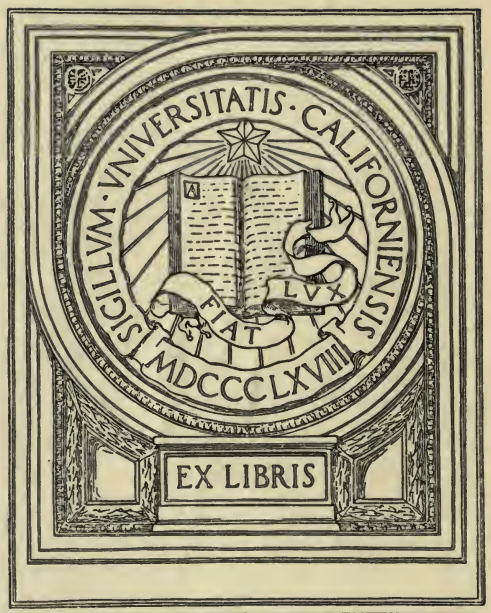
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A MANUAL OF THE
SHORT STORY ART

A MANUAL OF THE SHORT STORY ART

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
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A MANUAL OF THE SHORT STORY ART

BY

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To

My Father and My Mother

who taught their children around
the evening lamp and before
the open fire place that to
see life imaginatively
was to see life
truthfully.

FOREWORD

A famous actress, long since dead, once remarked with bitterness: "In my day all that was necessary to produce a play were two boards and a passion; today all that is necessary are two sticks and a wardrobe." In adapting this statement to the writing art I am tempted to paraphrase it as follows: In the good old days all that one needed to become a writer was an idea and a dozen goose quills; today all that one needs is a dozen rhetorics and a blue pencil.

This book was written with an eye on the student, not on the rules of composition and rhetoric. It conceives of the student as a creature who loves to use his eyes and ears, and who takes delight in playing the amateur detective and in ravelling and unravelling plots. It assumes that a young man or a young woman is filled to overflowing with warm, living interests and desires and aspirations which, taken together, constitute a greater driving force toward success in writing than anything which the textbooks and teachers can give him. By taking advantage of these natural desires and instincts and not working against them it is believed that the teacher may best "draw out" the student to the fullest self-expression.

One of these deep-seated instincts of the student is to see things in the concrete. For that reason the method of presenting exercises commonly used in this book is the so-called "projective method." Instead of being asked to

describe a city street, the student is asked to read a sentence that helps him to visualize a street and then to write down what he sees.

Another deep-seated instinct of a boy is to "get somewhere." Much as we may decry this by-product of the American worship of efficiency, we must accept it as a fact, whether or not we ignore it in theory. The American boy hates to mark time. For that reason he gives the best of himself in supporting his football team which is fighting its way toward a very definite and materially visible goal, and withholds all but the minimum amount of himself from the mastering of Latin conjugations where the goal is shrouded in mists of "sweetness and light." For the same reason the average boy hates the thought of writing "themes" where the only relation of one to the other is as the relation of the chapters on Unity, Coherence and Mass in his textbook are one to the other, and where the final result is the blue pencil or the wastebasket.

In this book the short story is the goal, and the descriptive and narrative bits which are required of the student in the early chapters are all steps in a carefully charted path leading directly toward that goal.

Needless to say there are many other instincts, characteristic of boy nature, which this textbook attempts to utilize in tempting a boy to give the best of himself to the art of writing, which, lest we become tedious, we shall leave for the individual instructors and students to discover for themselves as they proceed to put these exercises into practice.

To summarize briefly what has just been said, the purpose of this book is to take the study of English Com-

position out of the hands of the sons of Martha, who have monopolized it for many weary and all but fruitless years, and restore it to the sons of Mary to whom by birthright it naturally belongs. In other words, it is an attempt to transfer the art of composition from the field of the Sciences back to the field of the Arts, and to invest it with that most potent of all incentives to success—the artist's true joy in his work.

While the scheme of this book, taken as a whole, presents a new attack upon an old problem, the principles underlying the plan are not new. Perhaps the chief claim to originality which the book deserves is that its author has wandered somewhat off the beaten track in his search for these principles and for the illustrative matter to make them clear.

I am indebted first of all to the psychologists and the students of the human mind, from Aristotle down. In the second place I am indebted to Mr. H. C. Peterson who in a very elementary book intended for high schools, and to Miss Gertrude Buck who in a book intended for teaching "Expository Writing" to college girls discovered some psychological methods of approach which I considered adaptable for short story writing. I am indebted to innumerable authors who have in one way or another revealed some of their "trade secrets." One source which yielded richly of this material was the "Editor Magazine."

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A WORD TO THE TEACHER

The following plan of using this book has been found to be effective. One week may very profitably be spent on each of the first five chapters with the exception of the fourth which deserves two weeks. A week means three class recitations with theme assignments and sometimes an impromptu theme in class. The first five chapters serve to introduce the student to the more elementary materials of the short story, train his hand in the fundamentals of style, and form the habit of almost daily writing.

Following this introductory stage a week may be devoted to gathering material for plots according to the directions in Chapter VI; and while this is being done outside of class hours, the class periods may be used for impromptu themes or class discussions based upon the exercises in Chapter XI. Then should follow one or two weeks' study of each of the following chapters: VII, VIII, IX, and X. Stories should not be written these weeks; they should merely be planned.

Finally a month or three weeks should be given over to the writing of an original short story which should afterwards be carefully revised.

When the book is used for advanced classes in short story writing the first five chapters may be passed over a little more rapidly and the more intensive work begin with Chapter VI. One story of each of the four types

should be required of the students, one of which should be very carefully revised as the crowning effort of the course.

The most annoying difficulties in a course of this kind are usually connected with rhetoric, style, and plot building. For that reason the material in Part III has been included in this book to relieve the teacher of some of the burden of overcoming these faults of the student. It should be reserved for specific individual assignments—to be prescribed by the teacher whenever and wherever it seems to be particularly needed.

The main body of technique is grouped together in one short chapter (Chapter XI) which the student is to read and re-read and refer to constantly while he is writing his complete short story. This chapter discloses the whole premise upon which this book is based: That only as the student is required to apply his knowledge in actual exercises will the knowledge be assimilated, become part of that larger body of actual working knowledge which the student already possesses, and which, when it is made an integral part of himself, becomes wisdom.

A WORD TO THE STUDENT

It is only fair to tell you right at the beginning what this book cannot do for you. It cannot give you the background of a wide and deep experience of life. It cannot give you that liberal culture and training of intellect which only years of reading and study can give you. The highest attributes of a writer—character, culture and vision—this book cannot and does not pretend to give you. It furnishes only the smallest part of the requirements of a writer—the technique and formula of one specific mode of writing.

It might be said that this book is merely the mallet and chisel by which the student may be enabled to disengage his vision from the block. The technique is not as important as the vision; and a knowledge of formula is not as important as a knowledge of life. The beginner, without vision and without knowledge of life, will find himself circumscribed by a too slavish observation of the purely mechanical laws of short-story writing. But as he grows in knowledge of life and in breadth of vision he will find himself touching with confident hand certain phases of life regardless of whether they fall into the frame of the conventional plot with its emphasis upon action which too often results in melodrama, seeking rather those more subtle, intangible clashes between motives and persons which is real drama.

It is advisable that the beginner in any art should

submit his work to the technique and formula of that art. But that does not mean that he should become complacent as he sees himself attaining the mastery of the external material in which he works. For development in any art is measured not so much by the things done by the student as by the growth within the student; and this inner growth awaits upon the gradual development of his general intellectual capacities and his ever enlarging knowledge of life.

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PART I

STUDIES IN SHORT STORY WRITING

A MANUAL OF THE SHORT STORY ART

CHAPTER I

THE PICTURE

The protoplasm of all writing is the picture. The first known writing was picture writing. The latest achievement of human art is the picture drama. The picture is the most simple, the most elemental, the most effective of all methods of presenting thought.

As a matter of fact we habitually think, even in our commonest affairs, not in abstractions but in pictures. Your friend invites you to go with him on a fishing trip. You sit down to consider the matter. Almost at once your mental conceptions take the form of pictures. You see yourself collecting your tackle, and packing your grip. Then you see yourself on the edge of the lake or the creek, and pushing out in a little boat. You see the silver surface of the water all about you and the birches or willows along the water's edge. Perhaps you see your line shake as a fish nibbles at the bait, and then suddenly pull taut as the victim is snared. Or you may see the sun beating down upon your hat and the swarms of little gnats and mosquitoes buzzing round your ears, and your line hang-

ing listlessly in the water with no sign of a "bite." Other things being equal, it depends very largely upon the picture which you see most vividly whether you will accept your friend's invitation or not.

Someone has said that a story is merely a series of pictures strung together by dialogue, and as a matter of fact this is not by any means the poorest definition of a story. Teachers of public speaking have pointed out that nothing is much more effective in a speech than a series of well chosen pictures which illustrate and amplify the central thought. Thus you see that whether you are writing a story or delivering a speech the picture method is equally effective. Whether your hearers are illiterate peasants or the most learned scholars you can rest assured that the picture as a means of conveying thought is very rarely futile or inappropriate.

So we may reaffirm that the fundamental element in all writing is the picture. It is the raw material, the protoplasm out of which the first writing came, and the mastery of it and the shaping of it to artistic and effective ends is the chief goal of our greatest writers of today. Therefore if you intend to become a writer or speaker, or merely an intelligent reader of other men's writings, you should learn how to see and how to reproduce a picture.

Your first step toward the writing of the short story will be to put into practice this fundamental principle. You are to see a picture and to see it as vividly as you can. With that purpose in view give your concentrated attention for several minutes to the sentence in the middle of the next page.

OLD UNCLE JOHN SAT
IN HIS COMFORTABLE
ARM-CHAIR BEFORE THE
FIRE, SMOKING HIS PIPE

Did you get a picture? Now shut your eyes and wait until the picture becomes very clear, so clear that you begin to see the vaguely discerned objects in the shadows creep out to the edge of the flickering fire's glow. Do you see the way Uncle John sits—the lines on the cheeks and brow—the way he holds his hands—the garments he wears? Is he a real man, or merely a phantom man without a shadow and without a complexion, without wrinkles or freckles or anything to distinguish him from any other man? Is it a room different from all other rooms—a real room in fact?

Now take a perfectly clean sheet of paper and put that picture down in words. Take care not to have any other character enter and do not conjecture what Uncle John is thinking about. All that we want is a *picture*. Remember that every object is not equally distinct; some things are in the shadow, some are in the light. Try hard to put down all those salient little details which individualize that room and make it different from all other rooms. Begin with the thing which affects you most or stands out the brightest, and go straight ahead. Don't look to right or left. Let your pen go as fast as your fingers can make it. Don't pause for the word that won't come. Leave a blank and come back to it later. Don't stop to correct a word which you think may be misspelled. There will be plenty of time for that later. Your chief business for the time being is to get that picture down on the paper before you.

After your picture is completed, and not before, you may lean back in an easy chair and proceed to go over it, as the saying runs, "with a fine-tooth comb." Make this one of your most carefully observed laws of writing: *After writing down your picture in hot blood, revise it*

in cold blood. At this point you cannot be too careful. You will see the wisdom now of leaving space enough between the lines for interlinear corrections. Wide margins are also a great help. In your first themes look out especially for the following faults:

1. Have you used abstract or general words for concrete or specific ones? For instance, did you say that the room was dirty when you might have said that there were splotches of mud on the floor?

2. Were the sentences monotonously similar in form and length?

3. Did you use commas where they were not needed to make the meaning clear?

4. Did you use too many "ands"?

When you have finally made all the corrections you can, copy the theme neatly on a clean sheet of paper, writing on one side of the paper only, leaving good margins—and your first task is done.

THE ADVICE OF A FAMOUS TEACHER TO A FAMOUS PUPIL

"Everything which one desires to express must be looked at with sufficient attention, and during a sufficiently long time, to discover in it some aspect which no one has as yet seen or described. In everything there is still some spot unexplored, because we are accustomed only to use our eyes with the recollection of what others before us have thought on the subject which we contemplate. The smallest object contains something unknown. Find it. To describe a fire that flames, and a tree on the plain, look, keep looking, at that flame and that tree until in your eyes they have lost all resemblance to any other tree or any other fire.

"This is the way to become original. . . .

"When you pass a grocer seated at his shop door, a janitor smoking his pipe, a stand of hackney coaches,

show me that grocer and that janitor—their attitude, their whole physical appearance—embracing likewise, as indicated by the skilfulness of the picture, their whole moral nature; so that I cannot confound them with any other grocer or any other janitor. Make me see, in one word, that a certain cab horse does not resemble the fifty others that follow or precede it."

Flaubert's advice to Maupassant.

STUDIES IN VISUALIZATION

1. Little Johnny sat on the bank of a pond, with one shoe and stocking off, in deep meditation.
2. The street of smooth asphalt gleamed under the summer sun.
3. Mary, with her bonnet hanging loose, leaned over the gate, watching the road closely.
4. The soda clerk, in neat apron, stood behind the marble counter.
5. At the end of the long portage, the old harvester stopped for a moment to contemplate the glare of the setting sun upon the placid water of Lake Silence.
6. The immense cathedral stood right before him.
7. The riveter was working on the rattling steel girder.
8. Old Eben, with his scythe on his shoulder, stood by the old farm gate at the close of day.
9. A lone musician sat with his guitar in a small boat, playing to the moonlight on the water.
10. In the door of the tent Old Indian John, the last of his tribe, sat smoking his stone pipe.
11. The professor sat behind his desk waiting for his question to be answered.
12. With a gun in his hand and a dependable bird dog at his side he started out over the wild hay meadows.
13. The day was warm and the stands were crowded with people waiting for the race to begin.

14. Aunt Tilly sat on a straight back chair, reading the family Bible.
15. Grandmother Grey sat knitting in the back yard under the old apple tree.
16. The Old Doctor sat in his old office chair.
17. Little Marie sat on the floor of the nursery, playing with her dolls.
18. Old Silas and his friends had seated themselves around the old stove, in the general merchandise store, which was lighted by a hanging oil lamp.
19. On the wall above the mantle of the fireplace hung a colored painting entitled "Aurora."
20. Alice, a little girl three years old, was playing with a broken toy wagon on the street.
21. The moon shone brightly on the little old cabin, disclosing a darky seated on the front step with his banjo.
22. The chimney sweep, with bag of tools over his shoulder, came whistling down the street.
23. Shortly after landing we marched five miles inland, and then, for the first time, I saw the remaining ruins of the ancient Spanish fort.
24. Old Granny Chapple was busily weeding her garden beside the house.
25. Mary sits at her desk, busily writing a theme for English.
26. The old man in ragged coat sat on the bench in the park.
27. Freddie, standing on the outside of the circus tent with one eye glued to a tiny opening, seemed very intent on what was happening inside.
28. Old Rover was stretched out on the back step sunning himself.
29. Little Tom sat playing in the sand pile by the garden.
30. John was sitting on the ground fixing his automobile.

NOTE: The exercises above may be divided into three sets to be used in three succeeding years, or to avoid too great duplication in assignments when used in several sections of a Freshman College English course.

CHAPTER II

THE LOGICAL ARRANGEMENT OF A PICTURE

In your description of Uncle John what detail did you put first? His face? The effect of the light upon the room? The room as a whole? Or did you begin back in the corner?

This is an important question; for upon its answer hinges the clearness of effect which your picture will make upon your readers. The first thing we must learn after the elementary art of visualization has been mastered is the art of beginning in the right place.

I call this an art because that is what it practically amounts to in the hands of a true artist. However, it is an art founded upon a firmly established principle, and it will prove of inestimable help to you to know what this principle is. On its face this principle sounds very simple: *Describe first the thing which you see first.*

But as a matter of fact there is hardly a more difficult thing in the world than to determine definitely what you see first. Our method of observing things has become by long habit so rapid a process that to many of us it seems instantaneous. When we sit down and attempt to find stages in this process, we find it almost impossible.

We can get at this problem best by calling to our aid the analogy of the moving-picture machine. A naturalist who has difficulty in discovering the exact motions of a wild animal when it is running at top speed has recourse to the ultra-rapid movie camera. There comes a day

when he has the opportunity of making a series of pictures of the animal in motion. These pictures, when released upon the screen, reveal the animal moving at one-fifth its actual speed, thus enabling the student to observe accurately the exact sequence of its motions. A similar method has been used on groups of industrial workers by students of scientific management to discover ways and means of eliminating waste motions in industry.

As one means of getting at our problem, then, I suggest that we, figuratively speaking, bring to our aid a device similar to that of the moving-picture machine. That is to say, let us attempt to get our first impressions of a scene quickly, and then take them into a dark room, so to speak, and examine them slowly.

How shall you do this? Select an old church, a blacksmith shop or a dark cellar for your experiment. Step in, take one sweeping glance around you, and then step out again. What impression did you get? When you come to examine your results you will find that you will be able to deduce the following principle: The tendency of the good description is to move from the general to the particular, from the effect as a whole to the effect as detail. The mass of details, contributory to this general impression, should come later.

Another way of retarding your process of observation is to station yourself a long distance away from an object and approach it slowly. You can then record your impressions in the actual order in which they come to you.

"Southward, above and beyond the deep green chain, tower other volcanic forms—very far away, and so pale-gray as to seem like clouds. Those are the heights of Nevis—another creation of the subterranean fires.

"It draws nearer, floats steadily into definition: a great

mountain flanked by two small ones; three summits; the loftiest, with clouds packed high upon it, still seems to smoke; the second highest displays the most symmetrical crater-form I have yet seen. All are still grayish-blue or gray. Gradually through the blues break long high gleams of green.

"As we steam closer, the island becomes all verdant from flood to sky; the great dead crater shows its immense wreath of perennial green. On the lower slopes little settlements are sprinkled in white, red, and brown; houses, windmills, sugar-factories, high chimneys are distinguishable—cane-plantations unfold gold-green surfaces.

"We pass away. The island does not seem to sink behind us, but to become a ghost. All its outlines grow shadowy. For a little while it continues green; but it is a hazy, spectral green, as of colored vapor. The sea today looks almost black: the southwest wind has filled the day with luminous mist; and the phantom of Nevis melts in the vast glow, dissolves utterly."

—*Lafcadio Hearn.*

This substantiates your first conclusion: that the stages through which perception passes are always from the general effect to the particular details. "Perception is not the instantaneous thing we are accustomed to think, but occupies time, though brief time," writes Miss Buck in "Essentials of Expository Writing." "The stages through which perception passes on its way to completeness are, in their essential features, the same for all normal observers."

STUDIES IN FIRST IMPRESSIONS

I. Step into a building and out again quickly, in imagination or in reality, and then record your first impression in one or two sentences.

A cathedral	A kitchen	An attic
A grocery store	An old church	A barn
A cellar	A cozy parlor	A schoolroom

II. Describe in one paragraph, giving the general impression first and following with only a few of the most significant details, the glimpses you get from a rapidly moving train, of a lake, a river, a wood path, a street in a village, a crowd pouring from a hall, a burning house.

III. (1) Describe the way a black spot on the horizon resolves itself into detail as you approach: a factory, a village, a clump of trees, a farmer in the field.

(2) Watch an approaching train, steamboat, automobile, horseman, cyclist or drove of cattle, and record your impressions.

IV. Describe as in Chapter I one of the following:

1. The little store invited the weary shopper to its quiet.
2. As Vera reached the top of the hill, the rising sun was just peeping over the horizon.
3. Alice stood gazing at the beautiful silver path the moon was throwing across the lake.
4. Charles stood on the pier and watched the immense steamer slowly move out of the harbor.
5. An old dust-covered bicycle stood in Grandmother's attic.
6. Old Jerry sat dozing in the noon-day glare, his fish pole slanting down by the edge of the boat.
7. The little baby lay on his back on the rug playing with his toes.

SUGGESTIONS FOR ASSIGNMENTS

First Lesson: Describe one from I, one from II, one from IV.

Second Lesson: Describe one from I, one from III, one from IV.

Third Lesson: Take topic of own choosing and apply principles discussed in this chapter.

NOTE: The exercises in this chapter will automatically impress upon the student the importance of unity, coherence and a definite point of view.

CHAPTER III

SUPPORTING THE PICTURE

We see, then, that the picture is the starting point of all writing. And we have discovered that to present a picture vividly and effectively we must take into account two things: first, the importance of the seemingly trivial but in fact very important detail; and, second, the importance of presenting the picture in the natural, logical way in which it would appear to the observer.

But to give us a sense of reality a picture should be more than mere details strung together according to a definite and logical arrangement. The reader should be made to step into the picture, so to speak, and to feel himself a part of it. And here we find the limitations of the sense of sight.

I can make this clear by an illustration. Suppose we add to the purely visual details in the sketch of Uncle John, the sound of crackling logs, the smell of burning pine knots and the soothing sense of warmth stealing over the face and body of the old man, and immediately the picture springs into a thing of life. The object that we have been seeing becomes a real object in a real world.

In other words, a picture should possess that element which all great painters prize very highly—*atmosphere,* something which mere visual detail cannot give it. There is nothing that gives this depth and tone to a picture better than a judicious admixture of details of sound, smell, taste and touch. Note the sense of reality that lingers about the following descriptions:

SOUND: "His room was on the north side of the street, and the morning sun shone in his window as he lay back in the chair, grateful for its warmth. A heavy cart lumbered along slowly over the worn and irregular pavement; it came to a stand at the corner, and a gang of workmen swiftly emptied it of the steel rails it contained, dropping them on the sidewalk one by one with a loud clang which reverberated harshly far down the street. From the little knot of men who were relaying the horse-car track came cries of command, and then a rail would drop into position, and be spiked swiftly to its place. Then the laborers would draw aside while an arrested horse-car urged forward again, with the regular foot-fall of its one horse, as audible above the mighty roar of the metropolis as the jingle of the little bell on the horse's collar. At last there came from over the house-tops a loud whistle of escaping steam, followed shortly by a dozen similar signals, proclaiming the midday rest. A rail or two more clanged down on the others, and then the cart rumbled away. The workmen relaying the track had already seated themselves on the curb to eat their dinner, while one of them had gone to the saloon at the corner for a large can of the new beer advertised in the window by the gaudy lithograph of a frisky young goat bearing a plump young goddess on his back."—*Brander Matthews, "Vignettes of Manhattan."*

SMELL: "There were whole streets—and these by no means the least fascinating and romantic—where the unwritten domestic records of every house were afloat in the air outside it—records not all savory or sweet, but always full of interest and charm!

"One knew at a sniff as one passed the porte-cochère what kind of people lived behind and above; what they ate and what they drank, and what their trade was; whether they did their washing at home, and burned tallow or wax, and mixed chicory with their coffee, and were over-fond of Gruyère cheese—the biggest, cheapest, plainest, and most formidable cheese in the world; whether they fried with oil or butter, and liked their omelets overdone and

garlic in their salad, and sipped black-currant brandy or anisette as a liqueur; and were overrun with mice, and used cats or mouse traps to get rid of them, or neither; and bought violets, or pinks, or gillyflowers in season, and kept them too long; and fasted on Friday with red or white beans, or lentils, or had a dispensation from the Pope—or haply, even dispensed with the Pope's dispensation."—*George du Maurier, "Peter Ibbetson."*

TASTE: "You have watched that fruit-laden tree for a week. You have noted the blush beginning to creep over the sunward side of those peaches on the lower limb. But all your pinching heretofore has been in vain—not a peach responds with the well-known yielding at the pressure of your fingers. Now, at last, here in the fork is one with a blackened cavity in its side. It drops from its place when your hand rests upon it. You pick it up, exulting, rolling it over and over in your hands, noting the downy softness and the pliancy of its form with your fingers.

"Your next impulse is to carry it to your nose. When its fragrance strikes your nostrils, your mouth begins to water out of sympathy. A rich, clinging odor, not spicy nor savoring of aromatic drugs, but rich with the plain, honest sweetness of nature!

"The mouth in this case is the necessary concomitant of the nose. So in goes the peach—bit by bit—to prolong the pleasure of the eating. The rich, clinging fragrance changes to a rich, clinging flavor. The delicate structure seems to melt in your mouth; all turns to juice—a honied draught of nature's that neither intoxicates nor cloys—a drink that the nectar-sipping gods might envy."—*George F. Richardson, in Grinnell College "Unit."*

TOUCH: "I found Uriah (Heep) reading a great fat book, with such demonstrative attention that his lank forefinger followed up every line as he read, and made clammy tracks along the page (or I so fully believed) like a snail. . . . It was no fancy of mine about his hands, I observed; for he frequently ground the palms against

each other as if to squeeze them dry and warm, besides often wiping them, in a stealthy way, on his pocket-handkerchief. . . . After shaking hands with me—his hand felt like a fish, in the dark—he opened the door into the street a very little, and crept out, and shut it, leaving me to grope my way back into the house; which cost me some trouble and a fall over his stool."—*Dickens, "David Copperfield."*

STUDIES IN THE FIVE SENSES

I

SOUND

In the following exercises limit yourselves to one or two sentences for each.

1. The sound of a garden hose in the early morning.
2. The sound of a distant surf.
3. The distant sound of running water.
4. The sound of footsteps through dead leaves.
5. The sound of unloading coal down a chute.
6. The sound of footsteps on a board walk.
7. The sound of bells striking one at night.
8. The sound of oars at twilight.
9. The sound of a train crossing a bridge.
10. The sound of a stone striking the water.
11. The sound of a woman's voice singing in a lonely wood at the dead of night.
12. The sound of cheering from a distance.
13. The sound of wagon wheels going through a pile of loose gravel.
14. The sound of a section hand driving spikes on the railroad.
15. The sound of boisterous laughter coming from another room.
16. The whinnying of a horse.

17. The sound of a train passing at full speed.
18. The sound of an automobile passing rapidly.
19. The sound of wind blowing through a keyhole.
20. The sound of wind in the telegraph wires.
21. The sound of rain on the roof.
22. The sound of a fire bell.
23. The sounds of the deepest tones of the organ.
24. The sound of dogs barking at night.
25. A nocturnal chorus of cats outside your window on a moonlight night in June.

II

TOUCH

Limit yourself in the following exercises to a short paragraph for each.

1. Using the sense of touch alone, describe a climb up a small hill where there are many jagged rocks and much loose gravel.
2. Describe the sensation of diving into a lake fed with cool springs.

   "The cool silver shock of a plunge in a pool's living water." —*Browning.*

   (If you have never dived describe the sensation of entering the lake "by inches").
3. Describe the sensation of running across your back yard without hat and coat on a bright blustering day in January.
4. Describe the sensations felt while working in the field in the sun on a tropical day in July.
5. Imagine you are stricken blind and are amusing yourself with pets given you by friends. Describe in less than ten words for each, the sensation to the hand of the following: a bantam hen, three baby chicks, a Newfoundland dog, a small kitten, a sheep and a pony.

III

TASTE AND SMELL

These exercises should be longer than the others, in many cases a page or two in length.

1. Describe a boiled dinner on the farm.
2. Describe the walking home from church through a part of town where housewives are busy getting dinner.
3. Describe the eating of a watermelon picked fresh on the vines.
4. Describe the cooking of wieners and coffee at a campfire, and the roasting of marshmallows.
5. Describe the making of candy in your mother's kitchen.
6. Describe your experience, away from home, at a first-class hotel, in ordering and being served with an unusually appetizing meal, after you have been living on crackers and cheese for several days because of shortage of pocket money.
7. Describe your experience at a cheap lunch counter in a dirty little "joint" where you are forced to get a bite between trains.

IV

ALL FIVE SENSES

I should rank the five senses in the following order both in regard to their difficulty for description and in regard to their effectiveness for conveying images to readers: 1st, *sight* when applied to objects in *motion;* 2nd, *sound;* 3rd, *smell;* 4th, *taste;* 5th, *touch;* 6th, *sight* as applied to objects at *rest,* i. e., outline, form, color, etc.

The most effective combination and the one easiest to handle is a combination of the first and second in the list

given above. Where the art of writing has especial advantages over the art of painting is in its power to suggest sound and motion.* Bearing that fact in mind it would be well for you to make it a special point when choosing scenes to introduce into your stories to select those which give the greatest opportunity for describing sound and motion. In describing the following scenes, while making use more or less of all five senses, select the moment when sound and activity are at their height.

1. Passing of a fire wagon down a crowded street.
2. A busy hour in the factory.
3. The unloading of a steamer.
4. The children pouring from the school door at recess time.
5. A thunder storm.
6. A blustering March day in the suburbs.
7. A forest fire.
8. When Brown hit a three-bagger in the ninth.
9. At the fair.
10. The waiting-room at the Railroad Station.

* "According to Aristotle it would seem that though the arts should scorn none of the abundance and variety of images they should nevertheless rely not so much on images that are purely tactual, visual, or gustatory as upon those which are auditory and motor." Prof. Raymond M. Weaver of Columbia University in *Eng. Journ.*, February, 1919.

CHAPTER IV

THE STORY EMERGES FROM THE PICTURE

A dervish traveling alone in Arabia met two merchants who seemed to be in some sort of trouble.

"You have lost a camel?" he said to the merchants.

"Indeed we have," they replied.

"He was blind in the right eye, I believe," said the dervish.

"He was."

"And lame in the left fore leg?"

"Yes," answered the merchants joyfully.

"Had he not lost a front tooth?"

"He had," both replied.

"He was loaded with wheat on one side?"

"True."

"And with honey on the other?"

"Most certainly he was. Will you please tell us where he is?"

The dervish said he could not. When they asked why, he said he had not seen the camel. He was straightway haled before a judge. When the trial came off, he explained how he knew about the camel to the judge's complete satisfaction, and was given his liberty.

How interesting that sounds! How eager we are to hear the sequel which explains how the Arab constructed his hypothesis from such slender clues as the ants and bees and other signs along the trail! This ancient chronicle, the earliest of all detective stories, has been introduced here in order to impress upon you the fact that if you wish to become a good story writer you must first of all

become a good detective. For the work of a short story writer and that of a detective are exceedingly similar. The chief difference lies in their angles of approach; for while the business of the detective is to construct hypotheses from clues, the business of the story writer is to furnish clues for the reader to draw hypotheses from. But in both cases chief emphasis is laid, not upon what comes into the picture, but upon what is *suggested by* the picture. The importance of this truth cannot be impressed too much upon you. The very heart and marrow of all our greatest fiction is SUGGESTION.

How much more interesting it is to read that John Simpkins wore no collar and that his neck needed shaving than to be told that he was out of a job! How much more interesting to be led by the writer to a room where we may find two overturned chairs, a half dozen poker chips, a pistol, and a hat with a hole in it, than to be told that a brawl had occurred in a western town!

In the following studies it is not what you *tell* but what you *suggest* that counts. It is only the *significant detail* that you should look for. We are now concerned not with *denotation* but with *connotation.*

STUDIES IN SUGGESTION

I

Description of Place

Describe the following scenes, taking care not to have any people appear in them.

1. Describe a room in such a way as to show that the occupant is a young lady, who is a student, is rich, thinks much of style, is rather frivolous, hates study, and has red hair.

2. Describe a library so as to show that the owner is something of a hermit, who is deeply wrapt up in one phase of study, believes he has a message, but is impractical, and has weak eyes.
3. Describe a kitchen so as to show that the cook is Irish, is a Catholic, is very sentimental, very neat, but behind the times in her methods.
4. Describe a shoe-repair shop to show that the shoemaker is a foreigner, is a socialist, opposed to war, is something of a reader, and is lame.
5. Describe the interior of a cabin in the woods so as to show that the dwelling is a long way from civilization, and is occupied by a retired seafaring man who lives alone and subsists largely on the results of his hunting and fishing.
6. Describe a nursery so as to show that the family has one small son, who has a special private nurse, and is greatly pampered and spoiled.
7. Describe a hat rack full of hats and caps so as to show that a large family dwells in the house, that they are all interested in out-of-door sports, are in general slovenly and careless in their habits, and while not possessed of much worldly goods have abundance of health and good spirits. Show that the father enjoys gardening.
8. Describe a lonely spot of ground by a pond in the woods so as to show that a deer has been killed there, and that the hunter was an Indian with a gun, and was accompanied by a dog with a long tail.
9. Describe a village church in such a way as to show that the congregation are Baptists, are not very well to do, but that one member of the church is very wealthy, and that he has lost his wife or some other member of his family within the last five years; also show if you can that the congregation

is noted for its singing, or at least gives an important place to song in worship.

10. Describe a village store so as to show that the village is behind the times, is largely foreign in population, contains many old people, and is rather famous for the honesty of its citizens. Also that the storekeeper is good-natured and a little careless.

II

Description of Persons

In the foregoing exercises you were required to suggest things about people who were absent without letting them enter into the picture. Now reverse the process and suggest what has happened by inferences that may be drawn from the action of the persons themselves.

Here is a good example of character description to suggest something that has happened, taken from the novel "Adam Bede." You can see that Adam has gone through a terrible ordeal, though if you have not read the book you may not, of course, guess that one of his great illusions has been shattered—his faith in Hetty.

"You would hardly have known it was Adam without being told. His face has got thinner this last week; he has the sunken eyes, the neglected beard of a man just risen from a sick-bed. His heavy black hair hangs over his forehead, and there is no active impulse in him which inclines him to push it off, that he may be more awake to what is around him. He has one arm over the back of the chair, and he seems to be looking down at his clasped hands."

—*"Adam Bede" by George Eliot.*

1. Show by his actions that a young man who is waiting on a corner is a student at a military academy returning for his Christmas vacation, that the car is late and the day is cold.

2. Describe the reserved lady in the next pew, observed during a service which moved her greatly.
3. Describe a business man, neat and capable, seated at his desk, so as to show that he is a man of great efficiency, and has made a momentous decision.
4. Describe a patient workman eating his noonday lunch by his wheelbarrow so as to show that he is satisfied with his job.
5. Describe a grandfather, contentedly seated by the fireplace, smoking his evening pipe, so as to show that he is thinking of bygone times. (Do not tell us his thoughts.)
6. Describe a student entering a room, in such a way as to show that he has just returned from a football game where his team lost.
7. Describe the same student entering his room so as to show that he has just come from an examination where he flunked.
8. Describe the manners of a country boy so as to show that it is his first visit to the city.
9. Describe a city boy in the country, to show that he has never been on a farm before.
10. Contrast so as to show their character the way two students enter a class room when they are late, or the behavior of two boys during a football game.
11. Describe the new minister observed during his first sermon, so as to show that he is young, modest, but understands the human heart.
12. Describe a small boy at a circus so as to show that he is a typical "boy."
13. At an art gallery you remain for five minutes before a great picture like "The Song of the Lark." Relate the actions of one person who was very critical and yet did not say a word. Contrast

him with a noisy group who were making many criticisms regarding the work of art.

14. Describe a young man, cap in hand, sitting in a parlor, in such a way as to show that he is bashful, is waiting for his best girl, and that she is late.

CHAPTER V

THE STORY EMERGES FROM DIALOGUE

In the first chapter reference was made to a definition of the short story as a series of pictures fastened together by dialogue. You have been for some time producing pictures of various types, and you will probably hail as a welcome change an opportunity of trying your hand at the somewhat more complicated problem of making people talk.

If you wish to handle dialogue successfully there are two cardinal principles that you must never forget: one is that you should be acquainted with your characters, and the other is that you should keep your eye on them while they talk.

The failure of many beginners to make their characters talk naturally is due to the fact that they do not know their characters any better than their readers do. A full discussion of the methods of getting acquainted with your characters will be reserved until a later chapter, but it should be perfectly obvious to any student that without sympathetic realization of the inner motives and feelings of a character, an accurate rendering of his spoken discourse is impossible.

Another cause of failure in handling dialogue successfully comes from taking your eye off the characters while they talk. Any one who plays golf knows what happens when he removes his eye from the ball when he swings his club. What is true in golf is doubly true in dialogue.

As soon as you cease to visualize the character who is talking, his words are likely to cease to become his words and to become anybody's words—most probably your own. That is one of the many reasons why long speeches in a story are bad. The writer takes his eye off his character and begins to make a speech himself. Even Mr. Wells, a past master of the art of fiction, has frequently fallen into that error. Charles Dickens, Jane Austen, and Arnold Bennett, on the other hand, never lose sight of their characters.

Some writer has said that when writing dialogue you should enter into each character in turn. I am inclined to counsel against that. Provided you know your characters all the advantages that would accrue from this "subjective" method can be obtained by careful visualization, and, what is very important, many of the pitfalls of the method avoided. Therefore I say, take the attitude of *the interested observer.* Watch the facial expressions and gestures of your characters. Let them stand before you as living breathing personalities, and then try faithfully to convey to your readers the vivid impression which they make on you. In other words, make use of the powers of visualization developed in the exercises in the opening chapters of this book.

As soon as the talking begins, watch intently the "reaction" of each character on the other. Much of this reaction will naturally be without significance, foolish, inane. Do not record every bit, but look hard for the significant, the suggestive, the striking facial expression and gesture. This little element of "stage business" is one of the "small things that make the large differences," and a student cannot give too much attention to it. "From most amateur narratives," writes Miss Blanche Colton

Williams in "A Handbook on Story Writing," "I should judge that young writers regard gesture and business as conventionalized devices for propping the remarks of the characters. 'So speaking, she drew herself to her full height,' 'He thoughtfully flicked the ashes from his cigar,' 'With a glad cry she threw her arms about him,' and other statements equally venerable suggest by their faithful presence that the student relies upon the hackneyed."

Note in contrast to such amateur methods the conscientious nicety used by the real masters of the art, as illustrated in the dialogues at the close of this chapter. Read these selections and see how far they possess the two cardinal requirements of good dialogue: *Naturalness,* and *interestingness.* If you do so you will come to the following conclusions: Not only should you know your character; not only should you visualize him when he talks; but to these two rules, you should add one more: Speed up the conversation; make it sprightly. Here are a few suggestions that may help you to do this:

1. Make your speeches short. No one in real life talks in long sentences, and no one except on platforms makes ten minute speeches.

2. Do not hesitate to have one speaker break in on another. Interruptions and rapidity in "taking one's cues" keep the dialogue lively.

3. Instead of answering a question, have the character addressed ask another.

4. Instead of a character answering a question with a statement of what was done, have him tell why it was done.

5. Have a character ignore the question and anticipate the next and answer that instead.

6. Have a character answer a question by using differ-

ent words from those of the questioner. (See the opening scene in *Hamlet* for an example.)

In short, unless you have a special reason for making your dialogue move slowly you should move along in your conversation just as you go up a flight of stairs in a hurry —two and three steps at a time.

The following dialogue between a father and a son is taken from *The Harbor,* by Ernest Poole, and is written in such a way as to show that the son has studied in Europe and is ambitious to become a writer, and that the father is very reticent, understands nothing about the profession of writing, and yet is very anxious for his son to succeed, and that both of them dearly love the mother who has died recently:

But what an embarrassing job it is to get acquainted with one's father! When Sue had left us after dinner, there had been a few brief remarks and then this long tense silence. I, too, pretended to be reading.

"Your mother thought a lot of you, boy." He spoke at last so abruptly that I looked up at him with a start, and saw him watching me anxiously.

"Yes, sir." I looked quickly down, and our eyes did not meet again after that."

"It was her pluck that kept you in Paris—while she was dying."

I choked: "I know."

"You don't know—not how she wanted you back—you'll never know. I wanted to write you to come home."

"I wish you had!"

"She wouldn't hear of it!"

"I see." Another silence. Why couldn't I think of something to say?

"She kept every letter you wrote her. They're up there in her bureau drawer. She was always reading 'em—

over and over. She thought a lot of your writing, boy—of what you would do when—when she was dead." The last came out almost fiercely. I waited a moment, got hold of myself.

"Yes, sir," I brought out at last.

"I hope you'll make it all worth while."

"I will. I'll try. I'll do my best." I did not look up, for I could still feel his anxious eyes upon my face.

"Do you want to go back to Paris?"

"No, sir! I want to stay right here!" What was the matter with my fool voice?

"Have you got any plans for your writing here? How are you going about it to start?"

"Well, sir, to begin with—I've got some stuff I did abroad."

"Stories?"

"Not exactly——"

"Poems?" My father's look was tragic.

"No."

And I tried to explain what I had been doing. But my attempts to tell him of my work in Paris were as forced and as pathetic as his efforts to attend. More and more halting grew our talk, and it ended in a silence that seemed to have no end. Then I went to the fireplace, knocked the ashes out of my pipe, refilled it and relit it. When I returned he was reading his book, and with deep relief I took up mine. That much of it was over!—*Ernest Poole, "The Harbor."*

STUDIES IN DIALOGUE

1. Write a conversation between two college students so as to show that they are roommates, and that one is a football player of unusual ability, but rather weak in English and very conscious of his limitations; that the other is of a cheery, sociable nature, somewhat given to wasting time, although exceedingly proud of his modest but famous roommate.

2. Write a conversation between a minister and a little boy so as to show that the minister is absent-minded, well meaning but doesn't understand small boys; and that the little boy is mischievous, doesn't know much about Jeremiah or Bunyan or Izaak Walton, but knows all about the best swimming places and knows the batting average of all the star players in the American League.

3. A college man and a boarding-school girl went canoeing in August on a salt water inlet. Losing all track of time they were left by the ebbing tide aground in the salt marsh, surrounded by acres of bottomless mud crawling with small sea beasts. A violent thunder storm approached. What did they say and do during the first few minutes after discovering their plight? Don't try to rescue them. That is another story.

4. Write a conversation between a negro, who has had no education but who has obtained possession of one of your textbooks which contain large words, and one of the members of your college faculty.

5. Write a conversation between two characters taken from different novels which you have read.

6. Write a conversation between a man and a small boy so as to show that the man is a burglar, has had a very interesting though criminal past, and has once been a star on a high school football team in his little home town of Georgia, and that the little boy is alone in the house, is expecting an uncle and has a new football which he is very anxious to initiate.

7. Write an imaginary conversation between two rather dignified characters you know, possibly a member of the college faculty, and the superintendent of your home school, if they should meet in some unconventional place such as at a cheap lunch counter, or in a side show at the fair.

8. Write a conversation between two persons who meet at a railway station, so as to show that one is a farmer who has recently shipped a load of hogs and feels good-natured

toward all the world; and that the other is a young woman, waiting for a train which is late, that she has just received a telegram announcing her mother's death, and that she is very intense and refined, yet very brave and desires to keep her grief hidden from strangers.

9. Study "The House Opposite" as a model of effective dialogue.

THE HOUSE OPPOSITE*

ANTHONY HOPE

We were talking over the sad case of young Algy Groom; I was explaining to Mrs. Hilary exactly what had happened.

"His father gave him," said I, "a hundred pounds, to keep him for three months in Paris while he learnt French."

"And very liberal too," said Mrs. Hilary.

"It depends where you dine," said I. "However, that question did not arise, for Algy went to the Grand Prix the day after he arrived——"

"A *horse race?*" asked Mrs. Hilary, with great contempt.

"Certainly the competitors are horses," I rejoined. "And there he, most unfortunately, lost the whole sum, without learning any French to speak of."

"How disgusting!" exclaimed Mrs. Hilary, and little Miss Phyllis gasped in horror.

"Oh, well," said Hilary, with much bravery (as it struck me), "his father's very well off."

"That doesn't make it a bit better," declared his wife.

"There's no mortal sin in a little betting, my dear. Boys will be boys——"

"And even that," I interposed, "wouldn't matter if we could only prevent girls from being girls."

Mrs. Hilary, taking no notice whatever of me, pronounced sentence. "He grossly deceived his father," she said, and took up her embroidery.

"Most of us have grossly deceived our parents before now," said I. "We should all have to confess something of the sort."

"I hope you're speaking for your own sex," observed Mrs. Hilary.

"Not more than yours," said I. "You used to meet Hilary on the pier when your father wasn't there—you told me so."

"Father had authorized my acquaintance with Hilary."

"I hate quibbles," said I.

There was a pause. Mrs. Hilary stitched: Hilary observed that the day was fine.

"Now," I pursued carelessly, "even Miss Phyllis here has been known to deceive her parents."

"Oh, let the poor child alone, anyhow," said Mrs. Hilary.

"Haven't you?" said I to Miss Phyllis.

I expected an indignant denial. So did Mrs. Hilary, for she remarked with a sympathetic air,—

"Never mind his folly, Phyllis dear."

"Haven't you, Miss Phyllis?" said I.

Miss Phyllis grew very red. Fearing that I was causing her pain, I was about to observe on the prospects of a Dissolution when a shy smile spread over Miss Phyllis's face.

"Yes, once," said she, with a timid glance at Mrs. Hilary, who immediately laid down her embroidery.

"Out with it," I cried triumphantly. "Come along, Miss Phyllis. We won't tell, honour bright!"

Miss Phyllis looked again at Mrs. Hilary. Mrs. Hilary is human.

"Well, Phyllis dear," said she, "after all this time I shouldn't think it my duty——"

"It happened only last summer," said Miss Phyllis.

Mrs. Hilary looked rather put out.

"Still," she began.

"We must have the story," said I.

Little Miss Phyllis put down the sock she had been knitting.

"I was very naughty," she remarked. "It was my last term at school."

"I know that age," said I to Hilary.

"My window looked out towards the street. You're sure you won't tell? Well, there was a house opposite——"

"And a young man in it," said I.

"How did you know that?" asked Miss Phyllis, blushing immensely.

"No girls' school can keep up its numbers without one," I explained.

"Well, there was one, anyhow," said Miss Phyllis. "And I and two other girls went to a course of lectures at the Town Hall on literature or something of that kind. We used to have a shilling given us for our tickets."

"Precisely," said I. "A hundred pounds!"

"No, a shilling," corrected Miss Phyllis. "A hundred pounds! How absurd, Mr. Carter! Well, one day I—I——"

"You're sure you wish to go on, Phyllis?" asked Mrs. Hilary.

"You're afraid, Mrs. Hilary," said I, severely.

"Nonsense, Mr. Carter. I thought Phyllis might——"

"I don't mind going on," said Miss Phyllis, smiling. "One day I—I lost the other girls."

"The other girls are always easy to lose," I observed.

"And on the way there,—oh, you know, he went to the lectures."

"The young dog," said I, nudging Hilary. "I should think he did!"

"On the way there it became rather—rather foggy."

"Blessings on it!" I cried; for Miss Phyllis's demure but roguish expression delighted me.

"And he—he found me in the fog."

"What are you doing, Mr. Carter?" cried Mrs. Hilary, angrily.

"Nothing, nothing," said I. I believe I had winked at Hilary.

"And—and we couldn't find the Town Hall."

"Oh, Phyllis!" groaned Mrs. Hilary.

Little Miss Phyllis looked alarmed for a moment. Then she smiled.

"But we found the confectioner's," she said.

"The Grand Prix," said I, pointing my finger at Hilary.

"He had no money at all," said Miss Phyllis.

"It's ideal!" said I.

"And—and we had tea on—on——"

"The shilling?" I cried in rapture.

"Yes," said little Miss Phyllis, "on the shilling. And he saw me home."

"Details, please," said I.

Miss Phyllis shook her head.

"And left me at the door."

"Was it still foggy?" I asked.

"Yes, or he wouldn't have——"

"Now what did he——?"

"Come to the door, Mr. Carter," said Miss Phyllis, with obvious wariness. "Oh, it was such fun!"

"I'm sure it was."

"No, I mean when we were examined in the lectures. I bought the local paper, you know, and read it up, and I got top marks easily, and Miss Green wrote to mother to say how well I had done."

"It all ends most satisfactorily," I observed.

"Yes, didn't it?" said little Miss Phyllis.

Mrs. Hilary was grave again.

"And you never told your mother, Phyllis?" she asked.

"No-no, Cousin Mary," said Miss Phyllis.

I rose and stood with my back to the fire. Little Miss Phyllis took up her sock again, but a smile still played about the corners of her mouth.

"I wonder," said I, looking up at the ceiling, "what happened at the door?" Then, as no one spoke, I added,—

"Pooh! I know what happened at the door."

"I'm not going to tell you anything more," said Miss Phyllis.

"But I should like to hear it in your own——"

Miss Phyllis was gone! She had suddenly risen and run from the room.

"It did happen at the door," said I.

"Fancy Phyllis!" mused Mrs. Hilary.

"I hope," said I, "that it will be a lesson for you."

"I shall have to keep my eye on her," said Mrs. Hilary.

"You can't do it," said I in easy confidence. I had no fear of little Miss Phyllis being done out of her recreations. "Meanwhile," I pursued, "the important thing is this: my parallel is obvious and complete."

"There is not the least likeness," said Mrs. Hilary, sharply.

"As a hundred pounds are to a shilling, so is the Grand Prix to the young man opposite," I observed, taking my hat, and holding out my hand to Mrs. Hilary.

"I am very angry with you," she said. "You've made the child think there was nothing wrong in it."

"Oh, nonsense!" said I. "Look how she enjoyed telling it."

Then, not heeding Mrs. Hilary, I launched into an apostrophe.

"O divine House Opposite!" I cried. "Charming House Opposite! What is a man's own dull, uneventful home, compared with that Glorious House Opposite! If only I might dwell for ever in the House Opposite!"

"I haven't the least notion what you mean," remarked Mrs. Hilary, stiffly. "I suppose it's something silly—or worse."

I looked at her in some puzzle.

"Have you no longing for the House Opposite?" I asked.

Mrs. Hilary looked at me. Her eyes ceased to be absolutely blank. She put her arm through Hilary's and answered gently,—

"I don't want the House Opposite."

"Ah," said I, giving my hat a brush, "but maybe you remember the House—when it was Opposite?"

Mrs. Hilary, one arm still in Hilary's, gave me her hand. She blushed and smiled.

"Well," said she, "it was your fault: so I won't scold Phyllis."

"No, don't, my dear," said Hilary, with a laugh.

As for me, I went downstairs, and, in absence of mind, bade my cabman to drive to the House Opposite. But I never got there.

CHAPTER VI

GATHERING MATERIAL FOR STORIES

In the exercises of the first five chapters you have been gradually approaching the field of narrative writing. In the exercises on page 20, sound and motion, and again on pages 22-26, studies in inference, the story behind the picture has almost burst through the thin partition that divides description from narration. In the Studies in Dialogue (pages 31-33) the story has actually begun to show signs of organic life.

If you are a born story-teller you have already begun to feel that inner urge to break forth from the bonds of the chrysalis stage and try your wings as a full-fledged weaver of tales. But many of those who never feel this inner urge possess the rudimentary instincts of the story-teller lying dormant and undeveloped within them.

Due to our highly organized and ultramechanical age too little has been done to develop and bring this instinct out into the light. Moreover, the very exigencies of our present-day educational program—which aims to enlarge the boundaries of the individual's experience by communicating to him the accumulated stores of human experience of the past—has well nigh smothered in him whatever artistic impulse he may have originally possessed. In the face of the wealth and richness of this second-hand experience, the individual tends to lose sight of his own immediate contacts—and it is these immediate contacts with life—his own personal reactions to his sur-

roundings—that differentiate the real artist, and incidentally the real story-teller, from the rest of human kind.

It is the purpose of this chapter to re-open for you those closed avenues of approach which may lead to a direct contact with life. It will not be necessary for you to leave your college and to go forthwith and live in the slums, or go and sail to the South Sea islands, or take a trip through Europe to obtain this direct contact with life. While a period of travel and varied experiences may be of considerable value to a writer, it is by no means essential. Every one has within his own reach an abundance of ready-made material for story writing, provided he understands just what to look for in the life about him. The so-called "literary genius" is usually nothing more than the man who has the power of seeing the dramatic in the trivial little incidents of life, and, in addition to that, the power of putting what he sees into words. What you should try to cultivate at this stage, then, is the power of seeing the dramatic in the life about you. As the sun's white light may be separated by means of the prismatic lens into the seven colors of the rainbow, so we shall find that what is vaguely called "the dramatic in life" can be separated into five dramatic elements. When thus divided we shall find it much more easily comprehended. Take an inventory, then, of the extent of the power you may possess of observing the dramatic elements in life.

First of all, there is ACTION. Anything which moves has the germ of drama in it. Are you interested in travel, mountain-climbing, exploring, hunting, sailing the seven seas? Do you stop and stare when crowds pour in or out of a great coliseum, or when the troops go marching up the avenue, or when wild horses go dashing over the plain?

If you love action you possess the power of seeing the first, albeit the most elementary, of the dramatic elements of life. Scott and Cooper possessed this power to a great degree. Among short story writers we naturally think of Stevenson, O. Henry, Jack London, and Kipling. Adventure stories are built on action.

Second comes CONCENTRATION. Are you interested in seeing life at its intense moments? When the boy gets his first pair of trousers, when he earns his first dollar, when he wins his first promotion; when the girl delivers the Gettysburg Address before the whole village, when she gets her first love letter, her first proposal of marriage; when the man sees bankruptcy staring him in the face; when the criminal faces disclosure of his crime; when the hero faces death for his country—all these are dramatic moments, and furnish excellent material for fiction. Writers who possessed to an almost uncanny degree the power of seeing the concentrated moments in life are Poe, Hawthorne, Maupassant, Conrad, Dostoievsky, and Hugo.

Third comes CAUSE and EFFECT. When you see an old woman coming from a dark prison building with tears in her eyes, does your mind start bridging the gap between those tears and the cause of those tears? When you see two men whispering together on a street corner do you try to ferret out their secret? When you see a silent man appearing day after day in the same room of an art gallery without brush or sketching pad, what do you infer? Until you see the chain that connects cause and effect and lifts the little trivial things of life into larger significance you have not the story-writing instinct. Things are never dramatic because they just happen. To be truly dramatic they must proceed from known causes

by logical, although often recondite, steps to logical, although often surprising, results.

Perhaps no writers possessed this power to greater degree than A. Conan Doyle and Poe, among short-story writers, and George Eliot and Hardy among novelists.

Fourth comes HUMAN INTEREST. Anything which is human, which reveals character in a living, human way, is dramatic. Do old memories stir within you when you pass a school at recess time and see the boys and girls marching out, when you pass an old swimming hole in summer, or see a family group gather round the hearth on a winter's night? The little boy who builds an Indian wigwam in his back-yard, the old grandmother who sits and sews in the chimney corner, the young man who loves to fall in love, but cannot make his love stay put, all are sources more or less of human interest.

The study of human foibles and fancies and human weaknesses makes good material from which the dramatic fiction of the milder type is spun. All character writers and local-color writers stress this side of the dramatic. Mark Twain, Bret Harte, Charles Dickens, in both the novel and the short story, illustrate this dramatic element at its best.

Fifth and most important of all comes CONFLICT. Do you love a fight, even a dog fight or a chicken fight? Do you feel an impulse to crowd up on the outer fringe of the circle and see how a scrap between two newsboys turns out? Do you like contests of physical skill, such as the out-of-door games and sports of your college? Above all, are you interested in the struggle of two wills? In business, in love, in war, in a thousand different forms such struggles are to be found on every hand. When man is not struggling with some one else for mastery, he may

be engaged in a struggle between two contending motives or forces within himself. A maiden with a divided allegiance between duty to her parents and love for her sweetheart; a young man with a struggle between his desire for wealth, and desire for justice—these and countless other examples of inner conflicts make the very essence of the drama—and hence of the short story. Hugo, Shakespeare, and Dumas furnish excellent samples of this element of conflict. Among short-story writers we think of Jack London and Rex Beach.

It would be well at this stage for the student to arm himself with a "familiar note book" and spend a week jotting down ideas for plots. There is no need to draw distinctions between the various dramatic elements; anything that has the seed of drama in it should be grist falling to his mill. There are three sources from which he may draw almost endless numbers of plots.

First, the autobiographical source. Many men have definitely prepared themselves for fiction writing by jotting down sketches of their own lives. Anthony Trollope says that two things made him a novelist: one the habit of day dreaming; the other, the habit of keeping a journal without cessation throughout most of his life. Daudet consciously prepared for his life-work by writing his "Boyhood Sketches." Arnold Bennett affirms that all the greatest novels are autobiographical in nature. Turgenieff's "Sportsman's Sketches" were a direct prelude to his fiction writing.

Second, personal observation. William Dean Howells has been accused of sitting in his study and taking down, verbatim, the conversation of his wife and her callers in the adjoining room. Hawthorne kept notebooks of his

observations; Dickens took notes of what he saw in his journeys. Professional writers are always taking notes of what they see, and the more notes one takes the more he sees.

Third, the newspapers. If one wishes to go beyond the range of his own personal experience and his own personal observations, he will find that the newspaper will furnish him all the range he needs. This does not mean to imply that youthful writers should cultivate the newspaper reading habit. Nothing is less conducive to good writing than the habit of wasting time over a newspaper. But an occasional hour spent in going through newspaper files, looking for ideas for plots, will usually prove very fruitful in results. O. Henry got many of his ideas for plots from the newspaper. Browning took the theme of his "Ring and the Book" from a newspaper bought at an Italian bookstall. Observe this caution, however: go to the newspapers for plots—but not for style. One of the faults of our present-day fiction is due to the fact that too many of our story writers have received their only training as newspaper reporters.

EXERCISES IN GATHERING IDEAS FOR STORIES

I. Material drawn from personal experience.

A. Jot down a reminder of five incidents in your life which were marked by action.

1. A walking trip.
2. An automobile journey.
3. Hunting or fishing.
4. An exciting game.
5. Climbing a mountain.

B. Jot down five incidents in your life which were marked by intense concentration.

1. A night alone in a thunderstorm.
2. Your most serious accident.
3. The first time you thought you were in love.
4. Your most serious fright.
5. Your most thrilling triumph.

C. Make a note of three situations in your life where a result definitely followed from a distinct cause.

1. The time when your long habit of procrastination led to a serious "con" in math.
2. When your hobby of reading on the side everything you could find on a certain subject led to your being prepared for an unusual emergency.
3. When you met a man in college you had known in childhood.
4. When something you had been working for and dreaming about came true.

D. Cite five incidents drawn from your own life filled with human interest.

1. An incident which reveals you as a mischievous boy.
2. As a bashful lover
3. As a typical college freshman.
4. As a conceited prig.
5. As a loyal friend or a devoted son.

E. Cite five examples of conflict.

1. When your road lay between desire and duty.
2. When you fought your boyhood rival.
3. When you played in the football game.
4. When you wrested the leadership of the class.
5. The most serious struggle you ever fought.

NOTE: The list under each assignment is merely to stimulate the student's memory and speed him along this first and very important assignment in plot gathering. The student should be warned that in this assignment not mere "topics" are wanted, but complete sentences that give a clear and SUGGESTIVE reminder of the event he wishes to record. For instance under a walking trip he might write "A tramp I took at age of fifteen from St. Paul to La Crosse was in late autumn when the odor of new mown hay filled the air, and a camp fire felt good at night."

II. Material drawn from observation of others.

Cite an example of each of the dramatic elements drawn from personal observation, especially of conflict, concentration and human interest.

III. Material drawn from newspapers.

From newspaper accounts select examples of each of the dramatic elements, especially of conflict, concentration and human interest.

To THE TEACHER: While the students are occupying themselves outside of the recitation hours gathering material for stories, it might be profitable to make use of the class periods for some impromptu assignments from the list at close of Chapter XI. To the average student who has not yet a very firm command of English style I am inclined to recommend one or two studies in narrative movement. After a student has found his material, and selected his plot, the big problem is how to make his narrative "march."

CHAPTER VII

THE STORY FROM CHARACTER

"She was one of those pretty and charming girls who are sometimes, as if by a mistake of destiny, born in a family of clerks. She had no dowry, no expectations, no means of being known, understood, loved, wedded, by any rich and distinguished man; and she let herself be married to a little clerk at the Ministry of Public Instruction.

"She dressed plainly because she could not dress well, but she was as unhappy as though she had really fallen from her proper station; since with women there is neither caste nor rank; and beauty, grace, and charm act instead of family and birth. Natural fineness, instinct for what is elegant, suppleness of wit, are the sole hierarchy, and make from women of the people the equals of the very greatest ladies.

"She suffered ceaselessly, feeling herself born for all the delicacies and all the luxuries. She suffered from the poverty of her dwelling, from the wretched look of the walls, from the worn-out chairs, from the ugliness of the curtains. All those things, of which another woman of her rank would never even have been conscious, tortured her and made her angry. The sight of the little Breton peasant who did her humble house-work aroused in her regrets which were despairing, and distracted dreams. She thought of the silent antechambers hung with Oriental tapestry, lit by tall bronze candelabra, and of the two great footmen in knee-breeches, who sleep in the big arm-chairs, made drowsy by the heavy warmth of the hot-air stove. She thought of the long salons fitted up with ancient silk, of the delicate furniture carrying priceless curiosities, and of the coquettish perfumed boudoirs made for talks at five o'clock with intimate friends, with

men famous and sought after, whom all women envy and whose attention they all desire.

"When she sat down to dinner, before the round table covered with a table-cloth three days old, opposite her husband, who uncovered the soup-tureen and declared with an enchanted air, 'Ah, the good pot-au-feu! I don't know anything better than that,' she thought of dainty dinners, of shining silverware, of tapestry which peopled the walls with ancient personages, and she thought of delicious dishes served on marvellous plates, and of the whispered gallantries which you listen to with a sphinx-like smile, while you are eating the pink flesh of a trout or the wings of a quail.

"She had no dresses, no jewels, nothing. And she loved nothing but that; she felt made for that. She would so have liked to please, to be envied, to be charming, to be sought after."

—*From "The Necklace," by Maupassant.*

A careful study of the above description, which is in many respects the most perfect description of a character in the history of the short story, will satisfy you that here is a character which, if placed in a suitable situation, would almost of necessity *make* a story. The writer of such a description would be in the position similar to that of the little boy who stands at the top of a hill with a handful of snow in his hand with which he wishes to make a giant snowball. All he needs to do is to give it a push and the law of gravitation will do the rest.

For a person who has the least trace of the story-telling instinct the task of writing a character story, then, is very simple, provided that he can find the right kind of character to put into it.

But what constitutes the "right kind of character"? A careful study of the passage quoted above will help to make this clear. Maupassant has shown us by this ex-

ample that we should have our leading character dominated by some great desire or ambition or passion, or, to state what has become a commonplace among writers on short story technique, we should give him a *dominant trait*. Maupassant also shows us that if this dominant trait can be in contrast with his surroundings all the better. Contrast is the life of fiction. A cannon ball flying through the air unchecked has no story to tell. But as soon as it meets an obstacle "something happens."

It is a mistake to think, however, that this obstacle must always be outside of the character. Sometimes this element of contrast can better be supplied in the character himself. In fact, I know of nothing that can better help the novice to give an impression of individuality and reality to a character than to give his leading character—as a sort of counter-irritant or an antidote to his dominant trait—*a striking contradiction*. It safeguards the novice against making his leading character a pure idealization on the one hand or a caricature on the other. It rounds him out and gives him that little touch of nature that makes us all akin. It injects that little mite of human contradiction that adds so much to the humanness and interestingness of all of us.

It has been said that all heroes of tragedy have been noble men with some imperfection, often a very inconspicuous little trait, but which was large enough to serve for their undoing. Even Achilles had his vulnerable heel. Therefore, I say, if you wish to give an impression of reality and of individuality to your characters, look first for the dominant trait, and then search long and patiently for that vulnerable heel. If an old gentleman is kind and generous toward everyone, warp his humanitarianism just a trifle by giving him an inordinate prejudice against

men who wear monocles and drop their r's. If you have a villain totally depraved, save him from complete caricature by giving him a tender feeling for little children. If your heroine persists in being beautiful, mar her beauty just a bit by a dash of freckles or a snub nose. If your hero falls into copy-book lines, give him something to worry about if it is nothing more than an inherited fear of cats or an insatiable and undignified appetite for chocolate nut-sundaes.

But having chosen a character and having endowed him with a dominant trait and a striking contradiction is not enough. Before you can put him successfully into a story you must know him like a book. You must live with your character, eat with him, stroll with him, find out all that you can about his past, his family, the people who influenced him most, his likes and his dislikes, and his little mannerisms and tricks of conversation. Not until *you* have a clear conception of the man can you hope to convey a clear conception to *others*.

Turn to the great writers of fiction who have excelled in character drawing and you will find that many of the best ones wrote biographies of their characters before they put them into books. This was the habitual practice of Turgenieff, Ibsen, Jane Austen, and Arnold Bennett. These biographies were of course intended only for the author's eyes. Turgenieff, however, frequently put his bodily into his books. Tolstoy, Victor Hugo, Dickens, Thackeray and George Eliot frequently put what amounted to pretty complete dossiers of their characters right into their novels.

"Nothing that Turgenieff had to say could be more interesting than his talk about his own work, his manner

of writing. What I have heard him tell of these things was worthy of the beautiful results he produced; of the deep purpose, pervading them all, to show us life itself. The germ of a story, with him, was never an affair of plot —that was the last thing he thought of: it was the representation of certain persons. The first form in which a tale appeared to him was as the figure of an individual, or a combination of individuals, whom he wished to see in action, being sure that such people must do something very special and interesting. They stood before him definite, vivid, and he wished to know, and to show, as much as possible of their nature. The first thing was to make clear to himself what he did know, to begin with; and to this end, he wrote out a sort of biography of each of his characters, and everything that they had done and that had happened to them up to the opening of the story. He had their dossier, as the French say, and as the police has that of every conspicuous criminal. With this material in his hand he was able to proceed; the story all lay in the question, What shall I make them do?"

—Henry James, "Partial Portraits."

Nothing furnishes better material for fiction than biographies of actual men and women. "The only sort of reading I count as indispensable to a young writer," says Fanny Kemble Johnson in "Best College Short Stories" (Stratford Press), "is the sort that makes him genuinely familiar with the great Biographies, Autobiographies, Letters and Diaries of literature. And that because it forms a super-course in Human Nature, which is the proper study for a young writer." Nothing could furnish you better practice for fiction writing than the habit of keeping a little notebook into which you would regularly write each day a character sketch of someone you had met, or of some imaginary character you had been thinking about.

In fact, if you were planning to devote a year to the study of short-story writing, I should recommend that you devoted the first half of that year to the study of character. Not only would such a study make you a better writer, but it would increase your understanding of human nature, and would enlarge your sympathies and enrich your life.

EXERCISES

I. THE ELABORATE STUDY OF A CHARACTER

In the following exercise you will be asked to subject your character to three processes before he is "ripe" for your story. The first process, that of making out the "dossier," is perhaps the most tedious and mechanical, but if well done it should result in a page of information that will enable you to proceed with a clearness of eye and a sureness of touch when you come to the later stage which you could not get in any other way. The second process is that of visualizing the character in your own imagination. This will also take some time, but will not require any writing. The last process, that of making the finished character sketch suitable for actual use in your story, should take much less time. At least the first draft may be written with a certain speed and abandon. This depends of course upon the amount of time and thought you have given to the preliminary processes. It is worth while to remember, however, the advice given earlier in this book—that what is written in hot blood must be revised in cold blood. In fact, I do not know of any type of writing that improves so much under frequent re-writing as does the describing of character.

A. FIRST PROCESS: THE DOSSIER OF THE CHARACTER.

Choose a character, either from those discussed in this chapter or one of your own creation, and answer the following questions about him:

1. Where was he born and reared? In city, country, small town, east, west? Near mountains, sea, woods, prairie?
2. Parents? Type—New England, Southern, Western ranchman? Father's profession, mother's character, etc.? Any peculiar idiosyncrasies likely to influence the child?
3. Significant facts of childhood life? Types of books he liked best, or games, girls, playmates? What he wanted to make of himself? In some epochal event we may find cause for reversal of law of heredity.
4. Is he earnest and sympathetic, or flippant and cynical? Cheerful or melancholy? Independent and original, or conservative and conventional? Positive in his opinions? A man of high ideals?
5. State in large letters his dominant trait, and his most striking contradiction.

B. SECOND PROCESS: VISUALIZING THE CHARACTER.

Having completed your catalogue of details read it over again, trying hard to realize just what your character would look like. Then close your eyes and visualize him, noting especially manner, tricks of expression or gesture:

1. As he is visiting with friends by the open fireplace.
2. In his office or field at work.
3. Leaning on a gate talking to his little sister or mother.
4. Alone in his room reading a book, or thinking hard.

In which attitude did you find you could visualize him best? *This process is not to be written.*

C. THIRD PROCESS: DESCRIBING THE CHARACTER.

Now you are ready to put him into story. Selecting the dominant trait, the unifying fact about him, write a description that you think would do for the first paragraph in a story. Two or three rapid attempts at this may be necessary before you are thoroughly satisfied. Make either an external description of him, or make it more subjective—an exposition of his inner motives and feelings. It may prove helpful to glance over some of the descriptions in the short stories in Part II to find successful methods of procedure.

II. FURTHER STUDIES IN CHARACTER DRAWING

"He was of middle height, sinuous, muscular, and slightly round-shouldered, dressed in a coarse blue blouse full of paint spots and girded by a leather strap; his trousers, bespattered with paint, he wore tucked into his tall boots. Kostovsky had the appearance of a common workman, with long muscular hands, like those of a gorilla, and of great strength; his far from good-looking, but very characteristic face, with its prominent cheek bones, and long reddish mustaches breathed of power. From under knitted brows gloomily, and at the same time good-naturedly, looked out a pair of large blue eyes. The main peculiarity of his face was an expression of impetuousness and energy; his left eye was embellished with a large discoloration, the mark of a well-aimed blow —and his coarse reddish locks bristled rebelliously in all directions. On the whole, Kostovsky impressed one as a bold, untamable being."—*Petrov.*

A careful examination of the above description will disclose to you that one of the most widely useful principles of emphasis in character drawing is for the *most striking* detail, possibly of color or of movement, to come *first;* and for the *most significant* detail, as of feature or of mannerism or the like, to be saved for the *last.*

A. CHARACTERS TAKEN FROM REAL LIFE.

Making use of the principle illustrated in the description above (as well as in the description of Mathilde at first of chapter) write a paragraph description of some person that you have observed in real life, who, you think, would make a suitable character for a story.

B. A LIST OF CHARACTERS THAT WOULD MAKE STORIES.

Select one of the following and write a paragraph description suitable for the opening of a story:

1. A man, brutal and brusk as to character and manner, but who is constantly doing good in secret ways.
2. A neighborhood gossip who says exceedingly critical things to every one's face as though it were her personal right, but who will not allow any one else to do so, at least behind their backs, and who is, in fact, true gold, with a heart as big as a mountain.
3. A cabaret dancer with whom all the young bloods are infatuated, who bitterly hates her work, loves Browning, Shakespeare, and the ideals of home.
4. A street laborer or lumber jack who has once received a Harvard degree. What is his dominant trait?
5. A janitor who once led in a great charge which resulted in his receiving the decoration of the Legion of Honor. What is his dominant trait?
6. A shoemaker or carpenter who possesses a mysterious past—and who is even rumored to have come from a noble Hungarian family.
7. A man of twenty-five or thirty who always scoffed at love, suddenly subjected to an attack of the malady in its most acute form.
8. A girl pledged to the suffragette cause and an avowed manhater suddenly in the toils of love in

its most hopeless, or humiliating or sentimental form.

9. A judge, cold and scrupulously honest, but obsessed by an abnormal affection for a scapegrace nephew who bears his name.
10. A member of a family, who is the family pride and pet among many brothers and sisters, but who possesses one weakness or fault (which does not, however, arouse disgust or hostility).
11. A daring, brutal criminal, whose one saving grace is his love for little children, and who knows from experience just what to do when a little one is afflicted with croup in the dead of night.
12. A minister, who, in spite of Puritan upbringing, possesses unusual dramatic ability, and secretly loves dime novels and melodrama.
13. A village roustabout who believes in the adage, "When in doubt, tell the truth," but who has a habit since boyhood of rarely being in doubt.
14. A village loafer whose conversation in the village store, without his knowing it, has been for years following the most approved lines of logic and public speaking, a man liked by all but generally considered hopelessly good for nothing.
15. A man very ambitious to make an impression in society, but whose early life has been spent among users of slang and profanity.
16. An old woman, over threescore and ten, who is more innately progressive and open to new ideas than any one in the village.
17. A man possessed of unusual physical courage—a hunter or an athlete—but who possesses an unreasoning fear of barking dogs.
18. A very over-particular person who is habitually careless of one thing.
19. A very selfish person who forgets himself only

under one circumstance. Have a friend try to make that circumstance in his life habitual.

20. A woman in a prosaic situation whose love of mystery and romance are counterbalanced by no sense of humor.
21. A proud, strict woman of great reserve, who is secretly hungry for the impulsive unreasoning affection of young people.
22. A leader of a choir who cannot himself sing.

III. THE PLOT-BUILDING GAME

A. USING CHARACTERS FROM LITERATURE.

Divide the class into two divisions and to one division assign one of the men described below, and to the other division assign the other man. To both divisions assign the description of the woman at the beginning of this chapter. If the teacher desires he may add other characters to this list. Have each student take the characters thus assigned and outline a plot for a story, using the following questions as a basis:

1. Conceive that circumstances have thrown these two characters together in a rather unusual situation, in such a way that they are forced to become very intimately acquainted. Which character would dominate the other?
2. What spirit would be uppermost—love, antipathy, hate?
3. Probable outcome.
4. In a sketchy way outline the development of such a story.

(1) "When Presley reached Annixter's ranch house, he found young Annixter himself stretched in his hammock behind the mosquito-bar on the front porch, reading

"David Copperfield" and gorging himself with dried prunes.

"Annixter—after the two had exchanged greetings—complained of terrific colics all the preceding night. His stomach was out of whack, but you bet he knew how to take care of himself; the last spell he had consulted a doctor at Bonneville, a gibbering busyface who had filled him up to the neck with a dose of some hog-wash stuff that had made him worse—a healthy lot the doctors knew, anyhow. *His* case was peculiar. *He* knew; prunes were what he needed, and by the pound.

"Annixter, who worked the Quien Sabe ranch—some four thousand acres of rich clay and heavy loams—was a very young man, younger even than Presley, like him a college graduate. He looked never a year older than he was. He was smooth-shaven and lean built. But his youthful appearance was offset by a certain male cast of countenance, the lower lip thrust out, the chin large and deeply cleft. His university course had hardened rather than polished him. He still remained one of the people, rough almost to insolence, direct in speech, intolerant in his opinions, relying upon absolutely no one but himself; yet, with all this, of an astonishing degree of intelligence, and possessed of an executive ability little short of positive genius. He was a ferocious worker, allowing himself no pleasure, and exacting the same degree of energy from all his subordinates. He was widely hated, and as widely trusted. Every one spoke of his crusty temper and bullying disposition, invariably qualifying the statement with a commendation of his resources and capabilities. The devil of a driver, a hard man to get along with, obstinate, contrary, cantankerous; but brains! No doubt of that; brains to his boots. One would like to see the man who could get ahead of him on a deal. Twice he had been shot at, once from an ambush on Osterman's ranch, and once by one of his own men whom he had kicked from the sacking platform of his harvester for gross negligence. At college, he had specialized on finance, political economy,

and scientific agriculture. After his graduation (he stood almost at the very top of his class) he had returned and obtained the degree of civil engineer. Then suddenly he had taken a notion that a practical knowledge of law was indispensable to a modern farmer. In eight months he did the work of three years, studying for his bar examinations. His method of study was characteristic. He reduced all the material of his text-books to notes. Tearing out the leaves of these note-books, he pasted them upon the walls of his room; then, in his shirt-sleeves, a cheap cigar in his teeth, his hands in his pockets, he walked around and around the room, scowling fiercely at his notes, memorizing, devouring, digesting. At intervals he drank great cupfuls of unsweetened, black coffee. When the bar examinations were held, he was admitted at the very head of all the applicants, and was complimented by the judge. Immediately afterwards he collapsed with nervous prostration, his stomach "got out of whack," and he all but died in a Sacramento boarding-house, obstinately refusing to have anything to do with doctors, whom he vituperated as a rabble of quacks, dosing himself with a patent medicine and stuffing himself almost to bursting with liver pills and dried prunes.

"He had taken a trip to Europe after this sickness to put himself completely to rights. He intended to be gone a year but returned at the end of six weeks, fulminating abuse of European cooking. Nearly his entire time had been spent in Paris; but of this sojourn he had brought back but two souvenirs, an electro-plated bill-hook and an empty bird cage which had tickled his fancy immensely." —*Frank Norris, "The Octopus."*

(2) "The first face in the appearance of the younger man which might have struck the observer was, that his gravity, though conspicuous in the expression of his features, and evidently springing from the mind was not indicated by his person. Gravity is not inconsistent with passion, which it exalts by purifying it; but the idea of gravity could with difficulty be associated with an exterior remarkable above all for personal beauty. Being

in the holy orders, he must have been at least four and twenty, but he seemed scarcely more than eighteen. He possessed those gifts at once in harmony with, and in opposition to, each other, a soul which seemed created for exalted passion and body created for love. He was fair, rosy-fresh, slim and elegant in his severe attire, and he had the cheeks of a young girl, and delicate hands. His movements were natural and lively, though subdued. Everything about him was pleasing, elegant, almost voluptuous. The beauty of his expression served to correct this excess of personal attraction. His open smile, which showed his teeth, regular and white as those of a child, had something in it pensive, even devotional. He had the gracefulness of a page, mingled with the dignity of a bishop.

"His fair hair, so fair and golden as to be almost effeminate, clustered over his white forehead, which was high and well formed. A slight double line between his eyebrows, awakened associations with studious thought.

"Those who saw him felt themselves in the presence of one of those natures, benevolent, innocent and pure, whose progress is in the inverse sense with that of vulgar minds; natures whom illusion renders wise, and whom experience makes enthusiasts."

—*Hugo, "Toilers of the Sea."*

B. USING CHARACTERS FROM CLASS THEMES.

Divide the class into two divisions and have one division bring to class an original description of a young woman suitable for a story, and have the other division bring an original description of a young man. When the class assembles have students exchange their descriptions with those written by students in the other division. With the character drawn and the character of his own description as starting points, have each student plan a story in the class period, according to the plan outlined above.

IV. STEPS IN WRITING AN ORIGINAL STORY FROM CHARACTER

A. Read "The Spurious One" on page 109 and take warning from it to avoid the pitfalls of the conventional, hackneyed character types. Then choose a character from your list of original sketches that is "new" or original enough to make a story. If you have not yet described such a character try to conceive of one. Write a dossier of the character thus chosen, if you have not already done so.

B. Read "The Gay Old Dog" and the constructive criticism that accompanies it. Then make a story outline suitable to develop the character that you have chosen.

C. Using the character selected in A above, and using the plan worked out in B write an original character story of from 1500 to 2500 words.

CHAPTER VIII

THE STORY WHICH BEGINS WITH COMPLICATION

The making of a plot is nothing more nor less than taking the experiences of a life and arranging them in a logical order. If you know a very interesting character who has had some varied and interesting experiences you can make a very fascinating narrative by arranging his unrelated experiences into some sort of definite, logical order.

The simplest of all known methods of doing this is to find a problem and a solution, and arrange all events in such a way as to lead from one to the other.

The first thing necessary in the opinion of most teachers of short-story writing is a problem to solve or an obstacle to overcome. The bigger the problem or the obstacle, other things being equal, the easier it is to make an interesting story. While the experienced writer will find it possible to construct a story out of a very slender plot, the beginner will find it advisable to do his practicing on complications that obviously *are* complications. While Maupassant can produce a masterpiece of fiction using as his starting point a piece of string, you will find it more satisfactory to use as your motivating force a mysterious ring or a woman's glove—that is, if it is the situation you are after, and not the character.

How these problems or obstacles should be handled can best be indicated by doing a little plot building of

our own. Let us take a complication where the problem is obviously a big one. A man who has been wrongly accused of a crime has been confined in a dungeon for ten years. Every day he expects to hear that a pardon has been granted him; but the days continue to go by and no pardon comes. Finally he determines to take the matter into his own hands and escape. How will he do it? Here are two solutions typical of a student's first attempts at plot building:

First solution: As the man awakes one morning, a bright idea strikes him. He carefully rips open the mattress upon which he has been sleeping all these years, extracts a file and a coil of wire and—but what makes you smile at that? Let us try another.

Second solution: He awakes one morning at the sound of the jailor's key rattling in the lock. As he arises, he is confronted, not by the jailor, but by the officer in charge of the dungeon. "Mr. Brown," says the officer in stentorian tones, "I come to announce to you that His Majesty, having had the matter of your commitment brought to his attention at last, and having satisfied himself that there was an error in the record, does hereby grant you a full and complete pardon."

But clearly there is something wrong with that ending. Now, what is the matter with these two solutions? The one is absurd, the other uninteresting. Or, using more discriminating terms, the trouble with the first solution is that it is not plausible; with the second that it lacks suspense. Or to state it in still other words: The writing of successful stories narrows down to a matter of stating a problem, then solving it in a way that is *logical* but not perfectly *obvious*.

Inasmuch as the solution should meet two such im-

portant requirements, would it not be an advantage to find a solution first, and then find a problem to fit, rather than to reverse the process as is the general custom? Poe insists that this should be the rule saying that all good stories are worked out backwards. Miss Ida A. R. Wylie, who in 1919 had more distinctive short stories to her credit published in American magazines than any other English writer, told the writer that she hardly ever began a story till she could see the last sentence. Mr. Willard E. Hawkins, a professional critic and teacher of short story writers, editor of the *Student Writer,* is also a strong advocate of "the solution first" method.

As an illustration of the effective plotting he cites the following example from *The American Boy* magazine. A boy, taking pictures at low tide, allows his foot to become caught fast in a rocky crevice which holds him helpless in a cave while the water slowly rises over his head. How can he save himself is the problem. If he should work his foot loose the solution would be too obvious; if the tide should fail to reach its usual height the situation would not be logical. The writer in handling this situation solved it by having the lad put the bulb of the camera in his mouth, while he held the open end of the rubber tube above the surface of the water. Thus he was able to sustain life till rescue came. There is very little doubt but that the author got his cue for this story by noting, perhaps by accident, the peculiar similarity between a camera tube and a diving apparatus. In other words, he followed Poe's advice and worked from the climax backward.

Any clever student can, by looking through the *Scientific American* or *Popular Science Monthly,* discover any number of striking solutions for possible problems.

"As a means of stimulating a writer's invention," writes Mr. Hawkins, "the advice is sometimes given: 'Let your characters fall into difficulties, then set your wits to extricate them.' This method sometimes works very well; but more often the result is commonplace. Many somehow ineffective stories that have come to my desk were obviously developed by this method. The author has put characters into a situation which at once captures the reader's interest; but the climax, or solution, is a bare working out of details which reveal only moderate powers of invention. It is usually forced, obvious, and mediocre.

"The relative importance of the two elements of plot would be better indicated if we phrased our definition: *Plot is the solution of a problem.* For the solution is the all-important thing. When an editor returns your story with the comment: 'A well written tale, but it lacks a novel twist,' he means that you have solved the problem in a familiar way. The reader knows the answer before it is given. *The best possible plot material is a new device for solving a problem.* Have your climax—the solution—to start with, then devise a problem to fit it.

"In testing a plot idea, consider chiefly the possibilities for a striking climax. Almost every germinal idea may be used either for the opening situation—the problem—or for the solution. By all means, however, let it serve as your climax."

It will profit the beginner to heed this advice.

The ideal way of constructing a complication story is to have in mind from the beginning the kind of solution you intend to use, but all the while you are writing the story to be on the lookout for a still more startling or unexpected ending. Unexpected forces may enter into your stories to bring about a surprise even to the writer. Such upsets are frequent even with great writers, and the usual cause is the unexpected unfolding of some

character in the story, as illustrated in "The Spurious One" on page 109.

Here is an example: You are writing a story of a delicate young college boy who has been sent by his parents to spend a year on a western ranch. He finds himself universally looked down upon as a weakling by the cowboys, who make him the butt of all their practical jokes. One day he discovers that every year this ranch matches its best runner against the champion of another ranch. This discovery suggests an idea to him, and he determines to turn the tables on the others and become the "cock of the walk." He allows them to see a medal his roommate had won in a hundred yard dash—one of his numerous victories in big eastern meets. They are deceived into thinking that the medal was won by himself. He allows himself to become their champion. His purpose is to get even with them by enjoying their homage until nearly time for the race to come off, and then, on some faked up telegraphic message to be sent by his roommate, to leave them suddenly before his deceit becomes known.

Let us assume that you have worked out a clever solution before you begin, say something like this: The young chap is gradually to become softened by the kindly treatment he receives at the hands of the cowboys who do his chores for him and save him from every inconvenience, and he finally decides to telegraph for his roommate to come out and run the race for him. He can easily withdraw on some trumped up excuse of a sprained ankle, or attack of appendicitis.

As the story proceeds, however, the young college boy shows signs of developing into a "real person." Like

the "Minor Character" he begins to put ginger and spice into the story. The writer becomes interested in him. The boy's strength improves under the training. And here as you write your story a new solution occurs to you. Just as the boy is trying to think of some clever way to make a pretense at spraining an ankle, the famous runner, his former roommate, arrives suddenly, himself on crutches. Without any ruse at all, the wrong fellow has had a real accident.

It is now too late to find a plausible excuse for running away. If he races and makes a miserable showing, he hardly knows what he may have to expect from the cowboys who have bet heavily on him. They are all quick on the trigger. A critical moment of decision arrives. He finally decides to risk all on the race.

The ill-fated day arrives. The tenderfoot finds himself at last lined up beside his opponent. His roommate on crutches gives him some final advice:

"When you crouch in your holes, take a deep breath. Pump it out with the crack of the gun, and then grab another lung full, and hold it to the tape. Run all the way on one breath if you can. Don't look to right or left but keep your eyes on me. I'll be at the finish to catch you. Remember, old boy, you are doing this for old Yale. Keep your head well down and chin thrust out, and *don't look back!*"

Then let him win.

Thus you have turned your fake hero into a real hero—a greater accomplishment than either of the other solutions, *provided that you can make it appear logical.* At any rate, no one can criticize this plot for being "too obvious."

EXERCISES

I. STUDIES IN PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

A. FIVE PROBLEMS. FIND SOLUTIONS TO FIT.

1. A woman has just returned from a two weeks' house party when her telephone bell rings. She lifts the receiver to hear a voice which she recognizes as her sister's asking, "Are you back safely? How do you feel?"

"Terribly," she replies, "I never spent two such tiresome weeks in my life."

"Is that so?" comes the voice, which she now recognizes with horror to be that of her recent hostess, "I am very sorry." And she hears the receiver hung up at the other end.

How can you get this woman out of her predicament? (*The Black Cat* once offered a prize for the answer to this problem.)

2. A young law student arranges to have his fiancée, a college girl, spend a couple of weeks at his own home so that she may get acquainted with his parents, whom she has never seen. The mother who is not strong enough to entertain a guest as she would like to, wires at once to her brother, who lives in the same city where her son is attending law school, asking him to send down at once an experienced Irish cook. Word is sent as to the exact trains each will arrive on, but the cook takes the train ahead of time, and the girl misses hers. When they arrive, each is taken for the other.

3. A young man who has been attending a ball with his sister tarries a few minutes at the doorway talking to his chum. When he reaches the curbing only one cab is standing there. He gives the driver the address, and leaps in. At the farther end of the cab sits a girl. Both are wrapped up in their own thoughts until, at a

crossroad, he leans forward and lights a match to see the time. The girl moves slightly, and utters a scream, as the match goes out.

He gives an ejaculation and lights another match

"Who are you?" she cries.

"My God!" he exclaims, "I thought you were my sister."

What is the outcome?

4. A telegraph operator at a little station falls asleep at his post. He awakes to hear the wires clicking urgently, "Stop the westbound express—the president's special has left here going east." He hurries to the door just in time to see the westbound express leaping out into the darkness toward the terrible catastrophe that awaits it unless it can be stopped. He returns to his office stunned and stupefied. He looks about him, and suddenly an idea strikes him. What is it?

5. Four miners are working in a shaft when a pile of slate falls and shuts off their escape. Find a solution.

B. FIVE SOLUTIONS. FIND PROBLEMS TO FIT.

1. A very commonplace man finds himself suddenly placed in a position of terrible danger and great responsibility, and instead of feeling fear, he feels a great joy, the joy of his life, in both the danger and the responsibility, and by his zest and fearlessness brings triumph out of almost certain defeat.

Find a problem or opening situation which would make an ordinary man welcome such an opportunity in just such a way.

2. A plain and simple girl, seemingly without much charm, surprises everyone by marrying a brilliant man who was commonly thought to be the property of the belle of the town. How did she do it?

3. A vaudeville contortionist has the gift of throwing every joint of his body out of place at his own will so

cleverly as to defy all bone-setters. He also has the gift of throwing his joints all back again, one at a time. Find an obstacle or problem where such an accomplishment would offer a solution.

4. A common back-store loafer, who has done nothing but talk all his life, bears a striking resemblance to the governor of the state.

Find a problem, to solve which this coincidence might be useful.

5. A very miserly farmer is suspended by a rope and bucket in a well while his meek little wife refuses to draw him up until he promises to get her the dress she has long since needed.

How did she get him there?

II. EXERCISES IN THE THIRTY-SIX ORIGINAL PLOT SITUATIONS

Read over carefully the thirty-six original plot situations on pages 234-246, and find how many of these come within the range of your own personal experience. Select five of these and restate them in terms of some definite problem and some definite solution.

III. THE PLOT-BUILDING GAME

A. BASED ON GOZZI'S ORIGINAL PLOTS.* (See Part III.)

1. From a hat draw one of the thirty-six original plots. Express this in terms of a concrete problem and a definite solution.
2. From another hat draw one of the three characters discussed in Chapter VII. Show briefly how such a character confronted with such a situation would carry it through.
3. What would be the outcome? If possible suggest a "surprise" ending.

* For other exercises based on the Thirty-six Original Plot Situations, see page 249.

B. BASED ON SUCCESSFUL STORIES OF GREAT WRITERS.

1. Read to the class the first three-fourths of an O. Henry story and let the class write the conclusion according to their own ideas of how it should turn out. At the next meeting of the class the rest of the story may be read and the best solutions of the students read and discussed.

2. Read "The Lady or the Tiger" and have the class write a conclusion.

IV. STEPS IN WRITING AN ORIGINAL STORY FROM COMPLICATION.

A. Read the "Cop and the Anthem" and the creative criticism that accompanies it.

B. Select a plot including the problem and the solution. Jot down one or two little incidents or hints which would be useful or necessary for preparing the reader for the outcome. Insert one or two suggestions for increasing the interest of the reader by arousing his curiosity and holding him in suspense.

C. Write the story, giving chief attention to the points of emphasis—the beginning and the ending. Make the beginning "pregnant with action," and the conclusion snappy and climactic.

CHAPTER IX

THE STORY FROM SETTING

Two types of stories take their genesis from setting: the local color story, and the atmosphere story. These two types are frequently combined in one, but not necessarily.

Local color, as the term implies, makes its appeal largely to the *eye* of the reader. Atmosphere on the other hand makes its appeal almost entirely to the *emotions.* One is *objective,* the other *subjective.* One must be *true to fact,* the other *true to a given mood* either of the author, or of his creature, the leading character. Local color attempts to harmonize the details of setting and character with the *actual conditions* of a given time and place; atmosphere attempts to harmonize setting and character with the *feelings of a character* in a certain time and place. Thus it will be seen that the one is usually perceived by the intellect, the other by the emotions. The two usually work hand in hand, as local color, as seen through the eyes of a character, is the chief element in awakening the emotional response in the heart of the reader.

To develop the art of using local color you must practice describing scenes that are familiar to you. While Mrs. Gerould, who has never seen Africa, has succeeded in giving a marvelously vivid illusion of Africa, and Miss I. R. A. Wiley, who has never seen Russia, has

achieved a similar success in treating the local color of Russia, nevertheless I have yet to find in my experience as a teacher of composition, a single student who could describe convincingly a background which he himself had not seen. An amateur may wander afar for characters and plots, finding success in the unfamiliar and the grotesque, but in use of setting he is almost entirely dependent upon that which is familiar to him. In addition, one who desires to be successful in writing atmosphere stories must feel deeply and sympathize deeply. All great atmospherists were of this type,—Poe, Hawthorne, Conrad, Hardy, and Stevenson.

Local color, no matter with how heavy a brush it is put on, is nearly always a mere means to some larger end, either of character, plot or theme. Atmosphere, on the other hand, while usually holding a subordinate position may at times rise to the point where it dominates the whole story. In some instances, especially frequent in Poe, the characters are relegated to the function of mere puppets, while the atmosphere monopolizes the rôle of chief character. "In Stevenson," writes Pitkin, "Nature is often the leading lady; in Poe, Conrad, and Hardy, and most atmospherists, it is the villain; and in Hawthorne it is sometimes the hero's silhouette."

Such personification of atmosphere is seen at its best in the opening paragraph of "The Fall of the House of Usher," probably the greatest atmosphere story ever written.

"During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country; and at length found myself, as the shades of the

evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher. I know not how it was,—but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say insufferable; for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable, because poetic, sentiment with which the mind usually receives even the sternest natural images of the desolate or terrible. I looked upon the scene before me—upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain, upon the bleak walls, upon the vacant eye-like windows, upon a few rank sedges, and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees—with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveler upon opium: the bitter lapse into every day life, the hideous dropping off of the veil. There was an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart, an unredeemed dreariness of thought which no goading of the imagination could torture into aught of the sublime. What was it—I paused to think—what was it that so unnerved me in the contemplation of the House of Usher? It was a mystery all insoluble; nor could I grapple with the shadowy fancies that crowded upon me as I pondered. I was forced to fall back upon the unsatisfactory conclusion, that while, beyond doubt, there are combinations of very simple natural objects which have the power of thus affecting us, still the analysis of this power lies among considerations beyond our depth. It was possible, I reflected, that a mere different arrangement of the particulars of the scene, of the details of the picture, would be sufficient to modify, or perhaps to annihilate, its capacity for sorrowful impressions; and acting upon this idea, I reined my horse to the precipitous brink of a black and lurid tarn that lay in unruffled luster by the dwelling, and gazed down—but with a shudder even more thrilling than before—upon the remodeled and inverted images of the gray sedge, and the ghastly tree-stems, and the vacant and eye-like windows."

EXERCISES

I. STUDIES IN LOCAL COLOR

Let your mind run back over the scenes of your childhood and early youth and jot down a list suitable for use in a local color story. Then describe two of these. Follow directions given for the studies in visualization in the first part of this book. Employ the methods you learned there in regard to emphasis on the individualizing detail and the use of the four senses other than sight.

The following lists are chiefly for suggestion. Make a list of your own.

A. SCENES THAT A COUNTRY BOY MIGHT RECALL.

1. The cows standing knee-deep in the creek.
2. The muddy calf-yard after a shower.
3. The old pump surrounded by thirsty geese and chickens.
4. The cows in the stanchions at milking time.
5. The odor of the hay field at the close of harvest.
6. The old horse in the stall swishing flies with his tail.
7. The landscape in winter described so as to make the reader shiver with cold.

B. SCENES THAT MIGHT COME BACK VIVIDLY TO THE BOY REARED IN A SMALL TOWN.

1. The station platform filled with onlookers when the fast mail comes puffing in.
2. The corner drug store where the high school boys gather to talk over the latest game.
3. The creek by the edge of the town.
4. The restaurant where everything is served in slap-dash manner.
5. The village commons.
6. A church supper.
7. The village square.

C. SCENES THAT A BOY REARED IN A BIG CITY MIGHT RECALL.

1. The rattle of big trucks over the cobblestones.
2. The boulevard where the autos forever speed by.
3. The sounds of a great railroad union station at night when the yards are jammed with outgoing and incoming trains.
4. The sounds and sights of a factory running at top speed.
5. The "great white way."
6. The city as seen in the distance as one approaches it on the train.
7. A great department store.

II. STUDIES IN ATMOSPHERE

A. DESCRIPTIONS OF NATURE TO HARMONIZE WITH A MOOD.

"One thing in life calls for another; there is a fitness in events and places. One place suggests work, another idleness, a third early rising and long rambles in the dew. The effect of night, of any flowing water, of lighted cities, of the peep of day, of ships, of the open ocean, calls up in the mind an army of anonymous desires and pleasures. Something, we feel, should happen; we know not what, yet we proceed in quest of it. And many of the happiest hours of life fleet by us in this vain attendance on the genius of the place and moment. It is thus that tracts of young fir, and low rocks, that reach into deep soundings, particularly torture and delight me. Something must have happened in such places, and perhaps ages back, to members of my race; and when I was a child I tried in vain to invent appropriate games for them, as I still try, just as vainly, to fit them with the proper story. Some places speak distinctly. Certain dank gardens cry aloud for a murder; certain old houses demand to be haunted; certain coasts are set apart for shipwreck."—*Stevenson, "Gossip on Romance."*

In writing the following exercises, select only such details as will harmonize with the pervading spirit of the scene and reject all others that are "dissonant in mood." Preferably make your description from the view point of an actor or a participant, as atmosphere can be presented best through the medium of the emotions of one speaking in the first person. Have the character through whose viewpoint you write dominated by the setting. Note that the list below has been drawn with few modifications from Stevenson's suggestions above.

1. Describe a city street in such a way as to convey an impression of bustle and confusion and "busyness." (Work.)
2. Describe the coming of a peaceful summer night in the country in such a way as to fill the reader with feelings of peace and tranquillity. (Idleness.)
3. Describe a bit of street so as to convey as strong an impression as possible of deep darkness. (Effect of night.)
4. Describe a river in autumn in such a way as to "awaken an army of anonymous desires and pleasures." (Flowers and stream.)
5. Describe a valley as it would appear just before sunrise if viewed from a hill so as to impress the reader with the sweetness and freshness of the scene. (The peep of day.)
6. Describe the coming of a clear summer night in the sea making much use of color words. (The green ocean.)
7. Describe a "dank garden" that cries aloud for murder.
8. Describe a certain old house at twilight that "demands to be haunted."
9. Describe a coast that is "set apart for shipwreck."

B. Read a narrative that is distinguished for its compactness and brevity, such as a parable of Jesus or a fable by Æsop, and write a description rich in atmosphere, of some scene mentioned in the narrative.

III. THE PLOT-BUILDING GAME

A. When the instructor returns one of your studies in atmosphere or local color describe (in the class hour) a character that could adequately "interpret" such a setting either by reason of "harmonizing with the pervading spirit of the scene" or because of dramatic contrast with it.

B. From a hat draw a number corresponding to one of the settings below. Then from another hat draw a number corresponding to one of the three characters in Chapter VII. State in a paragraph how the setting would dominate or shape the character.

1. A western farm in harvest time.
2. A beautiful lake—every scene to occur when the moon is high.
3. A little college of many traditions and associations but small endowment and old buildings.
4. A little village of New England type in the Middle West.
5. A little village in Massachusetts where the belief holds sway that civilization ends at the foot of the Alleghenies.
6. A camp among the lumber jacks of northern Minnesota.
7. With a gang of Italians laying new steel rails on the railroad.
8. Among the four hundred of New York.
9. The slums of the East Side tenements.
10. Along the wharves of a large city.

11. In the trenches in Flanders.
12. A Mississippi River metropolis, noted for being "a wide open town."
13. A large university in a large city.
14. A department store.
15. A desert island.
16. A shoe-shining shop.
17. A Mexican mezza.
18. A jungle in India.
19. Among the mountains.
20. A lonely wood, at the time of the year when winds howl through the branches.
21. A cozy little cottage.
22. A large city hospital.

IV. STEPS IN WRITING AN ORIGINAL STORY OF ATMOSPHERE OR LOCAL COLOR

A. Read "Greater Love Hath No Man" and the constructive criticism accompanying it.

B. Select a setting and write a few tentative descriptions of it. The best way to write an atmosphere story or story of local color is to begin weeks ahead, writing down little paragraph descriptions or, better still, sentence descriptions that flash the exact impression you wish to make upon the reader. No type of story requires such painstaking care in selecting the right word and the suggestive phrase, such condensing and economy of language. For nothing bores one more quickly than a mediocre, conventionally phrased atmosphere story—and a good one always ranks as one of the gems of literature.

C. Write your story after first putting yourself into the mood you wish to convey to your readers.

CHAPTER X

THE STORY THAT GROWS FROM A THEME

When Jack London remarked that the two essentials of a successful writer were first the ability to work hard, and second, the possession of a "philosophy of life," he was not hitting very wide of the mark. While the first is very necessary for success in any line of writing the second is absolutely indispensable for the writer who wishes to do creditable work with the story of idea. It does not matter for literary purposes whether his philosophy agrees with the generally accepted creeds and cults. But it is essential that the writer of the idea-story should believe in something, and the more vigorously he believes in it the better.

The story that emphasizes idea is either the hardest story to write or the easiest. If it is merely a story with a "moral," it is comparatively easy of composition. A piece of didactic writing in narrative form is merely a string of incidents strung together in such a way as to make the moral idea clear. But such a story sacrifices literary qualities in order to make the moral obvious. If, however, you aim at presenting a truth through artistic effect, you are undertaking a far different thing.

In the strongest stories of idea, there is usually a decisive moment where the character has to decide between one of two issues. An entirely different set of consequences will follow each act. This is the crux of the story, and upon the way it is handled the strength of the

story depends. Sometimes the writer chooses to make the teaching as clear-cut as in the purely didactic narrative or in the story with a moral. At other times he solves the problem so impartially that the reader can only get by implication the writer's own true feelings in the matter. Sometimes, as in "The Lady or the Tiger," he does not solve it at all. Of the three methods, the second is the most artistic and in most cases the one to select. In other words, the method to be chosen in writing the story of idea should be one whereby the effect upon the reader is made not through the reason and intellect, but through the imagination and emotions.

As a matter of fact every story embodies a theme, no matter whether we call it a story from setting or a story from complication or a story from character. For no story can be written that is not more or less based upon some reality of life, upon some truth of human existence. But for that matter, all stories make use of setting, character and complication as well. For our purposes we shall classify as stories from idea only those stories whose purpose is to *emphasize* the theme more than to emphasize the plot or the character.

EXERCISES

I. STUDIES IN EXPOSITORY BEGINNINGS

Kipling in his earlier writing adopted a method of introducing his stories with an introductory essay of one or two paragraphs. As he grew in artistry and power he gradually discarded this method, but the vogue that he started continued. O. Henry was the most successful imitator of Kipling in the use of the "philosophical overture." Through these two popular writers this form

received great currency in this country, and today a great many of the best story-writers in current magazines employ it. But it is not the best way to write a thematic story. Because of its seeming popularity and because it does have some value in helping the beginner to fix his attention at once on the central theme the writer wishes to fix in the reader's mind, it deserves careful consideration before we leave it. Like the back-hand stroke in tennis, no harm will be done and a great deal of good may be accomplished, by trying it out occasionally in practice, although care should be taken to avoid it as much as possible in the real game.

A. Referring to the examples given under B, below, and using them as models, write a philosophical overture suitable for the beginning of a story on one of the following themes. Make it terse, individual and interesting. Take care to prevent it from becoming dull and preachy.

1. God made the world for lovers; all others are intruders.
2. Westward the course of empire takes its way.
3. A little child shall lead them.
4. Mercy is like the gentle dew from heaven.
5. Order is heaven's first law.
6. Opportunity knocks but once.
7. It is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.

If more topics are desired see *Book of Proverbs, Poor Richard's Almanac* and *Æsop's Fables.*

B. Read the story from which one of the following philosophical overtures has been taken and then write a one-sentence beginning to substitute for the expository beginning.

"To rear a boy under what parents call the 'sheltered life system' is, if the boy must go into the world and fend for himself, not wise. Unless he be one in a thousand he has

certainly to pass through many unnecessary troubles; and may, possibly, come to extreme grief simply from ignorance of the proper proportions of things.

"Let a puppy eat the soap in the bathroom or chew a newly blacked boot. He chews and chuckles until, by and by, he finds out that blacking and Old Brown Windsor made him very sick; so he argues that soap and boots are not wholesome. Any old dog about the house will soon show him the unwisdom of biting big dogs' ears. Being young, he remembers and goes abroad, at six months, a well-mannered little beast with a chastened appetite. If he had been kept away from boots, and soap, and big dogs till he came to the trinity full-grown and with developed teeth, consider how fearfully sick and thrashed he would be! Apply that notion to the 'sheltered life,' and see how it works. It does not sound pretty, but it is the better of two evils.

"There was a Boy once who had been brought up under the 'sheltered life' theory; and the theory killed him dead. . . ." —*From Kipling's "Thrown Away."*

"East is East, and West is San Francisco, according to Californians. Californians are a race of people; they are not merely inhabitants of a State. They are the Southerners of the West. Now, Chicagoans are no less loyal to their city; but when you ask them why, they stammer and speak of lake fish and the new Odd Fellows Building. But Californians go into detail.

"Of course, they have in the climate an argument that is good for half an hour while you are thinking of your coal bills and heavy underwear. But as soon as they come to mistake your silence for conviction, madness comes upon them, and they picture the city of the Golden Gate as the Bagdad of the New World. So far, as a matter of opinion, no refutation is necessary. But, dear cousins all (from Adam and Eve descended), it is a rash one who will lay his finger on the map and say: 'In this town there can be

no romance—what could happen here?' Yes, it is a bold and rash deed to challenge in one sentence history, romance, and Rand McNally."

—*From O. Henry's "A Municipal Report."*

II. STUDIES IN STORIES OF THEME

A. Read "The Fat of the Land," by Anzia Yezierska, which Mr. O'Brien considers the best short story in his collection of the "Best Short Stories of 1919." Do you think it deserves such high rank? Jot down one or two thematic situations which could be developed by a plan similar to that of this story, i. e., dividing a life into two parts giving two contrasting incidents separated by a long lapse of time, in the life of a leading character.

B. "The Dark Hour," by Wilbur Daniel Steele, is ranked by O'Brien in his collection of "Best Short Stories of 1918" as the best short story that has come out of the war. Now that the war is over plan a situation whereby the moral of the war—as finished—as you see it, could be best presented.

If you are interested you might read Alice Brown's "Flying Teuton," published in *Harper's* for August, 1917, which O'Brien considered the best war story of that year, and also "England to America," by Margaret Prescott Montague, which was ranked by a group of critics as the best short story of 1919. This story may be found in *The Atlantic Monthly* and reprinted in *Current Opinion* for March, 1920.

C. Read "The Citizen" by James Francis Dwyer in O'Brien's collection of "Best Short Stories for 1915" and then plan a story in which some one listens to a speaker and while listening lives over some dramatic incident in his life. Use the first and last paragraphs of the speech as a "frame" for the story. Speeches that would be easily adapted to such an end would be:

Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address.
Woodrow Wilson's Address: "Make the World Safe for Democracy."
Henry Grady's "The New South."

In planning such a story care must be taken to select the right person through whose point of view the story should be written.

D. Read Daudet's "The Last Class" and then plan a story sequel to it, forty years later, using one of following theme situations:

1. The little boy's return—now a general or a teacher —to the little schoolhouse to re-open it with the "first class."
2. The last class of a kind old German school teacher, a man untouched by militarism, who preaches a valedictory address on the mistakes and moral breakdown of his own nation which led to the return of Alsace-Lorraine to the French.

III. A STORY-BUILDING GAME

1. Draw from a hat numbers corresponding to one of the themes listed below. Then select a character, and plan a story in class that would illustrate this truth.

A. THEMES OF LOVE.

1. Only one love is true and great; we are gods but once.
2. Love is an art, not a science. We can be taught a science but we learn an art by trying.
3. When love dies, we die; from then on until we are buried we only exist.
4. Though love is essential to life, there is a hidden instinct in the heart of every man and woman to destroy it.
5. Sin is not purged by prayer, fasting and self-mutilation, but by love.

6. The only dangerous heretics are those who doubt love.
7. As soon as a woman thinks herself loved, she makes herself lovable.
8. It is singular that a woman is charitable toward the man who would ruin her, and so exacting toward the man who worships her.
9. No man finds himself until he loves a woman.
10. The soul of man is journeying from chaos to law; and the road is love.

B. HUMOROUS THEMES.

The following statements might be elaborated into humorous overtures:

1. Some men actually know a few of the things they believe.
2. Love is a great help to the girl who wants to make herself miserable.
3. It takes any man longer to make a garden than it takes an old hen to unmake it.
4. A man is never the same after his first baby, after his first automobile, and after his name has been mentioned favorably in the newspaper.
5. Common sense is very uncommon.

   —*Horace Greeley.*
6. If you do not wish a man to do a thing, you had better get him to talk about it; for the more men talk, the more likely they are to do nothing.

   —*Carlyle.*
7. Be good and you'll be lonesome.

   —*Mark Twain.*
8. Curiosity is one of the forms of feminine bravery.

   —*Hugo.*
9. There are few wild beasts more to be dreaded than a communicative person having nothing to communicate.

10. A very uncivil person may be able to pass a Civil Service Examination.

C. GENERAL THEMES.

1. No sensible person ever made an apology.
—*Emerson.*
2. If you always live with those who are lame, you yourself will learn to limp.
—*From the Latin.*
3. He who sings frightens away his ills.
—*Cervantes.*
4. In great straits; and when hope is small, the boldest counsels are the safest. —*Livy.*
5. Man is born barbarous—he is ransomed from the conditions of beasts only by being cultivated.
—*Lamartine.*

For other suggestions see *Book of Proverbs, Poor Richard's Almanac,* and *Æsop's Fables.*

IV. STEPS IN WRITING A STORY FROM THEME

A. Read "The Dark Hour" and the criticism that accompanies it.

B. Then select a theme that you would like to develop into a story and outline the general plan.

C. Read some expository material—essays and sermons, etc.—that bears upon your theme. In other words, get the *idea* well developed in your own mind before you begin.

D. Then write your story, avoiding as far as possible all suggestion of the didactic. Try to present your truth through artistic effect rather than pointed moral.

CHAPTER XI

SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED

If you have faithfully worked out the exercises in plot building in the last four chapters you will have found that the writing of a short story is not such an impossible task as you may have first thought. You are now ready to make a choice of complications, characters and setting and write a short story of your own. As you proceed in the writing, however, you are likely to be brought up against some questions that have not been anticipated in the last four chapters, and it is the purpose of this chapter to answer the most important of these questions in the order in which they will probably occur to you.

PROBLEM I. WHERE SHALL I BEGIN?

This is very easily answered. Start as near to the climax as you can. If you are describing your hero's climbing of Pike's Peak, start when he is halfway up. If your tale is concerned with an avalanche, begin when the avalanche is halfway down. That is to say, plunge *in medias res.*

As one important function of the beginning of a story is to set the tone of the story, a beginner could well profit by the method of Poe as described by Clayton Hamilton: "Poe began a story of setting with a description; a story of character with a remark made by or about the leading character; and a story of action with a sentence pregnant with potential incident."

Another very important function of the beginning of a story is to catch the interest of the reader. There is probably nothing more interesting to the average reader than action. Therefore, if you are not sure which of the four types your story will belong to, you will be safe by commencing with an incident. If this incident may be made to reveal, at the same time, the leading character, the setting and the central theme, you will accomplish one thing—the economizing of the reader's attention.

PROBLEM II. WHAT SHALL BE MY POINT OF VIEW?

This matter of viewpoint is the least understood of all the technical features of short story writing. The best way to make the matter clear to you will be to show you the same situation treated from various viewpoints, and indicate the advantage and limitations of each and let you take your choice.

1. *The External Viewpoint.*

The viewpoint of a spectator. The action may be presented as it would appear to an audience in a theatre.

"Nina!" A shrill voice was calling, "This is the third time I've called you to wash them dishes!" The back door slammed.

"Them plagued dishes!" exclaimed Tomboy Turner, as with a deep sigh she dropped to the ground from the limb of the apple tree where she had been sitting. "Gee, how lazy mother is getting," she said as she pulled up her stocking and started slowly, limping around the chicken coop. From time to time she stopped to mop her face with an old bandanna handkerchief. Her arms hung lifelessly at her side. Once she stopped and examined with care a skinned place on her knee. When

she reached the house she pressed her hands against her temples and leaned against the door jamb.

"Did you put the water on, ma?"

"No," snapped the mother. "Now get busy. This isn't an ordinary day. Something different maybe is going to happen."

Nina looked at her mother, her eyes now open wide. Her hair was tousled and she made a pretty picture as she stood in the doorway. She asked no further questions, and, filling a pan set it on the back of the stove; then, with a quick glance at her mother whose back was turned, she slipped through the door and hastened to her room where a moment later she could have been found with her face buried in a much thumbed book, bearing the title, "Three Eagle Feathers, or The Adventures of Cowboy Dick."

The disadvantage of this method is that the reader can not enter into the story as directly as when the personal viewpoint is used. We can say that Nina looked at her mother with wide open eyes, but we can only let the reader draw inferences as to what she was thinking. We can say that the mother turned with a frown, but we can not state with authority that Nina saw it.

It depends entirely upon visualization, and for that reason is excellent practice, but allows practically no opportunity for showing the emotions or feelings of the characters, excepting by inference, and therefore is practically useless for giving atmosphere. For these reasons I should not advise students to use it often.

2. The viewpoint of an actor in the story.

"Nina!" It was my mother's voice. "This is the third time I've called you to wash them dishes!" The back door slammed suggestively.

"Them plagued dishes!" I thought, as I slid down out

of the apple trees. How lazy mother was getting! I pulled up my stocking and started slowly around the chicken coop. Gee, how that sore knee did hurt! It was getting so hot and my head ached and my arms felt as if they were going to fall out. That skinned place on my knee must be pretty bad the way it burned. When I reached the house I had to stop and rest at the doorway. My, how my head did ache!

"Did you put the water on, ma?" I asked.

"No," she snapped, "Now get busy; this isn't an ordinary day. Something different maybe is going to happen."

"I wonder if Uncle Bill is going to come, that old grouchy guy," I thought, "I suppose that is what makes ma so cranky." Well anyway, I wasn't going to hurry on his account. So I filled a pan and set it on the stove far from the spot which I knew was hottest, and when ma wasn't looking I slipped out and up to my room to read another chapter in that most interesting tale, "Three Eagle Feathers or The Adventures of Cowboy Dick."

This method has obvious advantages in stories of atmosphere where the setting and actions must harmonize with the emotions of some character. It has distinct disadvantages if the one telling the story is going to be the hero or heroine, for braggadocio is distasteful to any reader. It should be recommended for use in all stories of atmosphere or mystery.

3. Over-the-Shoulder Viewpoint.

For stories other than atmosphere or mystery, the third person viewpoint is preferable. In this viewpoint the writer looks over the shoulder of one of the characters. Such a method may be obtained by taking the first person viewpoint and changing nothing but the pronouns.

"Nina!" It was her mother's voice. "Nina!" The back door slammed suggestively.

Tomboy Turner sighed profoundly and dropped to the ground. How lazy her mother was getting! She pulled up her stocking and started slowly around the chicken coop limping painfully on a sore toe. It was getting hot and her head ached and her arms felt as if they were going to fall out. That skinned place on her knee must be pretty bad, from the way it burned. When she reached the house she pressed her hands to her temples, and leaned wearily against the door jamb.

"Did you put the water on, ma?"

"No," snapped the other, "Now get busy, this isn't an ordinary day. Something different maybe is going to happen."

"I wonder if that old grouch, Uncle Bill, is going to come," thought Nina, "I suppose that is what makes ma so cranky." Well anyway, she wasn't going to hurry on his account. So she filled a pan and set it on the stove, far from the spot which she knew was hottest, and when her mother was not looking, she slipped out and up to her room to read another chapter of that most interesting tale, "Three Eagle Feathers or The Adventures of Cowboy Dick."

In this kind of story the writer lives the life of the viewpoint character. It is the simplest form and the best for the writer who is as yet uncertain of his technique. Care should be taken not to witness anything that the viewpoint character does not see; nor to enter into the thoughts of any other character. If the writer neglects this warning, discrepancies are bound to occur.

4. The Shadow Viewpoint.

This viewpoint, which is midway between the over-the-shoulder viewpoint and the external viewpoint, combining the best of each, is a discovery, I believe, of

Willard E. Hawkins, editor of the *Student Writer*. It is excellent for a writer who wants greater leeway than the personal viewpoint allows, as it gives him the privilege of telling not only what the characters saw and thought, but also how they looked.

"Nina!" It was her mother's voice. "This is the third time I've called you to wash them dishes!" The back door slammed suggestively.

Tomboy Turner sighed profoundly and dropped to the ground. How lazy her mother was getting! She pulled up her stockings and started slowly around the chicken coop, limping on a sore toe. It was getting hot and her head ached and her arms felt as if they were going to fall out. That skinned place on her knee must be pretty bad the way it burned. When she reached the house she leaned wearily against the door jamb. As she stood there silhouetted against the dark green of the orchard, her hair rumpled, with two or three stray leaves still loosely clinging in it, she made a pretty picture.

"Did you put the water on, ma?"

"No," snapped the other. "Now get busy, this isn't an ordinary day. Something different maybe is going to happen."

"I wonder if Uncle Bill is going to come, that old grouch," she thought, but nothing in the austere manner of her mother revealed what she knew. Great would have been Nina's consternation had she known the real reason for all this haste, but only the crumpled telegram concealed in her mother's apron pocket would have revealed the news to her, and this her mother had taken pains to keep from her sight, etc.

Mr. Hawkins describes this as the viewpoint of the character's subjective or astral self. He says further:

"For fictional purposes we assume that this shadowy double-self exists and that the story is told from its

viewpoint. Consider its properties and limitations. As an extension of the man himself it reaches beyond him, yet is a part of him. It thinks in unison with the man to which it belongs, yet can look at him as an outsider, can see events that he may be too preoccupied to notice. It can observe threatening dangers which he may not realize, but can not warn him—unless he is in a very passive state. It has no separate existence and can not ordinarily witness events that are entirely out of his range; still, it has a definitely wider vision than he possesses. It can not enter into the thoughts of any character other than the man it overshadows.

"This may sound like a very difficult and complex viewpoint, yet it is that which the majority of writers instinctively employ. They enter into close accord with the viewpoint character, but do not actually confine themselves to his or her limitations."

Its advantage is that it permits the writer to paint a picture that is rich in atmosphere and at the same time, rich in details. This method permits us to tell what Nina thought, how she looked and to include mention of some things within the range of the "shadow" viewpoint of which she had no knowledge whatever. It combines the virtue of the objective viewpoint of keeping the reader guessing, and gives opportunity of the personal viewpoint for purposes of atmosphere.

It must not be confused with the shifting viewpoint, however, as the writer must not stray further away from the central character than the length of his own shadow, so to speak. Otherwise the impression of unity of effect would be dissipated.

5. The Shifing Viewpoint.

If he should choose to use this viewpoint the writer would be permitted to describe first the receiving of

the telegram by Mrs. Turner in the kitchen, and then shift to the orchard where Nina was eating green apples and shirking her morning responsibility. The impracticability of such a viewpoint for the short story is so obvious that I need give no further discussion of it here. The fact that it is frequently used by successful magazine writers is no evidence whatever that their stories would not have been more successful without it. It does give evidence, however, that viewpoint like all the other rules of short story writing is a *means* to an *end* and is not the most important thing in the world in itself.

PROBLEM III. HOW SHALL I MAKE MY STORY MOVE?

A narrative is a living thing, like a stream of water; it flows toward a single definite impression that is to be made upon the reader. In some stories this stream should flow slowly, in others rapidly, in still others, and these the majority, it should start slowly and increase by a gradually accelerated movement until at the climax the movement is the most rapid and the interest the highest.

Slow movement is used most frequently in stories of character or atmosphere; rapid action is used in complication stories and sometimes in thematic stories; while accelerated action is found in all.

Here is an example of slow action:

"From Bleymard after dinner, although it was already late, I set out to scale a portion of the Lozère. An ill-marked stony drove-road guided me forward; and I met nearly half-a-dozen bullock-carts descending from the woods, each laden with a whole pine-tree for the winter's firing. At the top of the woods, which do not climb very high upon this cold ridge, I struck leftward by a path among the pines, until I hit on a dell of green turf,

where a streamlet made a little spout over some stones to serve me for a water-tap. 'In a more sacred or sequestered bower—nor nymph nor faunus haunted.' The trees were not old, but they grew thickly round the glade: there was no outlook, except north-eastward upon distant hill-tops, or straight upward to the sky; and the encampment felt secure and private like a room. By the time I had made my arrangements and fed Modestine, the day was already beginning to decline. I buckled myself to the knees into my sack and made a hearty meal; and as soon as the sun went down, I pulled my cap over my eyes and fell asleep. . . .

"As I thus lay, between content and longing, a faint noise stole towards me through the pines. I thought, at first, it was the crowing of cocks or the barking of dogs at some very distant farm; but steadily and gradually it took articulate shape in my ears, until I became aware that a passenger was going by upon the highroad in the valley, and singing loudly as he went. There was more of good-will than grace in his performance; but he trolled with ample lungs; and the sound of his voice took hold upon the hillside and set the air shaking in the leafy glens. I have heard people passing by night in sleeping cities; some of them sang; one, I remember, played loudly on the bag-pipes. I have heard the rattle of a cart or carriage spring up suddenly after hours of stillness, and pass, for some minutes, within the range of my hearing as I lay abed. There is a romance about all who are abroad in the black hours, and with something of a thrill we try to guess their business. But here the romance was double: first, this glad passenger, lit internally with wine, who sent up his voice in music through the night; and then I, on the other hand, buckled into my sack, and smoking alone in the pine-woods between four and five thousand feet towards the stars."—*Robert Louis Stevenson's "A Night Among the Pines."*

Note the tendency to loose sentences and the skillful use of adjectives.

Here is an example of swift action:

"The merchants closed their shops, and came out to swell the general chorus of alarm and clamor. Women rushed to the churches, and crowded the chapels, and knelt and prayed on the flags and steps. The dull sound of the cannon went on rolling, rolling. Presently, carriages with travelers began to leave the town, galloping away by the Ghent barrier. The prophecies of the French partisans began to pass for facts. 'He has cut the armies in two,' it was said. 'He is marching straight on Brussels. He will overpower the English, and be here to-night.'—*Thackeray, "Vanity Fair."*

Note short sentences, concrete nouns and verbs of action.

Here is an example of mixed action; starting with slow movement, the movement gradually increasing in speed until at the close the action is very rapid:

"The Kettle, growing mellow and musical, began to have irrepressible gurglings in its throat, and to indulge in short vocal snorts, which it checked in the bud, as if it hadn't quite made up its mind yet to be good company. Now it was, that after two or three such vain attempts to stifle its convivial sentiments, it threw off all moroseness, all reserve, and burst into a stream of song so cozy and hilarious, as never maudlin nightingale yet formed the least idea of.

"And here, if you like, the Cricket did chime in with a chirrup, chirrup, chirrup, of such magnitude, by way of chorus,—with a voice so astoundingly disproportionate to its size as compared with the Kettle (Size! you couldn't see it!)—that if it had then and there burst itself like an overcharged gun, if it had fallen a victim on the spot, and chirruped its little body into fifty pieces, it would have seemed a natural and inevitable consequence, for which it had expressly labored.

"There was all the excitement of a race about it. Chirp, chirp, chirp! Cricket a mile ahead. Hum, hum, hum—m—m! Kettle making play in the distance, like a great top. Chirp, chirp, chirp! Cricket round the corner. Hum, hum, hum—m—m! Kettle sticking to him in his own way; no idea of giving in. Chirp, chirp, chirp! Cricket fresher than ever. Hum, hum, hum—m—m! Kettle slow and steady. Chirp, chirp, chirp! Cricket going in to finish him. Hum, hum, hum—m—m! Kettle not to be finished. Until, at last, they got so mumbled together in the hurry-skurry, helter-skelter of the match, that whether the Kettle chirped and the Cricket hummed, or the Cricket chirped and the Kettle hummed, or they both chirped and both hummed, it would have taken a clearer head than yours or mine to decide with anything like certainty."—*Dickens' "The Chimes."*

Slow movement should be used in writing narratives on such topics as the following:

Sights seen on a street car.
A walk in the woods.
The loves of old Aunt Chloe.

Rapid movement would naturally be used in such themes as the following:

Chased by a mad dog.
When the wolf was cornered.
The four-oared boat race.

Accelerated movement would be used in such themes as the following:

Fishing for a gigantic trout.
Playing with mother's clothes while she was away.
The night of the rescue.

There is nothing that will help the student attain mastery over narrative movement more than a well de-

veloped sense of rhythm. If he is so fortunate as to possess this instinct he should by all means make the most of it, letting his ideas come as it were in 'thought-waves," and writing as though he were composing to music. The ebb and flow of these thought waves may be speeded up for fast, exciting, tense passages, and slowed down for calm and placid passages.

PROBLEM IV. HOW CAN I CONNECT THE EPISODES?

One of your first tasks should be to reduce the number of episodes to as few in number as possible. Every joint in your pipe is subject to leakage. The leaks in your story will be found at the points of juncture. Three fresh beginnings strain the limit of any story. If your story is naturally episodic, remedy the situation by binding together the earlier episodes into one continuous happening. Then treat the concluding episodes in a similar manner. If you find that you cannot do this I should advise you to throw aside the plot as one impossible to use. There are, however, a few exceptions to this rule. Stories which emphasize character sometimes require more episodes and longer lapses of time between them, in order to record the development of the individuals that are the center of the story. Compare in this respect the number of episodes and the big lapses of time in "The Necklace," and "The Gay Old Dog," with the single continuous episodes in "The Cop and the Anthem," and the "Last Class." Only an artist of as long experience as Maupassant or Edna Ferber could have riveted together so many "links of pipe" without having his stories fall to pieces, figuratively speaking, in clouds of smoke.

If you find it absolutely impossible to bridge the gap between certain parts of your story, don't be afraid to be honest with your readers. You owe it in common honesty to reveal the sharpness of the break, if necessary even typographically. A row of asterisks in the middle of a story is not the best form of transition by any means, but it is one way, and often by no means the worst way.

PROBLEM V. HOW CAN I MAKE MY CLIMAX SEEM PLAUSIBLE?

In a story this simply means that all the stage properties should be on the stage before the performance begins. A splendid example of this forehandedness is seen in Stevenson's "Treasure Island." Here we are told how kind the first mate was, and as an example of his generosity we learn of his having brought on board a barrel of apples. At the time we think of this as a device for showing the character of the mate, but some time later, when the barrel is all but empty, and the little boy crawls into it to eat the last apple and take a nap while sheltered from the rays of the sun, we see suddenly the relation of all this to the plot of the story.

But if forehandedness is necessary in preparing stage properties, even more is it needed for introducing character qualities. If your hero is to toss the villain over the quarterdeck on the last page, you should give us an example of his athletic prowess in one of the early pages. Such forehandedness is especially necessary where you plan to have things happen which would tax your reader's credulity. For instance, if a loafer is going to rise on a sudden occasion and deliver an eloquent address which leads to his election to Congress by being mistaken for

the governor, he should be revealed to us, earlier in the story, picking up methods of skilled orators in his discussions around the old stove in the village store. An excellent example of this preparation is found in the description of the mother on the first page of "They Know Not What They Do," by Wilbur Daniel Steele. But this point leads directly to the next problem of the short story.

PROBLEM VI. HOW CAN I INCREASE THE SUSPENSE IN MY STORY?

When we see a man walking slowly toward an open well, we think nothing of it, but when we discover by the second glance that he is blind, we become intensely interested in the outcome. When we discover by a third glance that he is our own grandfather, our interest is increased to the breaking point. And when finally something occurs to hinder our stopping him from advancing toward what seems certain death, our excitement grows very intense indeed.

This situation illustrates the three laws of suspense. In the first place find an intensely dramatic situation where, in order to prevent disaster, everything depends upon a certain thing happening within a certain limit of time. The Zenda and Graustark stories stress this method. Excellent examples of this are "The Cop and the Anthem," and "The Lady or the Tiger?"

Second, invest your characters with the sympathetic interest of the reader by whatever means at your disposal. If you can make us feel toward him as we would feel toward our own brother, then a very trivial matter will hold us in suspense. Arnold Bennet, Jane Austen, William Dean Howells, stress this method. Examples

in short stories are "The Gay Old Dog" and "The Last Class."

Third, give the impression of a considerable length of time elapsing between the discovery by the reader of the character in his precarious position and the solution. Such an impression may be given by using one of the following devices:

a. The writer may offer scientific explanations of the danger, keeping the reader on tenter-hooks awaiting the outcome. This was done in "The Lady or the Tiger."
b. Another method is to delay action by revealing the thoughts and emotions of the viewpoint character. Nowhere is this better done than in "The Coward."
c. Another way is to shift to some other part of the story and leave the character dangling in the air until we come back to him later. This method, frequently used in novels, implies the shifting viewpoint and is therefore not desirable for short stories.

The chief thing is to work for time for the full significance of the impending disaster to sink deeply into the reader's mind. The writer should be careful not to prolong this retarding of action to the point where it may vitiate the effect of the climax that is coming.

PROBLEM VII. HOW CAN I GIVE MY STORY AN EFFECTIVE CLIMAX?

From the conventional plot point of view what is the secret of a strong climax? If I should put the answer into one word I should say *Surprise*. This surprise must be, of course, compounded of materials that have already

entered into the story; in other words it must be, as I have reiterated elsewhere, plausible and logical.

What are some of the ways by which this surprise can be achieved? Perhaps the most effective methods are the following:

1. Have the character do exactly what we should expect but in a delightfully novel, unusual way, just as only that particular character would do it. In other words, have the surprise not in what he does, but in the way he does it. Who is not thrilled by the climax of "The Last Class?"

2. Have the character, stirred outside himself by some unexpected climactic event, do exactly the opposite of what he and every reader thinks he would do in such a crisis. See O. Henry's "The Proof of the Pudding" for a unique example of this.

3. Omit some little step in the story, as, for instance, the forbearance of Madame Loisel from telling Mathilde that the beads which she was selecting with such childish pleasure were paste, and save this for a revelation at the close of the story. This, of course, is the chief method of detective and mystery stories.

4. Perhaps the most effective surprise climax for a plot story is achieved by introducing a sub-plot which is kept hidden throughout most of the story, and re-enters near the close, long enough to give an entirely new turn to events. In "The Gay Old Dog" the early love affair of Jo Hertz and Emily, so long submerged that it has been forgotten by the reader, emerges at an unexpected moment in such a way as to give a strong climax to the story.

MISCELLANEOUS STUDIES IN SHORT STORY WRITING

These exercises are intended for oral reports, class discussions, or impromptu written assignments in the classroom. It is not intended that they should encroach on time required for the proper preparation of other assignments in this book.

I. STUDIES IN THE BEGINNING OF A STORY

1. Select almost any story of Hawthorne and write another beginning for it. Hawthorne's beginnings are notoriously weak. In fact, in structure of the story Hawthorne is as weak as Poe is strong; his style, however, is superior to that of any living writer and deserves careful attention.

2. Try writing four original beginnings, employing in turn the four methods described on page 88, the introductory incident, the leading character, the theme and the setting. If you prefer you may write four different beginnings for the same story.

3. Try writing an introductory paragraph which will introduce all four elements of the story simultaneously.

II. STUDIES IN THE POINT OF VIEW

1. Cut from a magazine a story which has been told in the first person, paste or string the story together so that it will not fall apart, and then change all the first person pronouns to third person, and write a one-page discussion of the advantage of the one form over the other.

2. After the same manner alter a story told in the third person to the first person form.

3. Plan writing a story from the over-the-shoulder viewpoint of one character, and then of another.

For further studies in viewpoint see IV below.

III. STUDIES IN NARRATIVE MOVEMENT

1. *Slow Movement:* Write an account, 100 to 300 words in length, on one of the following topics or on one of your own choosing:

Hunting with a camera.
A walking trip.
Uncle Tom takes a ride in the street car.

Take time to visualize the pictures you see, as you write, and strive to bring in much specific detail that will add to the vividness of the picture, even at the risk of slowing up the action. While striving for variety in sentence structure—something, by the way, you always should strive for—lean somewhat toward the long sentences, not avoiding the loose construction if you know how to use it. Before writing this sketch read a paragraph from Stevenson to catch his rhythm and grace of movement.

2. *Rapid Movement:* Write an account in 100 to 300 words on one of the following topics, or on one of your own choosing:

When Dave came to bat.
The fire in Garrow's Hotel.
Chased by a mad bull.
When old Burdick lost his temper.

Use shorter sentences than in slow action. Keep your nouns concrete and specific, and above all strive to find "verbs of action" to economize the reader's attention and to lend force to the narrative. For instance say "women rushed to the churches" rather than "went to the churches." Before writing this you will find it helpful to read a page from an exciting chapter in one of Victor Hugo's novels.

3. *Accelerated Movement:* Write an account in 150 to 400 words on one of the following topics or on one of your own choosing, employing the style you used in Exercise 1

above for the first part, and ending with the style you used in 2:

Before and after 11 o'clock on Armistice Day.
The coming of the hurricane to Carver City.
Gill appears for the mile run.

It is an interesting study and excellent practice to attempt to move by gradual stages from slow movement to rapid movement when the incidents in the narrative allow it. This is one of the best exercises to prepare one for the business of story writing.

IV. STUDIES IN SELECTION AND ARRANGEMENT OF EPISODES

1. Read "The Shot," by Pushkin. This is told in three episodes which are not arranged in chronological order. Plan writing this in chronological order and from the impersonal over-the-shoulder viewpoint of the leading character instead of from the first person viewpoint of a minor character. In doing this use "The Necklace" as your model.

What would be gained and what would be lost by this alteration?

2. Using the order of incidents and viewpoint of "The Shot" as a model, make the following alterations in "The Necklace": Have an intermediate incident come first: i. e., Mathilde scrubbing floors in a back garret. Have story told through viewpoint of a minor character—a new character—who occupies the same tenement and whose curiosity is aroused by seeing such a woman doing such menial work. Have the first part of her life told by Mathilde to this person as the second episode of the story, and then have the latter be present in some way at the dénouement and relate what she saw.

Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of such a change.

V. STUDIES IN PLAUSIBILITY

1. Cut out a magazine story which introduces very skillfully the necessary materials and furnishes the motivation for the concluding episodes. Make comments in the margins directing attention to the best examples of this and bring to the class.

2. After a similar fashion bring a story to class which is deplorably weak in motivation and in preparation for the final solution.

3. Point out the deplorably illogical places in "The Spurious One."

VI. STUDIES IN SUSPENSE

A. Indicate in which of the following situations suspense must be created by intensifying the interest in the *characters,* and in which by intensifying the interest in the *situation:*

1. Johnny spills molasses on the table-cloth at Mr. Gordon-Jones' party.
2. Mrs. Smith buys a can-opener from the agent only to find she has been duped.
3. Mr. Brown discovers that the shares in Brown's Harvester Company have dropped three points.
4. Mark Dolan slips on the glacier edge.
5. Robert McCord finds after starting on his first aëroplane flight that he has forgotten the way to alight.

B. Write in class a one-page sketch based on one of the following:

1. Dawson was to be hung at high noon. It was now five minutes of the hour, and still no reprieve had come.
2. The doctor washed his hands in preparation for the operation.
3. "In five minutes the boss wants to see you," she told me. Seeing that all in the room were looking at

me, I bent my head down over my work. But for the life of me I could not concentrate my thoughts upon the task before me.

4. I knew that in five minutes I should be under the enemies' fire. In order to calm my beating heart I began to reason very scientifically about it. In the first place . . .

5. I looked ahead one hundred yards to where stood the old gnarled tree and safety! Then I glanced back over my shoulder to where the wolf pack came charging only thirty yards away—with death gleaming from their yellow eyes and blood-red lips! Could I make it?

VII. STUDIES IN CLIMAX

1. Read "The Lady and the Tiger" and write a climax according to your own interpretation of the lady's motives. This sometimes makes an interesting impromptu class assignment when the instructor reads the story aloud at the beginning of the hour.

2. Read "Riding the Rim Rock" by Dallas Lore Sharp in Atlantic Narratives, and recast the last part of the story so as to have a climax instead of a philosophical discussion.

3. Discuss the ending of "The Gay Old Dog" and compare with the ending of "The Necklace."

4. Conceive a situation where some character who has been abused, scorned and looked down upon throughout the story arises in justifiable indignation and volcanoes forth his wrath at his persecutors in such a way as to make him the dominant character in the situation.

5. Conceive of a situation where a character does just the opposite of what we might have expected him to do.

VIII. DISCUSS THE "MORAL" IMPLIED IN THE FOLLOWING STORY:

THE SPURIOUS ONE*

BY GERTRUDE BROOKE HAMILTON

Putting up a white hand to brush back a curl that the wind had blown across her temple, the Heroine sighed, "But the storm will come and all our beautiful day will be spoiled."

The Hero's clean-cut face glowed. "Yes, it will rain."

"How can it," broke in the Minor Character, "when there's not a cloud in the sky?" Her hair, unlike the Heroine's, had become in the salt air perfectly straight. The Hero seemed to note the contrast. Again he glowed.

"It will rain," cooed the Heroine.

The Minor Character shook her head. "Where are the clouds?"

The Heroine smiled. Aside, she whispered fiercely, "To give me my big scene it *must* rain."

And it rained. A flooding downpour that drove the Heroine and the Hero and the Minor Character along the beach, and sent stinging handfuls of sand into their faces. Against the fury of the winds, the Hero walked in silent strength; but the Heroine faltered. Her hair, loosened from its shining coils, fell heavily upon her shoulders.

"I am afraid," she stammered, "for you!"

"For me!" he cried. "Then you——"

She flung out warning hands. "Hush! We have no right——"

He straightened. "Out here, let us face ourselves, the real selves. Let us be true. Conventionalities that bind and fetter——"

"This is all very fine," interrupted the Minor Character peevishly, "but I am getting wet."

"Be still!" hissed the Heroine. "Do you want to spoil our best scene?" And then to him: "No! no! I must not listen!"

The Minor Character seated herself upon a rock and began kicking it with her unshapely feet. Her hair hung about her eyes like snakes, her face was pale and her nose red. She was a sorry spectacle—and she knew it!

The storm was now magnificent; across the western sky-line faint flickers of lightning lived and died, and the thunder rumbled incessantly. The Heroine was very serious. "Voices of the storm," she brooded. "What are they saying to you—to me—to the world?"

"Love," he analyzed. "Look!"—a flame went across the heavens—"that is love playing upon two souls, lighting doubts with naked truth. Listen!"—the thunder broke—"That is love defying the world. Voices of the storm! Can't you hear them?"

She breathed unevenly. A blinding rent, a crash that shook the earth, brought them to their feet. "The end!" she wailed.

"The storm," contradicted the Minor Character. "I knew what would come of this idiotic business. Now, what are we going to do?"

The Hero stretched his arms. "Die, gloriously!"

"Not for mine," retorted the Minor Character. "I see a boat coming, anyway."

It was true. Across the swirling waters, flashed upon by vivid bolts, rescue was nearing them. When the craft drew up, a man wrapped in a flowing cape came rapidly forward.

"There is yet time," he muttered.

The Hero interposed with, "Sir, your name."

"What matters that?"

"Your name, or profession, before we move an inch."

"If you must have it," the stranger said sulkily, "I am the Villain. This lady's hair"—he waved a hand towards the Heroine—"needs no explanation—but the third person?"

"A minor character," the Hero said indifferently.

The Villain raised his brows. "Rather unusual, having her here at this climax."

"It had to be done," sighed the Heroine, "to get me here."

"It had to be done because I wouldn't stay out," retorted the Minor Character.

The Villain turned and stared at her. "A piece of impertinence, upon my life!"

"She is simply unbearable," snapped the Heroine.

The Minor Character stuck out her tongue. "Oh, chase yourself!"

"Be still," the Hero commanded. "And, to go on with the story: Dear Love, let me carry you over these sharp rocks."

The storm had abated somewhat, and the party proceeded in silence. The Villain led the way, followed by the Hero, who carried the Heroine as lightly as if she were a baby. "And as if she didn't weigh a hundred and sixty pounds!" reflected the Minor Character bitterly, as she, unnoticed, picked her way along.

On reaching the boat, the Villain sprang to the prow. Needless to say, the Hero was there before him. The Heroine sank, moaning, into the stern. By a violent effort, the Minor Character scrambled aboard, and they shot out over the boiling, violet tinted waters.

Before they had gone many yards, the Minor Character grasped the Hero's arm. "Look!" she cried. "Some one left on shore. A man! Go back!"

The Hero's lips set. "Impossible."

"He's not in the book," frowned the Villain.

"But only look! Swimming to us! Against this tide!" The Minor Character made a funnel of her hands, and shrieked: "Hurry! Hurry!"

The man was now plainly discernible. He waved long arms, startling them all by the wildness of his eye. "Wait!" he yelled. "Let me on."

"Impossible," shouted the Hero.

"You're not one of us," bellowed the Villain.

The Heroine added her voice. "We don't like—the

way you cut—your hair—or your clothes! But—" her face suddenly changed—"you might marry the Minor Character."

"What!" shrieked the stranger, rising manfully to the waves. "Marry the Minor Character! . . . Me! . . . I am the Author!"

Stunned silence. The party stared at one another. Never, in all the course of their eventful lives, had such a thing occurred. The Hero's hand fell from the prow; the Heroine uttered a faint cry; the Villain, forgetting himself, laughed sillily. The Minor Character alone retained any presence of mind. She brought the boat to a standstill, and the Author climbed in.

"What do you mean by this?" he stormed, shaking his fists madly and jumping up and down. "Paying no attention to me, walking off when and where you please! You'll die in the next chapter—the whole of you!"

At these terrible words, they shrank back, petrified—all but the Minor Character. She put her hands on her hips and retorted airily, "Gee! a fine author! Gets us into a mess like this, and then blames us for the way we act. What do you want us to do—drown?"

Her words seemed to further enrage him. "A fine minor character," he shouted. "What are you doing here, anyway? You belong back in the ball room."

"Maybe I do, smarty; but I'm not going back." Suddenly the Minor Character became serious. "I know what's the matter with you," she said. "You're afraid the publishers won't look at your book. Lord! I wouldn't blame them. I'm sick to death of it. Kill me in the next chapter; I'll be glad to get out of the whole thing, even with a paragraph. I'm tired of that freaky villain. I'm tired to death of that silly heroine. I'm tired of that copy-book hero. Why don't you get something original, ninny?"

The Author began to stutter. "Kill my sale—my popularity——"

"Resurrect it," she retorted calmly; "it's dead already." Then she walked over to him and held out her hands.

"See here, I'll tell you what to do. Make me the Heroine, and I'll make a best seller. Don't laugh—your face looks too ugly cracked up like that. Make me the Heroine. I've got it in me. Just give me a chance." Conviction was in her voice, born of obtruding persistently upon a hundred and fifty pages.

The Author turned to his principals. The Hero was gracefully guiding the boat with one hand and supporting with the other the flower-like form of the Heroine, whose beauty shone with unruffled brilliancy.

Then the Author turned and looked searchingly at the Minor Character; her pale, wicked eyes, her straight hair, her large defiant mouth, the whole awkward liveliness of her. "When I began to write this book," he groaned, "you were a shapeless bit of dough. I never liked you. You have forced yourself into every important scene, ruined climaxes, outshone the heroine, developed wit—Why? Oh, why?"

"Because I'm something that's never been done before. I'm new!"

The words had no sooner fallen from her lips than the Heroine was in the back seat; the Hero beside her; the Villain in front of him; and at the prow, dominating them all, shooting the boat forward with such swift action that they gasped for breath, was the Minor Character.

The Author glared, open-mouthed. "I don't blame them," he cried wrathfully, "I detest you."

Her hair blowing in the wind and her eyes agleam, the Minor Character laughed back. "When something like me comes along," she cried, "what do you count? I'm new! I'm new! Hold on to your hats—we're going some!"

The Author started to retort. Instead, with a sudden sparkle in his eye and wildness of manner, he grabbed up his pen again and began to write.

PART II

"CREATIVE CRITICISM" OF FOUR SHORT STORIES

READ THIS PAGE BEFORE YOU READ THE STORIES

In reading the stories on the following pages try to put yourself in the writer's attitude of mind. Assume that you yourself have written the stories or that you are in the process of writing them. To help you get this creative attitude of mind read several confessions of successful authors who have revealed their methods of work. Poe's explanation as to how he wrote "The Raven" is quite illuminative. Mrs. Dorothy Canfield Fisher has written an interesting essay entitled, "How Flint and Fire Started and Grew." But of all the information that authors have furnished in regard to their methods I know of none that will prove more helpful or more stimulating to beginners in story writing than the interview with James Oppenheim which is reprinted on the following pages.

Read it over carefully.

AN INTERVIEW WITH JAMES OPPENHEIM *

BY WILLARD D. PRICE

The swift hum of the typewriter in the next room ceased as I asked for Mr. Oppenheim, and a moment later he stood in the doorway.

"So you don't believe," I said, "that one must work with a soft pencil and at the dead of night to produce a satisfactory short story?"

"I used to think something of the sort," he confessed, as we passed into the story workshop.

"I used to wait until the fever caught me, and then write a story complete in one night; and be laid up for two days after it. Now I do my best work in the early morning and rarely turn out more than a thousand words at a sitting. I don't write as many stories as I did under the old system. But the work is more carefully done."

"How do you get the idea for a story in the first place?"

"I get at a story in three different ways. First, through a certain character. When I see someone a trifle different from most people, I often picture a story around him. Second, through some dramatic situation that I witness or hear about. Third, through the idea or theme itself; for instance, I might take the theme of child labor and work out the story from that beginning."

"When you build a story around a character, do you use the character about as you find him in real life?"

"Practically never. Things and people as they are in real life won't do for short stories. They are only starting points, spring boards. It is to get away from the dull and monotonous in life that people read short stories. Therefore only the high points in human experience can be used effectively by the story writer."

"It is so hard to make a character really live and breathe," I suggested, "to make him seem an actual flesh-and-blood person instead of a dry scrap of the author's own imagination."

"Yes, it is hard," granted Mr. Oppenheim. "I always insist upon knowing my character thoroughly before I write a word about him. That helps me. I must decide who his father and mother were, where he was born, how he spent his childhood, what education he had, whether he has any brothers and sisters, who his friends are, and so forth. I may not mention one of these details in the story. Probably I will not state that he was born on a farm in Maine in 1887 of plain, industrious parents, attended the village school, showed a great liking for reading and drawing but despised arithmetic, and so on. But to have all these things in mind helps me form a clear picture of my character and makes him stand out convincingly in my story. Knowing him intimately gives me a sense of assurance in writing about him that I couldn't have otherwise."

"Then how do you attempt to describe your character?"

"The great danger, I think, is in describing him too much. I generally try to give one sharp flash that leaves a clear impression. Too many details are apt to blur the picture rather than make it clearer.

"I remember Balzac in one of his novels tells of a tall woman who comes striding panther-like into the room—she was a dark beauty dressed in red—and instantly I had a picture of her. Perhaps it was not Balzac's picture, but it was mine, and it would have been sufficient for me throughout the story. But Balzac, not content, went on for a page and half adding one item after another to the description until the picture I had first formed gradually broke up and was lost. As a rule I think one quick flash is enough in introducing a character. Other details, if really essential, can be woven in later during the course of the story."

"One more question about character. Do you ever use

the shifting viewpoint; working through one character for a while and then through another?"

"No. I have seen that done very effectively, but I don't like to do it myself. I prefer the French method. I choose only one character to act as my spokesman. Then I write the entire story through him. I see, feel, describe everything through him, not directly."

"You do that for the sake of unity?"

"Yes. It concentrates the whole thing on one person. Then, too, I think you get a more vivid, realistic story if you try to see the whole action through the eyes of one character."

"These principles and rules are so interesting—and so valuable," I said. "But back of them all there must be vision? And inspiration?"

"Well, perhaps," parried Mr. Oppenheim, "though in my case I should rather call it a mood than inspiration. The mood I am in at the time is the biggest influence in determining the sort of story I write. Each mood begets a certain style, a certain manner of expressing things. The mood of my story 'Meg,' for instance, was the result of a walk through the dying autumn woods.

"Then after mood comes rhythm. I do my best work when a certain melody beats through my mind. With me, each piece of writing has its own rhythm. 'Meg' was in the staccato: 'Sharply at six the factory whistle loosed a long blast through the rainstorm.' I can't write anything real unless I feel it strongly. And strong feeling always accompanies, with me, a rhythm."

"But aren't there times when you sit down to write without any strong, new impression in mind? What do you do then?"

"I think it is often possible to induce a new impression just by intense application."

Mr. Oppenheim placed his hand on the back of the chair that stood before his typewriter. "I always hate to sit down on that chair," he said, smiling. "It is always hard work for me to start writing. It is hard to quit, too.

But the beginning of a story is always the most difficult part for me to write."

"Do you make an outline of your story before you begin, or do you just let it 'evolve'?"

"I am helped by laying out a rough synopsis. For example, to refer to 'Meg' again, the synopsis shouldn't be developed in too much detail, for then one is apt to follow it mechanically. But the main incidents in the story I plan out to the very end. I know exactly what the climax and conclusion are to be before I begin."

"Then how should the story begin?"

"The main thing in commencing a story is to get something different, unique. I think it doesn't matter much whether it is dialogue, action or meditation. Only it must be something unusual, something out of the beaten track."

"When you write a story, do you become engrossed in it? Or can you keep yourself apart from it and watch it dispassionately as you write?"

"As I get into the story, there are times when I become so absorbed that for fifteen minutes or so at a time the critic side of me is completely out of working order. If during one of those periods of forgetfulness someone should break down the door, I might not notice it. Then, when I reach a natural pause in the action, my critic emerges and goes back over what I have written."

"And does the critic discover much that has to be changed?"

"When I first began to write, he did. But he doesn't find so much now. Story-writing is so largely a matter of practice. A good many things begin to take care of themselves after a time."

THE SELF-INVENTORY OF THE WRITER OF STORIES

Bearing in mind Mr. Oppenheim's methods of writing, read the stories on the following pages, trying to trace the steps taken by the writers as they wrote them. Before you read the stories glance over the following questions and assume that each writer submitted himself to some such catechism before he wrote his story.

1. Who is to be my leading character in this story? Do I know him thoroughly before I write a word about him? What is to be his dominant trait?

2. What is to be the problem, and what is to be the solution in this story? Is the solution surprising, dramatic, character-revealing, full of human interest or otherwise worth while? Did I think of the problem first or of the solution?

3. What is to be the setting? Am I personally familiar with the details of local color? Can I enter into the emotional "feel" of the atmosphere?

4. What is to be the theme or moral? Can it be revealed through artistic means, or will it burden down the story with its didacticism?

5. What shall be the action of the narrative movement: rapid, slow or cumulative? Does "a certain melody beat through my mind" as I write?

6. Can I achieve my purpose best by choosing "only one character to act as my spokesman" and "write the entire story through him?" In this case should he be the leading character or a minor character? Should he relate the story in the first person or should I use the over-the-shoulder viewpoint? Or would the shadow viewpoint or shifting viewpoint better serve my purpose?

7. Where shall I begin? Can long descriptions of character and setting be absorbed in the action or deferred until later in the story? Where is the very latest point preceding the climax that I can begin?

8. What should be the chief climatic episode toward which everything in the story should point? How many other episodes *dare* I use, and how few *can* I use? How shall I weave them together?

9. Is anything going to take place in my story that will tax my reader's credulity? If so, how can I prepare him for the event by introducing the necessary hints, clues, premonitory allusions and character motivation to make it seem plausible? How can I make my character appear consistent and yet do unusual things?

10. Is the problem to be solved sufficiently novel, unusual or otherwise interesting so as to catch the interest of the reader early in the story and arouse his curiosity as to the outcome? Is the leading character sufficiently unusual, comical, pathetic, heroic or otherwise fascinating as to win the reader's interest and put him in a state of suspense as to what is going to befall him?

11. How can I make my climax strong? Can I make the leading character do just the opposite from what the reader expects him to do? Can I make him do exactly what the reader expects but in a delightfully unusual, unexpected way? Can I withhold some clue—some necessary link in the chain of action—which may be revealed at the very end to give the story a novel twist? Can I manage to have a sub-plot run a subterranean course through the story and reappear at the end long enough to give a new turn to events?

THE GAY OLD DOG*

BY EDNA FERBER

Those of you who have dwelt—or even lingered—in Chicago, Illinois (this is not a humorous story), are familiar with the region known as the Loop. For those others of you to whom Chicago is a transfer point between New York and San Francisco there is presented this brief explanation:

The Loop is a clamorous, smoke-infested district embraced by the iron arms of the elevated tracks. In a city boasting fewer millions, it would be known familiarly as downtown. From Congress to Lake Street, from Wabash almost to the river, those thunderous tracks make a complete circle, or loop. Within it lie the retail shops, the commercial hotels, the theaters, the restaurants. It is the Fifth Avenue (diluted) and the Broadway (deleted) of Chicago. And he who frequents it by night in search of amusement and cheer is known, vulgarly, as a loop-hound.

Jo Hertz was a loop-hound. On the occasion of those sparse first nights granted the metropolis of the Middle West he was always present, third row, aisle, left. When a new loop café was opened, Jo's table always commanded an unobstructed view of anything worth viewing. On entering he was wont to say, "Hello, Gus," with careless cordiality to the head-waiter, the while his eye roved expertly from table to table as he removed his gloves.

He ordered things under glass, so that his table, at midnight or thereabouts, resembled a hot-bed that favors the bell system. The waiters fought for him. He was the kind of man who mixes his own salad dressing. He liked to call for a bowl, some cracked ice, lemon, garlic, paprika, salt, pepper, vinegar and oil, and make a rite of it. People at near-by tables would lay down their knives and forks to watch, fascinated. The secret of it seemed to lie in using all the oil in sight and calling for more.

That was Jo—a plump and lonely bachelor of fifty. A plethoric, roving-eyed and kindly man, clutching vainly at the garments of a youth that had long slipped past him. Jo Hertz, in one of those pinch-waist belted suits and a trench coat and a little green hat, walking up Michigan Avenue of a bright winter's afternoon, trying to take the curb with a jaunty youthfulness against which every one of his fat-encased muscles rebelled, was a sight for mirth or pity, depending on one's vision.

The gay-dog business was a late phase in the life of Jo Hertz. He had been a quite different sort of canine. The staid and harassed brother of three unwed and selfish sisters is an under dog. The tale of how Jo Hertz came to be a loop-hound should not be compressed within the limits of short story. It should be told as are the photo-plays, with frequent throw-backs and many cut-ins. To condense twenty-three years of a man's life into some five or six thousand words requires a verbal economy amounting to parsimony.

At twenty-seven Jo had been the dutiful, hard-working son (in the wholesale harness business) of a widowed and gummidging mother, who called him Joey. If you had looked close you would have seen that now and then a double wrinkle would appear between Jo's eyes—a wrinkle

that had no business there at twenty-seven. Then Jo's mother died, leaving him handicapped by a death-bed promise, the three sisters and a three-story-and-basement house on Calumet Avenue. Jo's wrinkle became a fixture.

Death-bed promises should be broken as lightly as they are seriously made. The dead have no right to lay their clammy fingers upon the living.

"Joey," she had said, in her high, thin voice, "take care of the girls."

"I will, ma," Jo had choked.

"Joey," and the voice was weaker, "promise me you won't marry till the girls are all provided for." Then as Jo had hesitated, appalled: "Joey, it's my dying wish. Promise!"

"I promise, ma," he had said.

Whereupon his mother had died, comfortably, leaving him with a completely ruined life.

They were not bad-looking girls, and they had a certain style, too. That is, Stell and Eva had. Carrie, the middle one, taught school over on the West Side. In those days it took her almost two hours each way. She said the kind of costume she required should have been corrugated steel. But all three knew what was being worn, and they wore it—or fairly faithful copies of it. Eva, the housekeeping sister, had a needle knack. She could skim the State Street windows and come away with a mental photograph of every separate tuck, hem, yoke, and ribbon. Heads of departments showed her the things they kept in drawers, and she went home and reproduced them with the aid of a two-dollar-a-day seamstress. Stell, the youngest, was the beauty. They called her Babe. She wasn't really a beauty, but some one had once told her that she looked like Janice Meredith

(it was when that work of fiction was at the height of its popularity). For years afterward, whenever she went to parties, she affected a single, fat curl over her right shoulder, with a rose stuck through it.

Twenty-three years ago one's sisters did not strain at the household leash, nor crave a career. Carrie taught school, and hated it. Eva kept house expertly and complainingly. Babe's profession was being the family beauty, and it took all her spare time. Eva always let her sleep until ten.

This was Jo's household, and he was the nominal head of it. But it was an empty title. The three women dominated his life. They weren't consciously selfish. If you had called them cruel they would have put you down as mad. When you are the lone brother of three sisters, it means that you must constantly be calling for, escorting, or dropping one of them somewhere. Most men of Jo's age were standing before their mirror of a Saturday night, whistling blithely and abstractedly while they discarded a blue polka-dot for a maroon tie, whipped off the maroon for a shot-silk in favor of a plain black-and-white, because she had once said she preferred quiet ties. Jo, when he should have been preening his feathers for conquest, was saying:

"Well, my God, I *am* hurrying! Give a man time, can't you? I just got home. You girls have been laying around the house all day. No wonder you're ready."

He took a certain pride in seeing his sisters well dressed, at a time when he should have been reveling in fancy waistcoats and brilliant-hued socks, according to the style of that day, and the inalienable right of any unwed male under thirty, in any day. On those rare occasions when his business necessitated an out-of-town

trip, he would spend half a day floundering about the shops, selecting handkerchiefs, or stockings, or feathers, or fans, or gloves for the girls. They always turned out to be the wrong kind, judging by their reception.

From Carrie, "What in the world do I want of a fan!"

"I thought you didn't have one," Jo would say.

"I haven't. I never go to dances."

Jo would pass a futile hand over the top of his head, as was his way when disturbed. "I just thought you'd like one. I thought every girl liked a fan. Just," feebly, "just to—to have."

"Oh, for pity's sake!"

And from Eva or Babe, "I've *got* silk stockings, Jo." Or, "You brought me handkerchiefs the last time."

There was something selfish in his giving, as there always is in any gift freely and joyfully made. They never suspected the exquisite pleasure it gave him to select these things; these fine, soft, silken things. There were many things about this slow-going, amiable brother of theirs that they never suspected. If you had told them he was a dreamer of dreams, for example, they would have been amused. Sometimes, dead-tired by nine o'clock, after a hard day downtown, he would doze over the evening paper. At intervals he would wake, red-eyed, to a snatch of conversation such as, "Yes, but if you get a blue you can wear it anywhere. It's dressy, and at the same time it's quiet, too." Eva, the expert, wrestling with Carrie over the problem of the new spring dress. They never guessed that the commonplace man in the frayed old smoking-jacket had banished them all from the room long ago; had banished himself, for that matter. In his place was a tall, debonair, and rather dangerously handsome man to whom six o'clock spelled evening clothes.

The kind of a man who can lean up against a mantel, or propose a toast, or give an order to a man-servant, or whisper a gallant speech in a lady's ear with equal ease. The shabby old house on Calumet Avenue was transformed into a brocaded and chandeliered rendezvous for the brilliance of the city. Beauty was there, and wit. But none so beautiful and witty as She. Mrs.—er—Jo Hertz. There was wine, of course; but no vulgar display. There was music; the soft sheen of satin; laughter. And he the gracious, tactful host, king of his own domain——

"Jo, for heaven's sake, if you're going to snore go to bed!"

"Why—did I fall asleep?"

"You haven't been doing anything else all evening. A person would think you were fifty instead of thirty."

And Jo Hertz was again just the dull, gray, commonplace brother of three well-meaning sisters.

Babe used to say petulantly, "Jo, why don't you ever bring home any of your men friends? A girl might as well not have a brother, all the good you do."

Jo, conscience-stricken, did his best to make amends. But a man who has been petticoat-ridden for years loses the knack, somehow, of comradeship with men. He acquires, too, a knowledge of women, and a distaste for them, equaled only, perhaps, by that of an elevator-starter in a department store.

Which brings us to one Sunday in May. Jo came home from a late Sunday afternoon walk to find company for supper. Carrie often had in one of her school-teacher friends, or Babe one of her frivolous intimates, or even Eva a staid guest of the old-girl type. There was always a Sunday night supper of potato salad, and cold meat, and coffee, and perhaps a fresh cake. Jo rather enjoyed

it, being a hospitable soul. But he regarded the guests with the undazzled eyes of a man to whom they were just so many petticoats, timid of the night streets and requiring escort home. If you had suggested to him that some of his sisters' popularity was due to his own presence, or if you had hinted that the more kittenish of these visitors were palpably making eyes at him, he would have stared in amazement and unbelief.

This Sunday night it turned out to be one of Carrie's friends.

"Emily," said Carrie, "this is my brother, Jo."

Jo had learned what to expect in Carrie's friends. Drab-looking women in the late thirties, whose facial lines all slanted downward.

"Happy to meet you," said Jo, and looked down at a different sort altogether. A most surprisingly different sort, for one of Carrie's friends. This Emily person was very small, and fluffy, and blue-eyed, and sort of—well, crinkly looking. You know. The corners of her mouth when she smiled, and her eyes when she looked up at you, and her hair, which was brown, but had the miraculous effect, somehow, of being golden.

Jo shook hands with her. Her hand was incredibly small, and soft, so that you were afraid of crushing it, until you discovered she had a firm little grip all her own. It surprised and amused you, that grip, as does a baby's unexpected clutch on your patronizing forefinger. As Jo felt it in his own big clasp, the strangest thing happened to him. Something inside Jo Hertz stopped working for a moment, then lurched sickeningly, then thumped like mad. It was his heart. He stood staring down at her, and she up at him, until the others laughed. Then their hands fell apart, lingeringly.

"Are you a school-teacher, Emily?" he said.

"Kindergarten. It's my first year. And don't call me Emily, please."

"Why not? It's your name. I think it's the prettiest name in the world." Which he hadn't meant to say at all. In fact, he was perfectly aghast to find himself saying it. But he meant it.

At supper he passed her things, and stared, until everybody laughed again, and Eva said acidly, "Why don't you feed her?"

It wasn't that Emily had an air of helplessness. She just made you feel you wanted her to be helpless, so that you could help her.

Jo took her home, and from that Sunday night he began to strain at the leash. He took his sisters out, dutifully, but he would suggest, with a carelessness that deceived no one, "Don't you want one of your girl friends to come along? That little What's-her-name—Emily, or something. So long's I've got three of you, I might as well have a full squad."

For a long time he didn't know what was the matter with him. He only knew he was miserable, and yet happy. Sometimes his heart seemed to ache with an actual physical ache. He realized that he wanted to do things for Emily. He wanted to buy things for Emily—useless, pretty, expensive things that he couldn't afford. He wanted to buy everything that Emily needed, and everything that Emily desired. He wanted to marry Emily. That was it. He discovered that one day, with a shock, in the midst of a transaction in the harness business. He stared at the man with whom he was dealing until that startled person grew uncomfortable.

"What's the matter, Hertz?"

"Matter?"

"You look as if you'd seen a ghost or found a gold mine. I don't know which."

"Gold mine," said Jo. And then, "No. Ghost."

For he remembered that high, thin voice, and his promise. And the harness business was slithering downhill with dreadful rapidity, as the automobile business began its amazing climb. Jo tried to stop it. But he was not that kind of business man. It never occurred to him to jump out of the down-going vehicle and catch the up-going one. He stayed on, vainly applying brakes that refused to work.

"You know, Emily, I couldn't support two households now. Not the way things are. But if you'll wait. If you'll only wait. The girls might—that is, Babe and Carrie——"

She was a sensible little thing, Emily. "Of course I'll wait. But we mustn't just sit back and let the years go by. We've got to help."

She went about it as if she were already a little match-making matron. She corraled all the men she had ever known and introduced them to Babe, Carrie, and Eva separately, in pairs, *en masse*. She arranged parties at which Babe could display the curl. She got up picnics. She stayed home while Jo took the three about. When she was present she tried to look as plain and obscure as possible, so that the sisters should show up to advantage. She schemed, and planned, and contrived, and hoped; and smiled into Jo's despairing eyes.

And three years went by. Three precious years. Carrie still taught school, and hated it. Eva kept house, more and more complainingly as prices advanced and allowance retreated. Stell was still Babe, the family

beauty; but even she knew that the time was past for curls. Emily's hair, somehow, lost its glint and began to look just plain brown. Her crinkliness began to iron out.

"Now, look here!" Jo argued, desperately, one night. "We could be happy, anyway. There's plenty of room at the house. Lots of people begin that way. Of course, I couldn't give you all I'd like to at first. But maybe, after a while——"

No dreams of salons, and brocade, and velvet-footed servitors, and satin damask now. Just two rooms, all their own, all alone, and Emily to work for. That was his dream. But it seemed less possible than that other absurd one had been.

You know that Emily was as practical a little thing as she looked fluffy. She knew women. Especially did she know Eva, and Carrie, and Babe. She tried to imagine herself taking the household affairs and the housekeeping pocketbook out of Eva's expert hands. Eva had once displayed to her a sheaf of aigrettes she had bought with what she saved out of the housekeeping money. So then she tried to picture herself allowing the reins of Jo's house to remain in Eva's hands. And everything feminine and normal in her rebelled. Emily knew she'd want to put away her own freshly laundered linen, and smooth it, and pat it. She was that kind of woman. She knew she'd want to do her own delightful haggling with butcher and vegetable peddler. She knew she'd want to muss Jo's hair, and sit on his knee, and even quarrel with him, if necessary, without the awareness of three ever-present pairs of maiden eyes and ears.

"No! No! We'd only be miserable. I know. Even if they didn't object. And they would, Jo. Wouldn't they?"

His silence was miserable assent. Then, "But you do love me, don't you, Emily?"

"I do, Jo. I love you—and love you—and love you. But, Jo, I—can't."

"I know it, dear. I knew it all the time, really. I just thought, maybe, somehow——"

The two sat staring for a moment into space, their hands clasped. Then they both shut their eyes, with a little shudder, as though what they saw was terrible to look upon. Emily's hand, the tiny hand that was so unexpectedly firm, tightened its hold on his, and his crushed the absurd fingers until she winced with pain.

That was the beginning of the end, and they knew it.

Emily wasn't the kind of a girl who would be left to pine. There are too many Jo's in the world whose hearts are prone to lurch and then thump at the feel of a soft, fluttering, incredibly small hand in their grip. One year later Emily was married to a young man whose father owned a large, pie-shaped slice of the prosperous state of Michigan.

That being safely accomplished, there was something grimly humorous in the trend taken by affairs in the old house on Calumet. For Eva married. Of all people, Eva! Married well, too, though he was a great deal older than she. She went off in a hat she had copied from a French model at Field's, and a suit she had contrived with a home dressmaker, aided by pressing on the part of the little tailor in the basement over on Thirty-first Street. It was the last of that, though. The next time they saw her, she had on a hat that even she would have despaired of copying, and a suit that sort of melted into your gaze. She moved to the North Side (trust Eva for that), and Babe assumed the management of the household on

Calumet Avenue. It was rather a pinched little household now, for the harness business shrank and shrank.

"I don't see how you can expect me to keep house decently on this!" Babe would say contemptuously. Babe's nose, always a little inclined to sharpness, had whittled down to a point of late. "If you knew what Ben gives Eva."

"It's the best I can do, Sis. Business is something rotten."

"Ben says if you had the least bit of——" Ben was Eva's husband, and quotable, as are all successful men.

"I don't care what Ben says," shouted Jo, goaded into rage. "I'm sick of your everlasting Ben. Go and get a Ben of your own, why don't you, if you're so stuck on the way he does things."

And Babe did. She made a last desperate drive, aided by Eva, and she captured a rather surprised young man in the brokerage way, who had made up his mind not to marry for years and years. Eva wanted to give her her wedding things, but at that Jo broke into sudden rebellion.

"No, sir! No Ben is going to buy my sister's wedding clothes, understand? I guess I'm not broke—yet. I'll furnish the money for her things, and there'll be enough of them, too."

Babe had as useless a trousseau, and as filled with extravagant pink-and-blue and lacy and frilly things as any daughter of doting parents. Jo seemed to find a grim pleasure in providing them. But it left him pretty well pinched. After Babe's marriage (she insisted that they call her Estelle now) Jo sold the house on Calumet. He and Carrie took one of those little flats that were springing up, seemingly over night, all through Chicago's South Side.

There was nothing domestic about Carrie. She had given up teaching two years before, and had gone into Social Service work on the West Side. She had what is known as a legal mind, hard, clear, orderly, and she made a great success of it. Her dream was to live at the Settlement House and give all her time to the work. Upon the little household she bestowed a certain amount of grim, capable attention. It was the same kind of attention she would have given a piece of machinery whose oiling and running had been entrusted to her care. She hated it, and didn't hesitate to say so.

Jo took to prowling about department store basements, and household goods sections. He was always sending home a bargain in a ham, or a sack of potatoes, or fifty pounds of sugar, or a window clamp, or a new kind of paring knife. He was forever doing odd little jobs that the janitor should have done. It was the domestic in him claiming its own.

Then, one night, Carrie came home with a dull glow in her leathery cheeks, and her eyes alight with resolve. They had what she called a plain talk.

"Listen, Jo. They've offered me the job of first assistant resident worker. And I'm going to take it. Take it! I know fifty other girls who'd give their ears for it. I go in next month."

They were at dinner. Jo looked up from his plate, dully. Then he glanced around the little dining-room, with its ugly tan walls and its heavy dark furniture (the Calumet Street pieces fitted cumbersomely into the five-room flat).

"Away? Away from here, you mean—to live?"

Carrie laid down her fork. "Well, really, Jo! After all that explanation."

"But to go over there to live! Why, that neighborhood's full of dirt, and disease, and crime, and the Lord knows what all. I can't let you do that, Carrie."

Carrie's chin came up. She laughed a short little laugh. "Let me! That's eighteenth-century talk, Jo. My life's my own to live. I'm going."

And she went. Jo stayed on in the apartment until the lease was up. Then he sold what furniture he could, stored or gave away the rest, and took a room on Michigan Avenue in one of the old stone mansions whose decayed splendor was being put to such purpose.

Jo Hertz was his own master. Free to marry. Free to come and go. And he found he didn't even think of marrying. He didn't even want to come or go, particularly. A rather frumpy old bachelor, with thinning hair and a thickening neck. Much has been written about the unwed, middle-aged woman; her fussiness, her primness, her angularity of mind and body. In the male that same fussiness develops, and a certain primness, too. But he grows flabby where she grows lean.

Every Thursday evening he took dinner at Eva's, and on Sunday noon at Stell's. He tucked his napkin under his chin and openly enjoyed the home-made soup and the well-cooked meats. After dinner he tried to talk business with Eva's husband, or Stell's. His business talks were the old-fashioned kind, beginning:

"Well, now, looka here. Take, f'rinstance, your raw hides and leathers."

But Ben and George didn't want to take f'rinstance your raw hides and leathers. They wanted, when they took anything at all, to take golf, or politics, or stocks. They were the modern type of business man who prefers to leave his work out of his play. Business, with them,

was a profession—a finely graded and balanced thing, differing from Jo's clumsy, downhill style as completely as does the method of a great criminal detective differ from that of a village constable. They would listen, restively, and say "Uh-hur" at intervals, and at the first chance they would sort of fade out of the room, with a meaning glance at their wives. Eva had two children now. Girls. They treated Uncle Jo with good-natured tolerance. Stell had no children. Uncle Jo degenerated, by almost imperceptible degrees, from the position of honored guest, who is served with white meat, to that of one who is content with a leg and one of those obscure bony sections which, after much turning with a bewildered and investigating knife and fork, leave one baffled and unsatisfied.

Eva and Stell got together and decided that Jo ought to marry.

"It isn't natural," Eva told him. "I never saw a man who took so little interest in women."

"Me!" protested Jo almost shyly. "Women!"

"Yes. Of course. You act like a frightened school boy."

So they had in for dinner certain friends and acquaintances of fitting age. They spoke of them as "splendid girls." Between thirty-six and forty. They talked awfully well, in firm, clear way, about civics, and classes, and politics, and economics, and boards. They rather terrified Jo. He didn't understand much that they talked about, and he felt humbly inferior, and yet a little resentful, as if something had passed him by. He escorted them home, dutifully, though they told him not to bother, and they evidently meant it. They seemed capable, not only of going home quite unattended, but of delivering a

pointed lecture to any highwayman or brawler who might molest them.

The following Thursday Eva would say, "How did you like her, Jo?"

"Like who?" Jo would spar feebly.

"Miss Matthews."

"Who's she?"

"Now, don't be funny, Jo. You know very well I mean the girl who was here for dinner. The one who talked so well on the emigration question."

"Oh, her! Why, I liked her, all right. Seems to be a smart woman."

"Smart! She's a perfectly splendid girl."

"Sure." Jo would agree cheerfully.

"But didn't you like her?"

"I can't say I did, Eve. And I can't say I didn't. She made me think a lot of a teacher I had in the fifth reader. Name of Himes. As I recall her, she must have been a fine woman. But I never thought of her as a woman at all. She was just Teacher."

"You make me tired," snapped Eva impatiently. "A man of your age. You don't expect to marry a girl, do you? A child!"

"I don't expect to marry anybody," Jo had answered. And that was the truth, lonely though he often was.

The following year Eva moved to Winnetka. Any one who got the meaning of the Loop knows the significance of a move to a north shore suburb, and a house. Eva's daughter, Ethel, was growing up, and her mother had an eye on society.

That did away with Jo's Thursday dinner. Then Stell's husband bought a car. They went out into the country every Sunday. Stell said it was getting so that

maids objected to Sunday dinners, anyway. Besides, they were unhealthy, old-fashioned things. They always meant to ask Jo to come along, but by the time their friends were placed, and the lunch, and the boxes, and sweaters, and George's camera, and everything, there seemed to be no room for a man of Jo's bulk. So that eliminated the Sunday dinners.

"Just drop in any time during the week," Stell said, "for dinner. Except Wednesday—that's our bridge night —and Saturday. And, of course, Thursday. Cook is out that night. Don't wait for me to 'phone."

And so Jo drifted into that sad-eyed, dyspeptic family made up of those you see dining in second-rate restaurants, their paper propped up against the bowl of oyster crackers, munching solemnly and with indifference to the stare of the passer-by surveying them through the brazen plate-glass window.

And then came the War. The war that spelled death and destruction to millions. The war that brought a fortune to Jo Hertz, and transformed him, over night, from a baggy-kneed old bachelor whose business was a failure to a prosperous manufacturer whose only trouble was the shortage in hides for the making of his product—leather! The armies of Europe called for it. Harnesses! More harnesses! Straps! Millions of straps! More! More!

The musty old harness business over on Lake Street was magically changed from a dust-covered, dead-alive concern to an orderly hive that hummed and glittered with success. Orders poured in. Jo Hertz had inside information on the War. He knew about troops and horses. He talked with French and English and Italian buyers—

noblemen, many of them—commissioned by their countries to get American-made supplies. And now, when he said to Ben or George, "Take f'rinstance your raw hides and leathers," they listened with respectful attention.

And then began the gay dog business in the life of Jo Hertz. He developed into a loop-hound, ever keen on the scent of fresh pleasure. That side of Jo Hertz which had been repressed and crushed and ignored began to bloom, unhealthily. At first he spent money on his rather contemptuous nieces. He sent them gorgeous fans, and watch bracelets, and velvet bags. He took two expensive rooms at a downtown hotel, and there was something more tear-compelling than grotesque about the way he gloated over the luxury of a separate ice-water tap in the bathroom. He explained it.

"Just turn it on. Ice-water! Any hour of the day or night."

He bought a car. Naturally. A glittering affair; in color a bright blue, with pale-blue leather straps and a great deal of gold fittings and wire wheels. Eva said it was the kind of a thing a soubrette would use, rather than an elderly business man. You saw him driving about in it, red-faced and rather awkward at the wheel. You saw him, too, in the Pompeiian room at the Congress Hotel of a Saturday afternoon when doubtful and roving-eyed matrons in kolinsky capes are wont to congregate to sip pale amber drinks. Actors grew to recognize the semi-bald head and the shining, round, good-natured face looming out at them from the dim well of the parquet, and sometimes, in a musical show, they directed a quip at him, and he liked it. He could pick out the critics as they came down the aisle, and even had a nodding acquaintance with two of them.

"Kelly, of the *Herald,*" he would say carelessly. "Bean, of the *Trib.* They're all afraid of him."

So he frolicked, ponderously. In New York he might have been called a Man About Town.

And he was lonesome. He was very lonesome. So he searched about in his mind and brought from the dim past the memory of the luxuriously furnished establishment of which he used to dream in the evenings when he dozed over his paper in the old house on Calumet. So he rented an apartment, many-roomed and expensive, with a man-servant in charge, and furnished it in styles and periods ranging through all the Louis. The living room was mostly rose color. It was like an unhealthy and bloated boudoir. And yet there was nothing sybaritic or uncleanly in the sight of this paunchy, middle-aged man sinking into the rosy-cushioned luxury of his ridiculous home. It was a frank and naïve indulgence of long-starved senses, and there was in it a great resemblance to the rolling-eyed ecstasy of a school-boy smacking his lips over an all-day sucker.

The War went on, and on, and on. And the money continued to roll in—a flood of it. Then, one afternoon, Eva, in town on shopping bent, entered a small, exclusive, and expensive shop on Michigan Avenue. Exclusive, that is, in price. Eva's weakness, you may remember, was hats. She was seeking a hat now. She described what she sought with a languid conciseness, and stood looking about her after the saleswoman had vanished in quest of it. The room was becomingly rose-illumined and somewhat dim, so that some minutes had passed before she realized that a man seated on a raspberry brocade settee not five feet away—a man with a walking stick, and yellow gloves, and tan spats, and a check suit—

was her brother Jo. From him Eva's wild-eyed glance leaped to the woman who was trying on hats before one of the many long mirrors. She was seated, and a saleswoman was exclaiming discreetly at her elbow.

Eva turned sharply and encountered her own saleswoman returning, hat-laden. "Not to-day," she gasped. "I'm feeling ill. Suddenly." And almost ran from the room.

That evening she told Stell, relating her news in that telephone pidgin-English devised by every family of married sisters as protection against the neighbors and Central. Translated, it ran thus:

"He looked straight at me. My dear, I thought I'd die! But at least he had sense enough not to speak. She was one of those limp, willowy creatures with the greediest eyes that she tried to keep softened to a baby stare, and couldn't, she was so crazy to get her hands on those hats. I saw it all in one awful minute. You know the way I do. I suppose some people would call her pretty; I don't. And her color! Well! And the most expensive-looking hats. Aigrettes, and paradise, and feathers. Not one of them under seventy-five. Isn't it disgusting! At his age! Suppose Ethel had been with me!"

The next time it was Stell who saw them. In a restaurant. She said it spoiled her evening. And the third time it was Ethel. She was one of the guests at a theater party given by Nicky Overton II. You know. The North Shore Overtons. Lake Forest. They came in late, and occupied the entire third row at the opening performance of "Believe Me!" And Ethel was Nicky's partner. She was glowing like a rose. When the lights went up after the first act Ethel saw that her Uncle Jo was seated just ahead of her with what she afterward

described as a Blonde. Then her uncle had turned around, and, seeing her, had been surprised into a smile that spread genially all over his plump and rubicund face. Then he had turned to face forward again, quickly.

"Who's the old bird?" Nicky had asked. Ethel had pretended not to hear, so he had asked again.

"My uncle," Ethel answered, and flushed all over her delicate face, and down to her throat. Nicky had looked at the Blonde, and his eyebrows had gone up ever so slightly.

It spoiled Ethel's evening. More than that, as she told her mother of it later, weeping, she declared it had spoiled her life.

Eva talked it over with her husband in that intimate, kimonoed hour that precedes bedtime. She gesticulated heatedly with her hair brush.

"It's disgusting, that's what it is. Perfectly disgusting. There's no fool like an old fool. Imagine! A creature like that. At his time of life."

There exists a strange and loyal kinship among men. "Well, I don't know," Ben said now, and even grinned a little. "I suppose a boy's got to sow his wild oats some time."

"Don't be any more vulgar than you can help," Eva retorted. "And I think you know, as well as I, what it means to have that Overton boy interested in Ethel."

"If he's interested in her," Ben blundered, "I guess the fact that Ethel's uncle went to the theater with some one who wasn't Ethel's aunt won't cause a shudder to run up and down his frail young frame, will it?"

"All right," Eva had retorted. "If you're not man enough to stop it, I'll have to, that's all. I'm going up there with Stell this week."

They did not notify Jo of their coming. Eva telephoned his apartment when she knew he would be out, and asked his man if he expected his master home to dinner that evening. The man had said yes. Eva arranged to meet Stell in town. They would drive to Jo's apartment together, and wait for him there.

When she reached the city Eva found turmoil there. The first of the American troops to be sent to France were leaving. Michigan Boulevard was a billowing, surging mass: Flags, pennants, bands, crowds. All the elements that make for demonstration. And over the whole—quiet. No holiday crowd, this. A solid, determined mass of people waiting patient hours to see the khaki-clads go by. Three years of indefatigable reading had brought them to a clear knowledge of what these boys were going to.

"Isn't it dreadful!" Stell gasped.

"Nicky Overton's only nineteen, thank goodness."

Their car was caught in the jam. When they moved at all it was by inches. When at last they reached Jo's apartment they were flushed, nervous, apprehensive. But he had not yet come in. So they waited.

No, they were not staying to dinner with their brother, they told the relieved houseman. Jo's home has already been described to you. Stell and Eva, sunk in rose-colored cushions, viewed it with disgust, and some mirth. They rather avoided each other's eyes.

"Carrie ought to be here," Eva said. They both smiled at the thought of the austere Carrie in the midst of those rosy cushions, and hangings, and lamps. Stell rose and began to walk about, restlessly. She picked up a vase and laid it down; straightened a picture. Eva got up, too,

and wandered into the hall. She stood there a moment, listening. Then she turned and passed into Jo's bedroom. And there you knew Jo for what he was.

This room was as bare as the other had been ornate. It was Jo, the clean-minded and simple-hearted, in revolt against the cloying luxury with which he had surrounded himself. The bedroom, of all rooms in any house, reflects the personality of its occupant. True, the actual furniture was paneled, cupid-surmounted, and ridiculous. It had been the fruit of Jo's first orgy of the senses. But now it stood out in that stark little room with an air as incongruous and ashamed as that of a pink tarleton danseuse who finds herself in a monk's cell. None of those wall-pictures with which bachelor bedrooms are reputed to be hung. No satin slippers. No scented notes. Two plain-backed military brushes on the chiffonier (and he so nearly hairless!). A little orderly stack of books on the table near the bed. Eva fingered their titles and gave a little gasp. One of them was on gardening. "Well, of all things!" exclaimed Stell. A book on the War, by an Englishman. A detective story of the lurid type that lulls us to sleep. His shoes ranged in a careful row in the closet, with shoe-trees in every one of them. There was something speaking about them. They looked so human. Eva shut the door on them, quickly. Some bottles on the dresser. A jar of pomade. An ointment such as a man uses who is growing bald and is panic-stricken too late. An insurance calendar on the wall. Some rhubarb-and-soda mixture on the shelf in the bathroom, and a little box of pepsin tablets.

"Eats all kinds of things at all hours of the night," Eva said, and wandered out into the rose-colored front room again with the air of one who is chagrined at her

failure to find what she has sought. Stell followed her, furtively.

"Where do you suppose he can be?" she demanded. "It's—" she glanced at her wrist, "why, it's after six!"

And then there was a little click. The two women sat up, tense. The door opened. Jo came in. He blinked a little. The two women in the rosy room stood up.

"Why—Eve! Why, Babe! Well! Why didn't you let me know?"

"We were just about to leave. We thought you weren't coming home."

Jo came in, slowly. "I was in the jam on Michigan, watching the boys go by." He sat down, heavily. The light from the window fell on him. And you saw that his eyes were red.

And you'll have to learn why. He had found himself one of the thousands in the jam on Michigan Avenue, as he said. He had a place near the curb, where his big frame shut off the view of the unfortunates behind him. He waited with the placid interest of one who has subscribed to all the funds and societies to which a prosperous, middle-aged business man is called upon to subscribe in war time. Then, just as he was about to leave, impatient at the delay, the crowd had cried, with a queer dramatic, exultant note in its voice, "Here they come! Here come the boys!"

Just at that moment two little, futile, frenzied fists began to beat a mad tattoo on Jo Hertz's broad back. Jo tried to turn in the crowd, all indignant resentment. "Say, looka here!"

The little fists kept up their frantic beating and pushing. And a voice—a choked, high little voice—cried, "Let me

by! I can't see! You man, you! You big fat man! My boy's going by—to war—and I can't see! Let me by!"

Jo scrooged around, still keeping his place. He looked down. And upturned to him in agonized appeal was the face of little Emily. They stared at each other for what seemed a long, long time. It was really only the fraction of a second. Then Jo put one great arm firmly around Emily's waist and swung her around in front of him. His great bulk protected her. Emily was clinging to his hand. She was breathing rapidly, as if she had been running. Her eyes were straining up the street.

"Why, Emily, how in the world——!"

"I ran away. Fred didn't want me to come. He said it would excite me too much."

"Fred?"

"My husband. He made me promise to say good-by to Jo at home."

"Jo?"

"Jo's my boy. And he's going to war. So I ran away. I had to see him. I had to see him go."

She was dry-eyed. Her gaze was straining up the street.

"Why, sure," said Jo. "Of course you want to see him." And then the crowd gave a great roar. There came over Jo a feeling of weakness. He was trembling. The boys went marching by.

"There he is," Emily shrilled, above the din. "There he is! There he is! There he——" And waved a futile little hand. It wasn't so much a wave as a clutching. A clutching after something beyond her reach.

"Which one? Which one, Emily?"

"The handsome one. The handsome one. There!" Her voice quavered and died.

Jo put a steady hand on her shoulder. "Point him out," he commanded. "Show me." And the next instant, "Never mind. I see him."

Somehow, miraculously, he had picked him from among the hundreds. Had picked him as surely as his own father might have. It was Emily's boy. He was marching by, rather stiffly. He was nineteen, and fun-loving, and he had a girl, and he didn't particularly want to go to France and—to go to France. But more than he had hated going, he had hated not to go. So he marched by, looking straight ahead, his jaw set so that his chin stuck out just a little. Emily's boy.

Jo looked at him, and his face flushed purple. His eyes, the hard-boiled eyes of a loop-hound, took on the look of a sad old man. And suddenly he was no longer Jo, the sport; old J. Hertz, the gay dog. He was Jo Hertz, thirty, in love with life, in love with Emily, and with the stinging blood of young manhood coursing through his veins.

Another minute and the boy had passed on up the broad street—the fine, flag-bedecked street—just one of a hundred service-hats bobbing in rhythmic motion like sandy waves lapping a shore and flowing on.

Then he disappeared altogether.

Emily was clinging to Jo. She was mumbling something over and over. "I can't. I can't. Don't ask me to. I can't let him go. Like that. I can't."

Jo said a queer thing.

"Why, Emily! We wouldn't have him stay home, would we? We wouldn't want him to do anything dif-

ferent, would we? Not our boy. I'm glad he volunteered. I'm proud of him. So are you, glad."

Little by little he quieted her. He took her to the car that was waiting, a worried chauffeur in charge. They said good-by, awkwardly. Emily's face was a red, swollen mass.

So it was that when Jo entered his own hallway half an hour later he blinked, dazedly, and when the light from the window fell on him you saw that his eyes were red.

Eva was not one to beat about the bush. She sat forward in her chair, clutching her bag rather nervously.

"Now, look here, Jo. Stell and I are here for a reason. We're here to tell you that this thing's got to stop."

"Thing? Stop?"

"You know very well what I mean. You saw me at the milliner's that day. And night before last, Ethel. We're all disgusted. If you must go about with people like that, please have some sense of decency."

Something gathering in Jo's face should have warned her. But he was slumped down in his chair in such a huddle, and he looked so old and fat that she did not heed it. She went on. "You've got us to consider. Your sisters. And your nieces. Not to speak of your own——"

But he got to his feet then, shaking, and at what she saw on his face even Eva faltered and stopped. It wasn't at all the face of a fat, middle-aged sport. It was a face Jovian, terrible.

"You!" he began, low-voiced, ominous. "You!" He raised a great fist high. "You two murderers! You didn't consider me, twenty years ago. You come to me with talk like that. Where's my boy! You killed him,

you two, twenty years ago. And now he belongs to somebody else. Where's my son that should have gone marching by to-day?" He flung his arms out in a great gesture of longing. The red veins stood out on his forehead. "Where's my son? Answer me that, you two selfish, miserable women. Where's my son?" Then, as they huddled together, frightened, wild-eyed: "Out of my house! Out of my house! Before I hurt you!"

They fled, terrified. The door banged behind them.

Jo stood, shaking, in the center of the room. Then he reached for a chair, gropingly, and sat down. He passed one moist, flabby hand over his forehead and it came away wet. The telephone rang. He sat still. It sounded far away and unimportant, like something forgotten. I think he did not even hear it with his conscious ear. But it rang and rang insistently. Jo liked to answer his telephone when at home.

"Hello!" He knew instantly the voice at the other end.

"That you, Jo?" it said.

"Yes."

"How's my boy?"

"I'm—all right."

"Listen, Jo. The crowd's coming over to-night. I've fixed up a little poker game for you. Just eight of us."

"I can't come to-night, Gert."

"Can't! Why not?"

"I'm not feeling so good."

"You just said you were all right."

"I *am* all right. Just kind of tired."

The voice took on a cooing note. "Is my Joey tired? Then he shall be all comfy on the sofa, and he doesn't need to play if he doesn't want to. No, sir."

Jo stood staring at the black mouth-piece of the telephone. He was seeing a procession go marching by. Boys, hundreds of boys, in khaki.

"Hello! Hello!" the voice took on an anxious note. "Are you there?"

"Yes," wearily.

"Jo, there's something the matter. You're sick. I'm coming right over."

"No!"

"Why not? You sound as if you'd been sleeping. Look here——"

"Leave me alone!" cried Jo, suddenly, and the receiver clacked onto the hook. "Leave me alone. Leave me alone." Long after the connection had been broken.

He stood staring at the instrument with unseeing eyes. Then he turned and walked into the front room. All the light had gone out of it. Dusk had come on. All the light had gone out of everything. The zest had gone out of life. The game was over—the game he had been playing against loneliness and disappointment. And he was just a tired old man. A lonely, tired old man in a ridiculous, rose-colored room that had grown, all of a sudden, drab.

CREATIVE CRITICISM OF A STORY OF CHARACTER

"A GAY OLD DOG," BY EDNA FERBER

1. Character.

Edna Ferber knew her leading character well before she ever touched her pen to paper to write the story. She must have worked out an elaborate dossier of the minutest phases of his life, whether she ever put it down on paper or not. As a matter of fact a large part of this dossier appears in the first part of the story. This character is revealed as a common middle-class man of exceedingly mediocre qualities. And yet we become so well acquainted with him that we become deeply interested in him before the story is finished.

2. Complication.

The complication was selected to fit the character—or rather was a logical outgrowth of events that almost inevitably would happen to such a character. Stated in the form of problem and solution it might read, How can a man, dominated by his environment, with such lack of initiative, rise superior to the events and environment which surrounded him?.

This story begins with a death-bed promise which involves Situation 23 (Self-sacrifice for kinsmen). This soon transforms itself into Situation 11 (Obstacles to love), which remains dominant until it reaches a climax in Situation 4 (Revolt). In the meanwhile another thread of action, less vital but more conspicuous, leads us by way

of business adventure through Situations 16 and 19 (In the clutches of misfortune, and Obtaining).

3. Setting.

The setting was the city of Chicago. Edna Ferber knows it like a book. The detached touches of local color are excellent, and might serve as models for any beginner.

4. Theme.

The theme may have been as much in mind as the character when the story was first conceived, but the character very shortly assumed first place as the story progressed.

5. Movement.

This story is a good example of cumulative action.

6. Viewpoint.

The author uses the shifting viewpoint. Desiring to present the life and the personality of Jo Hertz from all angles—a life affected by many characters and incidents—Miss Ferber chose not to be circumscribed by the usual limitations of the short-story writer. But while she, as in this case, was successful, the novice had better keep to a narrower trail. Contrast the viewpoint used in this story with the single viewpoint method in "The Necklace."

7. Where shall I begin?

Miss Ferber opens her story with a short description of the Loop. This is put there merely to serve as an aid in the description of Jo Hertz, the loop-hound, the character about whom the story is to be woven. It would be interest-

ing here, again, to compare the opening with that of "The Necklace," another character story.

8. How many episodes shall I have and how shall I connect them?

Edna Ferber has done in this story what Maupassant has done in "The Necklace"—something which I should caution all students not to attempt. She has introduced a great number of episodes. Jo Hertz is shown as the creature of circumstances—as was Mathilde Loisel—hence a sufficient number of circumstances must be given to show this character in all his phases. It is in the handling of these transitions that Miss Ferber shows unusual skill. In spite of the fact that long lapses of time often occur between intervening events she weaves the events together so that it is only with difficulty that we can see the breaks. Careful study should be made of the sentences which serve as threads to weave the various episodes together.

9. How can I make my story seem plausible?

Here again Miss Ferber shows excellent craftsmanship. After accepting the early version of Jo—the downtrodden and imposed upon—a necessary wrench must be made upon the reader's credulity at Jo's sudden awakening and assumption of leadership, his idealism and strength of purpose at the end—unless the road is carefully prepared. The following situations help to prepare for the climax:

> Jo is in the downtrodden harness business—which later, because of the war, becomes a source of great wealth.
>
> Jo is shown in love with Emily, but failing to have initiative or money enough to marry her. But his very failure leaves a raw spot on his soul which never

quite heals over, and which ultimately precipitates the emotional climax.

10. How can I increase the suspense?

The interest the reader is made to feel in Jo Hertz—not the thrill of any dramatic incidents—is the means the writer uses to increase our suspense. Moreover, having seen Jo downtrodden so long, the reader begins to hope against hope for just such a climax as finally occurs.

11. How can I make an effective climax?

The climax deserves study. Jo's speech to his sisters, which reveals his transformation, is a remarkable example of emotional climax. Such climaxes when well handled constitute the best climaxes in literature. "The door banged." A less realistic writer would have closed the story here. Which method of ending stories do you prefer; that of Maupassant or of Ferber?

THE COP AND THE ANTHEM *

"O. HENRY" (S. W. PORTER).

On his bench in Madison Square, Soapy moved uneasily. When wild geese honk high of nights, and when women without sealskin coats grow kind to their husbands, and when Soap moves uneasily on his bench in the park, you may know that winter is near at hand.

A dead leaf fell in Soapy's lap. That was Jack Frost's card. Jack is kind to the regular denizens of Madison Square, and gives fair warning of his annual call. At the corners of four streets he hands his pasteboard to the North Wind, footman of the mansion of All Outdoors, so that the inhabitants thereof may make ready.

Soapy's mind became cognizant of the fact that the time had come for him to resolve himself into a singular Committee of Ways and Means to provide against the coming rigor. And therefore he moved uneasily on his bench.

The hibernatorial ambitions of Soapy were not of the highest. In them there were no considerations of Mediterranean cruises, of soporific Southern Skies or drifting in the Vesuvian Bay. Three months on the Island was what his soul craved. Three months of assured board and bed and congenial company, safe from Boreas and bluecoats, seemed to Soapy the essence of things desirable.

For years the hospitable Blackwell's had been his winter quarters. Just as his more fortunate fellow New Yorkers

had bought their tickets to Palm Beach and the Riviera each winter, so Soapy had made his humbler arrangements for his annual hegira to the Island. And now the time was come. On the previous night three Sabbath newspapers, distributed beneath his coat, about his ankles and over his lap, had failed to repulse the cold as he slept on his bench near the spurting fountain in the ancient square. So the Island loomed big and timely in Soapy's mind. He scorned the provisions made in the name of charity for the city's dependents. In Soapy's opinion the Law was more benign than Philanthropy. There was an endless round of institutions, municipal and eleemosynary, on which he might set out and receive lodging and food accordant with the simple life. But to one of Soapy's proud spirit the gifts of charity are encumbered. If not in coin you must pay in humiliation of spirit for every benefit received at the hands of philanthropy. As Cæsar had his Brutus, every bed of charity must have its toll of a bath, every loaf of bread its compensation of a private and personal inquisition. Wherefore it is better to be a guest of the law, which, though conducted by rules, does not meddle unduly with a gentleman's private affairs.

Soapy, having decided to go to the Island, at once set about accomplishing his desire. There were many easy ways of doing this. The pleasantest was to dine luxuriously at some expensive restaurant; and then, after declaring insolvency, be handed over quietly and without uproar to a policeman. An accommodating magistrate would do the rest.

Soapy left his bench and strolled out of the square and across the level sea of asphalt, where Broadway and Fifth Avenue flow together. Up Broadway he turned, and

halted at a glittering café, where are gathered together nightly the choicest products of the grape, the silkworm and the protoplasm.

Soapy had confidence in himself from the lowest button of his vest upward. He was shaven, and his coat was decent and his neat black, ready-tied four-in-hand had been presented to him by a lady missionary on Thanksgiving Day. If he could reach a table in the restaurant unsuspected, success would be his. The portion of him that would show above the table would raise no doubt in the waiter's mind. A roasted mallard duck, thought Soapy, would be about the thing—with a bottle of Chablis, and then Camembert, a demi-tasse and a cigar. One dollar for the cigar would be enough. The total would not be so high as to call forth any supreme manifestation of revenge from the café management; and yet the meat would leave him filled and happy for the journey to his winter refuge.

But as Soapy set foot inside the restaurant door the head waiter's eye fell upon his frayed trousers and decadent shoes. Strong and ready hands turned him about and conveyed him in silence and haste to the sidewalk and averted the ignoble fate of the menaced mallard.

Soapy turned off Broadway. It seemed that his route to the coveted Island was not to be an epicurean one. Some other way of entering limbo must be thought of.

At a corner of Sixth Avenue electric lights and cunningly displayed wares behind plate-glass made a shop window conspicuous. Soapy took a cobblestone and dashed it through the glass. People came running around the corner, a policeman in the lead. Soapy stood still, with his hands in his pockets, and smiled at the sight of brass buttons.

"Where's the man that done that?" inquired the officer excitedly.

"Don't you figure out that I might have had something to do with it?" said Soapy, not without sarcasm, but friendly, as one who greets good fortune.

The policeman's mind refused to accept Soapy even as a clue. Men who smash windows do not remain to parley with the law's minions. They take to their heels. The policeman saw a man half-way down the block running to catch a car. With drawn club he joined in the pursuit. Soapy, with disgust in his heart, loafed along, twice unsuccessful.

On the opposite side of the street was a restaurant of no great pretensions. It catered to large appetites and modest purses. Its crockery and atmosphere were thick; its soup and napery thin. Into this place Soapy took his accusive shoes and telltale trousers without challenge. At a table he sat and consumed beefsteak, flapjacks, doughnuts and pie. And then to the waiter he betrayed the fact that the minutest coin and himself were strangers.

"Now, get busy and call a cop," said Soapy. "And don't keep a gentleman waiting."

"No cop for youse," said the waiter, with a voice like butter cakes and an eye like the cherry in a Manhattan cocktail. "Hey, Con!"

Neatly upon his left ear on the callous pavement two waiters pitched Soapy. He arose, joint by joint, as a carpenter's rule opens, and beat the dust from his clothes. Arrest seemed but a rosy dream. The Island seemed very far away. A policeman who stood before a drug store two doors away laughed and walked down the street.

* * * * * * *

A sudden fear seized Soapy that some dreadful enchant-

ment had rendered him immune to arrest. The thought brought a little of panic upon it, and when he came upon another policeman lounging grandly in front of a transplendent theater, he caught at the immediate straw of "disorderly conduct."

On the sidewalk Soapy began to yell drunken gibberish at the top of his harsh voice. He danced, howled, raved and otherwise disturbed the welkin.

The policeman twirled his club, turned his back to Soapy and remarked to a citizen:

"'Tis one of them Yale lads celebratin' the goose egg they give to Hartford College. Noisy; but no harm. We've instructions to lave them be."

Disconsolate, Soapy ceased his unavailing racket. Would never a policeman lay hands on him? In his fancy the Island seemed an unattainable Arcadia. He buttoned his thin coat against the chilling wind.

In a cigar store he saw a well-dressed man lighting a cigar at a swinging light. His silk umbrella he had set by the door on entering. Soapy stepped inside, secured the umbrella and sauntered off with it slowly. The man at the cigar light followed hastily.

"My umbrella," he said, sternly.

"Oh, is it?" sneered Soapy, adding insult to petit larceny. "Well, why don't you call a policeman? I took it. Your umbrella! Why don't you call a cop? There stands one on the corner."

The umbrella owner slowed his steps. Soapy did likewise, with a presentiment that luck would again run against him. The policeman looked at the two curiously.

"Of course," said the umbrella man—"that is—well, you know how these mistakes occur—I—if it's your umbrella I hope you'll excuse me—I picked it up this

morning in a restaurant—If you recognize it as yours, why—I hope you'll——"

"Of course it's mine," said Soapy, viciously.

The ex-umbrella man retreated. The policeman hurried to assist a tall blonde in an opera cloak across the street in front of a street car that was approaching two blocks away.

Soapy walked eastward through a street damaged by improvements. He hurled the umbrella wrathfully into an excavation. He muttered against the men who wear helmets and carry clubs. Because he wanted to fall into their clutches, they seemed to regard him as a king who could do no wrong.

At length Soapy reached one of the avenues to the east where the glitter and turmoil was but faint. He set his face down this toward Madison Square, for the homing instinct survives even when the home is a park bench.

But on an unusually quiet corner Soapy came to a standstill. Here was an old church, quaint and rambling and gabled. Through one violet-stained window a soft light glowed, where, no doubt, the organist loitered over the keys, making sure of his mastery of the coming Sabbath anthem. For there drifted out to Soapy's ears sweet music that caught and held him transfixed against the convolutions of the iron fence.

The moon was above, lustrous and serene; vehicles and pedestrians were few; sparrows twittered sleepily in the eaves—for a little while the scene might have been a country churchyard. And the anthem that the organist played cemented Soapy to the iron fence, for he had known it well in the days when his life contained such

things as mothers and roses and ambitions and friends and immaculate thoughts and collars.

The conjunction of Soapy's receptive state of mind and the influences about the old church wrought a sudden and wonderful change in his soul. He viewed with swift horror the pit into which he had tumbled, the degraded days, unworthy desires, dead hopes, wrecked faculties and base motives that made up his existence.

And also in a moment his heart responded thrillingly to this novel mood. An instantaneous and strong impulse moved him to battle with his desperate fate. He would pull himself out of the mire; he would make a man of himself again; he would conquer the evil that had taken possession of him. There was time; he was comparatively young yet; he would resurrect his old eager ambitions and pursue them without faltering. Those solemn but sweet organ notes had set up a revolution in him. To-morrow he would go into the roaring downtown district and find work. A fur importer had once offered him a place as driver. He would find him to-morrow and ask for the position. He would be somebody in the world. He would——

Soapy felt a hand laid on his arm. He looked quickly around into the broad face of a policeman.

"What are you doin' here?" asked the officer.

"Nothin'," said Soapy.

"Then come along," said the policeman.

"Three months on the Island," said the Magistrate in the Police Court the next morning.

CREATIVE CRITICISM OF A COMPLICATION STORY

"THE COP AND THE ANTHEM," BY O. HENRY

1. Complication:

O. Henry had had opportunity in his eventful life to realize just what a problem the coming of winter meant to the typical vagabond who lived by his legs and his wits. It occurred to him to have one of these denizens of the underworld make a deliberate attempt to select one of the state penal institutions for his winter headquarters. This raised the problem: How to commit a crime just big enough to get him his goal, and yet not so big as to warrant a more severe and dangerous punishment. As he turned this plot over in his mind O. Henry doubtless saw the opportunity of surprising the reader by having the tramp discard his ambition at the end for a higher purpose in life. And then, with typical O. Henry ingenuity, he gave the reader a second surprise by getting the tramp into the penal institution after all.

This story begins with a suggestion of Situation 16 (In the clutches of misfortune), receives its motivation from Situation 5 (An audacious attempt), finally reaches by a surprise route Situation 27 (Remorse) and ends unexpectedly in Situations 26 and 2 (Erroneous judgment and Vengeance pursuing crime).

2. Character.

For his purpose O. Henry selected a typical tramp, the type he knew from A to Z. No doubt he knew all the

past experiences in the tramp's life before he began to write, but as the "plot was the thing" he brought little or nothing of this into the story. As it is a typical complication story the character might have been an automaton and still not ruin the story. However, there are a few little touches that help to individualize the tramp and make him a little different from the whole tribe of the underworld.

3. Setting.

O. Henry selected a setting to fit the plot—naturally a large city where such penal institutions are found—a city every detail of which was familiar to O. Henry himself. He kept the reader reminded of the surroundings by the barest amount of descriptive matter possible.

4. Theme.

As for a theme, he may have had a "moral" in mind from the very start, but I doubt it. If he did, it could be summed up in the phrase, "About the time you stop wanting a thing you are sure to get it."

5. Movement.

As befitting the rapid succession of situations, the humorous theme, and the light-weight character of Soapy, the action should be rapid from the start. Note the verbs of action and the short sentences throughout. O. Henry employs here what Oppenheim would probably call the "staccato rhythm."

6. Viewpoint.

For the sake of brevity and unity O. Henry decided not to depart far away from the person of the chief character. As atmosphere and emotion had very small place to play, and as no mystery or detective element need enter in, he

wisely avoided the unnecessary first person. He saw only what Soapy must have seen or what a man looking over his shoulder might have seen. O. Henry lived through Soapy's experiences with him, and consequently caused the reader to follow sympathetically the hero's trials and failures.

7. Where shall I begin?

"On his bench in Madison Square, Soapy moved uneasily." True to O. Henry's style the opening sentence throws the reader into the story. In a few short paragraphs the tone is set and the interest is centered, not upon Soapy as a character, but upon his plot to gain winter quarters.

8. How many episodes shall I have and how shall I connect them?

This story is an example, as are "The Last Class" and the "Sire De Maletroit's Door," of the three unities—action, time and place. The entire action of the story takes place within a few hours. A rapid succession of a few closely connected episodes composes the plot. There are, roughly speaking, seven episodes, and as they are very briefly treated, the transition from one to the other is worthy of attention. In fact, next to point of view there is nothing that causes the amateur more trouble than connecting his episodes. O. Henry makes no use of the hackneyed, trite phrases so useful to the college freshman: "then," "next," "on his second trial," "having failed in this," etc. Instead, he says—almost abruptly—"Soapy left his bench and strolled out of the Square," etc.; "A sudden fear seized Soapy that some dreadful enchantment," etc.; "In a cigar store he saw a well-dressed man lighting a cigar"; "At length Soapy reached one of the avenues to the east."

Perhaps newspaper writing cultivates skill in handling transitions. At any rate this story and "The Gay Old Dog" of Edna Ferber are models of economy in this matter.

9. How can I make my story seem plausible?

When Soapy, after his unsuccessful campaign, returns to his park bench home, it is the beginning of preparation for the climax. In the next few paragraphs—the short description of the churchyard, the hearing of the anthem by Soapy and his reflections—the stage is carefully prepared by O. Henry for the climax. As one does not read a story of this type in a too-critical mood the climax appears logical and plausible enough to the average reader. The longer the critical reader ponders over it the larger looms the question: Would Soapy, after all these years, be susceptible to such emotions at sound of a church organ? And would a cop arrest a man for hanging about a church?

10. How can I increase the suspense?

O. Henry depends only to a very slight degree upon our personal interest in Soapy. On the other hand, he achieves suspense to a very striking extent by means of the rapidly occurring succession of episodes and Soapy's constant failures to gain his end until his success seems well nigh hopeless. In other words, suspense lies in the incidents—not in the character.

11. How can I give my story an effective climax?

As stated elsewhere, an effective climax practically means a surprise climax. The method used here is a variant of method 2, suggested on page 103. The character accomplishes exactly what he set out in the beginning

of the story to accomplish, all of which should arouse no surprise. But the surprise is that the reader is surprised. Soapy, having exhausted all the means that a clever ingenuity could devise to attain a certain object, unexpectedly finds that his desire to attain that object has given place to a desire for something entirely different; and at this very moment of self-revelation, the object which he has renounced comes to him.

GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN*

BY BEATRICE WALKER

He was a breaker boy and his name was Billy Twist. At least every one had always called him Billy, and a keen-eyed tourist who had once noticed the boy as he had held off a derisive mob of fellow breaker boys had added the Twist. And Billy Twist he had remained. For Billy Twist was a hunchback, and his soul—for even breaker boys have souls—was as dwarfed and stunted as his body.

He had been a breaker boy ever since he could remember, and although he was only eleven it seemed to him that he could look back upon a century made up of days just alike—days of climbing up the narrow creaking stairs of the breaker, flight after flight up to the very sky. Day after day of sitting cramped up on the narrow bench, bent hour after hour over the endless chain that swept below him, mechanically picking out the slate from the coal; day after day of this, with only a brief hour at noon snatched for his hard lunch, and back to work. At night, going to the place he called home, to Mark Scanlon's shack, too tired to eat the greasy supper or to pay any attention to the scant remarks that Mark Scanlon and his slatternly wife threw at each other; then going to bed in a corner of the one room—too tired to sleep, his tired body aching in every bone and his mind filled only by a dull listlessness, that in a vague way took in

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the ghostly rustle of the wind around the corner of the shack and the creaking rattle of the machinery of the breaker. This sound did not bother him, but the cessation of it would have startled him like a clap of thunder.

And then had come Big Tom McGregor. He was a light-haired young giant fresh from a Technical School, with a world peopled with beautiful ideals. Billy Twist had first noticed him one noon when, with the other breaker boys, he had hung out of the narrow slit-like windows of the breaker high above the entrance of the mine to watch the men pour out of the shaft. From that height they looked like ants pouring out of a hole down which some one had thrust a straw.

There was something different about this tall young man who towered above the others. Billy watched him from a distance, trying to classify him. Yes, he was different. Billy could not place the difference, but he felt it and waited with a sickening dread for the time to come, as he had seen it come with so many others, when the breaker would have marked him for its own, would have bowed that erect head, changed that stride to the hopeless shuffle, and brought to his eyes the dull stare that he knew so well.

He watched him closely, fascinated with the fascination that the physically perfect always hold for the deformed. He could see the impression the town and its inhabitants made upon Tom McGregor. He saw the instinctive tightening of the engineer's lips and the hardening of the eyes when he looked at the sordid little town. For it was sordid and terrible. Billy Twist did not realize how terrible because he had never known anything else.

It was a typical breaker town, well-named, for, as in all villages that bear that name, the breaker towered over

all the little shacks that surrounded it. It was like a huge spider, grim, black and sprawling, watching with its dull, smoke-grimed eyes for any chance straggler that it might gather in and mark for its own. Farther and farther it extended its sway—even beyond the heaps of rubbish and tin cans that marked the end of the straggling street. In winter the filthy snow and in summer the sooty pall, blotting out the growth of even the weeds, proclaimed the domain of the breaker.

The sooty pine shacks, clustered around its base, were miniature copies of the breaker itself, for the unpainted pine boards were quick to take on the color of their surroundings.

Billy Twist had noticed strangers' seeming distaste for the conditions and he could not help noticing that Tom McGregor felt the same way. He tried to decide what had made a young man of his type choose such a place in which to begin his engineering experience if he hated it so. It was so evident that he hated it, yet he never seemed to try to avoid the breaker or the town. Duty never called the engineers into the breaker itself with its whirring machinery and flying dust. But this engineer was often to be seen standing about, unnoticed by the workers whose sullen smoke-colored eyes could see nothing but the coal by which their whole lives were colored.

But Billy Twist noticed and wondered. He wondered still more when, one noon, he clambered up the steep stairs to avoid the other breaker boys who made the noon hour unbearable to him, and found Tom McGregor on the incline, examining the belts and benches. He looked up, nodded casually, and started on down the stairs.

The other breaker boys soon clattered up, and work

started as usual. But Billy Twist's thoughts were in a tumult. No one ever climbed all those steep steps except on business, for the cupola was not a pleasant spot. People were wont to come up, stay only as long as necessary, and go down as soon as possible. No engineer had ever come up there before, engineers were not paid for that sort of thing. Then it dawned on Billy: This engineer must be paid for it, paid by some one to look at workings of the breaker and the men. *An inspector!* Well, he would not tell. He would not even let Tom McGregor know that he knew.

On his way home that evening, Billy was hemmed in by four men who were making sport of him, and he was replying with his usual mixture of profanity and bald truth. Billy did not mind much, he knew that he gave back as good as the others gave him, and, besides, he was accustomed to it. But Big Tom McGregor was not accustomed to seeing grown men bait a child and he stopped. It did not take many words to send the men about their business, because for the safety of their jobs it was better not to bandy words with the new engineer. So they slunk off feeling rather more abused than ashamed.

Tom McGregor looked down at the bent little figure before him. He had noticed the boy often before. Billy Twist's shrunken form and old face would make anyone look twice. At first he had merely pitied the boy, but later, after once or twice watching him hold off a crowd of young tormentors, he had begun to feel a certain admiration for the agile mind that must dwell within the big head enabling him to hold his own against the horde of young hoodlums who amused their lunch hour by tormenting him. The queer little waif must have a valiant spirit, he thought, to bear up under his deformity

and not be utterly crushed by the jibes, blows and jeers that made up his usual fare. But when he had overheard the remarks by which Billy held off his tormentors, his grudging admiration increased, for the vocabulary of this dwarfed eleven-year-old was such as to make the oldest mule driver or miner blush and give up all hope of achieving. Tom was accustomed to the language of the mining camps, but he had never heard anyone swear with such picturesque force and enthusiasm as this uncanny child. He thought of his own sheltered happy childhood, and shuddered. But then, he thought, how could one judge? The kid had never had a chance and it certainly showed cleverness to use the only weapon he possessed, and the never ending pluck of the queer child fascinated him.

So tonight he welcomed the chance to talk to the boy in order to find out, if possible, just what went on inside that queer top-heavy head of his.

Billy Twist was startled. He was startled clear out of his accustomed self-possession. He had had someone to defend him for the first time in his eleven years, and the experience was so new that he did not know quite what to do. The big man grinned down at him.

"Are you going my way, kid?"

This experience was as overpowering as the other. He had never had anything but jeers and taunts all his life, and he could not but believe that this was some sort of a game to make sport of him in a new guise. But no one should be able to say that he was a coward, so he gathered his quick wits together to meet whatever form the attack might take, and muttering an unintelligible assent, he fell in beside the tall engineer.

Tom shortened his stride to try to keep pace with the

odd shuffling step of the queer little figure beside him. He felt the same surging pity that always brought a lump to his throat at sight of a wounded or wronged animal. And this child had been wronged, he had been robbed of his chance for a clean, healthy, normal childhood. He would try to be a good angel to the little fellow, would give him something to read and try to improve that uncanny mind that knew too much for its years.

"You all don't think we-uns know how t' run this mine, do yuh? Yer goin' t' tell them that this here breaker's a back number."

The shrill voice broke in upon his complacent musing. Good Heavens! Did this child really have second sight? No one except the actual government officials that employed him knew that besides being the new engineer he was also a government employee to report whether or not the mine and breaker were being run according to law and for the safety of its employees instead of the illegitimate profit of its owners.

He looked at the boy with new interest. The child was shrewd all right; it took quick wits to put the right construction on his unusual interest for an engineer in the conditions of the mine and breaker. He had evidently known for some time and had never caused his discharge by telling. The superintendent and owners had never guessed at the reason.

If his mind had had any chance, what a boy he'd be! And then and there started their friendship, the dog-like devotion of the little hideous, starved breaker boy and the brotherly helping love of the big, handsome engineer. They spent every minute of their spare time together.

One day they were eating their lunch at their usual place at the back of the breaker, where on the slopes of

the surrounding hills one could see the green of spring beginning to show, for it takes a few weeks for even a breaker to blot out the coming of spring. The pent-up love of beauty in the child's heart burst its bonds suddenly.

"It's kinda pretty, ain't it, Tom?" he said shyly. Billy was learning fast. But even yet he was abashed at this sudden demonstrativeness, and turned to see what effect it would have on his companion. It needed but one look to show Billy that Tom had not heard a word. He was not looking at the hills, but was staring down at the drab valley, full of its eternal cloud of settling smoke. His mouth was hard, yet his eyes had a tender, far-away look that told Billy that he saw none of its ugly sordidness.

"Tom," he said suddenly, pulling the arm next him, "what do you think about when you look down there and kinda grin with your eyes??"

McGregor looked around with a start.

He hesitated a moment and then seemed to come to a decision and said suddenly, "Kid, you're rather old for your years and maybe you can help me. You see you'll have to put yourself in my place. If you loved the finest and truest girl in the world and she loved you too, would you bring her up here to live in this God-forsaken hole when you wouldn't have anything better to offer for a good many years, or would you ask her to keep on waiting for you?"

Billy's newly found world clattered about his ears. A girl! His hero in love with a girl! He thought of all the girls and women he knew, and could see nothing in them to attract wonderful Big Tom McGregor.

Tom felt the hesitancy and attributed it to a different cause.

"You see, kid," he hastened to explain, "it won't make any difference between you and me. She knows all about you and she says you must come to live with us. Do you want to see her?" pulling out his watch. "Now, don't you believe that she's the sweetest girl in the world?"

Again Billy's world swam. This radiant creature a girl! He thought over all the drab, slatternly, dull-eyed creatures that he called "girls," and decided silently that they had nothing in common with this bright-eyed angel with dainty features and fluffy hair. But while he did not know much about girls, he did know human nature. He knew that with the coming of this creature, things would not be the same between Tom and him, and that anyone as much in love with a person as Tom McGregor showed himself to be would have very little time to waste on a hunch-backed waif. But while he knew this, he knew better than to say so to Tom. And so the days—the most wonderful of his life for Billy—went on as usual.

One day he was at work high up in the tower of the breaker, as usual, when the machinery suddenly stopped. All the boys knew what had happened, it meant some accident in the mine beneath. They waited a minute, expecting the machinery to start, but when it did not, they hurried to the narrow windows to see what was happening below them.

The lift came up the shaft hurriedly as they watched, unloaded a crowd of excited men, made a quick descent and came up again with another load of choking, gasping humanity. Evidently this was something serious, not one of the ordinary minor accidents that often interrupted the work of the mine. With one accord the crowd of breaker boys turned and clattered down the rickety stairs like a herd of stampeding ponies.

When they reached the entrance of the shaft, a puff of acrid-smelling, yellow smoke belched out. Men were running dazedly about, shouting hoarse, confused directions, while the lift still kept up its tireless journey up and down, bringing up a load of half unconscious men, who were hauled out unceremoniously, while the lift returned for more.

As they stood there, a hoarse crash followed by a steady roar seemed to sound from the depths of the earth. There was a shout from below. The last load. Billy's heart stood still as the stupefied men tumbled out. Tom was not among them. He sidled through the crowd until he could grasp the sleeve of the superintendent. The man looked down impatiently.

"Tom," he gasped, "he didn't come up."

The superintendent gave a quick glance around. "Men," he shouted above the tumult, "has anyone seen Big Tom McGregor?"

A hubbub of voices answered. "He was on the second level when the cave-in came!" he made out at last. "He went down to the third level to help dig the men out," gasped one.

"Hasn't he come up?" thundered the boss. No one answered. "Boys," he said again, "will any of you volunteer to go down with me to get McGregor? We may be able to save him yet."

Nearly a dozen men sprang into the lift, and among them no one noticed Billy Twist.

The air at the bottom of the shaft was horrible. They bent close to the ground and crawled along like worms, peering through the murky gleam with aching eyes. The gas-filled air seemed to lie like a heavy weight upon their lungs. They crawled down one passage at the end of

which a red gleam was growing more and more ominous.

"No use going any further," choked the boss. "This corridor is all closed up where the timbers fell. The flames are back there. Tom!" he called. "Tom McGregor!"

A crash nearly deafened them, and the red gleam grew blinding.

"We'll have to get out of this," he cried, staggering back. They all turned to make their way back toward the shaft. But with a shrill cry a shadow broke away from the group.

"Who was it?" they all cried, their benumbed senses alert for an instant.

"It was the crooked one, Billee," said a young Italian, "he came down with us."

A blast of hot gas-laden air choked them.

"Come out of this. We can't sacrifice twelve men for one and a half." Hard? No, it was merely the stern stoicism of men to whom the nearness of death is all in the day's work.

Billy plunged forward blindly. He crawled through a small opening in the fallen timbers and came out upon a roaring furnace.

"Tom!" he called. "Tom!"

"Here!" answered a faint voice. Billy dodged around a huge beam the other end of which was already on fire. The red light made the murkiness thick and uncanny. Tom McGregor lay pinned under a fallen beam. "Kid," he cried eagerly, "have you brought help?"

"Hurry, hurry up, Tom, there's still time to get back the way I came in. We'll be in time yet."

"Are you alone?" Tom's voice was dull and lifeless. "You see, I can't move without someone strong enough

to lift this timber off me, and besides, I guess my leg's done for."

Billy flew at it and tugged with all the frenzied strength given him by desperation, but it would have taken the combined strength of three men to move the beam. And in spite of his wiry strength, Billy Twist was only eleven.

"It's no use, Boy; hurry back or you'll be shut in too. Go to Alice," he said thickly, "tell her I loved her, take care of her, kid. I'm not afraid to go."

"She'd be mighty glad to see me if I came back without you, wouldn't she? I'm going to stay here with you."

"Why you little fool, don't you realize that you can't live here ten minutes? Get out of here. I tell you, I'll make you go." Tom's desperation gave him strength to drag himself to a sitting posture. "Get out of here, I say." Billy stood stubbornly silent. There was a flash of blinding light, a roaring crash, and the beams that held up the level above caved in blocking the passage.

"Now," said Billy Twist, his face strangely transfigured; "I can't go! Do you hear me? You can't make me go!"

"Forgive me," gasped the man hoarsely, his voice breaking. . . . "Kid, you're a MAN!"

And hand in hand they awaited the end.

Five days later after the fire was smothered, when the mine was again unsealed, they brought up the two charred bodies. And the sad-eyed girl from another state, when asked concerning the body of the man she had loved, cried out:

"Oh, let me take them both. Who am I to separate two friends that even death was not strong enough to part?"

CREATIVE CRITICISM OF STORY OF ATMOSPHERE

"GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN," BY BEATRICE WALKER

1. Character.

As this story starts out with a description of the chief character some might consider it more of a character story than story of atmosphere. But as the little boy is dominated—even as to the shape of his body and lineations of his soul and mind—by the setting in which he is living—it properly belongs to the story of atmosphere or setting. Billy Twist is used, in a way, as the means to interpret the setting. His dominant trait at the beginning of the story is his shrewd, almost uncanny ability to see into motives of others and his ability to take care of himself in rough-and-tumble word battles. His striking contradiction is his love for the big engineer; in this case the contradiction assumes the proportions of a dominant trait before the story progresses far.

2. Complication.

Only sufficient complication was needed to bring out the setting and its effects upon the leading character. In this case the problem (in Billy's mind) is: How can I show my love for my big friend? Bearing this in mind you will see that the ending is not a tragedy but a triumph.

The action in this story begins with Situation 16 (In the clutches of misfortune), receives its motivation from Situation 17 (The Savior), moves by means of character

contrast to a dramatic climax built up out of Situation 5 (An audacious attempt), and 23 (Self-sacrifice for a friend).

3. Setting.

In a student theme the writer of this story wrote a description of an actual breaker town which she had lived in. Later she strove to find characters and plot to interpret this setting, and the story grew out of this attempt. The original description, greatly shortened, was inserted in the story—not at the beginning, but as soon as the interest of the reader was sufficiently aroused; "It was a typical breaker town," etc.—and through the following paragraph. But not depending upon this single block of description, the writer by means of constant little touches—words or phrases—keeps the setting constantly before the reader's eye.

4. Theme.

The title of the story might imply that the story was primarily a story with a moral. A careful reading will, however, show that both setting and character are more dominant than the theme.

5. Movement.

A story in which setting and character are as prominent as in this should necessarily march with a slower movement than a story of complication such as "The Cop and the Anthem." You will note that the movement flows in a much more leisurely manner than in the O. Henry story. As this story moves toward its emotional climax the rhythm or movement gradually changes—giving us an excellent example of "cumulative movement."

6. What shall be the viewpoint?

The over-the-shoulder viewpoint is used with Billy Twist the center, with one or two modifications. One of these modifications is where we are admitted into McGregor's thoughts when he looks down upon the bent figure of Billy, holding the men at bay who were bandying words with him. Another is where we get the words of McGregor's sweetheart after Billy is dead. For obvious reasons essential to the plot these deviations from the strict single person viewpoint were permissible.

7. Where shall I begin?

The story begins with a description of Billy Twist in the center of his lonely, sordid surroundings of the Breaker Town. It is a good example of that type of description which describes the surroundings and the effect of the surroundings upon the person even more clearly than it describes the character himself. Thus the character and the setting of the story are established in the reader's mind at one and the same time.

8. How many episodes and how shall I connect them?

There are four episodes in this story. A beginner should rarely attempt more. In the first one Billy observes McGregor. In the second McGregor notices Billy and they become friends. In the third they are shown as fast friends—of greatly contrasted types. In the fourth they enter upon the Great Adventure together. The first three episodes are woven together so as to lead to the main incident—the sacrifice of Billy Twist for the engineer. As in the two preceding stories the transitions are skillfully handled, especially for a beginner—and deserve careful scrutiny. "And then had come Big

Tom McGregor." "He wondered still more when, one noon, he clambered up the steep stairs to, etc." "One day they were eating their lunch in their usual place at the back of the breaker." "One day he was at work high up in the tower of the breaker as usual when the machinery suddenly stopped."

9. How can I make my climax seem plausible?

The problem of plausibility centers upon the event of Billy Twist's sacrifice. This is made plausible by reason of the picturing of his starved and stunted life in the cold breaker town, his own limited future without the engineer, his great craving for love, and his idealization of McGregor.

10. How can I increase the suspense?

Suspense is prepared first by arousing the interest of the reader in the chief character. Contrast the love which the reader inevitably experiences for the little stunted boy with the more removed interest one feels in Soapy. Suspense is also achieved by means of the very unsolvable problem of how to rescue Big Tom at the climax.

11. How can I give my story an effective climax?

The surprise here lies in the fact that he is *not* rescued at all. It is made effective through emotion. It is the kind of "surprise" permitted in college magazines but not very popular among the big best selling magazines that boast of large circulations.

THE DARK HOUR*

BY WILBUR DANIEL STEELE

The returning ship swam swiftly through the dark; the deep, interior breathing of the engines, the singing of wire stays, the huge whispering rush of foam streaming the water-line made up a body of silence upon which the sound of the doctor's footfalls, coming and going restlessly along the near deck, intruded only a little—a faint and personal disturbance. Charging slowly through the dark, a dozen paces forward, a dozen paces aft, his invisible and tormented face bent forward a little over his breast, he said to himself,—

"What fools! What blind fools we've been!"

Sweat stood for an instant on his brow, and was gone in the steady onrush of the wind.

The man lying on the cot in the shelter of the cabin companionway made no sound all the while. He might have been asleep or dead, he remained so quiet; yet he was neither asleep nor dead, for his eyes, large, wasted, and luminous, gazed out unwinking from the little darkness of his shelter into the vaster darkness of the night, where a star burned in slow mutations, now high, now sailing low, over the rail of the ship.

Once he said in a washed and strengthless voice "That's a bright star, doctor."

If the other heard, he gave no sign. He continued charging slowly back and forth, his large dim shoulders hunched over his neck, his hands locked behind him, his

teeth showing faintly gray between the fleshy lips which hung open a little to his breathing.

"It's dark!" he said of a sudden, bringing up before the cot in the companionway. "God, Hallett, how dark it is!" There was something incoherent and mutilated about it, as if the cry had torn the tissues of his throat. "I'm not myself to-night," he added, with a trace of shame.

Hallett spoke slowly from his pillow.

"It wouldn't be the subs to-night? You're not that kind, you know. I've seen you in the zone. And we're well west of them by this, anyhow; and as you say, it's very dark."

"It's not that darkness. Not that!"

Again there was the same sense of something tearing. The doctor rocked for a moment on his thick legs. He began to talk.

"It's this *war*——" His conscience protested: "I ought not to go on so—it's not right, not right at all—talking so to the wounded—the dying—I shouldn't go on so to the dying——" And all the while the words continued to tumble out of his mouth. "No, I'm not a coward—not especially. You know I'm not a coward, Hallett. You know that. But just now, to-night, somehow, the whole black truth of the thing has come out and got me—jumped out of the dark and got me by the neck, Hallett. Look here; I've kept a stiff lip. Since the first I've said, 'We'll win this war.' It's been a matter of course. So far as I know, never a hint of doubt has shadowed my mind, even when things went bad. 'In the end,' I've said, 'in the end, of course, we're bound to win.'"

He broke away again to charge slowly through the dark with his head down, butting; a large, overheated animal endowed with a mind.

"But—do we want to win?"

Hallett's question, very faint across the subdued breathings and showerings of the ship, fetched the doctor up. He stood for a moment, rocking on his legs and staring at the face of the questioner, still and faintly luminous on the invisible cot. Then he laughed briefly, shook himself, and ignored the preposterous words. He recollected tardily that the fellow was pretty well gone.

"No," he went on. "Up to to-night I've never doubted. No one in the world, in *our* part of the world, has doubted. The proposition was absurd to begin with. Prussia, and her fringe of hangers-on, to stand against the world—to stand against the very drift and destiny of civilization? Impossible! A man can't do the impossible; that's logic, Hallett, and that's common sense. They might have their day of it, their little hour, because they had the jump—but in the end! *in the end!*— But look at them, will you! Look at them! That's what's got me to-night, Hallett. Look at them! There they stand. They won't play the game, won't abide at all by the rules of logic, of common sense. Every day, every hour, they perform the impossible. Not once since the war was a year old have they been able to hang out another six months. They'd be wiped from the earth; their people would starve. They're wiped from the earth, and they remain. They starve and lay down their skinny bodies on the ground, and they stand up again with sleek bellies. They make preposterous, blind boasts. They say, 'We'll over-run Roumania in a month.' Fantastic! It's *done!* They say, 'Russia! New-born Russia? Strong young boy-Russia? We'll put him out of it for good and all by Christmas.' That was to cheer up the hungry ones in Berlin. Everybody saw through

it. The very stars laughed. *It's done!* God, Hallett! It's like clockwork. It's like a rehearsed and abominable programme——"

"Yes—a programme."

The wounded man lay quite still and gazed at the star. When he spoke, his words carried an odd sense of authenticity, finality. His mind had got a little away from him, and now it was working with the new, oracular clarity of the moribund. It bothered the doctor inexplicably—tripped him up. He had to shake himself. He began to talk louder and make wide, scarcely visible gestures.

"We've laughed so long, Hallett. There was *Mitteleuropa!* We always laughed at that. A wag's tale. To think of it—a vast, self-sufficient, brutal empire laid down across the path of the world! Ha-ha! Why, even if they had *wanted* it, it would be——"

"If they *wanted* it, it would be—*inevitable.*"

The doctor held up for a full dozen seconds. A kind of anger came over him and his face grew red. He couldn't understand. He talked still louder.

"But they're *doing* it! They're doing that same preposterous thing before our eyes, and we can't touch them, and they're—Hallett! *They're damn near done!* Behind that line there,—you know the line I mean,—who of us doesn't know it? That thin line of smoke and ashes and black blood, like a bent black wire over France? Behind that line they're at work, day by day, month after month, building the empire we never believed. And Hallett, *it's damn near done!* And we can't stop it. It grows bigger and bigger, darker and darker—it covers up the sky—like a nightmare——"

"Like a dream!" said Hallett softly; "a dream."

The doctor's boot-soles drummed with a dull, angry resonance on the deck.

"And we can't touch them! They couldn't conceivably hold that line against us—against the whole world—long enough to build their incredible empire behind it. *And they have!* Hallett! How *could* they ever have held it?"

"You mean, how could we ever have held it?"

Hallett's words flowed on, smooth, clear-formed, unhurried, and his eyes kept staring at the star.

"No, it's we have held it, not they. And we that have got to hold it—longer than they. Theirs is the kind of a *Mitteleuropa* that's been done before; history is little more than a copybook for such an empire as they are building. We've got a vaster and more incredible empire to build than they—a *Mitteleuropa,* let us say, of the spirit of man. No, no, doctor; it's we that are doing the impossible, holding that thin line."

The doctor failed to contain himself.

"Oh, pshaw, *pshaw!* See here, Hallett! We've had the men, and there's no use blinking the truth. And we've had the money and the munitions."

"But back of all that, behind the last reserve, the last shell-dump, the last treasury, haven't they got something that we've never had?"

"And what's that?"

"A dream."

"A *what?*"

"A dream. We've dreamed no dream. Yes—let me say it! A little while ago you said, 'nightmare,' and I said, 'dream.' Germany has dreamed a dream. Black as the pit of hell,—yes, yes,—but a dream. They've seen a vision. A red, bloody, damned vision,—yes, yes,—but

a vision. They've got a programme, even if it's what you called it, a 'rehearsed and abominable programme.' And they know what they want. And we don't know what we want!"

The doctor's fist came down in the palm of his hand.

"What we want? I'll tell you what we want, Hallett. *We want to win this war!*"

"Yes?"

"And by the living God, Hallett, we will win this war! I can see again. If we fight for half a century to come; if we turn the world wrong-side-out for men, young men, boys, babes; if we mine the earth to a hollow shell for coal and iron; if we wear our women to ghosts to get out the last grain of wheat from the fields—we'll do it! And we'll wipe this black thing from the face of the earth forever, root and branch, father and son of the bloody race of them to the end of time. If you want a dream, Hallett, there's a——"

"There's a—nightmare. An over-weening muscular impulse to jump on the thing that's scared us in the dark, to break it with our hands, grind it into the ground with our heels, tear ourselves away from it—and wake up."

He went on again after a moment of silence.

"Yes, that's it, that's it. We've never asked for anything better; not once since those terrible August days have we got down on our naked knees and prayed for anything more than just to be allowed to wake up—and find it isn't so. How can we expect, with a desire like that, to stand against a positive and a flaming desire? No, no! The only thing to beat a dream is a dream more poignant. The only thing to beat a vision black

as midnight is a vision white as the noonday sun. We've come to the place, doctor, where half a loaf is worse than no bread."

The doctor put his hands in his pockets and took them out again, shifted away a few steps and back again. He felt inarticulate, handless, helpless in the face of things, of abstractions, of the mysterious, unflagging swiftness of the ship, bearing him willy-nilly over the blind surface of the sea. He shook himself.

"God help us," he said.

"What God?"

The doctor lifted a weary hand.

"Oh, if you're going into *that*——"

"Why not? Because Prussia, doctor, has a god. Prussia has a god as terrible as the God of conquering Israel, a god created in her own image. We laugh when we hear her speaking intimately and surely to this god. I tell you we're fools. I tell you, doctor, before we shall stand we shall have to create a god in *our* own image, and before we do that we shall have to have a living and sufficient image."

"You don't think much of us," the doctor murmured wearily.

The other seemed not to hear. After a little while he said,—

"We've got to say black or white at last. We've got to answer a question this time with a whole answer."

"This war began so long ago," he went on, staring at the star. "So long before Sarajevo, so long before 'balances of power' were thought of, so long before the 'provinces' were lost and won, before Bismarck and the lot of them were begotten, or their fathers. So many, many years of questions put, and half-answers given in

return. Questions, questions: questions of a power-loom in the North Counties; questions of a mill-hand's lodging in one Manchester or another, of the weight of a head-tax in India, of a widow's mass for her dead in Spain; questions of a black man in the Congo, of an eighth-black man in New Orleans, of a Christian in Turkey, an Irishman in Dublin, a Jew in Moscow, a French cripple in the streets of Zabern; questions of an idiot sitting on a throne; questions of a girl asking her vote on a Hyde Park rostrum, of a girl asking her price in the dark of a Chicago door-way—whole questions half-answered, hungry questions half-fed, mutilated fag-ends of questions piling up and piling up year by year, decade after decade.—Listen! There came a time when it wouldn't do, wouldn't do at all. There came a time when the son of all those questions stood up in the world, final, unequivocal, naked, devouring, saying, 'Now you shall answer me. You shall look me squarely in the face at last, and you shall look at nothing else; you shall take your hands out of your pockets and your tongues out of our cheeks, and no matter how long, no matter what the blood and anguish of it, you shall answer me now with a whole answer—or perish!' "

"And what's the answer?"

The doctor leaned down a little, resting his hands on the foot of the cot.

The gray patch of Hallett's face moved slightly in the dark.

"It will sound funny to you. Because it's a word that's been worn pretty thin by so much careless handling. It's 'Democracy!' "

The doctor stood up straight on his thick legs.

"Why should it sound funny?" he demanded, a vein

of triumph in his tone. "It *is* the answer. And we've *given* it. 'Make the world safe for democracy!' Eh? You remember the quotation?"

"Yes, yes, that's good. But we've got to do more than say it, doctor. Go further. We've got to dream it in a dream; we've got to see democracy as a wild, consuming vision. If the day ever comes when we shall pronounce the word 'democracy' with the same fierce faith with which we conceive them to be pronouncing 'autocracy'—that day, doctor——"

He raised a transparent hand and moved it slowly over his eyes.

"It will be something to do, doctor, that will. Like taking hold of lightning. It will rack us body and soul; belief will strip us naked for a moment, leave us newborn and shaken and weak—as weak as Christ in the manger. And that day nothing can stand before us. Because, you see, we'll know what we want."

The doctor stood for a moment as he had been, a large, dark troubled body rocking slowly to the heave of the deck beneath him. He rubbed a hand over his face.

"Utopian!" he said.

"Utopian!" Hallett repeated after him. "To-day we are children of Utopia—or we are nothing. I tell you, doctor, to-day it has come down to this—Hamburg to Bagdad—or—Utopia!"

The other lifted his big arms and his face was red.

"You're playing with words, Hallett. You do nothing but twist my words. When I say Utopian, I mean, precisely, impossible. Absolutely impossible. See here! You tell me this empire of theirs is a dream. I give you that. How long has it taken them to dream it? Forty years. *Forty years!* And this wild, transcendental em-

pire of the spirit you talk about,—so much harder,—so many hundreds of times more incredible,—will you have us do that sort of a thing in a *day?* We're a dozen races, a score of nations. I tell you it's—it's impossible!"

"Yes. Impossible."

The silence came down between them, heavy with all the dark, impersonal sounds of passage, the rythmical explosions of the waves, the breathing of engines, the muffled staccato of the spark in the wireless room, the note of the ship's bell forward striking the hour and after it a hail, running thin in the wind: "Six bells, sir, and—*all's well!*"

"All's well!"

The irony of it! The infernal patness of it, falling so in the black interlude, like stage business long rehearsed.

"All's well!" the doctor echoed with the mirthless laughter of the damned.

Hallett raised himself very slowly on an elbow and stared at the star beyond the rail.

"Yes, I shouldn't wonder. Just now—to-night—somehow—I've got a queer feeling that maybe it is. Maybe it's going to be.—Maybe it's going to be; who knows? The darkest hour of our lives, of history, perhaps, has been on us. And maybe it's almost over. Maybe we're going to do the impossible, after all, doctor. And maybe we're going to get it done in time. I've got a queer sense of something happening—something getting ready."

When he spoke again, his voice had changed a little.

"I wish my father could have lived to see this day. He's in New York now, and I should like——"

The doctor moved forward suddenly and quietly, saying: "Lie down, Hallett. You'd better lie down now."

But the other protested with a gray hand.

"No, no, you don't understand. When I say—well—it's just the shell of my father walking around and talking around, these ten years past. Prison killed his heart. He doesn't even know it, that the immortal soul of him has gone out. You know him, doctor. Ben Hallett; the Radical—'the Destroyer,' they used to call him in the old days. He was a brave man, doctor; you've got to give him that; as brave as John the Baptist, and as mad. I can see him now,—to-night,—sitting in the back room in Eighth Street, he and old Radinov and Hirsch and O'Reilly and the rest, with all the doors shut and the windows shut and their eyes and ears and minds shut up tight, trying to keep the war out. They're old men, doctor, and they must cling to yesterday, and to to-morrow. They mustn't see to-day. They must ignore to-day. To-day is the tragic interruption. They too ask nothing but to wake up and find it isn't so. All their lives they've been straining forward to see the ineffable dawn of the Day of Man, calling for the Commune and the red barricades of revolution. The barricades! Yesterday, it seems to them now, they were almost in sight of the splendid dawn—the dawn of the Day of Barricades. And then this war, this thing they call a 'rich man's plot' to confound them, hold them up, turn to ashes all the fire of their lives. All they can do is sit in a closed room with their eyes shut and wait till this meaningless brawl is done. And then, to-morrow—to-morrow—some safely distant to-morrow (for they're old men),—to-morrow, the barricades! And that's queer. That's queer."

"Queer?"

"It seems to me that for days now, for weeks and

months now, there's been no sound to be heard in all the length and breadth of the world but the sound of barricades."

The voice trailed off into nothing.

To the doctor, charging slowly back and forth along the near deck, his hands locked behind him and his face bent slightly over his breast, there came a queer sense of separation, from Hallett, from himself, his own every-day acts, his own familiar aspirations, from the ship which held him up in the dark void between two continents.

What was it all about? he asked himself over and over. Each time he passed the shadow in the companion-way he turned his head, painfully, and as if against his will. Once he stopped squarely at the foot of the cot and stood staring down at the figure there, faintly outlined, motionless and mute. Sweat stood for a moment on his brow, and was gone in the steady onrush of the wind. And he was used to death.

But Hallett had fooled him. He heard Hallett's whisper creeping to him out of the shadow:—

"That's a bright star, doctor."

CREATIVE CRITICISM OF A THEMATIC STORY

"THE DARK HOUR," BY WILBUR DANIEL STEELE

1. Character.

As the theme was by all odds the chief consideration in this story, the author's task was to select a character that would be the most representative as well as the most authoritative mouthpiece for expressing the ideals and hopes of the people of the great democracies that were engaged in the World War. With true artist's insight he chose a wounded, dying soldier returning to his country, a soldier who, because he had given his all for the cause of democracy, had a right to speak, and with some show of authority, in behalf of the great principles for which he had given his life.

As only one other character is to appear in the story, he is very naturally the doctor, the only man likely to be alone with the soldier at that time of night. This doctor represents the discouraged and depressed spirit of what was at that time probably the state of mind of millions all over the world.

These two men, like the two divisions of the Greek chorus, the strophe and antistrophe, carry on a dialogue in behalf of the entire world. Naturally the chief danger in handling such a situation is that the characters might very possibly become mere types and lose all individuality. Mr. Steele avoids this by observing the two principles of good dialogue (see page 27); first, he knows

his characters well, and second, he keeps his eye on them when they talk. The reader is aware that Mr. Steele is keeping his gaze upon the characters with hawklike intensity and is quick to seize upon every characteristic movement or gesture in order to prevent the long speeches from becoming mere formal discourses, and his story from becoming a didactic sermon.

As the story progresses and stray little details of the soldier's past appear we begin to realize that the author had his dossier pretty well in his mind before the story began.

A rather striking character contradiction, but a very plausible one, is that the weak and dying man is the one possessed of the robust and conquering hope, whereas the doctor, full of strength and vigor, is filled with gloom and forebodings.

2. Complication.

This is a story without a complication as far as the immediate characters are concerned. The great environing action of the World War envelopes the characters completely, and when the story was first published was a living vital thing for every reader. If we reduce it to the conventional formula of a problem and a solution we shall find the complication a very abstract one. The question is raised, How shall the cause of democracy be saved? and the answer is in the form of an appeal for a more absolute faith and a more consistent practice of democracy as we see it. Stated in terms of the thirty-six original plot situations we can say that it starts with Situation 30 (Disaster), proceeds immediately to 6 (The Enigma), and ends with effective use, not in

action but in dramatic eloquence, of 22 (Self-Sacrifice for an Ideal).

3. Setting.

The symbolic use of setting in this story is noteworthy. The dark night was chosen because it symbolized the dark hour in the great World War. Through the darkness, however, shines a star, a star not noticed by the depressed doctor, but which holds the eye of the dying soldier. The recurrence of the star to the reader's view is always coincident with the passionate vision of democracy as revealed in the soldier's heart.

4. Theme.

The theme itself was big and deserved a setting with epic proportions. Where could Mr. Steele have better localized his story than upon this lonely, darkened vessel pounding its way through a submarine-invested area, where two men could talk alone standing between sea and sky? The writer's use of local color is masterly. It is a difficult thing to describe in a new way the old, old story of a ship going through the waves. But the author does it and so well that he dares put it in the opening paragraph to seize and hold our attention. From then on by means of little descriptive touches here and there he never allows us to forget for one moment the locale of the story. Mr. Steele has been familiar with the sea from his earliest boyhood.

5. Movement.

This story is an example of slow movement.

6. Viewpoint.

The objective viewpoint is used throughout. We see and hear the characters as actors upon a stage. We

gather what they think and feel only from their spoken words, their movements and gestures.

7. Where shall I begin?

The first paragraph gives us the setting, prepares the stage so to speak for the actors to begin their speeches, an excellent plan for a story made up almost entirely of dialogue. Incidentally it sets the tone for the solemn discourse that is to follow, much as the opening scene on the platform at Elsinore sets the tone for the story of Hamlet, and the witch scene on the lonely moor strikes the tone for the play of Macbeth.

8. How many episodes and how shall I connect them?

This story, a story without action, has but one episode. Other noteworthy stories which also illustrate the three unities are "The Sire De Maletroit's Door" and "The Last Class." Such stories are excellent models for students to study as they illustrate how much dramatic material and material of deep human interest can be packed into one situation at one time and in one place.

9. How can I make my story seem plausible?

The only strain upon our credulity in a story of this kind where a speaker—here a soldier—gives us so profound and eloquent a message, arises from the question, How could such a man be inspired to speak so deeply and so truly? This is satisfactorily answered by the fact that the speaker is a martyr for his country, who pauses as it were a moment on the very brink of eternity to speak to us.

10. How can I increase the suspense?

The fact that one man is dying and another is depressed and that a ship is running through the dark night in momentary danger of a submarine's torpedo furnishes a certain quality of suspense. But this external fact fades into insignificance in the face of the colossal suspense of an entire world locked in a life and death grapple. Probably in all history the world has never experienced a night of more overpowering suspense than when, weak and worn by four years of war, it saw the conquering German armies start their last great drive upon Paris. It was at this moment in history that truth could furnish material more dramatic than any fiction. Wilbur Daniel Steele seized the moment and turned it into a dramatic narrative that will probably rank for all time as the greatest short story that has come out of the World War.

11. How shall I give my story an effective climax?

The climax of this story is the peroration of the dying soldier's last speech, the appeal for making our dream of democracy a more living passionate dream.

It would be interesting to try to put the Gettysburg address into the mouth of a soldier dying on the battle field the night after the first day's fighting at Gettysburg, when the cause of the North was in its dark hour. If you note carefully you will see that some of the vital qualities of the Gettysburg address, its timeliness as well as its eternal verities, are found in the speech of the dying soldier in "The Dark Hour."

No student of the short story can afford to be unfamiliar with the work of Wilbur Daniel Steele, undoubtedly

America's greatest living short story writer. Those desiring to read a remarkable story of atmosphere are urged to read "For They Know Not What They Do," and for a study of character, "Footfalls." The complication and the unique climax in each of these stories also deserve attention.

PART III

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR MEETING THE CHIEF PROBLEMS IN RHETORIC, STYLE AND PLOT BUILDING

I. FIRST AID IN REVISION

I. WORDS

We all have three vocabularies: one which we use in reading, one which we use in writing and formal discourse, and one which we use in colloquial speech. Many a student whose range of vocabulary, as betrayed by his conversation, seems to end with "dope" and "guy" and "swell" actually knows by sight, when he happens to meet them, such words as "initiate," "accessible," "adequate," "indicate," "convey" and "scope."

For every ten words he uses in talking, there are one hundred which he uses in writing, and one thousand with which he has a "bowing acquaintance" in his reading. If any man could use accurately and expressively in his writing and speaking one-fourth of the words which he understands in his reading he would have one of the most remarkable working vocabularies which a writer ever possessed. The problem of diction resolves itself, then, into this: HOW SHALL WE SWEEP INTO THE CURRENT OF OUR WRITTEN AND ORAL SPEECH THE VIRILE, EXPRESSIVE WORDS WITH WHICH WE BECOME ACQUAINTED IN OUR READING?

1. Wide reading in good books, supplemented by frequent reading aloud. To get a timid, unexercised word across the threshold of the lips by reading it out loud will in many instances make that word, henceforth, a

brave, self-reliant member of our more active vocabulary. John Ruskin, who possessed a wonderful vocabulary, said that he owed "all the best of his style in literature to his mother's requiring him to read the Bible through each year from cover to cover, pronouncing every word aloud, hard names and all."

2. Listening to good speakers or conversationalists, and using words they have used which impressed you as being especially expressive or exact. This method has been consciously or unconsciously employed by all great writers who have grown up in homes of culture and refinement.

3. The habit of looking up in the dictionary the exact meaning of words. This is one of the best habits any student can form. A profitable supplement to this is the study of synonyms. Clearness is often merely a matter of choice between synonyms. Every student should have access to at least one of the following books:

Roget: Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases.

Soule: Dictionary of English Synonyms.

Crabb: English Synonyms.

Smith: Synonyms Discriminated.

Fernald: English Synonyms, Antonyms, and Prepositions.

March: Thesaurus Dictionary of the English Language.

4. Making lists of words and idioms which are especially virile and expressive, and deliberately making a practice of employing two or three of them a day until you have increased your working vocabulary by one hundred words. Here are some homely, virile words which might serve to start you off: Antic, balk (v), blink, brawl, budge, bungle, cant (n), chuckle, churl, clap,

cling, clog, clutch, curt, daft, daub, dawdle, dolt, drone (v), drub, fag (v), fetch, foist, fume, fuss, gabble, gad, garble, glib, glum, glut, grub (v), grudge, gulp, hag, haggle, hearsay, heave, hoax, hobnob, hodge-podge, hood-wink, huff, inkling, inglenook, jaunty, jeer, job, jog, jolt, kernel, knack, lag, lank, leer, loll, lout, lug, makeshift, maul, mope, mess, mumble, nag (v), new-fangled, niggardly, nudge, odds, offset, outlandish, outstanding, pat (a), peevish, pert, plod, prig, quack, qualm, quash, quirk, quit, ram (v) rank (a), ransack, rant, rip, romp, rot, ruck, sag, scrawl, scramble, scribble, scuffle, sham, shipshape, shift, shirk, shred, slam, slink, slipshod, sluggard, smash, smother, smug, sneak, snivel, sop, spurt, squabble, squat, squeamish, stuff, sulk, tang, tawdry, tether, thrash, trickle, tussle, twit, underling, vent, vixen, warp, wheedle, wince, wrangle. In this connection read Palmer's essay on "Self-Cultivation in English" and note the emphasis he lays upon "audacity" in the use of words.

Here are some homely, virile idioms which you do not use enough: By hook or crook, a dead lift, the quick and the dead, a man of straw, touch and go, not worth his salt, neither fish, flesh, nor fowl, on tenter-hooks, penny wise and pound foolish, at odds over (something), tit for tat, cheek by jowl, read between the lines, leave no stone unturned, put a flea in his ear, wash your hands of that, take him down a peg, hark back to that, make a cat's paw of, mince matters, knuckle under, set one's teeth on edge, draw in one's horn, have him on the hip, turn tail, cast in one's teeth, make him sing another tune, hug the shore, pay the piper, sit between two stools, he has other fish to fry, there will be blood on the moon.

II. THE SENTENCE

The student who regularly employs sentences that are babyishly short, or, what is equally bad, uses sentences that are long, rambling and incoherent, where the verbs do not agree with their subjects and modifiers are far separated from the words they modify, is not ready for this book. Neither is the student who puts commas at the end of sentences and periods at the end of clauses.

For all other students, no matter how brilliant their writing may be, such a chapter as this is needed in a book of this kind. For the sentence is the *pièce de resistance* of all students in college. In offering advice on the sentence, care has been taken to select only the most important and fundamental matters upon the observation of which depends the achievement of that finesse of style which we all in our hearts desire. Emphasis throughout this chapter is laid not upon the arbitrary rule, or the external form, as much as upon the process of thought which makes the particular rule psychologically logical and necessary. Before we have rhythm, emphasis, antithesis, and climax in sentence structure we must have rhythm, emphasis, antithesis and climax in thought. What has made the rhetoric of sentence structure so difficult to master in the past has been the tendency of authors of text books to treat it as a body of abstract rules to be memorized, instead of as an integral part of the creative process. What we need is not a code, but a real psychology of use; not many rules but a few principles which will help us to express ourselves with greater clearness and emphasis. We must remember that literature was written long before text books were invented, and that it is quite possible that one might become a successful

writer without ever having seen a rhetoric or memorized a rule.

The first step to take in mastering the art of the sentence is the following:

Try to cultivate a feeling for brevity, compactness and unity in your style just as you strive to cultivate a feeling for neatness in your personal appearance. Foster a dislike for sentences with clumsy, slovenly phrasing, just as you do for uncombed hair or an untied necktie. Try to see in every sentence a single central idea, and try to shape the phrasing so that that central idea will stand out. Stevenson used the word "whittling" as applied to style and that is a word which will serve us well here. Whittle away the superfluous phraseology from your sentences so that the central idea will emerge as keen and sharp as the point of a pencil. To be more specific, wherever possible reduce compound sentences to complex sentences, and complex sentences to simple sentences. Notice the way slovenliness gives place to order in the sentences below:

Complex to simple: We visited cities which were smoky and noisy.

We visited very smoky, noisy cities.

Compound to complex: To please his wife he entered politics, and he did not relish notoriety in any form.

To please his wife he entered politics, although he did not relish notoriety in any form.

Having made this attitude of mind your own you can safely proceed to a more careful consideration of what might be called the four post-graduate problems of the sentence. I shall introduce these to you in the words of

two of our leading teachers of rhetoric who have done much to codify and clarify the intricacies of our English language. "The finesse of style," writes Arlo Bates in *Talks on Writing English,* "may be said to depend largely, and indeed chiefly . . . on the use made of *participles, particles* and *parallel construction.*" "In the whole range of composition," writes J. F. Genung in *The Working Principles of Rhetoric,* "there is no process oftener mismanaged than the process of *retrospective reference.*"

Let us consider each of these four problems in turn.

I. *Participles.* "The participle is the most delicate part of speech in the language," writes Arlo Bates, "and as such is the most frequently abused or misused." Its misuse lies in failing to make it take the same subject and time as the principal verb. A participle which has lost the word upon which it should properly depend is about the most helpless little thing in the English language. Perhaps the easiest way to fix permanently in your mind the rule governing the participle is to think of the participle as a small child that is always accompanied by, and dependent on its mother.

Being so much in earnest, it is a pity to treat him slightingly. (Here the poor child has lost its parent.)

Being so much in earnest, *he* should not be slighted. (Family reunited at last.)

Confusing: He turned and fled from the crowd, squalling and squawking. (He or the crowd were squalling and squawking?)

Clear: Squalling and squawking, he fled from the crowd.

Confusing: He hardly spoke to me hurrying down town.

Clear: Hurrying down town, he hardly spoke to me.

By the above it is seen that it is safer to use the participial phrase to introduce the sentence than to close it.

Because participial constructions are so frequent and of such great service every student should take pains to master the following principle:

THE PRESENT PARTICIPLE ALWAYS TAKES THE SAME SUBJECT AS THE MAIN VERB AND REFERS TO THE SAME TIME AS THE MAIN VERB.

II. *Particles.* A frequent habit of college students, due possibly to the American mania for finding short cuts, is the tendency to omit little words that are really needed to make the thought clear.

Beloit is nearer Galesburg than Grinnell.
Than to Grinnell? Than Grinnell is?
The thin and fat man were coming up the steps.
Whether as a man, a husband, or poet, his steps led him downward.

The tendency to omit the little articles "a" and "the" is the most frequent form of breaking this rule. Another frequent error is that of making a principal verb in one part of a sentence serve in another when the same form is not grammatical in both parts, as—

He did what many others have and are doing.

The fundamental rule to observe here is: NO ESSENTIAL WORD WHICH IS NOT SPECIFICALLY IMPLIED SHOULD BE LEFT OUT OF THE SENTENCE.

III. *Parallel Construction.* Parallel structure is peculiarly useful in public discourse and no one who hopes to become a speaker should fail to master it. As a matter of fact oral eloquence would be impossible without it. Listen to the best speakers and mark well the use they

make of this element of structure. Sharpen your eyes for parallel structure by reading passages that exemplify it and illustrate it. Here are a few examples for which I am indebted to Professor Arlo Bates:

Meanwhile whether as a man, a husband, or a poet, his steps led him downward.—Stevenson: *Some Aspects of Robert Burns.*

How many college students would have omitted that last article and thus have sinned against the law of parallelism! Below we see parallelism in the use of the preposition:

God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.—Matt. xxii: 32.

One would have to read over the following passage very carefully to note all the delicate uses of parallel structure employed therein.

A University is a place of concourse whither students come from every quarter for every kind of knowledge. . . . All the riches of the land, and of the earth, are carried up thither; there are the best markets, and there the best workmen. It is the center of trade, the supreme court of fashion, the umpire of rival talents, and the standard of things rare and precious. It is the place for seeing galleries of first-rate pictures, and for hearing wonderful voices and performers of transcendent skill. It is the place for great preachers, great orators, great nobles, great statesmen. In the nature of things, greatness and unity go together; excellence implies a center. And such . . . is a University.—*Newman.*

The rule of parallel structure is this: ELEMENTS OF THOUGHT THAT ARE PAIRED TOGETHER OR THAT ANSWER TO EACH OTHER SHOULD MAKE CLEAR THAT RELATIONSHIP BY SIMILARITY IN FORM.

For excellent examples of parallel structure see the sections in MacCracken and Sandison's *Manual of Good English.* For further discussion of particles, participles and parallel structure the student is referred to Arlo Bates, *Talks on Writing English, Second Series.*

IV. *Reference.* The reason why so many college students are guilty of failing to make clear the antecedents of the adverbs, pronouns and phrases of reference, which they make such free use of, is due to a conflict between theory and practice. The reference is theoretically to an idea, but the laws of rhetoric demand that the reference should always be to some particular word.

When George came in *he* asked *him* to tell *him* why *he* had been so late.

Do not feed the animals in this cage; *it* is not permitted.

The horse is fast becoming extinct, which is a pity for *they* are such beautiful animals.

Shakespeare's plays will live; *he* presents human nature as it is.

He was a brave man, and *this* made his daughter worry for his safety.

To correct the faulty references above, all that is required is that we reduce theory to practice by supplying the missing word.

When George came in his *father* asked him, "Why have you been so late?"

Do not feed the animals in this cage. *Such acts* are not permitted. (Or, Feeding the animals is not permitted.)

The horse is fast becoming extinct, which is a pity, for *it* is such a beautiful animal.

The plays of Shakespeare are going to live forever, because *the writer* has presented in them human nature as it is.

He was a brave man, and *this fact* made his daughter worry for his safety.

Professor Genung, who has singled out this problem as the most serious one met by students of writing, offers a rather interesting remedy.

"The mismanagement results not from ignorance, but from haste and carelessness; the writer, in his ardor to continue his thought, does not stay to look back, but trusts to chance for accuracy, or puts the burden of interpretation on the reader. It is of especial importance in this process to form the habit, in the case of any backward referring word, of looking back at once and making sure of its adjustments before proceeding. Such a grammatical habit, once thoroughly established, does not check or retard the current of the thinking, and will save much trouble of recasting afterwards. . . . As in a game the ball is not only played but left in position for the next play, so in the phrasing of the thought a word that is to be referred to should be so placed or treated that the reader may naturally *think back* to it from the referring word. The spontaneous effort to leave the antecedent in favorable position is one of the results of the grammatical habit mentioned above."

The rule of reference can be expressed as follows: DO NOT USE A PRONOUN TO REFER TO A GENERAL IDEA; SUPPLY A DEFINITE ANTECEDENT OR ABANDON THE PRONOUN.

A sentence which illustrates every one of these four problems of the sentence is given below. Note the participial opening, the retrospective reference near the middle, the careful inclusion of the article in the last clause, and the parallelism used three times. Then memorize the sentence and tuck it away in the pigeon-holes of your mind for ready reference whenever these problems come up again.

"Speaking only of his command over language and metre, I have a right to reaffirm, and to show by many illustrations, that he is the most sovereign of rhythmists; and yet, nevertheless, as a thinker, a philosopher and a Christian he failed miserably."

Variety in Sentence Structure

More important than the mastery of the various parts of sentence structure is the use of variety of sentence structure in your writing. "Be infinitely various," counsels Stevenson.

Monotonous sentence structure in written composition, just like monotonous inflection of the voice in conversation, wearies a reader or listener. But when a man talks with "expression," as we call it, his conversation never wearies. And likewise when a man writes with expression, that is to say with emphasis, his writing does not weary. In short, the cure for monotony is emphasis.

What is the law of emphasis? "In the normally constructed sentence," writes Fulton, "the order of the constituent parts is, subject, verb, object, and verb modifiers; and when this order is followed, no especial emphasis is given to any one part. . . . Special emphasis can be given to any particular part only by placing that part in a position it would not normally occupy. Thus a verb-modifier placed at the end of the sentence is only slightly emphasized; placed at the beginning it is made strongly emphatic. Hence the general rule to secure emphasis in the sentence is, change the natural order of the parts and bring the part emphasized to one or the other of the naturally prominent positions in the sentence, namely the beginning or the end."

Variety in sentence structure will, therefore, be satisfactorily attained in most cases if the writer carefully attends to the placing of his emphasis.

The student should strive also to attain variety by a judicious mingling of short and long sentences. As a matter of fact one of the most effective ways of making a point emphatic is to insert a short sentence among several long ones. The short sentence is invaluable for making an important point stand out, for summing up some issue that has been discussed at length, for pointing transitions. However, it is lacking in rhythm and sustained power; it has no roll, no momentum. The long sentence is especially adapted for giving details, expansions, colorings, and shadings of thought already in the reader's mind. It also can possess rhythm, climax, cadence, massiveness, impressiveness. Combine the two forms and the writer secures the crispness of the short and the sustained momentum of the long.

Punctuation of the Sentence

You will find in A. S. Hill's *Rhetoric* thirty-six rules given for the use of the comma. Following the plan of reducing rules to those principles which are integral parts of the creative process we shall find that there are—at the very most—only four "rules" that deserve attention and that these cover every known use of the comma.

1. Commas separate equal members in the sequence of words or groups of words.

He was a tall, strong, courageous man.

He healed the sick, he relieved the poor, he made the blind to see.

2. All non-essential clauses should be enclosed by commas; essential clauses never. Stated in other words: Any long parenthetic expression that can be omitted without rendering the remainder of the sentence obscure, and any short parenthetic expression of which the parenthetic nature is strongly marked, are set off by commas.

This power rests with the President, the head of the army. (Appositive expression.)

Yes, Mr. Brown, I enjoyed it. (Vocative expression.)

Mr. Adams, who was president of the firm, put his veto upon the order. (Non-restrictive relative clause.)

"Come on," he said; "we want you." (Words introducing a quotation.)

Well, I shall consider it. (Mild interjection.)

It is of paramount importance that every student should understand what is meant by *restrictive* and *non-restrictive*. The general principle is that whatever can not be removed without destroying the sense of the statement is restrictive and should not be pointed with punctuation marks. Under non-restrictive we include all that could be omitted without destroying the central meaning.

Restrictive: The man across the street called to me.

Non-restrictive: Mr. Brown, who is very peculiar, called to me.

This is by far the most important and difficult rule of the comma and deserves careful study.

3. A comma may be used to set off words, phrases or clauses that anticipate their natural order. As the accepted order in a sentence is for the subject to come first, this rule practically means that any phrase which precedes the subject is ordinarily set off by commas.

In spite of the fact that his daughter was very young, Judge Smith insisted on sending her away to school.

If I can, I will tell him.

When daylight fades, the owl comes forth.

4. When the subject of the second part of a compound sentence is different from the subject of the first part, or if the sentence is very long, a comma is required before the connecting *and* or *or*. *But* always requires a punctuation mark, often the semi-colon.

The two millionaires left the inn, and the poor inn-keeper breathed a sigh of relief.

The illness was not serious, but the doctor insisted that he must remain in bed.

Rules 3 and 4 seem to be going out of fashion among modern writers excepting where absolutely necessary to make the meaning clear. For instance, in the following sentences some writers would have commas, most would not:

Hurrying to the gangway he called down to the men below.

Seeing that he was too late to stop the train he returned home.

The book was published on the thirtieth and we sent out our circulars on the twenty-fifth.

The Semi-colon. The semi-colon is like the utility baseball player who can play equally well in the outfield or the infield, depending upon the particular need of the occasion.

A. As substitute for a comma when the writer wishes to separate two or more co-ordinate members of a simple or complex sentence when those members, or some of them, have commas within themselves.

He said that he was ready to join the army; that his mother, being very ill, he had delayed his reporting for service before; and that he would consider it a personal favor if he could be placed in one of the first units to be sent to France.

B. As a substitute for the period when the writer wishes to group together into a compound sentence two or more sentences that have a distinct and readily-felt unity.

He did not go to college; he went into business instead.

I came; I saw; I conquered.

Herodotus has written something better, perhaps, than the best history; but he has not written a good history; he is, from the first to the last chapter, an inventor.

The Colon. There is one principle governing the use of the colon: the colon points forward to something which is to come.

That which is to come may be merely the body of a letter following the salutation, or a list of items on a bill of lading; but, when skillfully used in literary composition, this looking forward is often dramatic in effect, suggesting something of fulfillment, even of climax, as illustrated by this descriptive line taken from a modern novel: "To the left in the distance, she could see something shining: a broad disk of light in which narrow shadows pivoted around like spokes in a wheel."

III. THE PARAGRAPH

Paragraphing, like punctuation, is an invention of the moderns to enable readers to see at a glance the chief breaks in the thought by means of graphic breaks for the eye. If properly employed paragraphing gives as much assistance in understanding a whole composition as punctuation gives in understanding a sentence.

An average paragraph in the best modern English varies between 150 and 250 words. This matter of length is very important and frequently determines for a writer whether to develop a topic further, omit it altogether, or combine it with another topic pertinent to it.

Paragraphing is used for the following purposes:

(a) Showing a change of thought or subject.
(b) Calling attention to a particularly important thought.
(c) Resting the eye, and breaking up a page to prevent its assuming a formidable appearance.
(d) Indicating a change of speaker in conversation.

EXERCISES IN RHETORIC

For a student who is especially weak in the fundamentals of rhetoric the following exercises are recommended:

1. Word-study: Require a student, weak in vocabulary, to read "Clayhanger" and collect one hundred simple idiomatic words and phrases that are clear, accurate and suggestive.
2. Sentence Study: For exercises in sentence structure, especially in sentence rhythm and variety of sentence structure, see Exercises under Self Cultivation in Style, page 223. Study in Punctuation: Require a student, weak in punctuation, to read the selections on pages 225-232 and put above every comma the number of the principle it illustrates, and above every semi-colon the letter (A or B) which indicates its use.
3. Paragraph Study: Read "The Dark Hour," and opposite each paragraph place the letter (a), (b), (c) or (d) to indicate what purpose it serves.

II. SELF-CULTIVATION IN STYLE

"James Russell Lowell says in his *Essay on Chaucer* that a poet learns to write, just as a child learns to speak by watching the lips of those who can speak better than he can. It was so with Chaucer. Franklin tells us in his Autobiography that he formed his own style by imitating the Spectators of Addison and Steele. Dr. Johnson says in a passage which is not, but ought to be, familiar to every school boy: "Whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison.' Lamb got his manner from Sir Thomas Browne. Stevenson relates in detail how he taught himself his trade by a multitude of monkey tricks based on a list of authors ranging from Lamb to Hazlitt and from Baudelaire to Obermann. Even Jack London confesses that he acquired his style by studying modern American magazines and newspapers nineteen hours a day.

"Literature bristles with evidence that other writers have done likewise. The *Æneid* is an imitation, a very palpable imitation, of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Dante openly proclaims that Virgil was his master. In *Paradise Lost,* by substituting Satan for Æneas, Eve for Dido, and Hell for Africa, John Milton produced a parody more impressive than his model, but still a parody. Tennyson confesses that his epic, his *King Arthur,* consists of faint Homeric echoes. It seems clear that Æschylus learned from Pindar; Sophocles from Æschylus; Euripides from Sophocles; Racine, Corneille, and Milton from all three.

" 'Shakespeare himself, the imperial,' says Stevenson, 'proceeds directly from a school.' By judiciously imitating sporting Kyd on the one hand and on the other

studying the cadences of 'Marlowe's mighty line,' he learned to steer from grave to gay, from lively to severe, in a fashion which overjoyed all his contemporaries except Greene, who expressed his grief by calling the predatory William 'an upstart crow beautified with our feathers.' It was true. It is also true that *Wilhelm Tell* and *Beket* remind one in countless ways of *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*. Theocritus taught Virgil the art of writing bucolics, Milton the plan of *Lycidas,* and Tennyson the melodies of *Œnone*. The influence of Demosthenes is clear enough in the *Areopagitica;* and the plan of Burke's *Conciliation* is essentially the same as that of Cicero's *Manilian Law*. 'The more I wonder the less I can imagine,' wrote Francis Jeffrey to Thomas B. Macaulay, 'where you picked up that style.' If he had investigated a little more and wondered a little less, he would have found the answer in Demosthenes and Cicero, in Thucydides and Tacitus, in Homer and Dante, in the King James Bible, in Milton, Addison, and Burke. Macaulay's sentence structure has been aped with some success by John Richard Green, John Churton Collins, John Bach McMaster, James B. Angell, and Sir George Otto Trevelyan, not to mention several hundreds of less skillful disciples, while the admirable construction of his framewords and the clearness of his paragraph structures have influenced many other imitators, including Francis Parkman and John Fiske. Even Thomas Carlyle confesses that he got his style by imitating his father's speech. Did Irving learn nothing from Addison, Bryant from Wordsworth, Lowell from Tennyson, Whittier from Burns, or Holmes from Pope? Think of Burns's obligations to Spenser, Pope, and Fergusson. Indeed, the only poets I am accustomed to think of as not being imitators are Homer and Rudyard Kipling. But has not the latter imitated Will Carleton and Bret Harte? And does not he somewhere sing of the former:

> 'When 'Omer smote 'is bloomin' lyre,
> 'E'd 'eard men sing by land and sea;
> And wot 'e thought 'e might require
> 'E went and took, the same as me.'

"It would be easy to expand this catalogue, but it is needless. The conclusion is irresistible. The way to learn to write is to use models."—Edwin L. Miller in *Notes on Teaching English Composition.*

Benjamin Franklin and Robert Louis Stevenson are the classic examples of writers who owe their style largely to the imitative study of models. True, these two men, like all the others mentioned above by Mr. Miller, approached their task with a purposeful initiative which enabled them to assimilate their models and not allow the models to assimilate them. The danger of a feeble, flabby, indifferent attack upon the style of great writers may be that the models may assimilate the student. By that I mean the student may merely garner mannerisms and faults, making his style affected instead of effective. But such a danger is very slight—and if the student carefully follows the directions which follow he will derive only strength from the exercises. There is no other exercise which will so increase a student's working vocabulary, add rhythm and grace to his sentence structure and shake him out of his ruts generally.

DIRECTIONS FOR EXERCISES IN STYLE BUILDING

1. Read over each passage first for the subject matter, jotting down a very brief outline of the thought, preferably a catch word for each individual sentence—nothing more. If he desires, the student may write the word "long" or "short" after each catch word to indicate whether the sentence is long or short. But this is not necessary, as it is not the exact sentences that should be reproduced, or the exact words, but rather the thought

so that he may afterwards compare his attempt with the original and see where he has fallen short or has improved upon the model. After he has written a few of these exercises the student may do away with the outline altogether, as he will be able to make a mental outline of the thought as he reads the passage.

2. Following the first reading there should be a second reading, this time special attention being given to the vocabulary, especially the new words or words used in new and expressive combinations.

3. Before you write your transcript read the passage a third time, this time *aloud,* giving yourself up completely to the measures, rhythms and cadences of the sentences.

THEN SHUT THE BOOK AND WRITE DOWN THE PASSAGE FROM MEMORY.

1. "The rain was still falling, sweeping down from the half-seen hills, wreathing the wooded peaks with a gray garment of mist, and filling the valley with a whitish cloud.

"It fell around the house drearily. It ran down into the tubs placed to catch it, dripped from the mossy pump, and drummed on the upturned milk-pails, and upon the brown and yellow beehives under the maple-trees. The chickens seemed depressed, but the irrepressible bluejay screamed amid it all, with the same insolent spirit, his plumage untarnished by the wet. The barnyard showed a horrible mixture of mud and mire, through which Howard caught glimpses of the men, slumping to and fro without more additional protection than a ragged coat and a shapeless felt hat."—*Hamlin Garland: Main Travelled Roads.*

2. "The deep woods have many moods in winter; more, perhaps, than in summer, or even in spring. But they are never quite so beautiful as on this brilliant morning after the first heavy snowfall. Now the underbrush is bowed everywhere in slender hoops and arches of white. Now the brooks are still unfrozen and have hollowed the snow on their banks into rounded caps. Now the tree trunks down the forest aisles are sharply divided like a harlequin's costume into black and white, white on the windward side, black on the leeward. Now the forest overhead is one continuous roof of frosted fairy tracery, dazzling where the sun shoots through, soft and feathery in shadow. Down a glittering forest aisle a fern stands up in the shelter of a rock, a vivid green above the white carpet. About us in silence, as we walk, come down little plops of snow from shaken branches. As the sun mounts and its heat is felt, the tiny avalanches are sounding softly all around us in the woods. By noon the fairy groins and arches overhead, all this tracery as of elfin gothic gone delightfully mad, will have fallen. The trees will stand up naked above a snow carpet packing down for the first layer of winter. But for one glorious morning we walk in spangled aisles and count it the best day of the year."—*Walter Prichard Eaton.*

3. The following is an interpretation of Mendelssohn's Spring Song by describing the images it calls up to the writer's mind:

"For from far away somewhere came the softest, sweetest song. A woman was singing, somewhere. Nearer and nearer she came, over the hills, in the lovely early morning, louder and louder she sang—and it was the Spring-song! Now she was with us—young, clear-eyed, happy, bursting into delicious flights of laughter between the bars. Her eyes I know were gray. She did not run nor leap—she came steadily on, with a swift, strong, swaying, lilting movement. She was all odorous of the morning, all vocal with the spring. Her voice laughed even while she sang, and the perfect, smooth succession of the separate sounds was unlike any effect I have ever heard. Now she passed —she was gone by. Softer, fainter—ah, was she gone? No; she turned her head, tossed us flowers and sang again, turned, and singing, left us. One moment of soft echo—and then it was still."—*Josephine D. Daskam: Smith College Monthly.*

4. "I went to Washington the other day and I stood on the Capitol hill, and my heart beat quick as I looked at the towering marble of my country's Capitol, and a mist gathered in my eyes as I thought of its tremendous significance, of the armies and the treasury, and the judges and the President, and the Congress and the courts, and all that was gathered there; and I felt that the sun in all its course could not look down on a better sight than that majestic home of a Republic that had taught the world its best lessons of liberty. And I felt that if honor and wisdom and justice dwelt therein, the world would at last owe that great house, in which the ark of the covenant of my country is lodged, its final uplifting and its regeneration.

"But a few days afterwards I went to visit a friend in the country, a modest man, with a quiet country home. It was just a simple, unpretentious house, set about with great trees and encircled in meadow and field rich with the promise of harvest; the fragrance of the pink and the hollyhock in the front yard was mingled with the aroma of the orchard and the garden, and the resonant clucking of poultry and the hum of bees. Inside was quiet, cleanliness, thrift and comfort.

"Outside there stood my friend, the master, a simple, independent, upright man, with no mortgage on his roof, no lien on his growing crops—master of his land and master of himself. There was the old father, an aged and

trembling man, but happy in the heart and home of his son. And, as he started to enter his home, the hand of the old man went down on the young man's shoulder, laying there the unspeakable blessing of an honored and honorable father, and ennobling it with the knighthood of the fifth commandment. And as we approached the door the mother came, a happy smile lighting up her face, while with the rich music of her heart she bade her husband and her son welcome to their home. Beyond was the housewife, busy with her domestic affairs, the loving helpmate of her husband. Down the lane came the children after the cows, singing sweetly, as like birds they sought the quiet of their nest.

"So the night came down on that house, falling gently as the wing of an unseen dove. And the old man, while a startled bird called from the forest and the trees trilled with the cricket's cry, and the stars were falling from the sky, called the family around him and took the Bible from the table and called them to their knees. The little baby hid in the folds of its mother's dress while he closed the record of that day by calling down God's blessing on that simple home. While I gazed, the vision of the marble Capitol faded; forgotten were its treasures and its majesty; and I said, "Surely here in the house of the people lodge at last the strength and the responsibility of this government, the hope and the promise of this Republic." —*H. W. Grady: "The New South."*

5. "One Sunday morning, a few months ago, I passed along the sumptuous corridors of the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, New York, on my way to the writing-room, and I came to a spacious scarlet hall, set about with plush couches and little writing desks. Exquisite and imperious women sat in cozy flirtation with respectful young Americans, and there was a happy buzz of vanity in the air. Wealth, luxury, idleness, were all about me, purring and sunning themselves in the electric light; and yet, for some unknown and doubtless trivial reason, I was sad. As I look back I can only account for my sadness by the fact that I was to sit answering week-old letters, while these happy people flirted. A little reason is always the best to give for a great sadness—though, indeed, how could one help being sad in the presence of so much marble and so many millionaires?

"Well, at all events I was sad; but suddenly, as I looked about for an unoccupied desk, what was this voice of ancient comfort speaking to me from a little group, one reader and two listeners,—a gray-haired, rather stern, old man, a gray-haired old lady, a boy, not specially intent,—rich people, you would say, to look at them: 'Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it; if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.'

"It was a New England father persisting in a private morning service here among the triflers.

"I felt like those of whom one has read in Sunday-school stories, who, passing the door of some little mission-house one rainy night, heard a word or a hymn that seemed miraculously intended for them. Surely that stern old Puritan father had been led to read that particular chapter, that particular Sunday morning, more for

my sake than, at all events, for the sake of his little boy, who might quite reasonably and respectfully have complained that he was too young as yet to comprehend writing so profoundly beautiful and suggestive as the Hebrew scriptures.

"Yes! it was evidently for the poor idealist in the House of Astor that the message was intended. For the boy weariness, for the mother platitude, for the father a text—for me a bird singing; and all day long I kept saying to myself, lonely there among the millionaires: 'Many waters shall not quench love, neither shall the floods drown it; if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.'

"If a wild rose had suddenly showered its petals down from the ceiling, or a spring bubbled up through the floor, or a dove passed in flight through the hall, the effect of contrast could hardly have been more unexpected than the surprising sound of those old words thus spoken at that moment, in that place. They had for the ear the same shock of incongruity, of willful transportation out of one world into another quite alien, which Cleopatra's Needle has for the eye amid the hansoms and railway bridges of the Thames' embankment, or the still greater shock of juxtaposition with which one looks upon the Egyptian obelisk in Central Park.

"But there was this difference. The obelisks tell of a dead greatness, of a power passed away, whereas those words told of an ever-living truth, and bore witness, even by their very quotation in such a context, to a power no materialism can crush, no pessimism stifle, the deathless idealism of the human spirit."—*Richard Le Gallienne: "The Second Coming of the Ideal."*

6. "Night is a dead, monotonous period under a roof; but in the open world it passes lightly, with its stars and dews and perfumes, and the hours are marked by changes in the face of Nature. What seems a kind of temporal death to people choked between walls and curtains, is only a light and living slumber to the man who sleeps afield. All night long he can hear Nature breathing deeply and freely; even as she takes her rest she turns and smiles; and there is one stirring hour unknown to those who dwell in houses, when a wakeful influence goes abroad over the sleeping hemisphere, and all the outdoor world are on their feet. It is then that the cock first crows, not this time to announce the dawn, but like a cheerful watchman speeding the course of night. Cattle awake on the meadows; sheep break their fast on dewy hillsides, and change to a new lair among the ferns; and houseless men, who have lain down with the fowls, open their dim eyes and behold the beauty of the night."—*Stevenson: "A Night Among the Pines."*

Further examples for reproduction will be found in this book:

7. Passage from Stevenson on page 96.
8. Passage from Maupassant on page 47.
9. Description of Nevis by Hearn on page 11.
10. Description of "Eating a Peach" by Richardson on page 16.

I know of no better method of mastering the art of the short story and at the same time developing a style of your own than to devote a month to the following exercises:

Copy "The Necklace," word for word, punctuation marks and all. Do this twice. Then set the story aside for several days and try writing the entire story from memory. Finally, select a similar theme, place it in a modern setting, and write an original story of your own.

III. THE THIRTY-SIX ORIGINAL PLOT SITUATIONS

"Gozzi maintained that there can be but thirty-six tragic situations. Schiller took great pains to find more, but he was unable to find even so many as Gozzi."—*Goethe.*

No apology is needed for introducing these thirty-six plot situations in a book of this kind. An explanation might be in order, however, in regard to the way they should be used. The student should turn to this list whenever he desires to sharpen his eye for new plot combinations, or feels the need of having his creative imagination stimulated. The student will be disappointed who comes to them expecting to find plots all ready for his hand. He will find here inspiration rather than information.

The order and arrangement are my own. I have divided the plots into two grand divisions, one comprising those situations that seem to take their rise from the solution and the other comprising those that are the outgrowth of the problem. It seemed to me that this arrangement should render the situations more immediately suggestive to the student who comes to them with the purpose of having his power of invention stimulated.

CLASSIFICATION OF THE THIRTY-SIX PLOT SITUATIONS

A. The sixteen original plot situations that are stated in the form of the problem.

1. SUPPLICATION:

   A situation in our day practically ignored.

   Illustrative examples: *The Suppliants,* Æschylus and also Euripides, *Book of Esther* (Bible).

   Modern short stories: *Making Port*—Richard Mathews Hallet. O'Brien, Best Short Stories, 1916.

2. VENGEANCE PURSUING CRIME:

   A theme very popular with Arabs, Spaniards, and Israelites of the Old Testament.

   Illustrative examples: End of both Homeric Poems, *Othello, Hamlet.*

   Modern short stories: *The Red-Headed League,* A. Conan Doyle; *The Blood Red One,* M. S. Burt; O'Brien, Best Short Stories, 1918.

3. THE PURSUED:

   The converse of plot two. Shifts viewpoint and sympathies from pursuer to pursued.

   Illustrative examples: *Brigands,* Schiller; *Raffles,* Hornung; *An Enemy of the People,* Ibsen.

   Modern short stories: *A Jury of Her Peers,* Susan Glaspel; O'Brien Collection, 1917; *The Riding of Black Bill,* O. Henry; *A Retrieved Reformation,* O. Henry.

4. REVOLT:

   A splendid, virile theme. May be used as core of solution as well as of problem.

   Illustrative examples: *Chanticleer,* Rostand; *William Tell,* Schiller; *Doll's House,* Ibsen; *A Life for a Life,* Herrick.

   Modern short stories: *The Revolt of Mother,* Mary Wilkins Freeman; *Buster,* Katherine Holland Brown; O'Brien, 1918; *Dishes,* A. M. Brownell, O'Brien, 1919; *The Fat of the Land,* Anzia Yezierska, O'Brien, 1919.

5. Audacious Attempt:

"Summarizes the poetry of war, of robbery, of surprise, of desperate chance—the poetry of clear-eyed adventurers, of man beyond the restraints of the artificial civilization, of Man in the original acceptation of the term."—*Polti.*

Illustrative examples: *Toilers of the Sea,* Hugo; *Henry V,* Shakespeare; *The Conquest of Mexico,* Prescott; *The Message to Garcia,* Elbert Hubbard.

Modern short stories: *The Taking of Tungstunpen,* Rudyard Kipling; *The Taking of the Redoubt,* Prosper Mérimée.

6. The Enigma:

Usually upon the solution of the enigma hangs a reward, either of love or money, and upon its failure some penalty, sometimes even the penalty of death.

Illustrative examples: *The Sphinx,* Sophocles; Queen of Sheba and Solomon; Portia's coffers in *Merchant of Venice.*

Modern short stories: *The Dilemma,* S. Weir Mitchell; *The Gold Bug,* Edgar Allan Poe; *The Lady or the Tiger,* Frank Stockton; *What Was It? A Mystery,* Fitz James O'Brien; *The Damned Thing,* Ambrose Bierce.

7. Fatal Imprudence:

This will always remain one of the most fascinating of themes, for as in the case of the Enigma the reader or spectator easily becomes as curious as the imprudent character in the story. The motives may be curiosity, credulity or jealousy.

Illustrative examples: Pandora and her box; Eve and the apple; Bluebeard's wife and the closed room; *Wild Duck,* Ibsen.

Modern short stories: *De Vilmarte's Luck,* Mary Heaton Vorse, O'Brien Collection, 1918; *The Necklace,* Guy de Maupassant; *Maulbaum's Fever Ward,* George Gilbert, O'Brien, 1918; *The Wedding Jest,* James Branch Cabell, O'Brien, 1919.

8. Enmity of Kinsmen or Friends:

Not an attractive theme, as it is based upon estrangement and hate. The chief difficulty will be to find an element of discord powerful enough to cause the breaking of the strongest human ties.

Illustrative examples: *Cain,* Byron; *Seven against Thebes,* Æschylus; *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse,* Ibañez.

Modern short stories: *Mrs. Drainger's Veil,* H. M. Jones—O'Brien, 1919; *The Fat of the Land,* Anzia Yezierska—O'Brien, 1918.

9. Rivalry of Kinsmen or Friends:

War, love, business and adventure offer attractive opportunities for this theme.

Illustrative examples: *Pelleas and Melisande,* Maeterlinck; *Adam Bede,* George Eliot; *Two Gentlemen of Verona,* Shakespeare; *Two Noble Kinsmen,* Beaumont and Fletcher.

Modern short stories: *The Confession,* Guy de Maupassant; *A Light Man,* Henry James; *A Cup of Tea,* Maxwell Struthers Burt, O'Brien, 1917; *The Love of Men,* Nevil A. Henshaw, Neal, Today's Short Stories Analyzed.

10. Unequal Rivalry:

This is and will always remain one of the most popular plot situations in all literature. The poor boy loves the little rich girl, and Cinderella loves the prince. Its combinations are unlimited.

Illustrative examples: *Toilers of the Sea,* Hugo;

Cyrano de Bergerac, Rostand; *Launcelot and Elaine,* Tennyson.

Modern short stories: *The Boy in the Corner,* M. L. C.; *Rainbow Pete,* Richard Mathews Hallet, O'Brien, 1917.

11. Obstacles to Love:

So common a theme as to be the very quintessence of the trite, and yet so broad and deep in its appeal, and so varied in its possibilities, that it still remains the greatest of all plots of romance.

Illustrative examples: All fairy tales with love element, and half the love stories of today.

Modern short stories: *In Maulbaum's Fever Ward,* George Gilbert, O'Brien Collection, 1918; *M'liss,* Bret Harte; *On the Fever Ship,* Richard Harding Davis; *Blue Roses,* Lisa Ysaye Tarleau; *A Rag-time Lady,* Rhodes and Yates.

12. An Enemy Loved:

This is a variation on situation 11. Splendid opportunities for such a theme are presented by the present war.

Illustrative examples: *Romeo and Juliet,* Shakespeare; *Duchess of Malfi,* Webster; *Monna Vanna,* Maeterlinck.

Modern short stories: *Messengers,* Calvin Johnson, O'Brien, 1919.

13. Ambition:

Ambition, when once awakened in a man, is the most powerful of passions and will continue to dominate him till he dies. Strange to say, the ancients never made use of this theme.

Illustrative examples: *Cromwell,* Hugo; *Wallenstein,* Schiller; *Richard III,* Shakespeare; *Julius Cæsar,* Shakespeare; *Macbeth,* Shakespeare.

Modern short stories: *A Cup of Tea,* Maxwell Struthers Burt; *Three Arshins of Land,* Lyof Tolstoy; *On the Stairs,* Arthur Morrison; *The Path of Glory,* Mary Brecht Pulver; *The Ambitious Guest,* Hawthorne.

14. Struggle Against Destiny or God:

This theme, in contrast to the one preceding, was the most popular one among the ancients, whereas today it is rarely touched.

Illustrative examples: *The Book of Job; Prometheus,* Æschylus; *Bacchantes,* Euripides; *Paradise Lost,* Milton; *Master Builder,* Ibsen.

Modern short stories: *Kitchen Gods,* G. F. Aslop, O'Brien, 1919; *Caught,* Mr. and Mrs. Haldermon Julius; *In Maulbaum's Fever Ward,* George Gilbert, O'Brien, 1918.

15. Mistaken Identity:

Offers especially good opportunity for depiction of the emotion of jealousy, also unlimited opportunities for farce.

Illustrative examples: *Comedy of Errors,* Shakespeare; *Cymbeline,* Shakespeare; *Prisoner of Zenda,* Anthony Hope.

Modern short stories: *My Double and How He Undid Me,* Edward Everett Hale; *Girl,* O. Henry; *His Wedded Wife,* Rudyard Kipling.

16. In the Clutches of Cruelty or Misfortune:

A big theme giving only of its riches to the master hand. A favorite of epic and Biblical literature.

Illustrative examples: *The Princess Madeline,* Maeterlinck; *Jews in Captivity; Negro in America; Prometheus Bound; Book of Job.*

Modern short stories: *Lonely Places,* Francis Buzzell, O'Brien, 1917; *The Last Class,* Alphonse Daudet.

B. Plot Situations Stated in the Form of the Solution.

17. The Savior:

The "Unfortunate" may be a community starving for inspiration and enlightenment, such as a frontier village lost in drink and debauchery; or it may be an old community befogged with dogmatism or pessimism or mutual criticism, or it may be an individual who is in dire distress. The Rescuer may be a sweet, inexperienced young woman leaving her college upon graduation for wider fields of service, a young minister, a crippled soldier, a little child. This theme, when divorced from medieval heroics and modern melodrama, is exactly the theme which this age most profoundly needs.

Illustrative examples: Chivalrous legends where the lady is saved by the knight; Bluebeard, etc.; *Sky Pilot,* Connor; *Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come,* Fox.

Modern short stories: *The Luck of Roaring Camp,* Bret Harte; *The Idyll of Red Gulch,* Bret Harte; *His Majesty the King,* Rudyard Kipling; *Feet of Gold,* Arthur Gordon Smith, O'Brien, 1916; *The White Battalion,* Frances Gilchrist Wood, O'Brien, 1916; *Ching, Ching, Chinaman,* Wilbur Daniel Steele, O'Brien, 1917; *Extra Men,* Harrison Rhodes, O'Brien, 1918; *Boys Will Be Boys,* Irvin S. Cobb, O'Brien, 1917; *The Willow Pond,* Helen Ellwanger Hanford.

18. Vengeance Taken Upon Kindred by Kindred:

This is chiefly a theme of the ancient Greeks. When the avenger's action is prompted by the wish of the dying victim, or the spirit of the dead mysteriously appearing, professional duty

or an imprudent promise, the dramatic possibilities are enhanced.

Illustrative examples: *Hamlet,* Shakespeare; *Electra,* Sophocles and Euripides; *Libation Pourers,* Æschylus.

Modern short stories: *The Caller in the Night,* Burton Kline, O'Brien, 1917.

19. Obtaining:

This is a popular theme today whether it is located in the field of commerce or of love.

Illustrative examples: *Philoctetes,* Sophocles; *Helen Reclaimed,* Euripides.

Modern short stories: *A Sisterly Scheme,* H. C. Bunner; *Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford,* George Randolph Chester.

20. Madness:

Modern writers cannot find the literary possibilities in insanity that the earlier writers found in it, for the simple reason that modern science pronounces it to be merely hereditary and pathological where Greek writers considered it divine, and medieval writers considered it demoniacal—two conceptions which gave it its literary position. Shakespeare had an inordinate love for it. The greatest short-story writer of today, Wilbur Daniel Steele, has shown wonderful power in depicting it.

Illustrative examples: *Hedda Gabler,* Ibsen; *Hercules Furens,* Euripides; *Ajax,* Sophocles; *Saul,* Gide; *Macbeth,* Shakespeare.

Modern short stories: *The Open Window,* Charles Caldwell Dobie, O'Brien, 1918; *Laughter,* Charles Caldwell Dobie, O'Brien, 1917; *The Cask of Amontillado,* Edgar Allan Poe; *The Tell-Tale Heart,* Edgar Allan Poe; *The Women at Seven*

Brothers, W. D. Steele; *For They Know Not What They Do,* W. D. Steele; *The Wrists on the Door,* Horace Fish, O'Brien, 1919.

21. Slaying a Kinsman Unrecognized:

This is a rarely used situation. Hugo had an inordinate liking for it and bases most of his dramas upon it. Shakespeare, on the other hand, has not in a single instance employed it.

Illustrative examples: *Sohrab and Rustum,* Arnold.

Modern short stories: *The Father's Hand,* George Humphrey, O'Brien, 1918; *Tropics,* Patrick Casey, Neal's Today's Short Stories Analyzed.

22. Self-Sacrifice for an Ideal:

Like the Savior, this situation is just what we need today. It easily becomes trite and "preachy" if not handled in a new way. There is no necessity, however, of choosing a hero of a too-perfect type.

Illustrative examples: Jean Valjean, Joan of Arc, Sir Launfal, Sir Galahad; *The Doctor,* Connor; *Luther,* Werner; *Resurrection,* Tolstoy.

Modern short stories: *A Certain Rich Man,* Lawrence Perry, O'Brien, 1917; *The Emperor of Elam,* H. G. Dwight, O'Brien, 1917; *The Knight's Move,* Katherine Fullerton Gerould, O'Brien, 1917; *Messengers,* Calvin Johnson, O'Brien, 1919.

23. Self-Sacrifice for Kindred or Friends:

This also may easily become trite and didactic unless handled in a big way. It is one of the three most popular plot situations used today.

Illustrative examples: *Cyrano de Bergerac,* Rostand; *Great Expectations,* Dickens; *Tale of Two*

Cities, Dickens; *The Joy of Living,* Zola; *Alcestis,* Euripides.

Modern short stories: *Onnie,* Thomas Beer, O'Brien, 1917; *The Gay Old Dog,* Edna Ferber, O'Brien, 1917; *The Bunker Mouse,* Frederick Stuart Greene, O'Brien, 1917; *A Derelict,* Richard Harding Davis; *The Substitute,* François Coppée; *Tennessee's Partner,* Bret Harte; *None So Blind,* Mary Synon, O'Brien, 1917; *For They Know Not What They Do,* W. D. Steele.

24. Discovery of the Dishonor of a Loved One:

If this comes as the solution to a plot, the story must end in remorse, or hate—at all events in tragedy. If it comes at the beginning—and stands in the place of the problem—then the discoverer may try to help the sinner make amends and live down the fault.

Illustrative examples: *Allison's Lad* (one-act play).

Modern short stories: *Mateo Falcone,* Prosper Merimée; *The Child Spy,* Alphonse Daudet; *For They Know Not What They Do,* W. D. Steele.

25. All Sacrificed for a Passion:

This theme gives splendid opportunity for studying nervous pathology, and consequently is one of the most constantly treated themes of the French writers of today. Not to be attempted until one understands how to express emotion.

Illustrative examples: *Antony and Cleopatra,* Shakespeare; *Cléopatra,* Sardou; *Sapho,* Daudet; *Salome,* Wilde; *Herodias,* Wilde.

Modern short stories: *In Maulbaum's Fever Ward,* George Gilbert, O'Brien, 1918; *L'Arrabiata,* Paul Heyse.

26. Erroneous Judgment:

This has larger possibilities if placed at the beginning of the story, as a problem to be worked out. At the end the mistake leads only to tragedy.

Illustrative examples: *The Brigands,* Schiller; *The Serpent Woman,* Gozzi.

Modern short stories: *The Piece of String,* Guy de Maupassant.

27. Remorse:

"It is hardly necessary to call attention to the small number, but the terrible beauty of the works of literature that has dealt with this theme."—*Polti.*

Illustrated examples: *Orestes,* Euripides; *Manfred,* Byron; *Madeline,* Zola; *Werther,* Goethe; *Rosmersholm,* Ibsen; *Bernice,* Poe.

Modern short stories: *Markheim,* Robert Louis Stevenson; *Another Gambler,* Paul Bourget; *Laughter,* Charles Caldwell Dobie, O'Brien, 1917; *The Wrists on the Door,* Horace Fish, O'Brien, 1919.

28. The Necessity of Sacrificing Loved Ones:

This situation as it stands will rarely be found in modern literature. The beginner will have few occasions to use it.

Illustrative examples: Abraham and Isaac; Jephtha's daughter; *Iphigenia in Aulis,* Euripides; *Monna Vanna,* Maeterlinck.

Modern short stories: *Kitchen Gods,* G. F. Aslop, O'Brien, 1919.

29. Abduction.

This is a favorite theme of the French. In American literature a treasure box is often substituted for the girl.

Illustrative examples: *The Abduction of Helen,*

Euripides; *Iphigenia in Tauris,* Euripides; The Sabine Women; Cassandra.

Modern short stories: *The Ransom of Red Chief,* O. Henry; *In Maulbaum's Fever Ward,* George Gilbert, O'Brien, 1919.

30. Disaster.

This theme, the ever-recurring refrain of the Biblical books, reverberating in immortal echoes through Homer and the Greek dramatists, today awaits a writer with sufficient sweep and scope of imagination, with mind of sufficient Homeric proportions, to re-incarnate this great epic in a message for our own modern era. Europe has furnished the material. Let him who can essay the task. But when the great writer of this theme arises he will not select for his medium the short story. Only an epic will do it justice.

Illustrative examples: *Last Days of Pompeii,* Bulwer Lytton; *The Persians,* Æschylus; *La Débâcle,* Zola; *War of the Worlds,* Wells; *Antony and Cleopatra,* Shakespeare; *War and Peace,* Tolstoy.

Modern short stories: *Lodgings for a Night,* Bret Harte; *The Ambitious Guest,* Hawthorne.

31. The Recovery of a Lost One:

One of the perennially popular themes. Like all such, it is a little threadbare, but deserving of fresh treatment in new settings.

Illustrative examples: *Winter's Tale,* Shakespeare; *Pericles,* Shakespeare; "The Stolen Child" situation; Prodigal Son, etc.

Modern short stories: *The Mystery of the Red-Haired Girl,* Louise Kennedy Mabie; *Messengers,* Calvin Johnson, O'Brien, 1919.

32. The Loss of Loved Ones:

Where this situation is used for the problem, it presents opportunities for all types of plots; where used as the solution it confines the writer to an atmosphere of gloom and mourning not at all popular today.

Illustrative examples: *The Intruders,* Maeterlinck; *Niobe,* Æschylus; The Seven Princesses, Maeterlinck.

Modern short stories: *In the Open Code,* Burton Kline, O'Brien, 1918; *Without Benefit of Clergy,* Rudyard Kipling; *The Unknown,* A. P. Terhune, Neal, Today's Short Stories Analyzed.

C. Four undesirable plot situations:

33. Adultery.
34. Murderous Adultery.
35. Crimes of Love.
36. Involuntary Crimes of Love.

HOW TO USE THE THIRTY-SIX PLOT SITUATIONS

The following situations you can throw into the discard as being practically useless unless occasionally employed in a very secondary situation: 18 (Vengeance taken upon kindred), 21 (Slaying a kinsman unrecognized), 8 (Enmity of friends), and 28 (Necessity of sacrificing loved ones). It is too difficult, almost impossible, to secure the necessary motivation for such situations; furthermore they are offensive to the average reader.

Next you can put down as exceedingly trite and therefore to be used only sparingly and in connection with exceedingly vital, novel characters or unusual complications: 15 (Mistaken identity) and 29 (Abduction), the two most frequently used movie plot situations today,

and 31 (Recovery of a lost one). The only place where it will be safe to use these is in minor episodes.

The situations which have the largest dramatic values are 22, 23, 24 and 25 (Self-Sacrifice for an Ideal, Self-Sacrifice for Friends, Discovery of the Dishonor of a Loved One, and All Sacrificed for a Passion). Because these situations are so rich in dramatic possibilities they have been used a great deal; therefore the following advice is given in connection with them: In using 22 (Self-Sacrifice for an Ideal) and 23 (Self-Sacrifice for Friends) care should be taken to see that the sentimental is avoided and that the situations are plausible, vital and compelling. The other two, 24 (Discovery of the Dishonor of a Loved One) and 25 (All Sacrificed for a Passion), are better when used as secondary situations. Situation 24 goes well with 28 (Necessity of Sacrifice of Loved Ones), about the only occasion when situation 28 may be safely used.

The situations which have largest possibilities for action are 2, 3, 4 and 5 (Vengeance Pursuing Crime, The Pursued, Revolt, and the Audacious Attempt). In handling these special care should be taken to avoid melodrama, especially in 4 (Revolt), which is very effective if this danger is avoided. Situation 3 (The Pursued) is good in combination with 12 (An Enemy Loved) and 26 (Erroneous Judgment). Situation 5 (Audacious Attempt) makes an excellent basic action when combined with 4 (Revolt) or 30 (Disaster).

The four love themes, 9, 10, 11 and 12 (Rivalry of Friends, Unequal Rivalry, Obstacles to Love, and An Enemy Loved), are always interesting if the characters are real, and the action is well motivated, and vital, but 9 (Rivalry of Friends) and 12 (An Enemy Loved)

should be used for secondary situations rather than main situations.

The situations that have been used the least of all and therefore are deserving of careful study by students who wish to find new plot situations are the following:

1. *Supplication.* Has been used so sparingly in the past that it is practically an unworked field. Possibilities, however, are limited.
6. *The Enigma.* Has rarely been used outside of detective stories. Has excellent possibilities.
7. *Fatal Imprudence.* Has excellent possibilities if the character is novel and unusual.
13. *Ambition.* Has excellent possibilities where the character is well drawn.
14. *Struggle Against Destiny.* Gives remarkable opportunity for atmosphere story, or story of introspection and emotion.
17. *The Savior.* This has been used often but has been overused in only two types of plots: where the rescuer saves some one who has been abducted (the favorite movie topic), or where he is faultlessly good. Where the character is well drawn, human and interesting, and where sentimentality and melodrama are avoided, this situation has infinite possibilities.
20. *Madness.* Presents its best opportunities when used in connection with situation 7 (Fatal Imprudence) or 25 (All Sacrificed for a Passion).
27. *Remorse.* Requires skillful treatment and knowledge of human nature. Best fitted for stories of introspection and emotion.
30. *Disaster.* Not effective unless the disaster is well motivated. Would make good basis for atmosphere story.

The majority of beginners' stories fail, from the plot point of view, for one of the following reasons:

1. They begin well, but the solution falls flat.
2. They have an excellent climax, but are improperly motivated at the beginning.
3. They have a well-drawn character, but the situation he is placed in doesn't give him a chance to reveal himself.
4. The plot is excellently developed, but it is hopelessly trite.

Every one of these mistakes could have been avoided by a careful study of the thirty-six original plot situations.

Perhaps the most valuable use you can make of these situations is as follows: First select a starting point for a story based upon your own experience. This may be merely a character you have known, a setting you are familiar with, a theme you wish to present in artistic form, or a complication or solution that tempts you but which you don't quite know how to develop. Then turn to the thirty-six plot situations and study them carefully. For purposes of reference, guidance and inspiration you will find they are invaluable.

EXERCISES IN THE THIRTY-SIX PLOT SITUATIONS

I. Read four of the following short stories and bring to class a list of the plot situations used in them. See section 2 in each of the analyses of the four short stories printed in this book for models. This exercise is one of the very best ways to train the sense of plot-building in students:

The Last Class (Daudet)
The Necklace (De Maupassant)
Sire De Malétroit's Door (Stevenson)
The Municipal Report (O. Henry
The Man Who Would Be King (Kipling)
England to America (Margaret Prescott Montague
Making Port (Richard Mathews Hallett)
For They Know Not What They Do (W. D. Steele)
Footfalls (W. D. Steele)
Twenty-three and a Half Hours' Leave (Mary Roberts Rhinehart

II. Take a character that you would like to use in a story and put him in each of the four love plots (Situations 9, 10, 11 and 12) and write a paragraph abstract on each one, outlining in a very general manner how the plot would evolve.

III. In similar manner put him in each of the four action plots (2, 3, 4 and 5).

IV. In similar manner put him in each of the four self-sacrificing situations (22, 23, 24 and 25).

V. In similar manner put him in each of the nine situations described on page 248 as being the least trite (1, 6, 7, 13, 14, 17, 20, 27 and 30).

VI. Notice that the situations are summarized below in two columns, the column to the left consisting of situations stated in form of a problem and the column to the right consisting of situations stated in form of a solution. From the first column select one situation (preferably Ambition) as the problem and find ten solutions for it in situations taken from the opposite column. Summarize each of the plots thus formed definitely but briefly.

VII. Select one situation from the solution side (preferably The Savior) and then find ten problems in the other column to serve as starting points or complications for which this situation could be the solution. Summarize the plots thus formed briefly, but as concretely and definitely as possible.

Sixteen Original Plot Solutions stated in form of PROBLEM

1. Supplication.
2. Vengeance pursuing crime.
3. The pursued.
4. Revolt.
5. Audacious attempt.
6. The enigma.
7. Fatal imprudence.
8. Enmity of friends.
9. Rivalry of friends.
10. Unequal rivalry.
11. Obstacles to love.
12. An enemy loved.
13. Ambition.
14. Struggle against destiny.
15. Mistaken identity.
16. In the clutches of misfortune.

Sixteen Original Plot Solutions stated in form of SOLUTION

17. The savior.
18. Vengeance taken upon kindred.
19. Obtaining.
20. Madness.
21. Slaying a kinsman unrecognized.
22. Self-sacrifice for an ideal.
23. Self-sacrifice for friends.
24. Discovery of dishonor of a loved one.
25. All sacrificed for a passion.
26. Erroneous judgment.
27. Remorse.
28. The necessity of sacrificing loved ones.
29. Abduction.
30. Disaster.
31. Recovery of lost ones.
32. Loss of loved ones.

VIII. A Plot-Building Game.

Divide the thirty-two original plot situations given above into four groups. Then divide the class into four sections and to each section give a group of plot situations. Then select some particular phase of life that all are familiar with, preferably college life, and require that every student bring to class on the following day a definitely worked out plot for each of the eight situations given to him.

When the class meets have these plots passed around among the students until each paper has been read and graded by five students. Then, beginning with situation 1 (Supplication), read the three or four best developments of this theme as applied to college life. Have the class discuss these briefly and take a vote upon the best. In a similar fashion take up each plot situation in turn. This may require two or three full recitation hours. At the end of these discussions the plot situations which were chosen by vote as best should be neatly typewritten with sufficient carbon copies so that the instructor shall have a copy and several may be placed in library so that students may have access to them. The class will find this a revelation of what excellent work can be done in plot-building. Two or three years' accumulation of such lists would prove to be a veritable gold mine of material for an instructor in short story writing or for an instructor of a Freshman English class which is studying narrative writing.