes to bring?”

“Well, yes. I mean, no. . . . I mean. . . . Oh hell, I don't know what I mean. I . . . uh. . . . I've been studying.”

“What nonsense is this you are speaking. . . . No cigarettes . . . studying? Have you been drinking? Yes, I see you've been fighting and drinking. That's why you couldn't come, isn't it?”

“No Loret, I'll tell you the truth. You may laugh. . . . yes, you'll think me a fool. I don't know how to put it cleverly; it's really not very clever. I've been reading the Bible.”

She gave a bitter little laugh.

“You've been reading the Bible, ha . . . ha . . . ha. Yes, I know you read it. I never should have befriended you. It is not wise to trust a man who rationalizes with a Bible in his hand. You are stupid—a hypocrite, a fool—you and your delicate soul. You could have sent a message to let me know; that would have been the Christian thing to do.”

He knew how naive, how ridiculous his confused statement had seemed to her. But how could she, poor colet, understand the great feeling of peace that came to him when he read, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity—To everything there is a season, and a time to everything under the heavens: A time to be born, and a time to die—A time to love and a time to hate.” How could she understand, she who lived by caresses, that he wanted to be alone, utterly alone. He went on. “Loret, I intended to come every day this week, but there were two voices arguing within me; one argued that she is waiting to hear from you and that it is incon-

siderate to leave her thus, after all her kindness. The other said, abide; if you go it will be a great mistake. The few moments you have had reading, concentrating, thinking, will be as lost pearls for with her you will laugh and drink and be satisfied, but your soul will ache with a deeper hunger . . . and there is so little time."

She laughed again, with taut lips that betrayed an effort to restrain her tears. "You are a comedian, that is your only talent—you—a poet! It were better I had befriended an ordinary French laborer. He never would have treated me as cruelly as you have."

His eyes dropped to the ground; he scratched the dirt with his toe. "You drive the knife pretty deep, Loret." She turned and walked slowly toward her bicycle. He felt obliged to make some further explanation, or rather he felt the episode incomplete. He called quietly to her. "Loret, come back." She paused as if to make up her mind and returned. "You think there is another woman, don't you, Loret? But I want you to know there is not . . . there will not be another woman."

"In her mind this theme played, madly repetitious. He is a soldier, a foreign soldier, I knew that from the beginning. They are all alike, they think we are nothing but perfumed animals. They know nothing but to take, to lie, to destroy." I came back not to hear more of your silly talk Joel, but so those two French soldiers sitting in that truck would suspect nothing." Tears appeared in the corners of her eyes. "We gave you our home, our friendship. I gave you everything, more than you are really capable of understanding. Yes it is true, you are tired of me and have found someone else to amuse you. You are a driven animal parading as a knight in armor. You with your pure thoughts. You do not even know yourself. I do not care to see you again." She turned to go and he did not detain her.

Some soldiers who were nearby had been watching the scene. As Loret pedalled off down the street, they began to guffaw and cast bawdy taunts at Joel. "Hey, where's the wedding, Joe?" "Ah, these lovers' quarrels." "Looks like pretty good stuff, Joe, why don't you take some of your friends around."

Joel looked at them through narrow slits of eyes feigning anger, dug his hands in his pockets and slumped away. He reflected morosely on what had been said. "God it's a funny world. You want to go along, minding your own business, being a good guy and yet you're always hurting somebody or getting hurt. Maybe she was right. Maybe I am a clown . . . but I'm a soldier. What can I do?"

Landfall

BY RAOUL SALAMANCA

THE sailor stood with elbows on the rail, his back hunched forward, his eyes scanning the northeast horizon. The ship plunged deep into a wave, cleaving it cleanly, sending up a spray of fine salt that felt good against his skin. The waves were bigger now. They came in long, rolling ground-swells out of the north, lifting him skyward, then plunging him dizzily down. High above his head the signalman was running up his landing colors. Two gulls darted among the flags, their wings flapping noisily.

"Special sea details, man your stations."

Even the impersonal tone of the ship's inter-com system could not hide the excitement in the exec's voice as he gave the order. The men at the rail sensed it too. Their eyes searched the horizon. The sailor settled his elbows against the rail, adjusted his legs more comfortably. To the northeast, water stretched endlessly. His eyes ached from the sun glare. . . . Then he saw it. Where the water joined the sky, projecting timidly above the sea-surface, the thing appeared—a hazy, bluish, little blob of substance, a blessed piece of solid land, a bit of America!

He was home at last.

TONIGHT THERE STILL IS SILENCE

Tonight there still is silence and the all
Pervading sombreness that seems to fill
Your vacant place. No footsteps down the hall;
No whispered word or warm embrace. O will
There be no end to all these hollow days
And faded nights when once again we stand
Beside each other, sure to go in ways
Of one . . . to seek in love our own green land?

Not long, the seasons say. Time leaps ahead
To quickly gather space and draw us near,
For even now once leafless trees have shed
Their dormant cast to bear a fruitful year.
Not long to wait . . . until the rain-winds fall,
And wash my lonely shadow from the wall.

—Jeannette Webman.

