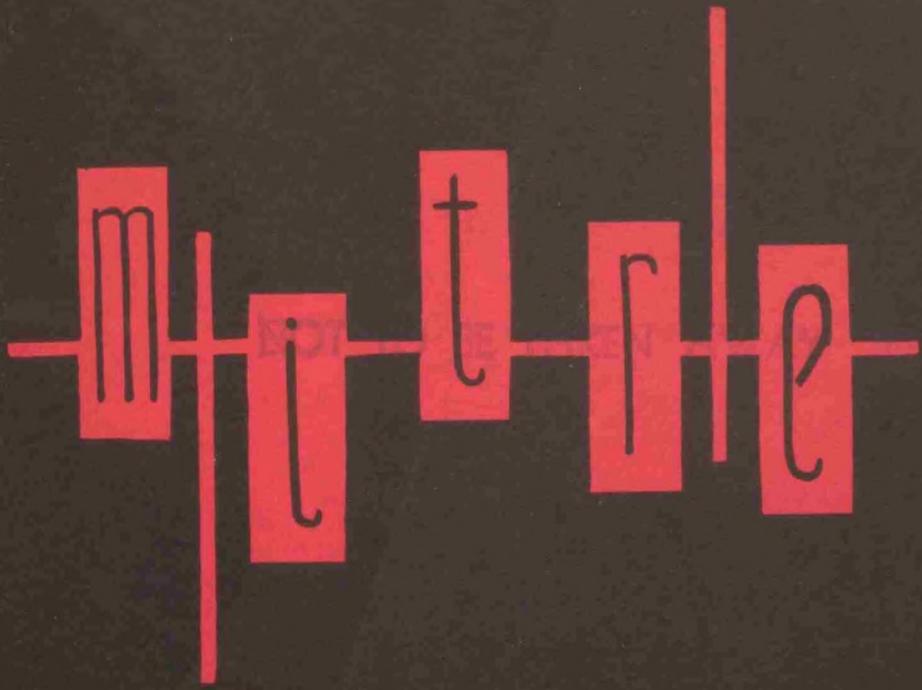


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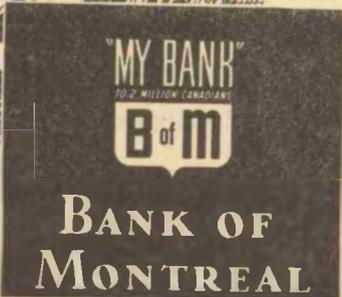
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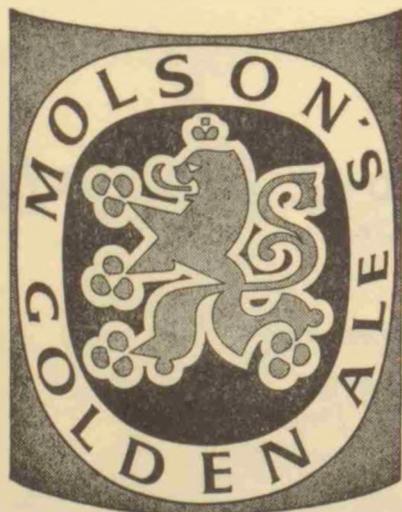
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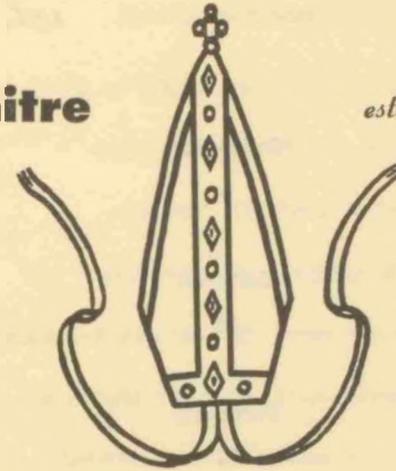
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Dedication

*To the late Joyce Cary
who, even in death, was
an inspiration.*

the mitre

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Editorial

IT is said that when you are through changing, you are through. **The Mitre** is not through. That is why **The Mitre** is changing.

In this issue you will notice a wide divergence from the central themes of the Lent edition. Yet within this obvious variation, we have sought to maintain a consistency of literary spirit and quality. Once again the strongest side of many writers' personalities are presented. But in this case, their strength lies in a distinctly different vein.

We predicted correctly that the last **Mitre** would not be liked by everyone. Nor will this one. But there is a fundamental difference. What was printed last issue was a "first" and people could not do much about it if they didn't like it. Not so with this issue.

One of the prime features of the editorial policy of **The Mitre** is to accept any or all contributions of genuine creative literary merit. Depend on it, if we had received enough great material to triple the size of our issue, we would have broken our backs selling advertising in order to include it all between **The Mitre** covers.

We offered this maxim — If you didn't like the last **Mitre**, then change the next one by writing something better. This is the "next" **Mitre**. If you don't like this one, you will have to wait till next year.

Foreword to Dramatis Personae

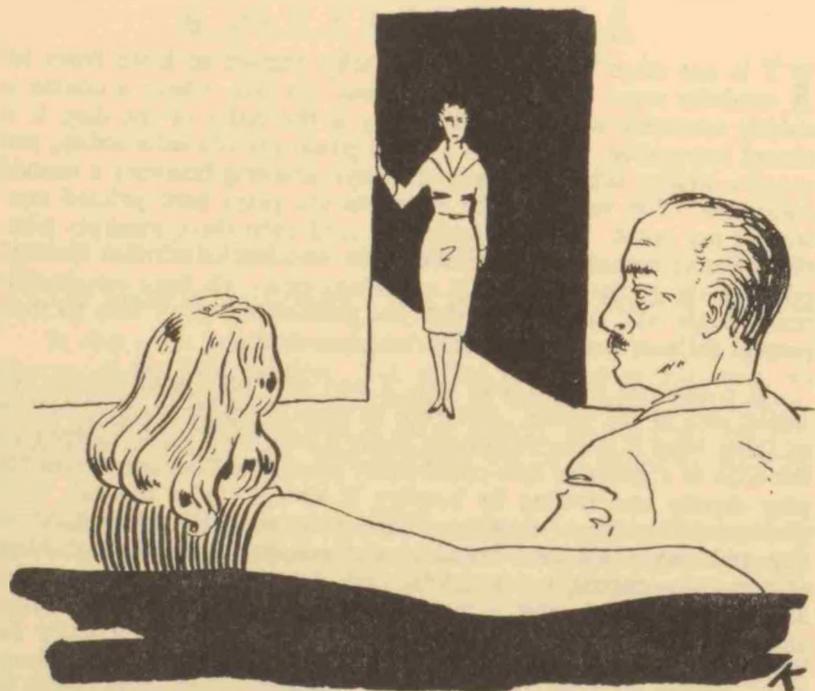
IT is not often that a teacher is lucky enough to learn from his students more than he teaches them. In fact, where a course is strictly academic and formal lecturing is the order of the day, it is almost impossible. But where a small group permits informality, and creative writing takes the place of essays, learning becomes a mutual enterprise. The variety to be found in the plays here printed constitutes my proof. It is impossible to read even these excerpts without learning something more about the wonders of a mind directed purposefully to the creation of something new. To have watched so many plays take shape from the first glimmering of an idea to their present fullness has brought the richest rewards.

It is obvious that to read only a part of a play is to have a distorted idea of the whole. But even in these excerpts there is enough to show what is distinctive about each: Katharine Cantlie, writing on the edge of a situation that could easily become melodrama, gives her play dignity and feeling by keeping it always under control; John Cook, refurbishing a story from Petronius, casts it differently from Fry and shows his own brand of extravagant humour; Carl MacCallum, demonstrating an intellectual detachment worthy of Ben Jonson, uses a style that is terse and sharply directed; Dolce Narizzano, returning to the tradition of the fairy tale, tells a story for children in which anything can happen, and tells it in her own charming, gentle style; John MacNaughton, throwing aside all the rules of play-writing, writes a deliberately literary piece that would be most at home in the pages of the **New Yorker**; Nancy Pond, not pretending to write about extraordinary happenings, gives us here an example of natural dialogue that is quickly shaped to a climax; and Lynn Ritchie, turning to domestic comedy, writes about the family she has created with a great deal of amusement and genuine affection.

Taken together, these seven possible approaches to play-writing should make a field-day for the reader.

ARTHUR MOTYER

Blueprint of Two Lives
 — by **Katharine Cantlie**



It is always with pride that *The Mitre* finds within its own staff, a writer who is worthy of publication between our covers. Miss Cantlie has been a frequent contributor to this magazine in the past and has also held the post of Assistant Editor for a number of years. Following the publication of the play from which we have printed the following section, Miss Cantlie plans to holiday in Europe with her mother soaking up sun and experiences.

Katharine Cantlie

"Blueprint of Two Lives"

SYNOPSIS: Gordon Pasmore, an architect, and his wife Isobel have an adopted daughter Helen, aged 20, and two sons of their own, aged 8 and 10. Mr. Pasmore is fonder of Helen than of his sons, and his wife, who idolises the boys, resents this. She is constantly unpleasant to Helen, and Mr. Pasmore, a gentle and peace-loving man, is unhappy about the schism in his family. The play revolves around Helen and her problem: she can do nothing to alleviate the tension of which she is the cause, as her departure from home might seem ungrateful to her foster-parents. The problem is resolved when Mr. Pasmore finally tells her that he is her real father — a fact which he had never admitted to his wife when they married and subsequently decided to adopt a child, the choosing of which he had influenced in order to give his love-child a good home. Helen's love for her father has been great but it increases when she learns this, and she sees that she owes it to her father to make his life as happy as possible; so she leaves home, knowing that his love for her will not be lessened by this, and that his family life will be at least undisturbed, if not happy.

The action takes place in the living room of the Pasmore home. The following excerpt from the exposition begins with Helen and her young brothers spending the afternoon together.

HELEN (putting arm around **MICHAEL**): Tomorrow is Saturday — you know what I think we three should do?

MICHAEL: No, what?

HELEN: I'll get the car, and we can bring a picnic and drive out to see the old fort. How'd you like that? You haven't been there for ages.

(The boys jump up and down; **ALLAN** pretends he has a gun and is shooting at **MICHAEL**.)

ALLAN: Bang! Bang-bang!

(At that moment, the front door is heard opening and closing, and **MR. PASMORE** appears in the doorway to the hall. He is about 48, tall and well-built, with slightly greying hair, and a very gentle manner and face.)

MR. PASMORE: Well, well! What's all this!

(The boys run up to him and he tousels their hair affectionately. **HELEN** walks to him and kisses him.)

HELEN: Hello, Dad. This is the Civil War — we can move to the fort tomorrow if you'll lend me the car.

MR. PASMORE: Sure! Good! I'd like to come myself . . . But I don't think I can — I imagine I'll be pretty busy.

(The boys start fighting again, noisily.)

HELEN: Now, now — that's enough. Outside, you two — we'll have no wars in the living room, please.

(She herds them out into the hall and returns.)

MR. PASMORE is fixing a drink.)

MR. PASMORE: You certainly have them right under your thumb, Helen.

HELEN: Oh, I think it's just the novelty of having me home from college again. It'll probably wear off all too soon. Did you have a good day?

MR. PASMORE: A little rough, I'm afraid.

HELEN: You're working on that big new school out in Rosedale, aren't you?

MR. PASMORE: Yes. It's quite a project.

HELEN: Can I see the blueprints sometime? I'd really like to.

MR. PASMORE: Yes, yes. I tell you what — come down to the office with me on Monday and we'll make a day of it.

HELEN: You're sure you don't mind?

MR. PASMORE: Mind? Heavens, no — you know how much I like taking you. And besides, the more you learn now the better.

HELEN: Yes, I know. I'm getting a little nervous about going to Columbia next year. Do you think there'll be many other women taking architecture?

MR. PASMORE: Oh, a few, I suppose. But you mustn't start worrying.

HELEN: I only hope I can live up to what you expect. I don't want to flunk out and waste all your money.

MR. PASMORE (sits on sofa beside her and pats her hand): Don't you worry about that for a minute, sweet. I just want you to do whatever will make you most happy.

HELEN: You're wonderful.

(She kisses him. MRS. PASMORE enters from the hall. She is somewhat younger than her husband, smallish and thin, and neurotic in manner and appearance. She does not look well or happy, and is inclined to be sharp and fretful.)

MRS. PASMORE (to MR. PASMORE): Well, dear, why didn't you tell me you were home? I was lying down upstairs.

MR. PASMORE: I was just going to come up and bring you a drink.

MRS. PASMORE: Well I'm here now — I'd like a gin and ginger.

(MR. PASMORE goes to bar to fix her drink.)

And Helen, I don't like you wasting time down here when your room is so untidy. I've never seen such a mess, and I want it cleaned up right away.

HELEN (peaceably): But Mother, I tidied it this morning — there's no mess.

MRS. PASMORE: There certainly is. You've got papers littered all over the place — all those messy sketches and drawings. If you don't put them away somewhere or throw them out, I'll get rid of them myself for you. Now go and do it right away.

HELEN: Yes, Mother. I'm sorry.

(She goes.)

MR. PASMORE: Here's your drink, Iso. Have you been feeling ill today?

MRS. PASMORE: No, just the usual. I suppose you think I look hideous?

MR. PASMORE: No, no, no, not at all. I just wondered why you were so short with Helen.

MRS. PASMORE (exasperated): Gordon, I simply won't have my home looking like a pigsty, even if she is the only one who has to live in that filthy bedroom of hers. And besides, she's got to stop wasting time drawing all day long.

MR. PASMORE: It's not wasted time, Iso.

MRS. PASMORE: I suppose **you** think she's good. You must — you certainly encourage her enough. Really, Gordon, you should have more sense.

MR. PASMORE: Well, what's wrong with encouraging her to do something she enjoys? Iso, I don't understand why you're so against her being interested in architecture.

MRS. PASMORE: It's just that I don't approve of you two spending all your time fiddling with blueprints and things. You're making her neglect her family and her duties to them . . .

MR. PASMORE (interrupting): Now that's not true. She spent most of the afternoon with the boys so that you could have a nap, and she's taking them to the fort tomorrow. I don't call that neglect — she adores them and they adore her. And as for her duties — she does far more cooking and washing up than she should have to.

MRS. PASMORE: That's right — protect her, as usual. And as for taking the boys to the fort — why aren't you doing it? You never see them, never pay any attention to them.

MR. PASMORE: Iso, I have to work tomorrow — the deadline for the school plans is the end of next week.

MRS. PASMORE: You should still be able to find time to spend with your own sons. I don't think you even care whether they go to the fort or not. And it means so much to them.

MR. PASMORE: Iso, I do care. They're my children too — and you know how glad, how happy I was when they were born. They're very special because they're ours. You know how much that means.

MRS. PASMORE: Yes, I think I know even more than you do.

MR. PASMORE (a little angrily): But that doesn't mean that they have to be spoiled all the time, simply because they're ours and Helen is adopted. Look, remember, Iso, that we adopted her long before they were born, and our love and duty to her should be just as great. And you're not keeping up your end of it at all.

MRS. PASMORE: Well, I think **you're** overdoing it. After all, she's not your own flesh and blood, she's just an orphan we happened to pick out of a group — and you treat her better than the boys, your own sons.

MR. PASMORE: That's not true, but even if it were, don't you think it's less harmful than your attitude?

MRS. PASMORE: What attitude?

MR. PASMORE: This business of resentment — as if you didn't want her as your child any more, now that you have two of your own. You're not being fair to her — you pamper Allan and Mickey to death, and all you have for her is disapproval.

MRS. PASMORE: I suppose you want me to condone her activities? Since she's come home from college all she's done is play records and draw sketches and gaze at old blueprints. She doesn't need to be commended for looking after the boys because she's supposed to anyway. And as for this idea of going to Columbia next year . . .

MR. PASMORE: Well, what's wrong with that?

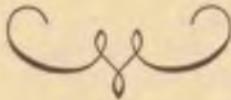
MRS. PASMORE: It's absolute nonsense. She's already had four years of college, and now she wants to go on, and be a career girl. What does she think you are — a millionaire fairy godfather?

MRS. PASMORE: For that, maybe, but what about the boys when their turn comes? (Sarcastically): Or will she be taking a Ph.D. somewhere then? (Angrily): Are you going to spend all our money on her? And not leave anything for our own sons?

MR. PASMORE (quietly): No, I'm not, Iso. Suppose you leave the money business to me. You know perfectly well I'd never even think of giving her advantages which I couldn't give to the boys.

MRS. PASMORE: I know nothing of the sort.

MR. PASMORE (setting glass down hard on bar, and trying to control his temper): You are completely unreasonable. Call me for supper — I'm going to the den.



Opus No. Three-Eighths

— by John Cook



Mr. Cook is well known as editor of *The Bishop's Campus*. Creatively speaking, he has a long list of distinguished *Mitre* contributions to his credit. We are both proud and pleased to print this excerpt from his forthcoming play. Following its Spring publication, Mr. Cook is going to retire to the solitude of his workshop where he will "write five hundred words a day for three months and if nothing happens, (he) will get a job like everybody else."

SYNOPSIS: A few years before the birth of George Bernard Shaw a Roman named Petronius wrote down a tale called **The Widow of Ephesus**. It is a story about a widow who shuts herself up in a crypt to die with the body of her husband beside her. This story, as can be easily seen from this synopsis, is screamingly funny. It has long been one of my favorites.

It seems that lots of others have found the same boundless mirth in this rather macabre little piece, for there have been countless plays produced on the same plot — the most recent as far as I know being Christopher Fry's **A Phoenix Too Frequent**, a verse play.

So I thought it quite natural that I should do it too, only with a shift of interest. Most of my predecessors concentrated on the widow, her husband's body, and the young soldier who comes to persuade her that perhaps life is worth living. Being avant garde it is only natural that I should concentrate on the reactions of the people outside of the tomb to the whole thing — perhaps the influence of Cecil B. and his People Circuses. This chunk comes from the second scene.

Scene: the same:

The Inspector is sitting behind his desk straightening his tie. Outside there is again the sound of a crowd. This time obviously a fairly good sized crowd. A band is playing — a predominance of tubas and French horns, not quite on key.

Shelby enters.

SHELBY: Sir, the people have gathered.

INSPECTOR: Yes, I hear them. They sound angry.

SHELBY: They **sound** angry. You can't hear curiosity. And that's what they really are, behind those ugly scowling brows, just plain, old, humanly curious. It's all very exciting for them — and widow and you, Sir. They especially like this business about sending their Representatives to meet you. That's captured their imaginations.

INSPECTOR: Where does the Young Peoples Symphonic Orchestra come in relation to me, the widow, and the Peoples Representatives?

SHELBY: What do you hear now? It lends color, Sir.

INSPECTOR (quietly repeating): Color, yes.

SHELBY: Are you ready to meet the first of the toads, Sir.

INSPECTOR: How many Peoples Representatives did you find me, Shelby?

SHELBY: Only three with any degree of coherency. Shall I send them in?

INSPECTOR: Perhaps you'd better tell me —

(He is cut off with a crash as an ethereal young woman in a white gauze-like dress and long golden tresses bursts into the room and sprints across to fall on her knees at the Inspector's feet. She clutches his hand to her cheek.)

INSPECTOR: My good woman, what in the hell —

SAPHO: O good sirrah! O long faced Justice! O lean shanked Humanity, O simple Truth —

(Shelby is frantically struggling with her, trying to get her on her feet, saying again and again, "But Madam, please Madam . . .")

Save, save, save that good woman from the Long Icy Night of Death! Stretch out your kindly work-worn hand! — For Love's Sake, for the sake of her children and her children's children, and her children's children, children yet mercifully unborn!

INSPECTOR (struggling furiously as she swarms over him, resisting Shelby's attempts to lead her away. The Inspector roars out): But the widow is barren!

SAPHO (being dragged towards the door by Shelby, shouts back at the Inspector): For all the Little Sleeping Heads the world over, for all the Little Lollipop Lickers, for all the Players with Hoops and Balls, Save, save, save that woman!

(Shelby gets the door open, squeezes her out through it, and then slams it, leaning against it to hold it firmly shut. Somehow a little man in black has slipped past him, and as he begins to speak Shelby turns around in amazement, wondering how he could possibly have got in.)

LITTLE MAN (pointing his finger at the Inspector and shouting in a wild, burbling outburst of enthusiastic salesmanship): Do you need a thousand swinging picks? Do you need a thousand digging shovels? Do you need the gleaming backs of a thousand sweating men? I have them, I have them. Yes! I have them! My men can bore through a mountain in an hour, two mountains in two hours!

(Shelby temporarily loses his patience, grabs the man and pushes him out through the door. They stand their feet apart, breathing heavily, the little man in the doorway and Shelby barring his way.)

LITTLE MAN: Give the Inspector my card. You have to give him my card!

SHELBY (finally): I shan't. Get out.

(The little man glares fiercely at Shelby. Then he removes an outsize business card from his pocket and presses it against Shelby's chest. Shelby mechanically puts his hand to it. The little man steps backwards, bows, and leaves.)

INSPECTOR: Every one of them has turned against me.

SHELBY (offhandedly): They are only people, Sir.

INSPECTOR (despondent): I don't even know where they got those two from — I've never seen them before in my life.

SHELBY: Just as long as you don't forget that they're only people —

INSPECTOR: Well, I'm not going to let them do it to me. They think if they send every crackpot and his brother to see me they'll be able to break me down — wear me out. But you know, Shelby, I'm not

going to let them do it!

SHELBY: No, Sir.

INSPECTOR (holding up a folded piece of paper): Here, on this piece of paper, written by my own hand, is my answer to them. And when they send those Representatives in to see me, this is what I will read them.

(reading with careful enunciation, as though for a child)

"Here is THE PROBLEM. On a HIGH HILL outside of our town, there is A GRAVEYARD. In this graveyard there is a TOMB. And in this TOMB there is a WIDOW. THIS WIDOW is LOCKED in and THE BOLT is on the INSIDE. The BOLT is on a DOOR OF CONCRETE TWO FEET THICK! Now, and listen very, very carefully, HOW do we get the WIDOW out of THE TOMB without KILLING HER?"

SHELBY: That might do it, Inspector.

INSPECTOR: It will, Shelby, it will.

SHELBY: Would you like to see the first Representative now, Sir?

INSPECTOR: I would like very much, Shelby.

(Shelby goes to the door. He opens it and the roar of the crowd drops to a murmur.)

SHELBY (shouting): Curate Everlast!

(The curate, a timid, hollow looking youth, enters, his hat in his hands.)

CURATE E. (hesitantly): Good afternoon, Your-Your-Your Honor?

INSPECTOR: Inspector.

CURATE E.: Good afternoon, Inspector.

INSPECTOR: Good afternoon, Curate Everlast. How are you finding your new parish — I hope you're not finding us too difficult to fit in with? — Curate, I have prepared this document to help us with our common problem — I would appreciate if you would give it your careful attention.

(He reads from the sheet of paper.)

"Here is The PROBLEM. On a HIGH HILL . . . WITHOUT KILLING HER?"

CURATE E.: Cataclysmic, Inspector, positively cataclysmic —

INSPECTOR (hurt): Well now, I don't know. It isn't literature but I think it calls a spade a spade.

CURATE E.: My world, Inspector, is steeped in a black pall tonight — I have been thrown, an unshorn lamb, into a world of cataclysmic upheaval, a world besmirched by a black pall — a pall of doom.

INSPECTOR: I am sorry to hear that, Curate, however I thought that this little paper which I prepared only a few minutes ago simplified the problem down to a level . . .

(He trails off.)

CURATE E.: I arrived in this hamlet on Tuesday. As yet my sermon pen lies upon my desk, dry, un-inked.

INSPECTOR: No sermons?

CURATE E.: I am afraid not. Since Tuesday last I have been unable to

determine the location of the basic tools of my work — the members of my congregation. Upheaval. I arrived on the afternoon that that poor woman confined herself in the crypt — and found the topsy-turvy world cold to my presence. I am afraid that perhaps an older man —

INSPECTOR: We mustn't say that. You're undoubtedly doing everything which could be expected.

CURATE E.: Since my advent I have been unable to set foot inside even one door. One woman called me a black beetle.

INSPECTOR: There is a very important place in the universe for black beetles, isn't there?

CURATE E.: There will be an older man in this village within the year.

INSPECTOR (desperately): Would you let me try my paper again, Curate? "Here is THE PROBLEM. On a HIGH HILL —

(He is stopped by the Curate's upraised hand.)

CURATE E.: No, Inspector, I am afraid that I can be of little use to you tonight. I shall repair to the solitude of my study. I must steel myself for Sunday. I must gather the strength to hear my own voice echoing back at me off the walls of the church.

INSPECTOR (exhausted): Good night, Curate. And good luck on Sunday.

CURATE E.: Good night, Inspector. Thank you.

(Enter Shelby quietly from right.)

SHELBY: Did it work, Inspector.

INSPECTOR: No, Shelby. I'm beginning to be afraid that no matter how firmly we dump the ball in their laps, they're going to somehow manage to dump it back again.

SHELBY: I don't think it's as bad as it looks — You never know.

(Brightly): How about another Representative now, Sir.

INSPECTOR: Who's next?

SHELBY: Mr. Steers, Sir.

INSPECTOR: Oh yes, old Tony Steers. Send him in.

SHELBY (goes to the door): Mr. Steers!

(There is heavy male applause and a particularly uncouth roar from the crowd. Shouts, e.g.: "Give him hell, Tony," are heard.)

(Enter Mr. Steers, a large bluff man, not conservatively dressed.)

STEERS: My name is Steers, Anthony Steers —

INSPECTOR: Hello, Tony, how is the bowling going?

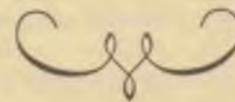
STEERS: Fine, Henry, fine — And I'm here to find out just what's behind this nonsense about that woman in the tomb —

INSPECTOR: That's what I thought, so to aid us both I prepared this simple explanation of the problem. Listen: Here is THE PROBLEM. On a HIGH HILL . . ."

STEERS: No, Henry, no. I didn't come here to listen to any crud. (Chastizing). Henry-y. I want to know three things. I want to know if the constituted authority of this town — that's you, Henry — is conscious of its responsibilities to The People who gave it that

authority and from the fruits of whose labour it's larder is lined —
INSPECTOR: I get twenty-four hundred a year.
STEERS: Secondly, I want to know if you — have a firm grasp on the magnitude of the Problem itself — if you can see the whole Big Picture as it were —
INSPECTOR: It's really quite simple —
STEERS: And thirdly, I want to know exactly what in hell you're going to do about it!
INSPECTOR (hesitantly): Well —
STEERS: Well?
INSPECTOR (clearing his throat): Well I — as the constituted authority — am pretty sure of my responsibilities to the people —
STEERS: Look, Henry, you're a Working Man aren't you?
INSPECTOR: Working Man or no Working Man, I still don't know how to get her out. She's in there of her own volition, and if the silly woman wants to stay there, there is precious little I can do to get her out. She didn't ask my permission to go in, you know.
STEERS: I'm afraid that you still don't see the Big Picture, Henry.
INSPECTOR: I do, I do!
STEERS: That woman is the widow of a Working Man!
INSPECTOR: He was an artist — a painter.
STEERS: That's all right, he painted industrial scenes — we've got 'em hung all over the plant! Look, Henry, this is important, it's Big! This is our chance to prove that we can protect 'em — even after they die! This man's widow has become a symbol — she's Compensations, Mediation, Time and a Half, The Pension Plan — all rolled up into one 115 pound doll.
INSPECTOR (quietly): Yes, Tony. I'll do everything in my power to get her out, symbol or not.
STEERS: You're our True Champion, I know you will. See you, Henry. (Exit Steers.)
INSPECTOR: 'Bye, Tony.
(The Inspector sits still, staring dully in front of him. After a moment a young girl of about 17 enters left. She is pretty, lithe, self assured.)
MISS ANN: Hello, Inspector, mad day isn't it?
INSPECTOR: Yes, mad.
MISS ANN: Have you thought about it at all?
INSPECTOR: Yes.
MISS ANN: Then you will give it to me?
INSPECTOR (out of his brown study): Give it to you? What?
MISS ANN: My license — my driving license. You said that if I'd go away for a month you'd think about it. Well it was a month ago ten o'clock this morning.
INSPECTOR: No. I'm afraid I haven't thought about that much.
MISS ANN: Have you been very busy?
INSPECTOR: Yes, with this widow business.

MISS ANN: Martha Kersch.
INSPECTOR: Is that her name? Martha Kersch. No one told me her name.
MISS ANN: She's my aunt — many times removed, the connection is very vague. When I was young I used to think she was fey — you know, like an adult elf.
INSPECTOR: It must have been a sad revelation.
MISS ANN: But once I was grown up I realized that she wan't really fey — just a little crazy.
INSPECTOR: I think she's a little crazy, too.
MISS ANN: Well, don't worry about. She should come out any minute now.
INSPECTOR: What's that? Any minute now? I understood she was in there for good.
MISS ANN: Oh no, she always comes out.
INSPECTOR: What do you mean, "she always comes out?"
MISS ANN: Her "clausterfilia" wears off — just like a headache. She comes out from under it like a spotted lizard from under a rock.
INSPECTOR: Clauster — what?
MISS ANN: Clausterfilia. That's what my father calls it — it means that she loves closets. She's been hiding away in closets and things as far back as anyone can remember. Why, my father says that at one time or another she's hidden in every closet and trunk in the house. That's clausterfilia. But she always comes out — she gets hungry.
INSPECTOR: Wonderful! Wonderful!
MISS ANN: You look quite happy — I hope I've been helpful to you.
INSPECTOR: You have. You're the first down to earth person I've seen all day. It was very, very — fey? — of you, my dear.
MISS ANN: No. They don't make fey people any more.
INSPECTOR: Well, none the less —
MISS ANN: Do you think you might give me my Driver's License now?
INSPECTOR: That's the very least I could do. Yes. Here, take this. It will do you until I get the forms through.
MISS ANN: Thank you very much, Sir. And don't worry about Aunt Martha. She should have about reached her limit by now. Goodbye, Inspector.
INSPECTOR: Goodbye, Miss.
(Exit Miss Ann. The Inspector talks to himself.)
Fey. I hope that widow feels as hungry right now, as I feel harrassed.



How Green Was My Valet — by *Carl MacCallum*



Mr. MacCallum is equally well known in cultured circles as both a distinguished actor and author. Following the publication of the *Lent Mitre*, in which Mr. MacCallum had considerable space devoted to his writings, he was appointed to the Foreign Trade Service of the Government of Canada. This Spring he will fly to Ottawa to take up his duties as File Clerk.

Carl MacCallum

How Green Was My Valet

being a quote about Christina by Alfred, who himself didn't know much about gender and things.

SYNOPSIS: The main character is Mrs. Christina Kirby. She is seventy-four. She has money left to her by her late husband, Alfred Kirby, one-time manufacturer of brass door knobs who had the clutch of a giant bald eagle and held on to the first sou he ever made. Christina also has a 39-year-old son, Woodrow, who loves his mother largely because of her eight-page Will in a safety deposit box at the bank. The old lady lives with her son, his wife Patricia and their 10-year-old son, in a comfortable home in an average district of a large city.

Christina knows that her keepers dislike her and so she considers herself very much neglected and constantly draws correlations between herself and St. Joan at the stake. Little does she know that Woodrow & Co. have decided to give nanny the heave-ho. After a few stirring orations, Christina is persuaded to move to a home for the aged where the room temperature and average age is seldom below eighty and I.Q.'s frequently not above.

The new inmate feels she is trapped as in a cave full of bats but little by little she becomes used to the people there and grows increasingly tolerant of their little idiosyncrasies of which there is an abundant wealth. As time hobbles on, Christina develops strong bonds of affection for her companions, who take her for what she is worth and make her feel welcome. She wants to do something for these chummy, beetle-brained, disease vessels, but how?

It then dawns on Christina that all the profit from all the brass door knobs in the whole wide world won't be any good to her when she dies. Woodrow has enough money, anyway. Cheques begin appearing at the bank with her palsied signature for lush sums. Never has the rest home seen the like. Every day is like Christmas. Old bodies are wrapped in fifty dollar silk pyjamas and wrinkled pates with fourteen hairs haltingly brushed with gold plated military brushes. Personal TV sets are everywhere blaring their many programs into withered eardrums in a wild cadenza of septuagenarian syncopation. "Ask and it shall be given unto you, seek and ye shall find." It's like \$64,000 Question, only everybody wins. Woodrow gets wind of the situation and after a hastily contrived bi-lateral agreement with Patricia, goes to fetch mama home again before she makes herself and her heirs destitute. Christina won't budge.

SCENE: Christina's arrival at the Pearly Rest Home, ACT II

(Fade in as Christina, Woodrow, Patsy and Winston approach the front door.)

WOODROW: Isn't this a charming place, Patricia? So tranquil, why it's just . . .

(As he searches for the correct phrase, a high-pitched insane

(giggle is heard faintly.)

CHRISTINA: We must never judge a book by its cover, dear. Oh, Woodrow, look — the beautiful dahlias, do pick one for me.

PATRICIA: Woodrow, do you think you ought to? We'll bring you some, mother. The management mightn't like our picking their zinnias —

CHRISTINA: Dahlias, dear.

PATRICIA: Dahlias, then. We'll get you some at the market tomorrow — Woodrow!

(Woodrow goes ahead undaunted, trying to humor mama by one last act of kindness that won't cost him anything anyway.

As he reaches for the steam a rustle in the bushes beside the flowerbed causes him to look up. Tiger, tiger burning bright — it's Luke the handyman with gimlet eyes and lips like two filleted anchovies. Woodrow springs back.)

WOODROW: Oh — sorry, I was just . . . ha, ha! Lovely flowers you have here. You grow them?"

(Luke feels that his little darlings are safe and he submerges Grendel-like behind the bushes, not answering.)

PATRICIA: I knew that would happen, Woodrow. Let's go in. Christina, you must be tired.

CHRISTINA: Oh no, dear, but I am disappointed that Woodrow didn't get me a pretty flower. Perhaps if I ask the gentleman he might part with one.

(She raises her head to call.)

PATRICIA: Christina, please, I said we'll bring some. Winston, come and say good-bye to grandma now dear; she's going in and you'll have to stay here."

(Winston approaches unwillingly.)

CHRISTINA: Here's a nickel, dear. It belonged to your grandfather but I'm sure he wouldn't mind. Why don't you buy an ice cream cone to give strength to your little muscles so you'll grow up to be a big man, just like Grandfather Kirby.

WINSTON: Who says I want to grow up like —

PATRICIA: Winston! Kiss grandmother and go back to the car. There. Don't cry dear, you can come and visit grandma often.

(Winston looks bored, obeys.)

CHRISTINA: We mustn't stand here all day, children. Come along. (Camera follows in, Woodrow pushes bell.)

WOODROW: Mother, if this isn't just the best service available, let me know. If the slightest thing annoys you, just call home. You're entitled to first-class service, after all it is costing three hundred dollars per month.

CHRISTINA: Now, Woodrow, I saw the brochures clear and it's only two hundred dollars per month. You'll have to keep track of things more carefully if you are going to handle the funds. Your father would not have approved of bookkeeping that would allow money to get sidetracked.

WOODROW: I meant two hundred, mother, of course.

(He mouths the word "Damn" to Patricia behind Christina's back. The big, white door snaps open and Etta Peabody, the head nurse and keeper, towers there in a big, white uniform. There is a lull.)

ETTA: Well?

WOODROW: Ahh . . . We've come to bring Mrs. Kirby. We're supposed to report today.

ETTA: That's right. I'm Etta Peabody. We've been waiting for you. (Etta turns and goes in, others follow.)

Wondering how long you'd fiddle around outside before coming in. Incidentally we don't like to have our flowers picked. They are there so everybody can enjoy the beauty of nature. I don't see how anybody can enjoy the beauty of nature if you're going to go around picking at it. We were watching you, you know, through the office window. We keep tabs on everyone and everything here, even the flowers, because they are for the good of the whole and in the Pearly Home no one person or object is privileged, everything is treated with an equal amount of love and affection so that no one will feel left out of our little community which, I think, is a happy one — at least it should be — we all work hard enough at making it so. Which of you is Mrs. Kirby?

(By this time they are in front of the desk and Etta is behind it.)

CHRISTINA and PATRICIA (together): I am.

ETTA: Let's make up our minds, shall we? According to our records, we have agreed to take under our protective wing one Mrs. Alfred Kirby. I assume one of you is that person. If so, which is it, please?

CHRISTINA: I am, and I don't think I like your manner, young lady.

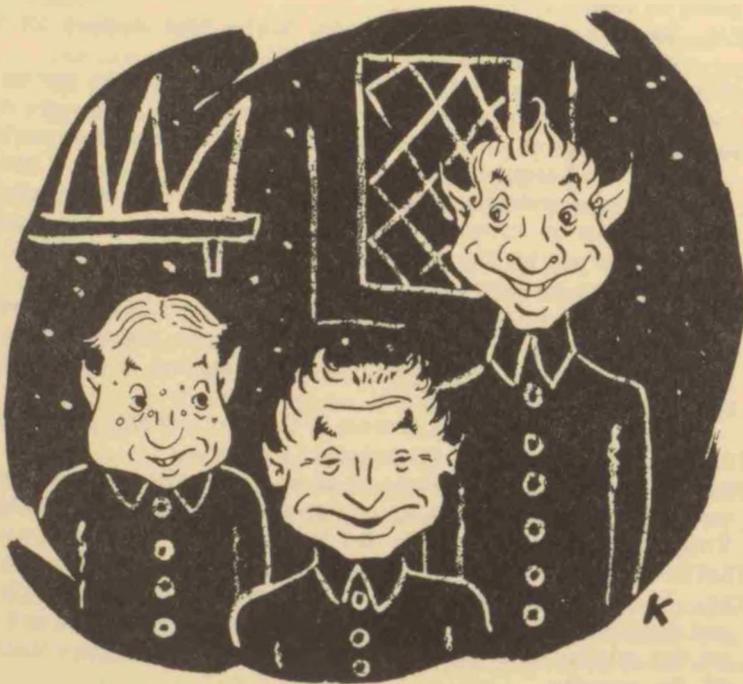
ETTA: If you've a complaint to register, madam, fill out this 207 SC and drop it in the mailbox on that door. You might just as well wait till this evening to do it though because it won't get to the authorities till the morning.

CHRISTINA: Yes, thank you, I shall register my displeasure. In years gone by a domestic wouldn't have lasted a day using such an impudent tone. Just who are these authorities who will receive my note?

ETTA: I am and I will. In the meantime we'll need some information for our files.

The Three Elves

— by Dolce Narizzano



This represents Miss Narizzano's first venture into the creative world. Her simple and charming style so enchanted the editor, that he insisted on the presentation of the following section.

Carl MacCallum

"The Three Elves"

SYNOPSIS: Once upon a time there was a man who had lost his wife and a woman who had lost her husband; the man had a very pretty daughter called Rose and the woman had a not-so-pretty daughter called Maud. They decided to get married to give their girls a proper home. At first the former widow tricked her new husband by being nice to his daughter, but as time passed, she and her daughter grew increasingly jealous of Rose. Finally, hating her from the bottom of their hearts, they stopped all attempts at liking Rose and began to make her life miserable by giving her all the housework to do. This scene opens shortly after Rose has been ordered into the forest to look for strawberries. She is clothed only in a thin paper dress and it is very cold.

ACT TWO

Scene 1: It is afternoon of a winter day in the forest. The left side of the stage is in total darkness. The right side is covered with pine and other trees. There is snow on the ground, the sun is shining and the wind is blowing fiercely. The stage is empty. After a few seconds three or four forest animals rush on and perform a little dance. Just as they are finishing Rose comes along a path, sees the animals dancing and tries to catch them, but they run off through the trees.

ROSE: Oh dear, I didn't mean to frighten them. (Looks around for them) Come back. I want to know where I am. I'm lost. (pause) It's no use. (shrugs her shoulders) I'm too tired to go any further. I think I'll just sit down here against this tree and sleep for a few minutes. The wind is so cold (starts to cry) . . . maybe if I eat some of my lunch . . . oh, what's the use, I know I won't find any strawberries and I can't go home until I do. (Cries some more).

(Her Fairy Godmother suddenly appears, but Rose doesn't notice her at first.)

ROSE: (looking up) Oh! Fairy Godmother! How did you ever find me here?

FAIRY GODMOTHER: My poor child. There, don't cry anymore. I've come to help you.

ROSE: No. You must go away. It's too cold for you to be here with only a thin dress on. Look how hard the wind is blowing. You mustn't catch cold because of me.

FAIRY GODMOTHER: The wind never bothers me. All I ever feel is a gentle breeze whether it's winter or summer. But you're the one that is shivering from the cold. (gently reproving voice) I see I got here just in time. Did you know the danger you were in? Why if you had gone to sleep under this tree you would have frozen to death in the snow. You mustn't give up yet. That's not like you, Rose.

ROSE: What shall I do, Fairy Godmother? I'm too tired and cold to care, and I don't know where I am.

FAIRY GODMOTHER: First, I will wave my wand over your head — like this — so that you become warm again.

ROSE: Oh, thank you. How good it is to feel warm. Now I'll be able to look for the strawberries. Can you tell me where I can find some, Fairy Godmother?

FAIRY GODMOTHER: Listen to me. I can't do anything more for you although I wish I could help you find the strawberries, but if you keep walking through the forest you will soon find help. (disappears.)

ROSE: How far do I have to go, Fairy Godmother? Fairy Godmother (looking around) . . . where are you? Don't go yet. I wish you would stay longer. You didn't even . . . (resigned) Well here I am alone again . . . I wonder what she meant by finding help. Now that I'm warm it will be easy to go on. Here's a path . . . maybe I should follow it.

(Slowly the left side of the stage brightens up to reveal the front of a charming little log cottage where the three elves live. The interior runs parallel to the footlights. It is a one room house — living room, bedroom, dining room and kitchen all together. The front wall of the house is vertical to the footlights. In the centre of the back wall, facing the audience, is a fireplace now burning, with two windows on either side, and a bench in front. Beneath the left window are three small cots, in front of them a table and chairs. Three heads are poking out a window to the left of the front door, but they pull in just before Rose sees them. They are three elves, Healthy, Wealthy and Wise, dressed in solid colored costumes of red, green and blue.)

ROSE: (spying the house) What a beautiful little house. I wonder who lives here. How I would love to rest inside for a little while (pauses) but I don't know if I should go in. (she shivers) O, I'm suddenly cold again. The spell must have worn off or . . . maybe this is where my Fairy Godmother meant I'd find help. (She knocks on the door) Hello . . . hello . . . is anyone home?

VOICES: Come in. Come in. Come in.

ROSE: (Opens door) Hello. I'm cold and hungry and I was wondering if I could rest by your fire for a few minutes.

HEALTHY: Yes. Yes. But close the door or we'll all have to get warm.

ROSE: Oh — I'm sorry, I forgot. (Closes door, looks about nervously and goes to fireplace.)

WEALTHY: Well, Well. Sit down. Sit down. Let's have a look at you.

WISE: My. My. What a pretty little girl. What's your name?

ROSE: Rose, and I —

HEALTHY: Let her get warm first before you start asking questions. The poor little girl is all tired out. (Rose sits by the fire) Can't you see how cold she is? Quickly, Wise, get the blanket off my bed to wrap around her.

ROSE: Thank you, but I feel much better now. You're very kind to let me come in. I don't want to disturb you if you're busy.

HEALTHY: Nonsense, we seldom have visitors . . . and never anyone

as charming as you.

WISE: Here, put this around you (hands her blanket). Now you must tell us your story.

ROSE: My story?

HEALTHY: Yes. How did you get here? How did you find our house?

ROSE: My stepmother sent me out this morning to find some strawberries because my stepsister wanted a strawberry pie for her supper. I guess I walked too far into the forest because I got lost and cold and was sitting down in the snow when my Fairy Godmother appeared . . .

WISE: You have a Fairy Godmother?

ROSE: Yes.

HEALTHY & WEALTHY: (impressed) Oh!

WISE: Hush — let her go on.

ROSE: Well, then she told me not to give up, and said if I walked through the forest I'd soon find help.

WISE: Did you?

ROSE: Well, not yet — Your house was the first thing I saw, so I knocked on the door.

WEALTHY: We're glad you did.

ROSE: You're being very kind to me — and I don't even know who you are.

WISE: Why we're the three elves. (Points) These are my brothers Healthy and Wealthy (they bow) and I'm Wise (bows.)

ROSE: O, how cute you are. Are you going to help me?

HEALTHY: Maybe we can.

ELVES: Yes, let's try.

ROSE: Oh, how wonderful if you could. I can't go home until I've filled my basket with strawberries.

WISE: Give us some time to think about what we can do (Paces the room.)

ROSE: I'll sit here and eat my lunch. Would you like to share my bread with me? It's very good.

HEALTHY: (Surprised) Is that all you have? Your stepmother must be very cruel to send you out in this snow looking for strawberries and then only giving you a crust of bread to eat.

ROSE: Well, we're very poor, and can't afford many good things.

WISE: You can't be that poor if your stepsister can have a strawberry pie for her supper. (Wealthy begins to play a tune on his harmonica. Rose starts tapping her feet to the music.)

ROSE: You play so beautifully. I just love to dance. When my stepmother and stepsister go out and leave me all alone I dance around and around and pretend I'm dancing at a ball. Would you like me to dance for you?

ELVES: Oh, please do.

HEALTHY: Yes. We've never seen anyone dance before.

WEALTHY: Can you teach us too?

WISE: (To Wealthy) No. You have to play the music. (Wealthy plays and Rose dances. Healthy and Wealthy clap their hands, then they dance with her. Wealthy stops playing and joins in.)

ROSE: That was much more fun than dancing by myself.
(Wealthy and Wise sprawl on the bench puffing away.)

ROSE: Oh, what's the matter with them? Are they sick? (Rushes over to them.)

HEALTHY: No — they're just tired out. I keep telling them to get more exercise because they never have any energy. Look how fat Wealthy is. (Punches him in the stomach.)

WEALTHY: Hey, that tickles.
(They all laugh happily.)

ROSE: I wish I could stay here forever. I'm having such a good time.

WEALTHY: (Jumps up and down) Yes, why can't she stay. Let her live with us.

HEALTHY: (Excited) Stay with us.

WISE: Now. Now. You know better than that, Wealthy. Rose wouldn't really be happy living here with us. What would she do all day? And who would she see? You know I'd like her to stay too, but her place is with her family. What about your father, wouldn't he miss you?

ROSE: I guess it would be terrible for him if I never went home. He loves me.

HEALTHY: We love you too.

WISE: Maybe your stepmother does mistreat you, but if you go home and remain obedient some day your fortune will change. (To Healthy and Wealthy) Some day a handsome young man will fall in love with Rose and want to marry her. If she stayed here she'd never have an opportunity to meet someone who will be good to her.

WEALTHY: (resignedly) It would be selfish of us to want to keep her here.

ROSE: I guess you're both right. Oh, but how can I go home now. It's so dark out and I haven't even looked for any strawberries.

HEALTHY: There, you see, Wise. Her stepmother will beat her.

WEALTHY: And we don't want that to happen.

WISE: Everything will be alright. You trust me, Rose.

ROSE: Have you thought of a way to help me?

WISE: Not yet. We have to put on our thinking hats and talk about it.
(Healthy goes to the shelf under the left back window and takes down three tall hats) I'm afraid you can't be in the room with us, Rose.

ROSE: I'll wait outside.

WISE: (Gets a broom from beside the door) Here, take this broom and sweep off the front walk.
(The elves look at each other significantly while Rose goes outside. Outside Rose begins sweeping. As she does she discovers that there are strawberries under the snow. She gives an excited "Oh" and proceeds to sweep the snow and put the berries in her basket.)

(The elves watch her out the window. Then they cheer joyfully, "She's found the strawberries." They join hands and dance around the room. Then Wise breaks up the dance.)

WISE: Stop. Stop. Listen to me.

WEALTHY & HEALTHY: What is it?

WISE: Let's reward Rose for being so sweet and good. We can all make a wish.

HEALTHY: I wish that she'll grow prettier every day.

WEALTHY: I wish that when she gets home her basket of strawberries will fill with gold.

HEALTHY & WEALTHY: It's your turn, Wise.

WISE: I wish that she will marry a Prince.
(HEALTHY & WEALTHY clap hands)

WISE: (Looking out the window) Hush — she's coming.
(Rose enters)

ROSE: (holding out her basket filled with strawberries) I'm so excited I don't even know the proper way to thank you. How could you — ?

WISE: Now, don't ask any questions.
(They find it hard to act innocent as their smiles give them away)

HEALTHY: You must rush home, Rose — it's getting dark.
(Rose kisses them goodbye)

WISE: (stops) Wait a minute. She can't go out like that still in her paper dress or she'll freeze.

WEALTHY: What'll we do —

HEALTHY: None of our clothes fit her.
(Suddenly her Fairy Godmother is standing in the doorway.)

ROSE: (Surprised, runs to her and holds her hand. The elves back away in awe) Fairy Godmother. You were right. I did find help. See. Here are the strawberries in my basket. (Fairy Godmother smiles) And these are my friends — Healthy, Wealthy and Wise.
(they bow)

FAIRY GODMOTHER: Hello. Don't be frightened. I'm your friend too. And I think I have what you're looking for. (She hands Rose a coat) I went back and got it after I left you in the forest.

ROSE: Isn't it beautiful! Oh, Fairy Godmother, you're so good to me.
(The elves crowd around Rose, helping her put it on. They don't notice that the Fairy Godmother has disappeared.)

HEALTHY: (Looking up) She's gone.

WEALTHY: She came and went so fast I hardly believe she was really here.

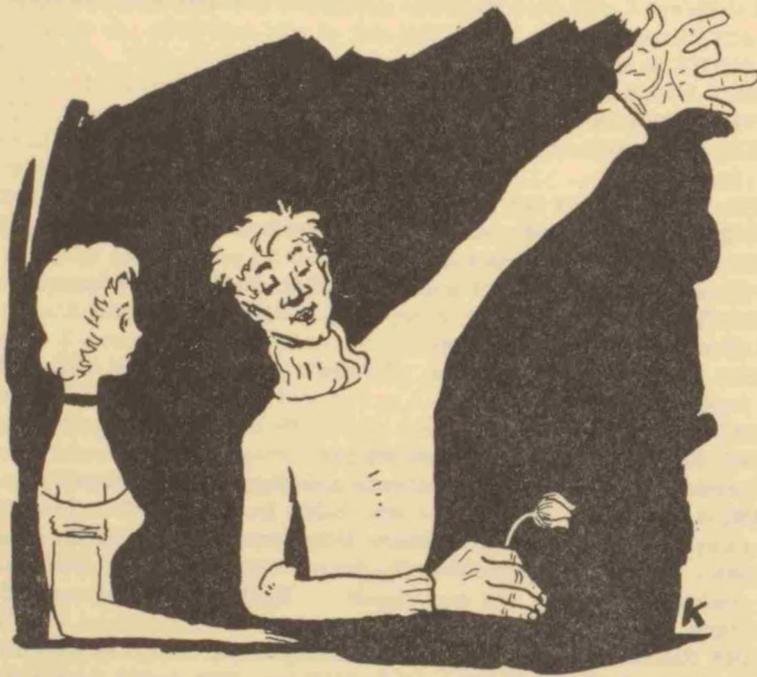
ROSE: Oh, she was. Only she never stays long after she's helped me. I'm beginning to get quite used to her disappearing. And I must leave too, dear elves. Can I visit you again?

WISE: We won't let you go until you promise to come back.
(Rose kisses them again.)

ELVES: Goodbye, Rose.
(Healthy takes out his handkerchief and wipes tears from his eyes, then embarrassed he waves goodbye. The lights dim.)

Ole Cheese

— by John MacNaughton



It was with the publication of a series of his letters that Mr. MacNaughton began his career as a writer. *The Mitre* noticed and encouraged this talent and printed several of his early works in our 1955 issues. During the past year he has been dividing his time between reading English papers at Bishop's University, studying in preparation for his doctorate in medicine, and writing. The following excerpt from his new play represents the manifestation of this latter activity.

John MacNaughton

Ole Cheese

(An Adaptation from the Play)

SCENE: The main bar of a European coastal resort hotel. The bar is of a verandah type nature, one side of the entire length of which is open to the weather, which presently consists of pouring rain. From the band at the far end of the room can be heard the mad mad strains of: "Auf Abfall Lohnzahlung." At a table in a corner, in strange opposition to the melee of gay drunken guests who lurch merrily to and fro in the background, we see a party of three having breakfast. This party consists entirely of women. At left is Guiltgretchen Vierwaldstatter, an exotic girl of about thirty years. She is expensively but tastefully dressed, and as will presently be seen, has a marked Danish accent. On the right is another young woman, very dark and breathtakingly exotic. She has pale coral eyes and is dressed in clothes that speak of gypsies and the Paprika fields of Transylvania. In the center is a large old looking woman who, as presently will be seen, is addressed as "Moms". Inconveniently, she is facing rear; thus her face cannot be seen. Breakfast has actually not yet arrived, and the exotic looking girl with the coral eyes is leaning towards the others, whispering hurriedly. As if aware that the audience is eavesdropping, she glances nervously around at it, whispers a few more words, and slinks off in an exit. The woman called Moms shifts to the newly vacated side chair, apparently to get a better view of the rest of the room. She is seen to be full and pleasant of face and quite fat. A waiter hurries over to the table, bearing breakfast. Guiltgretchen's breakfast consists of a poached egg and a very very dry martini. Moms has two quarts of beer and a fish.

MOMS (Takes a large bite of fish, then washes it down with a long draught of ale. Slams her glass back on the table with a sharp crack. Relaxes. Addresses her companion. Comfortably.) Well kid, how the hell are you this morning? (Sees that she is poorly and becomes more compassionate. Kindly). Don't worry child. That woman can't touch you. I can see right through her.

GUILTGRETCHEN (Though retaining her decorum, she is slowly turning green, and does not seem in the least reassured by Moms.) You don't know Ingold at all. You don't know her reputation. (Despondently, slowly). You don't know her powers . . . And it's you, not I, I worry for.

MOMS (Becoming concerned and a bit worried). But dear, she can't do anything. There's law here . . . besides, why me? Surely you must be mistaken.

GUILTGRETCHEN (Bitterly). Yes, there's a law . . . and she has it. You remember what happened to Nikki . . .

MOMS. Yes, but that has nothing to do with this.

GUILTGRETCHEN (Wan). Think a little harder. You remember Feodor? The old man?

MOMS. But he was . . . (Suddenly beginning to understand. Fear in her voice). But he couldn't have been . . . (Choking). I mean he didn't . . . (Beginning to shake violently).

GUILTGRETCHEN (Picks up her martini glass — there is no colour to her face at all now, but she is in perfect control. Quietly). He was . . . he did. (Takes a sip, puts her glass down.)

MOMS. You mean all the time I thought . . . you mean you let me think . . . (Grips the table, her eyes wide with fright).

GUILTGRETCHEN (Takes Moms' hand in both of hers. Kindly). We knew it would come sometime, dear. We thought it would make you miserable to know before you had to.

MOMS (Is slid back in a position of flop in her chair and shaking and heaving with violent sobs. Regains a bit of control.) But not you? You wouldn't . . . (A gleam of hope in her eye).

GUILTGRETCHEN (Steely). I'm sorry, Moms. Blood is thicker than water. It's the only way.

MOMS (Sobbing, runs to the door, her tear streaked face hidden in her hands. Not being able to see, she thus does not notice that the door is shut, collides with it, collapses in a heap below it, and makes moan. Suddenly, inexplicably, she explodes, and is never either heard from or referred to again. Guiltgretchen eyes her poached egg for a few moments, and then, primly, she eats it, thinking. By the end of the dish she seems to have forgotten her worries, at least for the present. She relaxes, sipping her second martini with remarkable composure.) Enter Rogo, a sage bum. He is, shocking to say, rather drunk. (However, in the interests of giving a clear account of the situation, no detail can be left unrecounted.) As if they themselves were sober, the company regard him in stony silence. Oblivious, he looks around happily for a table. Spying Guiltgretchen sitting alone, he lurches over and sits down.

ROGO (Looking at Guiltgretchen. Loudly). And who, pray, are you, charming child? What do you call yourself, girl?

GUILTGRETCHEN (Aside. Muttering). Who is this animal?

ROGO (Answering). That, little flower, is not important. (All passion). But what is important, little sunbeam: what is your name? Ye gods, little duckling, but you're a beauty. You remind me of a child I knew as a boy. (Reminiscing). Heidi, Heidi . . . She was a child of the mountain slopes and the meadows thereon. Many was the morning, at the break of dawn, when we would run barefoot, hand in hand, up the rocky slopes to our daily task of milking the goats, she with her simple taffeta print dress on and I with my coarse leather lederhosen slapping at my knees. Tirelessly we would run, laughing with the pure joy of living . . . my simple lunch of course cheese stashed in my sock . . . Ah, Heidi, where are you now? What did Kipling say . . . "I've a sweeter neater maiden in a cleaner greener land." . . Heidi. She was a child of the mists and the mountains, the sun and the sky. I remember once . . . we were only children, they told us we were too young . . . but yet one day, a few days before my father sent me off to the Gymnasium at

Zurich, . . . we were standing, hand in hand, barefoot, together on the Jungfrau, and she looked up into my eyes and smiled, and told me that she loved me. I looked around then and smiled at the world, at the sun and the sky and the ice and the snow, and the dwarfed, thatched simple peasant cottages far in the valley below that I had come to look upon as home, the only home I knew. I knew then that this was the only girl I could never love, this product of the sun and sky, this dimpled sweet-heart of the alpine mists. I remember I was holding my lunch then and in the joy of the moment it slipped from my hand and fell clattering from rocky promontory to rocky promontory, down to the valley falling away far beneath us. But we sat there and she shared her simple fare with me and my happiness was complete. We sat there in each other's arms for a long, long time that day, until the sun was dropping behind the western peaks. We promised each other that when I returned in four years from the Gymnasium we would be married, and settle down in a simple thatched peasant cottage, to live and breed as simple peasants such as us are wont to do. Such were our hopes and such were our dreams . . . perhaps we were not reaching high, but to us it was the clouds . . . (soberly, sadly . . . regarding the table) . . . Funny isn't it, the cruelty of fate . . . the way the modest dreams of simple kindly souls like me are cut to ribbons by a merciless providence. (Quoting).

The Ball no question makes of Ayes and Noes,
But Here or There as strikes the Player goes;
And He that toss'd you down into the Field,
He knows about it all—he knows—HE knows!

(He is silent . . . he runs his fingers through the pool of tears that have fallen from his eyes).

GUILTGRETCHEN (Engrossed, concerned, sympathetic). What happened? . . . what happened then? In the background the band is starting to render the sad sweet strains of Liebestraum, a dream of love.)

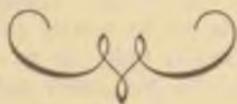
ROGO. I went off to the gymnasium as had been arranged . . . I had planned to major in sheep shearing. We wrote to each other, Heidi and I . . . we wrote (shyly) . . . avidly. I came home at Christmas. Our parents were all for us . . . getting married I mean. I had worked while at the gymnasium after classes as a schundmann to save up money to buy Heidi a Christmas present. I bought her a pair of red slippers . . . she had never had shoes of any kind before. We were sitting by the Yule fire together, in each other's arms when I gave them to her . . . It was Christmas eve and our families were having a big party together as was a tradition with our families at Christmas. Tonight was extra gay however, as we were also celebrating our betrothal. All was joy as we sat there that night, the wind howling outside but us cosy round the hearth in that sturdy alpine hut, toasting each other and singing the old songs to the strains of mother's zither. We were drinking Heidi's mother's wonderful preserved wine — I can still picture her plump happy hands, stained with the juice of the berry as she worked preserving the stuff of a summer's day when I was a small boy. I used to stand there bare-

foot, in my coarse leather lederhosen, my flaxen hair tousled over my eyes, and look up at her and laugh for the pure joy of the thing. And she would look down at me and laugh too, and then we'd both laugh and she'd reach into her smock and pull out a hot cross bun and break a bit off and laugh and give it to me, and I'd laugh and eat it and laugh and laugh and laugh. And then her father might stride in from the slopes, his rough leather lederhosen slapping at his knotty, muscled knees. I was like a son to him. He would look at us and laugh, and say we were both crazy, and slap me over the shoulders, the clean sweat of his honest hands staining my rough wool jerkin. And then we'd all laugh for joy, and then Heidi's mother, the woman whom I later thought was to be my schweigmutter, would open her coarse honest mouth and say that this called for a celebration, and she would break open a few jars of the wine that had been allowed to ferment a while, and the three of us would grin at each other and drink it and laugh for the honest joy of the thing. And if Heidi was around I would grab a pail in my small hands and run and milk a ewe so Heidi could join in the party, for Heidi was very religious and never drank alcoholic beverages. Oh, life was everything then, life was all it was set up to be and even more. It was full and complete, and wonderful, and like a poetry book full of poems. It was coarse and frank and spoke of rocky slopes and the majesty of the skies and the hills and the happy honest folk that dwelt thereon. It was like a sunny day, with the wind smelling of pine and of sheep dung, and the air full of the jingling of goats' bells and happy shouts of honest alpine joy. It was like a great shaggy sheep dog, filled with the goodness of honest days and wholesome night, or a docile kindly cow, smiling harmoniously at her world through friendly understanding eyes. It was like Heidi — a sunny happy child. Heidi never needed intoxicants as I do now in order to live life to its fullest.

GULTGRETCHEN. But what happened — what became of the happy state you thought was to be? . . . the honest peasant cottage . . . the happy days of honest work and wholesome joy?

ROGO (Sullenly.) I forget. (At this point the whole set explodes, sending fumes and debris into the confused and panicking audience.)

THE CURTAIN FALLS



In Vino

— by Nancy Pond



The Mitre is pleased to announce that the following section from "In Vino..." is the first work which Miss Pond has had published. It is only recently that she began to pursue the field of creative writing seriously. The editors feel that Miss Pond's work shows a great deal of promise and are looking forward to receiving any of her future works.

In Vino

Curtains open, revealing a living room in which there has recently been a party. Louise, a young woman in her mid-twenties, is talking to her fiancé, Roger, who is presently rather drunk. At the party he has embarrassed her in front of a sophisticated, New York cousin, Bernice, and alarmed her by veiled hints about losing his job.

LOUISE: It's nice to have a little quiet again. Smokey in here. Would you open a window, please? (Roger does not move. Louise, after waiting a minute, does it herself.) I'm a bit hungry, aren't you? . . . I think I'll make sandwiches and coffee . . . Watch out! (Roger has crossed his legs viciously, nearly tipping a glass - and ashtray - littered coffee table.) Sorry I shouted, dear, but that would have made an awful mess. What kind of sandwiches would you like?

ROGER: You think I'm drunk, don't you?

LOUISE: Well, I don't know. How . . .

ROGER: I know. You think I'm plastered. Well, you're right! So what?

LOUISE: Let's talk about it after I've made some coffee.

ROGER: Why the great passion for coffee?

LOUISE: Suddenly the only thing in the world I want is a cup of hot, black coffee.

ROGER: Funny, that's the last thing in the world I want.

LOUISE: But the way I make it . . .

ROGER: (Interrupting) Yes, well, it's still the last thing in the world I want.

LOUISE: Oh, Roger, stop acting so childishly.

ROGER: Sure, sure, I'm childish. If we stayed behind to drink coffee, bring it on, and let's join the others. Then maybe I can have an intelligent conversation for a change — with Bernice. At least I'm a man with her and not a child.

LOUISE: Any boy over 16 is a "man" in her opinion.

ROGER: Nice way to be talking about your cousin after this week. Don't think I didn't understand all your subtle hints about being nice to dear Bernice. If you'd had any respect for me you'd have come right out and said, "Don't drink this weekend."

LOUISE: So now we've reached the wounded hero stage. Last time I said that to you, you tied one on that lasted the whole weekend. And told everyone how little Lou was wielding a fist of iron even before she was married.

ROGER: (Grinning in a satisfied manner) I remember that weekend — parts of it, anyway. Everyone said I was a killer.

LOUISE: What did you expect them to say? You're a bore, go away?

ROGER: (Not listening to her) That's your trouble, Louise. You're afraid of life. Don't try to deprive the world of laughter. If it makes people happy to laugh, make yourself a figure of amusement.

LOUISE: Fine, but let me do it for myself. For heaven's sake, Roger,

don't you see that when you act that way, people aren't laughing with you, they're laughing to humour a drunk?

ROGER: How can *you* be the judge? You have no sense of humour, and that, my dear, is one very important factor in a successful marriage. Take today, for instance. You'll probably weep and moan and think it a great tragedy that I've lost my job. But I think it's funny as hell that I got up and told that miserable idiot what everyone thinks of him as an editor.

LOUISE: What everything thinks of him? All your friends think he's a wonderful person and a very capable editor.

ROGER: Those fools. What do they know about anything? Think they'll ever get anywhere? Not a chance. Content. That's the trouble with most people. No ambition. No vision. No realisation of what the world could be. All their todays are so mediocre that tomorrow can't possibly be different. That's not for me.

LOUISE: What happened, Roger?

ROGER: What happened when?

LOUISE: This afternoon, dear.

ROGER: What do you mean what happened?

LOUISE: Did you or did you not lose your job?

ROGER: Lose my job? I made the first step toward my future. And it'll be no grey, drab, little life. You might say I ended my job and started a new life.

LOUISE: What on earth do you mean?

ROGER: Writing. Why, I can make a fortune and fame at it. What makes the great writers of today? The realisation that they had to start sometime. Page One has to be written and so today I've started Page One of a new life. Say, how does that sound to you? Might use it for my autobiography some day.

LOUISE: Please tell me what you said to Mr. Brown.

ROGER: Oh, him. You see, I was supposed to write something about a boy and a dog — the usual tripe old Brown goes in for — I was busy and didn't get it done.

LOUISE: Why didn't you explain to him that you were busy? . . . Roger! Had you been drinking when you went to see him?

ROGER: I said, Mr. Brown, I'm sorry I didn't write your touching little story. However, I was constructively occupied. I was making a draft of the plot of my first novel, something which, I'm sure you'll agree, takes precedence over a column for a newspaper such as this.

LOUISE: You fool. You had been drinking.

ROGER: Anyway, he said, A newspaper such as what? I'd been trying to be tactful, but since he took me up on it, I told him what I thought of his third rate paper. He then told me I was drunk and to come back tomorrow and we'd discuss it rationally.

LOUISE: Oh, thank goodness. If you apologize, everything will be all right.

ROGER: Apologize for what? For being honest? For having the cour-

age to stand up for my ideals? For deciding to live my life the way I feel I have to?

LOUISE: Be reasonable, dear. Mr. Brown has a right to expect you to do the columns you're responsible for.

ROGER: I cleaned out my desk, collected my cheque and left — for good.

LOUISE: But what about our plans? How can we get married next month if you're not working?

ROGER: Surely you can wait six months.

LOUISE: Did you have that planned too without consulting me?

ROGER: My darling, I expect to make the plans now and always.

LOUISE: You're a great maker of plans, but when it comes to doing anything about them!

ROGER: Just what plans haven't I gone through with ?

LOUISE: Oh, Roger, the short stories you were going to write for the *New Yorker* — that was after you resigned from the magazine — and . . .

ROGER: Man's little helpmate, aren't you? Bernice would have the sense not to throw a man's failures at him when he was trying again. You'll never get married if you keep this up, Lou.

LOUISE: I thought I **was** getting married, and to you, just in case alcohol temporarily fogged your memory.

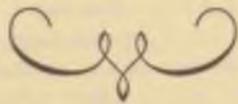
ROGER: You'd ruin any creative talent I possess. You're too cold and matter of fact. You'd be much happier with some one else.

LOUISE: You and your drunken dreams of grandeur. Can't you see what is going to happen if you don't realize soon that drinking won't help you become what you want to be? You're ruining your career yourself. I've had nothing to do with it.

ROGER: (Rising and going to the door) I'm going to leave, Louise, my dear, before you become maudlin and mawkish. The least I can do for you now is preserve your dignity.

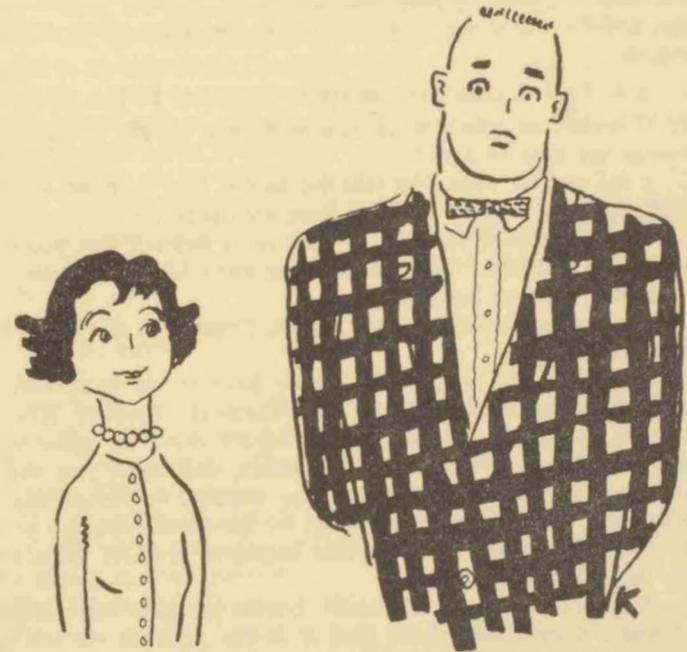
LOUISE: Maudlin and mawkish? I wonder that you can say such things to me.

ROGER: (Staggers slightly, but rights himself and standing very straight goes out the door) I hope you are happy some day, Louise, but the change will have to come about in your philosophy of life.



Susan

— by Lynne Ritchie



Miss Ritchie began her literary career as a features writer on *The Bishop's Campus*. She retired from this duty in November of last year in order to devote more time to the purely literary side of writing. Her background includes a brilliant adolescent period of creativeness in which she wrote "soul searching" poems for her high school annual. Following the completion of the play featured in part of this issue, Miss Ritchie plans to return to the business world, probably in the capacity of "an advertising agency copy writer."

Susan

SYNOPSIS: Susan Gilbert, an imaginative adolescent, fancies herself hopelessly in love with her older sister's boyfriend, Peter. In the meantime, the sister, Peggy, worried about Susan's inferiority complex, has persuaded Peter to compliment the child and boost her morale. Peter has tried with somewhat unexpected results. It is after supper on the same day, and Peter and Peggy are sitting in the living room discussing the situation.

PETER: But, Peg! I didn't say anything insulting to her.

PEGGY: It wasn't so much what you said; you simply chose a most inappropriate time to say it.

PETER: I did exactly what you told me to do. The moment she came through the door I said, "My, you look nice today."

PEGGY: Well, obviously, the tone of your voice implied that you meant precisely the opposite. She thought you were being sarcastic about the dreadful state of her clothes.

PETER: I told you it wouldn't work. Look, Peggy, I'm not going to go on with this.

PEGGY: Of course you are. You'll simply have to try a different approach. (She frowns thoughtfully for a moment) I know! When the kids finish the dishes, and come in here, I'll think up some way to remove David and myself from the picture, and leave you and Sue alone. Then you can apologize for your conduct this afternoon, and keep on with the original plan. Only, for goodness sake, try to be a little more subtle about it. (As Peter begins to protest) Now, Peter, please don't be difficult.

PETER: What do you mean, difficult? I tried my best this afternoon, and I was a dismal flop. Let's face it — I'm just not cut out to be the successor to Dorothy Dix.

PEGGY: (This is her coup de grace) M-m-m-m Actually, I think I can understand your reluctance. You never were too adept at turning a phrase. (Thoughtfully) Yes, I can see why Susan would be insulted at your attempt to compliment her.

PETER: Now, wait a minute, Peggy. Let's not be ridiculous. I may not toss off an epigram every third sentence, but, on the other hand, I've never had any difficulty impressing young women with my flow of suave conversation.

PEGGY: Your flow of suave conversation reduced my little sister to tears this afternoon. I'm afraid I'm forced to accept the evidence.

PETER: That's a completely different thing.

PEGGY: How is it different?

PETER: My talents do not include impressing hysterical adolescents.

PEGGY: Until you prove it by patching things up with Sue, I can't believe your talents include impressing anybody.

PETER: (Exasperated) Oh, women! All right, if it's the only way to

make you stop nagging, I'll try again.

PEGGY: Well, it's settled then. But remember, don't rush into . . . (Susan and David, the youngest member of the Gilbert family, come into the room. Susan has changed into a summer dress, and looks somewhat more attractive than she did earlier in the day. David, the financial genius and miser of the family, hasn't changed in the slightest)

DAVID: O.K., we finished the dishes, so you owe me a quarter, Peggy.

PEGGY: Oh, all right, I'll pay you later. Honestly, David, I think you ought to be able to do a member of your own family a favour without charging for it.

SUSAN: He'd sell a member of his own family into slavery if he thought he'd make a killing.

DAVID: Yeah? Well, I'd give you away.

PETER: Impossible, David. Your true nature would shine through at the last minute, and you'd try to make a profit on the deal.

DAVID: It'd be pretty hard to make a profit on her.

SUSAN: Oh, yeah?

DAVID: Yeah.

SUSAN: Oh, yeah?

DAVID: Yeah.

PEGGY: Now, stop it you too. When the argument degenerates to this level, it's time to change the subject.

DAVID: (His spirits not the least bit dampened) O.K. Let's play gin rummy. Cent a point.

PEGGY: (Laughing) David, you're incurable! But I'll do something that will make you happier than gin rummy. Come on upstairs and I'll give you your quarter.

DAVID: (Eagerly) I'll go up and get it.

PEGGY: Uh-uh, dear. I want to keep my eye on your itchy little fingers. (As they go out, Peggy looks significantly at Peter, who nods resignedly.) When they have gone there is an awkward pause as Peter and Susan regard each other for a moment, then both begin to speak at once)

PETER: Look, Sue, I . . .

SUSAN: I think I'd better . . .

PETER: Oh, sorry, go ahead.

SUSAN: Oh, nothing . . . nothing . . .

PETER: Well, I was just going to say, I'm awfully sorry about this afternoon. I mean, I didn't mean . . .

SUSAN: That's all right, Peter. I'm sorry I . . .

PETER: Don't you apologize, Sue. It was my fault. I guess I'm not very good at telling a girl she looks nice, especially when I really mean it.

SUSAN: (Trembling in amazement and awe) Peter! Did . . . did you really mean it sincerely?

PETER: (Embarrassed, but he can't stop now) Of course I did. Why would I say a thing like that if it weren't true?

SUSAN: Well, I thought, I mean my clothes were such a mess and everything, I thought you were making fun of me.

PETER: How could you ever think such a thing of me? Surely you must have realized that I've always considered you one of the most attractive, uh, women I know.

SUSAN: (She can hardly believe her ears) Oh, my, do you really think so, Peter?

PETER: I certainly do. When you came through that door this afternoon, I was immediately aware of your presence . . . of your charm! (He begins to warm to his subject) Why, I remember thinking at the time, Susan Gilbert is one girl I know who can throw on any old thing, and still outshine everyone else in the room.

SUSAN: (Slowly) That's the nicest thing anyone has ever said to me.

PETER: (Feigning surprise) Oh, surely not! There must be many others who have seen you as you really are.

SUSAN: (Significantly) No. You're the only one. You're so different from other people — people like my family. They treat me as if I were a child.

PETER: But they're too close to you to see that you've suddenly grown up. To an outsider, like myself, the recent change in you is obvious. Standing apart and viewing you objectively, I can see you are no longer a mere schoolgirl.

SUSAN: (Drinking this in) Oh, you're so right. They've just got used to me the way I was before, and they refuse to notice that I'm not a baby any longer. Like Peggy, ordering me around as if I were her slave. (She is suddenly struck by a thought) Peter, do you think I'm as pretty as Peggy?

PETER: Uh, Peggy? (He is not quite sure what to say to this, but he might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb) Oh, she can't hold a candle to you, Sue. I mean, she's a good kid, but . . . well, let's not bring Peggy into this, all right?

SUSAN: (Happily misinterpreting his reluctance to talk about Peggy) Of course not, Peter. I understand.

PETER: You do? Well, I meant let's talk about you. (Actually he is running out of things to say, and he wishes Peggy would come back) You must be nearly finished school?

SUSAN: I'm going into grade ten, but that means only two more years, and I'll be finished.

PETER: Oh, well. Two years isn't a very long time. It will rush by before we know it.

SUSAN: You don't think it's too long to wait? It will seem like an eternity to me.

PETER: I imagine two years does seem like an eternity at the age of fourteen.

SUSAN: But I'll be going on seventeen when I graduate. That's almost as old as Peggy is now.

PETER: You shouldn't be worrying about age in years. After all, it's

one's mental outlook that's important.

SUSAN: That's exactly what I've always thought, and I'm so glad you think so too. Oh, I've always known we had many things in common.

PETER: Oh? Oh, yes. Well, anyway, let's take you for example. Now I've always considered you far above the rest of your age group.

SUSAN: Have you really? I've felt it too. Somehow, I've always known that the people I call my friends are . . . well, younger than I am.

PETER: I'm quite sure of it. You'd probably be much more comfortable with someone older — more my age, or Peggy's.

SUSAN: Yes, Peggy. Oh, Peter, I really do love her very much.

PETER: (Beginning to be a little bored with the whole thing) I'm sure you do.

SUSAN: I mean, I hate to hurt her like this.

PETER: (Puzzled, but not really interested enough to pursue the matter) M-m-m-m?

SUSAN: Because I know she . . . (Fortunately, she is interrupted by Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert, who come through the hall door, dressed to go out)

MRS. GILBERT: Oh, here you are, Sue. Darling, we're just going over to see the Jamieson's for a little while. Is Mary-Lou coming over?

SUSAN: Yes, Mom.

MR. GILBERT: Better lock the refrigerator. That child has the appetite of a stevedore.

SUSAN: Daddy, don't always criticize my friends.

MR. GILBERT: I'm not criticizing Mary-Lou. I might be justified in criticizing her parents for starving the child, except I happen to know that she also eats like a stevedore when she's at home.

MRS. GILBERT: She simply has the naturally healthy appetite of a growing girl. Go right ahead, and help yourself, dear, if you get hungry.

SUSAN: (Annoyed at being brought back to earth from the heights of happiness induced by Peter's "revelation") All right, Mother. Thank you.

PETER: Does that offer include all the children?

MRS. GILBERT: Of course, dear. And tell Peggy and David, will you?

MR. GILBERT: (Caustically) By all means. And why not phone a few of your friends while you're at it, and invite them over too? You could play that immensely amusing game called "Let's eat the Gilberts out of house and home."

New Contributors

A Speck of White

— *Graham Jackson*

IT was 1949; the day broke much like this one. The trees over which the rising sun cast its pink rays were not oaks and elms but palm trees. The country was Jamaica. The world seemed peaceful and all its creatures, except one, gladly awoke to greet the morning.

When Gary opened his eyes and became reasonably conscious he was aware of a dull, uncomfortable ache in his stomach. He looked at the forty iron beds in his dormitory and realized that he was still at private school, and to-day was the day he had feared.

The building was situated on the top of a mountain range and used to house the chained slaves each night before their long days began in the sugar plantation fields. Now it was converted to the furtherance of the education of the young.

Thirteen-year-old Gary did not want to face the day, to face what he knew was going to happen — it was mainly habit that forced him to walk down to the washing pump in his towel bathrobe and get ready for classes and the event to follow them.

The morning lessons began. Gary saw in the eyes of his school fellows a mixture of pity and anticipation as to how he would take it. Some had been through it before, and only some had not weakened and had not cried out. To admit to any pain would be considered a mark of a "sissy", and thus condemn the poor unfortunate to constant ridicule. Gary resolved to try and give no indication of the pain he would feel.

At last the dull tones of the iron bell declared to the world that lunch time had arrived. It was said this same bell was rung to call in the slaves at dusk. The large, black metal rings in the corner stones still were there ready for the human chain to be locked securely to them.

Gary joined his black schoolmates in the customary scramble to be among the first in the dining hall line-up. This way the food would at least be a little warm when it was served. He often wondered why he rushed to get his food when he didn't like the fatty purro meat, the oily platanos and the starchy yams anyway.

This day, however, Gary was one of the last to get his cold midday meal as on the way he was roughly detained by a senior who had told him he had better not forget his appointment at the Upper Sixth form room that evening. "We dawnt lyke your face man," the senior had informed him," and now you'll suffa for it man — wee'll teach you to look at seniors in a disrespect'ful manna' man."

Gary wondered why it was the Jamaicans always finished everything they said with the word "man" — even the women when talking to each other and smoking their dirty clay pipes would use it at every oppor-

New Contributors

tunity. He also wondered in what way his face was different from all the rest — except perhaps that his was white and theirs were black; but this, he thought, was a very feeble reason to make him run the gauntlet.

The shadows lengthened and the sun's rays became golden; a warm pollen scented trade wind blew gently across the wide playing fields and the coral coloured tennis courts, up to the main building of grey brick. The peacefulness was broken only by the scraping of desks being pushed by eager hands to the center of the oblong class room. A space was cleared around the outside of the room that somewhat resembled a miniature race track. Gary stood outside the Upper Sixth, his face pushed into the wall, waiting to be called in.

The brown panelled door suddenly opened, and Gary was pushed inside. He saw only a sea of black faces and shining excited eyes giving him their undivided attention.

The assembled group had arranged themselves around the edge of the track — all were tense, expectant, and in their hands they held long leather brass buckled belts, or supple three foot canes of bamboo.

Twenty laps was about right they had decided — the first ten Gary would run untouched, this would produce the necessary tiring effect; the second ten would be accompanied with the unceasing help of strong right arms.

Gary began to run, naked from the waist up. Underneath his trousers he had put on his swimming trunks to add extra protection, but he realized nothing could help his bared back. As he ran he hoped they would not notice that he had cheated a little.

The tenth lap came rapidly to an end and the eleventh was heralded with wild yells of "lick 'im man, lick 'im man!" Gary winced as the first bamboo cut into the soft flesh that covers the kidneys, then the next came, and the next, each blow found its moving human target. Gary's eyes became blurred as every blow left a burning red impression upon his resisting body. "I must not cry out," he thought, "Oh God, help me not to feel the pain." He tried to think of himself as someone else, as if the sticks and belts were not hitting him, but only a body that did not feel. The picture of his parents at home on the mainland flashed through his confused brain — he saw them sipping their evening Old Fashioneds before getting dressed for dinner. Then he saw Aura, kind, gentle, sweet Aurita. She had touched his hand for one precious moment and told him to visit her often next holiday. He thought it strange that such calm could come in the midst of the brutal flurry of brass buckles. The last lap had begun — "I will not make a sound, I will not cry," he repeated silently to himself, "I'll show them I can take it no matter how hard they beat."

That night as Gary lay on his stomach in bed, he cheered himself

with the thought that the term would be over in two weeks. Then he would be going home. He imagined the train journey down to Kingston. On the way they would throw apple cores at the women with baskets on their heads, or tie strings of cheap fire crackers to the shoe-laces of the sleeping old men in the corner seats. What fun it is to persecute others, he thought, but not to be persecuted. Then he cried into his pillow.

Onslaught

Martha Fellowes

Rushing

Rising

Suspenseful Eternal-momentary blink-eyed crest

Crash!

Rush

Suds

Swish

Lap lap laplap toe-curlingly,

Wells in wet sand seeping.

Again again again . . .

Rappell

— Peter Wilson

S UDDENLY he was falling. The cold, crisp air seared his throat, rushed into his lungs, choked him —

Then a wrenching jerk, and silence except for pounding blood.

At first he dared not open his eyes; his insides told him he was in motion. Then he looked and saw a wall of ice before him. Suspended, he hung like gibbet fruit before the ice.

Of course, he had done the unforgivable of climbing alone which meant there was no one belayed to hold him should he slip. Yet his judgement on all that tortuous ascent had been perfect — up and up and up like a fly on a white kitchen wall, and then so close to his goal he had trusted a treacherous crag.

In tearful anger he kicked out at the face and dislodged a chunk of ice which chinked, clattered, clinked, and tinkled down — he did not hear it land, only tinkling echoes.

Looking up he saw two white and purple hands grasping a grey and tufted rope. It was hard to believe that those were his hands, his arms were numb from the shoulders. This was a second chance! And with this thought the desire to live reached him in his trance of terror. Everything became real.

Obviously this rope had been left by a previous climber or climbers. Where did it go? He looked up again. Above him, far above, the rope disappeared into a confusion of crags. The rope then, was used for a rappell — it led down — to safety. Below, he saw the rope continue for about thirty feet and disappear over a hump in the cliff. Below the hump, white ribbons, black rocks, mists. But what lay immediately below the hump was out of sight. How far to safety? Not far, such lengths of rope are seldom carried by climbers.

To go up was an impossibility, his arms were virtually paralysed and the wall was like glass, but to go down was to contend with an unknown quantity. Yet clearly this was the way out. It had been used before — still, if he could see below the hump. Slide down and look, that's all that can be done!

He let the rope slip gradually through his fingers, his hands came to life with a burning sensation. After what seemed hours, his feet were sliding over the smooth protrusion in the ice face, slowly, painfully, jerkily. He stopped. He could rest here with his feet on the ice and perhaps if he waited long enough he would regain sufficient strength to attempt the long hand over hand up the rope. But there must be an escape over the hump. There had to be. The owner of the rope passed this way safely.

He slid down over the hump until he could see the face beneath. Below, the cliff receded once more, and another thirty feet down there was a ledge at least three feet across at the widest and about forty feet long. There was an escape route too; from one end a jumble of black

rock seemed to fall away to comparatively safe ground.

The end of the rope, however, swung about eight feet above and ten feet beyond the ledge. The other climber must have had nerve to reach that ledge. But for himself, it was not a question of nerve; he was so tired now he had no choice.

He must swing out and in and down, let go of the rope and hope to land on the ledge. Should he swing too hard he would bounce off the face above it — not hard enough and he would miss entirely.

Trying to keep the glaciated rocks so far below out of focus, he pushed out from the hump with his feet, and let the rope slip between his fingers. The whole perpendicular world spun about him, black, white, and a sterile greenish blue. For an instant he caught a glimpse of the narrow shelf, the rope gave a slight jerk and was gone. Then he felt his fingernails grating on the rock. He heaved himself up to the ledge, eased one leg then the other onto it and rolled over on his back gasping.

He had almost missed, almost. The thought made him sick and he turned over and retched so violently the blood came. He must rest for the long trip down.

What a yarn for the fireside, what prestige over coffee and liqueurs at his club. This was an experience that he would never forget, an adventure requiring the utmost in human endurance and courage, and he had passed the test. He thought he was waxing melodramatic but he felt better for it. In fact he felt well enough to start on his way.

It was getting dark. He must hurry. Unsteadily, he rose to his feet and made his way to the end of the shelf where lay the black, broken stairway he had seen from above. But something was wrong. His hasty eyes had misjudged, the rocks were a long way down. The shelf ended in smooth, glassy ice.

An animal sob of despair escaped him, all that came back to him was a lonely echo. He had an eerie feeling that he was not alone. He looked back down the ledge searching for an escape but there was only smooth ice. It was then he noticed something on the ledge he had not noticed before. He stumbled back to look closer.

A hoarse scream brought the mountains to life and the cliffs screamed back, but the something which sat before him on the ledge with eyeless sockets and tight grey parchment split over yellow cheek bones sat on unconcerned.

The Rocky Path

— Andrew Webster

IT was grand to be alive again. Nobody likes being dead, and I had been dead for such a very long time. At least I think it was a long time. It's very hard to tell up there since time is timeless. Well, anyway that was all over with, and now the road of life awaited me. I knew it would unfold vividly before me as it had the last time, and I walked anxiously, eagerly down its path. At first the road was straight and very flat. It stretched across a green valley in which grew many lovely apple trees.

I reached up and plucked one of the apples. "Jenny, do you know why apples turn from green to red?" I asked the little freckle-faced girl sitting beside me. Before she could say anything I answered the question. "My dad says it's because of little gremlins that come every year at this time. They carry red paint with them and spread it over all the sour green apples." Jenny laughed and rode off on my tricycle. I ran down the road after her.

At the end of the valley the road became narrower and began to climb. A dense forest with many tall pines took the place of the apple grove. One of the big pines had fallen across the road. I walked up to it.

I moved towards the bed. The room was silent and I gazed around at the sombre faces of my family. Stretched out on the bed was a human form. Belonging to that form was a face which extended out from beneath the covers. The face of my mother, her eyes large and watery, stared up at me with sad, longing expression. Her lips moved. "Son, I want you to do well at college. Always be truthful and spend the days of your youth wisely." Full of compassion I bent down and kissed her forehead. Tears streamed from my eyes, but I did not cry. My older brother's strong arm led me from the room.

What was a gentle grade before, now became a steep hill. The paved road switched to coarse gravel, and gradually narrowed to a thin path which wound its way upwards. Twice I stumbled and fell over large stones but I kept climbing. The vegetation was sparse. I stopped by a clump of green shrubbery and sat down to rest.

I sat down in the corner with the potted fern and ordered a beer. It was a large beer and I spent a good half hour thoughtfully drinking it. "Another of the same please, Martin." This time I cut my time down to twenty minutes. After four more my legs began to feel heavy. I stared ahead at the shelves laden with liquor. My mind was a blank except for a vague feeling, a premonition that she was close. She walked in, paused at the door a moment and then moved towards my table. The heavy feeling had crawled up my legs and now it affected my head. She smiled unhappily and I followed her out onto the street.

The rocky path came to an abrupt end as it reached the top of a steep precipice. I made my own path and edged cautiously down the cliff. I gazed down at the scene below. A four-lane highway divided the land in

two, stretching in a straight line down to a fresh-water bay. Surrounding the bay in a wooded area was an assortment of brightly painted houses. The landscape was beautiful and fresh. Great maple trees towered above the quaint houses and extended their protective arms simulating a broad, green canopy. At the water's edge, brilliant red, blue and green boat-houses jutted out into the bay. From across the bay I could barely hear the low drone of a motor boat approaching.

The tiny engine sputtered and came to life. An excited voice yelled, "Look, dad. She's going." I looked on proudly as my son stood holding a cable at the other end of which circled a bright yellow model airplane. It circled around at a dizzy speed, dipping and diving crazily. Once it dived too low and it struck the ground with a heart-rending crash. Jimmy ran over and examined the pieces. He held up one of the bright yellow wings before me and burst into tears. "Golly, Dad. I didn't think it would do that," he sobbed. I tried to comfort him. "It's all right son; we'll build another one that'll be twice as big." I put my arm around him and we walked home together.

And so I continued on down the road never knowing exactly where it would lead me, but confident of some fresh new experience at every turn. And if I was not satisfied by this trip, I could always look forward to the next.

The Law and Diminishing Returns

Peter Wilson

Hail, certain spectre, ever perspicacious!

Know you not mercy, ponderous press?

Ravenous, repugnant and rapacious,

Always more, never less —

The racketeer's

Achilles' heel,

Bureaucracy's gears,

Official seal.

All this to get

From gross to net

And then some,

Oh, never lax

Income

Tax?

A Simple Tale

— Ross Howard

THE old Vicar crossed his legs and lit his pipe. His visitor, apparently a tourist who was making a round of the churches in Surrey, watched the Vicar solemnly and glanced at the church, so old it was that it could form a subject of controversy for archaeologists and ecclesiologists as to whether it was older than St. Martin's Church, Canterbury, reputed to have been built by St. Augustine, the Apostle of England.

The visitor, actually a scientist and a rationalist possessed of a rather faustian knowledge, was asking the questions of the Vicar, who appeared to him a living relic sprung out of a dying but still persisting embodiment of a superstition that had arose around the Jesus of Nazareth. His questions often failed to elicit the desired information owing to the good Vicar's deafness. But the Vicar, though not quite comprehending the scientist's anxiety for archaeological tid-bits, was nevertheless quite as eager to communicate his own knowledge. The scientist, giving up the effort, leant back in the chair and patiently waited for the Vicar to pour out what he expected to be the same trite pietistic legendary stories about the parish.

The Vicar, with smiling eyes, yet a solemn voice, let out with a story.

"The parish," he declared, "is dedicated to St. Ossifroth, a saint whose subject is hardly known even in the most obscure and dusty volumes of hagiography . . . Well, it seems, he lived at the time of the Anglo-Saxon invasion of Britain. He was a priest and had already done his bit of evangelism in these parts around here, and he grew to be so old that he could have seen to the day when the next phase of invasions from abroad came about . . . But here he was to meet his martyrdom. It went like this . . . a band of Anglo-Saxons came into this part and ravaged whatever came into their hands. This priest, nobody knows his real name, shortly came into their hands, and for all his courage and humility, couldn't lift a finger against these plunderers. So he was bound up and the ravagers, later on being well-nigh drunk during their frivolous gathering of drinking bouts, playfully cast this poor man into a barrel of beer. The good old man bore all this with equanimity and suffered himself to be soaked in the beer. The vandals, if I may so call them, had drunk themselves to excess and soon fell asleep, forgetting the good old priest in the barrel. But they remembered him the next day and opened up the barrel. Much to their amazement, to be sure indeed, they found

only bones and none of St. Ossifroth's flesh . . . Far from questioning themselves on this mystery, they were only tempted to quaff more beef from their same barrel. I suppose it was the only one left. They did and were soon filled with the most delicious beer such as they had never touched in their lives. The pleasant experience of drinking this most unusual beverage was not unaccompanied by pangs of remorse and sorrow, both of which must have been engendered by the qualities of the beer . . . So in short time they spread tales of this man, but always in a vein of repentance. It was not long before the virtues of this martyr were recognized and in still shorter time, he came to be canonized and enrolled in records as St. Ossifroth. So, my dear visitor, if you recollect your Latin aright, the word Ossi comes from the word Os, meaning bone. And the word froth, well, I need not say, is that substance which we blow off before we down our beer . . .'

The story ended, the Vicar and the scientist-rationalist smiled meditatively. And to round off the enjoyment of the tale, the scientist suggested a stroll to the nearest pub to drink to the memory of St. Ossifroth. The Vicar agreed immediately, this time understanding the scientist's meaning for all his deafness. Which was quite natural.

Compensation

— Elizabeth Corden

A forlorn little figure, a child, sat on the sand. In front of him lapped the grey waves, across the lake were rolling, misty mountains. No sun shone to-day; and no sun was in his little heart. His father — his dear idol, protector, companion — had punished him this morning, had slapped his hands, hard. Father was angry, child sobbed in chagrin. Now the child was inconsolable, digging aimlessly in the wet sand. His father had slapped him.

Suddenly, through the mist on the lake a lovely white bird drifted toward him on the water. A swan! A beautiful regal creature, sleek and shining in the wan sun which now hesitantly shone from behind a grey cloud. How like an angel it must be, thought the child. I must touch it.

The swan still glided over the rippling waves, always toward the eager little figure on the sand. His prize! The day was no longer grey; now rays of sun played on the white feathers and curving neck of the bird. Ah, here! I can just reach out, said the child, and pat his wing . . .

With an angry hiss, strident cackle, the swan beat its wings and darted that proud head at the child.

No sun now, but tears of chagrin. His swan had bitten his fingers . . . Again there was no joy in his little being. The grey waves lapped at the damp sand. Mist crept down the shore.

But suddenly he heard a whistle — three cheery notes sounded from the house. Their private code! His father was coming down to the beach! Again the sun peeped from behind a cloud, and rays of happiness filled the child. He ran up the path, and a pair of glad, strong arms were waiting as he made a flying leap toward his father. The sun shone from a blue scrap of sky, and sun-beams played over the dancing waves.

Mood Thoughts

Elizabeth Corden

When the sun lies warmly overhead, a still soft sea,
I think of summer, and the waving fields of grass, with
Drowsy days, sun-filled, and dusty roads,
Swimming in a rippling lake, basking on the sand —
Blue sky above; bright sun, and Summer.

When, in winter, on the crisp cold stretch of clearest blue
A sharp wind darts, and white puff clouds skid gleefully,
I think of white snow-blankets covering rolling hills;
Snow-frosting dipped on evergreens,
While all the forest wears a lattice shawl of white.
I think of skiing, flying down the slope, the wind as wings,
whistling at our sides —
The brightly coloured skiers, here and there a red sash,
blue cap, flashing by.

In September, a light haze almost imperceptible,
Hangs round the golden elm, brown oak, or rust-red maple,
Golden elm, golden leaves, golden sun, golden mood,
With a flash of crimson in a living tapestry,
I think of walking through the fields, dusty yellow.
A bird's song drifts, leaves drift down,
And the sleeping autumn afternoon is being gently whiled away as
golden thoughts.

Thoughts While Walking To College at 8:30 in the Morning

Joan Scharle

You are walking up the hill,
The whistle, softened by the bend, carries over your ear.
Your eye sees the gate, black and white and long, come down.
Your ear hears the bells clanging a discordant warning,
But your mind is searching the track for the train.
You wait, for you must.
It comes, a freight train.
You forget the bleak hills, the shabby gas station,
The gate on which you lean,
In the marvel of a freight train.
C.P.R. — a mare usque ad mare,
And what would happen if B.C. seceded?
From sea to Saskatoon.
Great Northern, Grand Trunk, Grand Central,
G.N., G.T., G.C.
They thought big in those days
And wasn't there something about a gold spike?
The words sing past, and dreams unfold.
Bangor and Aroonstock — Eastern Indian meets Western,
And the Taj Mahal is surrounded with smoke of tepees,
While feathered head stalks buffalo in rice paddies.
Atcheson, Topeka and the Santa Fe — Gandy dancer's ball
And peublos, while rattlesnakes coiled in the desert
Also watch the train.
Wabash — the cannonball roars through the dark
With string of cars carrying the products of western forests,
And a cow caught on the track screams in pain.
The caboose, and you remain, replete with thoughts
Of death and other lands and the saga of our history.
And who dares say
There is no magic left in the world?

Old Contributors

Green Blues

— John Howard

THE station was the same as I remembered it. The grey building bore its posters advertising release for a weekend at Blackpool, or the pleasures of the unspoilt village on the Devon coast which was to be honoured with a cut-rate fare the coming weekend. The clock garden was still five minutes slow, as if deliberately mocking the large and efficient clock on the wall. Even the old terrier came to sniff at me, and then allow me to enter the village.

She was waiting for me by the car. We smiled at each other a little embarrassed, and a little afraid. She put out her hand, then drew it back and looked at me very seriously. Then we kissed, and it was as if the world had drawn in very tight, and we were in the middle of it. I remember saying, "Lovely weather, isn't it?", and then feeling very silly. She laughed, whispered, "Let's not talk just for a moment," and taking my hand, led me to the car.

We had high tea on the lawn, she in a pale frock that set off the slight flush on her cheeks. I think she is beautiful, but if not, she was that afternoon. Jim and Carola were their usual relaxed selves, talking pleasantly about this and that. I remember how highly I thought of them, particularly since the time they had asked me to call them by their first names. It means a great deal, when you're seventeen, and want to be a little older.

The days passed, and we were happy, playing croquet, going for a swim, walking in the fields, visiting old churches. We thought that we were very intellectual, so we would discuss poetry; we didn't like the Romantics, we read Donne and Crashaw and Herbert. She played the violin in the local orchestra, and I would take her to the rehearsals. Afterwards, we would have coffee with Joe who organized and conducted the group. Life was a dream, a dream of reality.

Joe had a party one night. It was on his lawn, and we all came in peasant costumes. We sang folksongs, danced to folk music, drank cider and ate good, solid, food. Late in the evening we were dancing a country waltz when someone tapped me on the shoulder and asked her to dance. I didn't want to stop, but she smiled at me and shrugged very slightly. I smiled at her, then went to get a glass of cider. As I finished it, the music stopped. Turning, I saw the shadow of a couple embracing behind a tree.

I walked back to the house, packed, left a note for Jim and Carola, and got out on the main road. A truck picked me up. I sat in the cab looking through the windshield, straining to see London, begging it to come and pull me into itself.

I met her again the other day. We're both older now, much older. Only a few years in time but many exhausted years in life. That is why I'm here now, with the terrier sniffing at me, and the taste of her on my lips.

Old Contributors

The White Turban

— Phyllis Parham

BESIDE the road where the car was parked stood a very tall palm tree. Elsa leaned out the window, delighting in every inch of the slender trunk, and sliding her gaze up to the clusters of fuzzy, brown coconuts.

"Daddy should be out any second now," said her mother. Elsa grunted contentedly. They had not been waiting long, and she hadn't even considered feeling restless. She leaned further out, watching the dust of a retreating car. When the road lay clear again, she saw a man walking towards them, very slim and upright, his face dark beneath the whiteness of his turban.

She grabbed herself back into the car and buried her face in the safety of her mother's arm. Her mother had seen the man too. She held Elsa close. "Why are you so frightened of Indians, darling? You like Ramon."

Elsa shook her head. One couldn't include Ramon with ordinary Indians. He was the best cook in the world, and young and kind, and he never covered his short black curls with a turban.

It was the turban that did it. Once she had seen an Indian bare-headed, with his hair hanging long and straight down his back. She tried to imagine how horribly he must have to coil it to fit it into his turban. But she could never explain why Indians filled her with such speechless terror. Her father knew some of them, so they must be good. If only they weren't always so thin and old, and their black eyes didn't pierce you through and through.

Often in her dreams the turban became mixed up with the white flat-topped hat of the muffin-man in one of her books. She didn't really know what a muffin-man was, but she pictured him as a strong, relentless giant, dressed in long flowing robes printed with a vague design and belted with a thin, red cord. Above his shadowy face he wore the biggest turban anyone had ever seen. He came stealthily at night to snatch her away from her parents and her baby brother, sometimes threatening to eat them before her eyes and then kill her in some unimaginable way. Then she would wake up, cold and sobbing, until her mother brought love and warmth to banish the muffin-man.

"Elsa, you know this man. He often comes to see Daddy. Come, you must say hello to him."

Elsa heard the Indian and her mother exchange greetings. She buried her head in the comfortable linen lap, while the voices went on above her. At last, with the same fascination that wouldn't let her run away from the muffin-man, she looked up.

The Indian grinned down at her, the grin cracking his bony face. He laughed softly. He knew she feared him. He thinks it is funny, she thought, he is going to stay here until I scream; maybe I'll die. Why doesn't he go away?

She hid her face again. When she opened her eyes he had gone. She sighed with relief.

Then she heard a tap at the window behind her. There he was, grinning in evil delight and snapping his long fingers. She began to cry.

Her mother stroked her hair, gently, oh so gently. "Don't cry, darling. He's trying to play with you. Smile back at him."

Elsa sat stiffly against the back of the seat, determined to stop crying. She would act very brave and grown-up and polite.

The Indian ran around and looked in the other window again, still laughing and waving and snapping his fingers. Then he began to distort his face, crinkling up his forehead until he looked just like an ancient monkey. Suddenly in the midst of an especially huge sob she giggled. She clung to her mother and laughed until it hurt, while the old man did a little dance in the middle of the road.

He came and peered into the car once more. His eyes, she noticed, were sparkling and not at all cruel. Still she kept tight hold of her mother's hand.

The Indian looked carefully at her. "Hello," he said.

Elsa caught her breath to stop one last little sob. "Hello," she answered.

He bowed very low, looked very wise, and walked off down the road, slim, erect, and no longer hateful.

"Look, Elsa, here comes Daddy at last."

Elsa had a pleasant thought. "You knew what, Mummy? There won't be any more muffin-man ever again."

"I know, dear."

The white turban faded into the distance, turned a corner, and disappeared. She waved after it, and then leaned back happily, laughing up at the coconuts.

The River

W. Mark Pfeiffer

*I paused on the bridge and looked out on the River,
A chill wind was blowing across the hard ice,
I thought of the River now flowing beneath it —
Rushing though silent, now held in its vice;
And then we continued, arriving quite early, to wait.*

*We returned by the bridge, but now it was colder
And darkness approaching: We hurried across.
Our thoughts were now elsewhere, neglecting the River —
Rushing though silent, its sound to us lost.
We quickened our pace then, returning much faster, but late.*

*The temperature changed; the weather was warmer,
I now crossed the bridge once or twice in the week.
But the season was early, the ice still unyielding;
Rushing though silent, — the River too weak.
For it was yet winter, the ice yet a glistening plate.*

*One day it was warm and the sun growing stronger,
The snow had all melted: — quite pleasant to walk;
And so with a book I went down by the River —
Rushing though silent, and seeming to mock.
For the wind that blew off it brought winter, — its cold and its hate.*

*I had noticed the cracks, heard first the faint trickles
Another day down by the River to read;
But though the ice buckled, it held yet its captive —
Rushing though quiet, more time did it need.
And the warm spell continued, unheard-of at that early date.*

*We paused on the bridge on another occasion;
The ice must be thin now, well-latticed with cracks;
So we dropped some large stones to the ice on the River —
Rushing though stifled, and still too relaxed,
The break-up not yet, — ever longer to anticipate.*

*No hurry this time, I was walking for pleasure,
So I paused near the centre and leaned on the rail;
A couple approached me and greeted me warmly,
But rushing and roaring, forced out of its jail
I gazed at the River, now burst through in patterns ornate.*

The others had gone; he had more free time now;
He asked me to come over once every day:
What a chance this provided to study its progress
As rushing and foaming it tore through a way
Ever widening the passage, and flowing with increasing rate.

As I crossed over daily, I noticed the changes:-
Cakes of ice carried down, bits of debris and such;
Though the thaw had been long and the melted snow little
Yet rushing and tumbling, seizing all it could touch
The River surged mighty, its freedom to appreciate.

I paused on the bridg and looked out on the River,
I gazed at it slowly 's I crossed it to-day;
Bits of ice on the banks, high, were the only traces,
But sluggish and stumbling, its strength gone away
The River flowed muddy! Strange, cruel trick of fate.

Epigraph

Thomas E. Baker

Of photons and of sound-waves,
Of gravity and tears,
Of matter and of motion,
Of universe and years,

Of days and hours and seconds
And centuries of time
I weave this gentle fabric,
My solitary rhyme.

I mould the rolling aeons
With instruments of pain,
And fashion flowing sunsets
And crystal drops of rain.

I toil with hands that tremble
For ears that will not hear,
And build my simple verses
From fundamentals of fear.

Sea-Gazing

Daphne Winslow

The fish slide past, silent and fast,
At most a host
Of dreams,
Reflecting the light, all silver all white,
The gems of the dens,
Of the sea.
An octopus creeps, through rocky deeps
Grey in the sway
Of eight legs.
While the light that twirls over the swirls
Of watery, tottery
Plants,
Slips through the glades, and gradually fades,
Sinking and twinkling
Away.

Invocation of the Muse

after the manner of Theocritus, Virgil, Spenser and Milton

— *Phyllis Parham*

Since everyone else can invoke a Muse whenever he wants to,
Let me also invoke one.
(In fact, I have quite made up my mind to do so, and therefore, O
shades of Lycidas,
Don't you dare try to stop me.)
There are, I believe, nine Muses,
But you can't expect me to be content with just any old Muse.
I want THE Muse that flapped its wings at Milton,
And dictated while Homer took notes.
Come, O Muse, for I am stupid today,
And if all those people became famous by stealing your ideas,
(Always with an acknowledgement, of course),
Surely you will not disdain to bring me some brilliant wave of
inspiration.
It is quite respectable to plagiarize from you, O Muse.
A proper invocation to a Muse
Must, I understand, have
Nymphs and shepherds and rustic deities
Frolicking all over the place.
And so, my Muse, I present you with a correctly meadowy scene
Of very unusual people,
Sunning themselves and playing pipes and doing arabesques
Among flowers with names like columbines and (oh horrors!)
daffodilies.
There is a clear, rippling brook too. (One must never forget the
clear, rippling brook.)
And somewhere we must have a procession of mythological characters,
But here we run into trouble.
I called Apollo and Ceres and Persephone (Ah, spring!) and all the
the others one naturally calls in such a case,
But they had marched so long for Theocritus, Virgil,
Spenser and Milton,
That they were all tired out
And refused to march any more for anyone;
And the nymphs refused to answer any more personal questions.
Therefore, O Muse, I beg thee
To make allowances in my case,
For is it not obvious that I need thee a great deal more than
Theocritus, Virgil,
Spenser or Milton
Needed thee?
Is it not obvious,
O Muse?

A Toast

Katharine Cantlie

Not to us, dear love, but to your soul:
May it never die,
Not even when this shivering crystal glass
Is drained of its last red dregs;
Nor when the firelight tires of its wingless flying
Across the flat of a thick gold signet ring
On a blue-white hand;
Nor when there is silence in the settling day
Instead of a hushing, and waiting for softness
And for the black;
Nor when time has shattered the God that lives
Today in the windows of Chartres;
Nor when eyes are hard and tearless
From too much gazing; nor in the end
Of love, in the fading of a smile;
No, not even in the clotting of the last heart's blood.

Today

Katharine Cantlie

How in all the swirling grey find
Solace? Rain, rain, stinging, needling,
And the new-bare earth is black with filth.
No birth here; all is dead, limp, drowned,
And the mud ubiquitous, pierced by cold droplets.
Thick is the air with wet and grey, and trees
Loom black in a network, seeming far;
Chill pervades, seeps bitterly into bones,
And the heart is not less miserable than the faint
Muffled chirp of a sodden peevish bird.
A curse on spring — where now the sung joy
Of pregnant trees and pushing grass and warmth?
Agh! No solace here from past winter death;
Damned be the mud and the rain's curled lashing.

April Music

— Donald Kuehner

ONE pair of shoes was made of canvas and rubber. The sole had worn thin under the ball of the foot. On top the canvas had stretched and the foot felt comfortable. The other pair of shoes was a pair of loafers. All over the leather had stretched and the feet were comfortable. Dust settled on the canvas and on the leather as the feet scuffed along the sidewalk. Pete and Joe talked.

"I like sunshine."

"In the daytime."

"Appropriate."

"And warm."

"Look! There are flowers."

"Behind glass with their throats cut."

"No birds though."

"Not appropriate."

"Just flies."

"Flies are birds in the city."

"And people are animals."

"Here streams run underground."

"But the sky is overhead."

"And the sun is shining."

"I like sunshine."

The two young men turned up the grade to the Fourteenth Street bridge. Their legs had muscles for climbing on such a day. Pete rubbed his hand along the railing and collected a ridge of pale, warm dust. They stopped and leaned their elbows on the rail. It was made of steel and was hard. To feel it thus hard was good. The sunlight warmed their backs. Joe wiggled his shoulders to feel it better.

"Look at all the crud in the water."

"Yeah."

"Fish must get tired of people."

"Ain't no fish in there."

"Well, don't tell that guy with the fish-pole."

"Aw, he's just loafing."

In front of the hotel on Malcolm Street two young women watched an old man clean the street. His big stiff-bristled broom shoved sand and dust in front of it and left streaks of sand dust behind. Jill stretched and felt her sweater rub against her back where it felt good. Mary wiggled her toes where they stuck out of her sandals. Her toes were dusty but she didn't care.

"I'm glad it's warm again."

"It's spring."

"Yesterday it was April."

"Today its spring."

"The country would be all green."

"With flowers."

"And birds."

"And bees."

"But gentlemen prefer blonds."

"Men prefer women."

"Doctors prefer Camels."

"Whoops!"

"Spring in the air."

"And it's warm."

"I'm glad it's warm again."

They walked with young legs swinging in loose skirts. The grade up to the Fourteenth Street bridge is fun to climb on a day full of sunshine. Jill ran a finger along the railing and through a ridge of pale, warm dust that someone had made. Mary stopped and arched her back against the rail. It felt hard and solid — part of a good world. She watched a gull floating in the sky. The sun was warm on her. Jill made a little singing noise because she felt good.

"The birds sure make a mess on the bridge."

"Who cares?"

"Birds must have fun."

"Not in the winter."

"It's not winter."

"It's spring."

From behind a tall, brick building at the corner of the street came the sound of music. There was a band in the streets.

Joe looked at Pete and raised his eyebrows.

Jill turned to Mary and said, "Ah-ha."

When the band crossed the bridge it made a great noise. The trombone moved in and out. The trumpet player was perspiring and his cheeks were puffed out. There was a man with two big brass cymbals. He was enjoying himself. At the back of the band was the strongest one of all. He played the bass drum. That man had very powerful arms and wrists. Wow! Carried by two men was a banner with bright red lettering on it. No one remembers what the lettering said.

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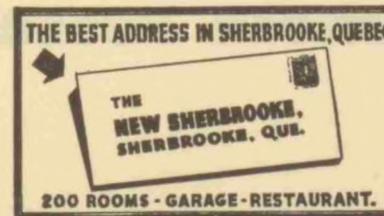
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