AMERICAN LITERATURE OF THE FIRST HALF OF THE XX CENTURY. LEVEL B1-B2

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АМЕРИКАНСКАЯ ЛИТЕРАТУРА ПЕРВОЙ ПОЛОВИНЫ XX ВЕКА. УРОВЕНЬ B1-B2

Учебное пособие по домашнему чтению
для студентов бакалавриата
факультетов иностранных языков

Санкт-Петербург
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Contents

SECTION I (the last quater of the XIX-th century) 6
LITERARY CONTEXT 6
Theodor Dreiser 6
Ernerstine 6
SECTION II (the beginning of the XX-th century) 26
LITERARY CONTEXT 26
Sherwood Anderson 26
The Strength of God 26
The Teacher 31
Loneliness 36
F.S.Fitzgerald 47
Babylon Revisited 47
F.S.Fitzgerald 66
The Last of The Belles 66

SECTION I (the last quater of the XIX-th century)

LITERARY CONTEXT

As the 19-th century drew to a close, American writers produced a wide variety of works, particularly in the field of prose. The industrialization of America and the social problems concomitant upon such a development coincided with new definitions of reality in scientific and philosophical terms. The nature of society was changing and the ways of perceiving and interpreting reality were being revolutionized in the wake of new discoveries in the fields of science and psychology. New forms of fiction writing known as Realism and Naturalism also developed during this period.

Against a seedy background of social degradation, crime, exploitation and slum conditions, the writers of that time attempted to demonstrate that human behaviour was determined by natural scientific and environmental laws: in exploring the amorality of society, they often show their characters as victims of their social surroundings. They mainly portrayed the characters whose deeds are nothing more than "chemical compulsions". Their bleak determinism made for characters who are unable to direct their actions, swallowed up by opponents whose greater strength and ruthlessness bear out a kind of Darwinian "survival of the fittest".

Theodor Dreiser

Ernerstine

I think that the conclusions that troubled her most, and finally decided her upon her eventual step, were, first, that she had in some way mismanaged the opportunities that had been hers, and next, that life itself was a confusing gamble in which the cards were frequently marked, and the dice weighted. She was, I am sure, a little confused and saddened by her eventual realization that the field she had espoused was engineered by men and women without real intelligence or decency or understanding, and with scarcely any traces of the stabilities upon which we must lean at times if we are to live at all. Also, I think that toward the last she failed to find in herself enough of those stabilities to warrant her continuing. She was too much inclined possibly, to look for worth in others — too little to compel it in herself. If I were less convinced that life itself is anything but a game, arranged for as well as motivated by the greedily, the arrogant, the lecherous and the heartless, with dullards and beggars and nincompoops at the bottom as their tools and pawns, I would be prepared to assail the members of the joyous profession of which she was a part. There is little that is too sharp or uncomplimentary, I assure you, that might be said of them — mercenary, covetous, sycophantic, lax, dissolute, malevolent, brutal — But why go on? You may find lists that apply in Trent and Walker. Yet having said all this, am still compelled to

ask myself wherein they are so much worse than the members of any of the other professions that eventually and perforce, via related compulsions, find themselves in authority in life. If anyone or anything is to be indicted, let it be Life.

But to the tale itself.

The first time I saw Ernestine she was coming down the steps of the Sixth Avenue Elevated Station, at Eighth Street. She was very young, not more than eighteen or nineteen, and sensuously, and so disturbingly, beautiful and magnetic. With her was an aspiring theatrical manager whom I knew — the type that begins with a "little theatre." He was showing her the Village, I presume, and his air was that of the impresario. Hers was that of a very young, and not very sophisticated, person who condescends to take notice of a domain offered for her inspection. There was a moment's pause while he introduced us, and then they were off. And yet, brief as was the contact, I could not but know that she was exceptional. The litheness and vigour of movement, which half denied a languorousness of temperament, which yet smote one! The health, and gaiety, and poetry, and love of beauty! Something about her suggested two of the lines in one of a group of poems later addressed to her by a writer and publisher who for a time at least was enormously taken with her.

“I never taste the sweet exceeding thought.

That you might love me, though I loved you not.”

She was at this interpreting something on the legitimate stage, and her true habitat was the white light region between 42nd and 59th Streets. But her flutterings over the surface of the Greenwich Village art sector of New York evoked not a little admiration and enthusiasm. The young artists and playwrights of the Village were, after a fashion, agog. She was quite wonderful, or so they said. One ought to see her. Even the women of the Village admitted, if a little grudgingly, that she had looks and a decided appeal, for men anyhow.

At a party later I was a witness to this marked appeal and the fever of passion and yearning which she evoked. Escorted by the same aspiring producer, she had entered, and immediately the attention of the men was centred upon her. Not that she was so remarkably intelligent or artistically forceful as that she had that indescribable something which all women fear and envy — sex appeal. Her temperament as well as her beauty was focal, and she knew it. Even while some of the women were inclined to find fault with her for one reason and another, they kept studying her, while throughout she remained cool and beaming — too cool, Γ thought at times, and too vain.

A famous critic of international repute — a student of types and personalities — was sufficiently impressed by her to enter on a long discussion of her type and American girls in general. "Now there is this Ernestine De Jongh," he said to me. "These American girls are astonishing, really. They are not always so well equipped mentally, but they have astounding sensual and imaginative appeal as well as beauty and are able to meet the exigencies of life in a quite satisfactory manner, regardless of what Europe thinks; and that is more than can be said for any of the women of the other countries with which I happen to be familiar. By that I mean that your American girl of this type thinks and reasons as a woman, not as a

man, viewing the problems that confront her as a woman, studying life from a woman's viewpoint and solving them as only a woman can. She seems to realize, more than do her sisters of almost any other country today, that her business is to captivate and to dominate the male, with all his special forces and intelligence, by hers, and having done that she knows that she has bagged the game. Now I do not count that as being inferior or stupid. To me it is being effective."

While I was interested by this bit of philosophy, which struck me as true, I was more interested by the fact that this particular girl, at her age, should have inspired it. For, distinctly, she was not intellectual, the best sense at least, and the critic in question was all but impervious to the befuddling force of beauty. His opinion confirmed my impression that after her fashion she was a personage, not a mere chemical salt upon the sensual hormones of the male.

About this time I began to learn something of her history. She was from the American north-west. Her father was a well-to-do dairyman in that region from which the Tillamook cheese comes. There was an elder sister in Seattle who had taken this younger one to live with her after she had been so fortunate as to marry a man of means herself. There-Ernestine had come in contact with, and aspired to, the stage, as represented by private theatricals in which her sister happened to be interested at the time. And there she had eventually come to identify herself with a "little theatre" movement. But, as she told me later, her father and mother were "old-fashioned and religious and very much opposed to the theatre," and in order to avoid anger and ill will on their part, she had for a long time concealed her interest in it. Finally, deciding to follow it as a profession, she had joined a touring company and changed her name - which was Swedish, I believe. There was the usual history connected with that venture, yet of not sufficient interest, or at least not sufficiently different, to merit a recital here.

I suspect that by then she had been in love more than once. Her manner was that of one who had learned to breast the stream of life with some little assurance. Plainly, she had come to realize the value and effect of her beauty, of which, as I say, she was markedly conscious.

It was perhaps six months or a year after I first met her that I began to hear of her as the mistress of a man of considerable reputation in the critical and liberal thought of the time. He was a poet, although of no great importance in that field. Personally, he interested me, not only as a character but as a man of force and appeal. For a period of years beginning with his college days in New York, he had managed not only to sustain himself but others as well in the business of furthering one and another liberal or charitable cause — woman suffrage, child labour, a liberal, semi-radical paper, which he, or rather his patrons, financed. Also he had found time to write various books and essays full of fairly readable thoughts on poetry and reforms of various kinds. Incidentally, he was a handsome fellow, pleasingly cultivated in his ways and moods and without a trace of that aggressive, pushing, self-seeking need which too often one finds motivating those who are professedly interested in reforms.

That Ernestine understood him I doubt. More likely she was drawn by his verility, looks, charm and public repute — a man connected with the arts and

intellectual matters. As she saw it, I think, it was rather exceptional for a man to be a writer and a critic and a poet all at once —one who could get his name into the papers and be looked up to by a number of beginners as a personage. In addition, he was really good-looking and gay. Apart from that, I doubt that she was able to share his finer moods. And yet she had a kind of crude reverence for them, as time was to show— a reverence, indeed, for everything connected with the arts and those who achieved in them without quite knowing why. That she was obtuse to all phases of his character I do not mean to imply. She understood him well in some ways, as was made plain by the manner in which she could set forth his methods and his own attitude toward himself — descriptions, in the main, very penetrating and illuminating.

Once she said to me: "I never saw such a person as Varn." (Varn Kinsey was his name). "When he wants to be nice I think he can be the nicest person in the world. He has such an air. Arid he thinks so well of himself — not in a silly but rather in a reverential way — as though he felt himself called by God or someone to fulfil a great duty of some kind. You know the sort of person I mean, perhaps. He looks upon everything he thinks, or says, or does, as important. What other people think and say and do does not appeal to him so much. And he never looks upon anyone else, whoever he may be, as more than an equal, if as much. For that reason, perhaps, he is always able to get money out of rich people for any cause in which he actually believes. I never saw such a person for finding people interested in the things he is interested in, and then playing up to them. I wouldn't say that he is a toady, exactly, but he can always manage to talk to them, especially rich women, in a way that makes them willing to help him. Once he gets the money for any cause, though, he usually leaves to other people the work for which the money has been secured, resting and taking the largest salary for his pains. He used to say that he had done enough when he raised the money.

"And of course he is always surrounded by a lot of minor people who look up to him as a leader and who do the things he feels he hasn't time for. As for himself, he reads, and writes essays and poetry, and gets himself interviewed from time to time in connexion with the things he is supposed to be doing. I suppose he actually does render some kind of intellectual service to the causes he is supposed to further. He used to argue that the mere use of his name and the way he looked after things enabled him to get the money for the things he did. Also he added that it was necessary for him to live well and keep up appearances in order to help the causes he was interested in."

This is one of those interpretations she could provide so freely after she had known Varn for four years and which caused me to think of her as intelligent. She analysed him then as from time to time afterwards she was able to analyse others.

When Ernestine came into Kinsey's life he was fifteen years her senior and married to a woman of ability and charm who was a painter and illustrator. But shortly after this meeting there came rumours of trouble between him and his wife. They were no longer so much together as they had been. They were quarrelsome. Where formerly Varn had been an arresting figure at Mrs. Kinsey's teas and affairs, now he was absent. Meanwhile he was being seen with Ernestine. I myself was

once a witness of a happy dinner they took together. It was in one of those many-roomed, semi-theatrical cafes which abound north of Forty-second Street and it was the crowded hour between seven and eight. They came in while I was dining with a friend and found a corner near us, but without noting that I or anyone else was near them. They were too much engrossed in each other. Once seated, and before ordering, they fell into a deep and plainly affectionate conversation. So impressed was he by her beauty that he seemed to devour her with his eyes. And she, conscious of the spell that her charm had cast, sat back and allowed him to gaze upon her, bestowing upon him from time to time the most ravishing of smiles. And once he seized both her hands in his and held them while he gazed into her eyes.

"There is a man," commented my companion, “who most certainly is in love. It is charming, don't you think? He seems to view her poetically. He is obsessed with her beauty.”

I agreed. Also, as I observed, more than one of those dining there glanced at them interestedly.

I should add that time proved that this infatuation was genuine, for he divorced his wife. And though he never married Ernestine, there was a live and close and seemingly happy relationship between them. He became conspicuously devoted to her, and for several-years thereafter one scarcely saw one without the other. And yet I gathered from many sources at the time, and later, that she was by no means an affectionate slave. Rather, it was he who could scarcely sleep because of her.

Kinsey and myself, having little in common, rarely met; nor, except on rare occasions, did I encounter Ernestine. She was always busy with her stage work. But of her life and moods in connexion with him and herself I heard not a little from many who were close to them. While they were happy for the first year or so (and that was the period in which the series of poems exalting her were written by him; they are still extant), afterwards there had begun to appear difficulties in connexion with her work, or rather her interest in a new form of it. For just at that time a new type of opportunity, the motion picture, was coming into public favour, and with it newer and sharper conditions governing the rise of stars in that particular field. One had to be the mistress of somebody — director, producer, owner or backer — or so it was said. Nevertheless the opportunity for the concomitant enormous financial returns was being grasped and responded to by attractive and ambitious girlhood the country over.

I heard a great deal at the time of the interest a certain picture producer of great wealth and notoriety was taking in Ernestine, and the interest that she was taking — not so much in him as a man or a possible lover as in the power he possessed of rapidly furthering the career of anyone in whom he chanced to be interested, in this new field which he represented — (the Arabian lure of the movies in those days). And much against Kinsey's will and wish, as it now appeared, Ernestine had already ventured upon several screen tests in one and another of the new studios in New York, which were then mere floors or lofts in ordinary loft buildings. A new director of rumoured ability who was then operating

in a loft in Union Square, had cast her for several minor roles, which proved to her own satisfaction that she might shine in this new field if she applied herself and if opportunity favoured her.

But there was the rub. For Varn Kinsey would have none of it — that is, not with himself as a factor in her life. A bachelor of arts and inclined by education and training to look to the more serious productions of the stage for anything histrionically worthy, he was not in the least interested in the pretensions of those who were destined to feed the multitude with what it could grasp. In fact, he disliked motion pictures, and above all he was opposed to the conditions of advancement as those conditions were now being revealed to him. Any talk of the fat and powerful masters in that world who were holding tempting morsels of fame and wealth before such aspirants as Ernestine was likely to inflame and enrage him. As long as she was connected with the legitimate stage in New York, where nightly he could find her — well, that was different. As for sharing her time at all hours and in all places with motion picture directors who had "locations" and such to propose — that was something else again. He would leave her if she attempted it.

Came finally a certain picture producer, part owner of one of the great film companies, who was much impressed by what he had seen and heard of Ernestine. Because of what he could do for her if he chose (I heard this from herself later), he expected her to take a great personal interest in him, and in spite of the crudity of his approach, and because of the great power he represented, Ernestine was interested, because, as she said later, she was almost abnormally ambitious. A craze for fame was driving her—fame and applause — and so, while evading him as gracefully as possible, still, because of what he might do for her, she sought to cultivate his friendship. But when intimation of this reached Kinsey's ears, there was trouble. At the time — and not from her later — I heard of a storm which caused him to depart from his studio and take quarters in an hotel; also, that at three o'clock of another morning, later, she had followed him there and was all but beaten for her pains. After that came heartaches and reunions and separations, until finally there came a last separation. For a long time neither was to be seen about their old haunts. Ernestine, as I heard, had departed for studio work somewhere. Then, alone, Kinsey returned to the quiet and studious world that had known him. Obviously, he was too vigorous and interesting a man to share the favours of any woman, however attractive, with another, and that was what success in this work for Ernestine appeared to mean.

Some six or eight months later I was interested to see posted about New York on the bill-boards an announcement of a new screen drama or romance (one of the earliest of the six-reel productions), and with the name of Ernestine De Jongh as the star. In relatively modest type, as producer, appeared the name of the man who had been so engrossed in her the year before. Curiously enough, I had meanwhile met this man. He was one of those persons who think that the answer to everything — quite everything — lies in wealth and power. He was blond, red-blooded, dynamic, of the merchant and organizing type, contemptuous of rivals and of the pretensions of others. Trade, the plastering of his name here and there as owner or producer of this, that and the other, the possession of pretty women —

such; were his ambitions. How Ernestine De Jongh, fresh from the allurements of such a poetically-minded person as Kinsey, could have turned to a man of this type, was, from one point of view, and yet from another, not so very difficult to understand. While she admired Varn Kinsey's intellectual reputation, still more did she love finery and fame, and these the new-comer had to offer. So, I thought when I heard this, she has succumbed after all. Kinsey was not strong enough to hold her. There must be, I decided, a coarse streak there after all. The lure of fame! The hope of distinction! And in that field!

A week or two later I stepped in to see the picture, because I was interested to see the type of thing she was doing and whether her ambition in this direction was as justly grounded as her stage work, or whether this was a case of a medium prepared to flatter the vanity of one not legitimately suited to the work in hand. To my surprise and interest, the picture was entirely satisfactory, as such things go, and Ernestine also. The story? Oh, well, it was movieesque but very well suited to a girl of her beauty and charm, and built around just such a girl as herself. Its premier-pas was in such a world as she must have come from — an old farm home. And she was pictured as a simple country maid, dreaming of love and sortie impossible earthly supremacy. There was the customary country lover, whom she favoured, and the city magnate who eventually realised her worth and gave her her chance. There was the usual romantic ending — a return to the old home, only to find that the one-time love had fled also and had scored a success scarcely less exceptional than her own. Whether they were brought together after the approved movie pattern, I do not recall.

But what interested me was that from a technical point of view the thing was very well done, and the support given her all that could be expected of those who labour in that very artificial field. Indeed, the whole thing seemed to suggest a sincere-effort on the part of her sponsor to provide her with a proper medium. That meant then that he was really interested in her. More, it seemed to me that she bade fair to prove acceptable to a large public. She was beautiful; and no expense had been spared to make her costumes and settings as striking as possible. After all, I thought, she may have chosen wisely, from a practical point of view, anyhow. This man appears to be sufficiently interested in her to do as well by her as could be expected.

A year or two after this an actor I knew who had been to the west coast in connection with a screen contract returned to report alternating development in that part of the world. Los Angeles itself was not so much of a city — rather a Methodist settlement where formerly had been sand and cactus — but one of its suburbs, Holly-wood, was certainly a new kind of thing. Pepper and palm trees and flowers had made it into a kind of paradise. And there were marvellous skies and mountains, and automobile roads splendidly laid, to say nothing of a coastline dotted with beaches: A new and different kind of cottage — the California bungalow— modelled very much on Japanese lines - abounded, and in them dwelt the most startling and reckless and extravagant of a new type of Thespian, the motion picture star, with a salary which made the salaries of the most successful of

the "legitimate" workers seem low and small. A world of swagger and bluff and fine feathers was to be seen in surroundings which would inspire a poet.

Apropos of all this he suddenly added: "Did you ever meet Ernestine De Jongh who used to live here in New York?"

"Sure."

"Well, you should see her place out there. She has one of the most charming little homes I ever saw. Not large, but different, and suited to that climate. She has a walled court, with flowers and a fountain in it at the back, and the most delightfully furnished rooms in the house proper. They are Japanesy, with windows and doors that slide sidewise into the wall and open level with porches and walks. And she has a Japanese cook and maid, as well as a gardener. She was working on a new picture while I was there."

Well done, I thought. That shows how easily beauty united with a little practical sense triumphs in this world.

And then the conversation turned to the movie magnate whose interest had proved Ernestine's opportunity.

"He's a grandee of sorts in the movie world out there you know. He recently built himself a gorgeous residence in a place called Beverly Hills, which is just west of Hollywood. He's married, you know, and has a child."

"Is he?" I inquired, wondering, for I had thought that possibly...

Then he gave me the name of the actress whom he had married some six or seven years before.

"Well, what about Ernestine?"I asked.

"Oh, you know how it is, he replied. Those fellows at the top in the game take their women rather lightly. I haven't a doubt that he cared for her at first. At least he gave her start in pictures, and she has done fairly well. But those things never last, you know. A fellow like that meets too many beautiful aspirants all the time. And as things are now, it isn't very hard to launch one or two of them now and then. If she makes good, very well. If she doesn't, in the course of time she has to fall in behind those who do. The slate is wiped clean when they give a girl an opportunity. I think, all told, that Ernestine has nothing to complain of. She's been in three pictures, and is doing another now, He's out of it, however. I hear he's interested in..." and he gave me another current name.

Recalling the individual as I knew him and recalling also the nature of her attitude toward him at first, I could not help but feel that, apart from financial or practical considerations, the loss could not have been so much. She had probably never cared for him in an emotional sense. On the other hand, I could not help but feel that the relationship with Kinsey must have been of a different character. There are orders and orders of men and women. Some of them possess a sensitivity, a refinement, which takes and retains impressions deeply. Others are adamantine, incapable of a scratch. And, others are water, incapable of retaining any impression.

The thing dwelt with me. I still saw Kinsey about, alone as a rule, a book, or two under his arm and always busy with those reforms which seemed to afford him such a good living. And then, three years later, I journeyed to the west coast under

circumstances which tended to bring me in contact with the very element about which my actor friend had been talking. Not that I was personally connected with the film industry in any way — it was from contact with others that I heard and saw a great deal. In truth, I had occasion to study the thing at first hand, but this is no place to record my impressions. In the main they would not be fit to print anyhow! The tinsel! The arrogance! The vainglory! The asininity! The waste! The fol-de-rol! The rush of a little temporary prosperity to the head! Vulgarians, mental light-weights posing as geniuses, creators, heirs to the Bard of Avon himself! And surrounding and overflowing all this, downright gross and savage and defiant vulgarity!

In my youth, as a schoolboy, I used to read and vaguely wonder at the nature of the pagan orgy. Stray bits concerning the florid passions and. satiations of Sidon and Tyre and Greece and Rome and Antioch had blown my way, and I had wondered about them. Plainly, I argued then, in my innocence and ignorance; such things were gone forever. The like of them would never come again. The world would not tolerate even a trace of such things as had been those olden days. Yet, in the flower-covered bungalows of Hollywood and its environs, at that time, behind closed doors, and with obsequious assistant directors, camera men, masters and mistresses of wardrobe, alleged scenarists, and actors, all pandering to the elect as represented by directors and stars and managers generally, what might be representative of an older, and presumably concluded, world. I doubt if either novelist or historian has ever painted scenes more suggestive of what the ancients are supposed to have known than were here visible to the living eye. Drunkenness, lechery and gluttony were the order of the night, and the following morning, for that matter. Gestures and dances and erotically-worded appeals, calculated to urge the lagging or to hearten the half-hearted. Promiscuous pawing. Indiscriminate and public caressing. Actors, directors, stars and stockholders all united, in .an orgy of self-satiation, and without the danger of publicity. And on the part of those anxious to succeed in pictures at almost any price, a desire not to offend. And over it all a kind of compulsion arising from not only the power but the will of those in authority to bring about just such effects as were here being achieved.

This may sound like an exaggerated picture, but it is not. And it is entirely probable that, power; and affluence, wherever these same chance to be achieved, ever tend to licence after the manner here indicated. You are to remember that commercial power and affluence to a fantastic degree had descended upon, many who had never previously known either.

And of this world was this girl, now something of a personage. I will not say that she was, an enthusiastic member of it, because I do not know. Nevertheless, she was distinctly of the mind or mood to countenance all that she saw here for the sake of the advantage it might bring her financially. Then, more than now, the grandees and magnificoes of this realm — the male portion at least, to say nothing of a heavy percentage of the women themselves — were determined to satiate themselves at any cost. Rules were even made that no young married woman of any shade of loyalty to her vows need apply for advancement in this field, and no unmarried woman of any great beauty or physical appeal need apply unless willing

to submit herself, harem-wise, to the managers and directors, and even principals. For in nearly all cases at this time the principals were able to say with whom, or without whom, they would work. And if a girl were young and attractive she had to be hail-fellow-well-met with every Tom, Dick and Harry from prop-boy and office-scullion to director, casting director and president. She had to "troop," be "a regular fellow." The fact that Ernestine for several years was a figure in this local scene would — so it seemed to me at the time — indicate that in part at least she did as the Romans did. Still, one may seem at times and yet not actually be— though I met her at one of these bungalow parties at the "home" of a famous director one evening and was a witness to much that I have just described.

The entertainment had been in progress for several hours when the group of which I made one entered. Plainly there had been a steady flow of liquors. Quite all of those present were the worse for what they had already consumed. Girls and men - orchids and fashion plates —were here in number, dancing, singing, talking, or rallying one another about things with which they were familiar. Occasionally they disappeared, pair by pair, into one of the numerous minor rooms, only to reappear after a time smiling and defiant. Amazingly frank and frankly insulting questions were asked and answered. "If it isn't little...! And only three months ago she was so shy!" "Come see, fellows! Look in here! And drunk, too!" "Is it your idea, 'Clarice, that wearing so little will make you more enticing?" "Who's the beauty D — has brought with her to-night?" (This from a girl star of national and later international fame.) "Bring your girl friend over, D —, and introduce me, will you? We'll put sawdust on the floor and liquor on the table." "Say, Willard, you’re needed in here. You’re the only one will do, it seems...." Assort and arrange and apply such things for yourself. Your fancy cannot go very far amiss.

But, as I say, Ernestine De Jongh was there, and before her was one of those large, bull-like "heroes" of the film world, in de rigueur evening clothes but much the worse for liquor. He was taking such frank liberties with her as I would never have dreamed possible in her case, and she was passing the same off with a half-intoxicated smile, protecting herself as best she could but not very forcefully at that. Thinking she might recognize me and not wishing to embarrass, her, I turned away, and after a time left without actually speaking to her.

But having seen her again I was interested to learn of her state after these several years. She had looked about as attractive as ever, though not quite so young, with a way and air and a ready humour that was pleasing, enough. On inquiry I learned that financially she was about as well placed as ever, having a. car and the bungalow and considerable work as leading female support to one star and another, male and female. Yet she herself was no longer starred. A competent interpreter of such roles as were assigned to her, still she was placed second to one and another movie queen or king of probably no greater acting ability than herself. Why? By more than one casting director I was told that while she was a competent actress, still her colouring, which was dark, and her height, about five feet seven inches, were not in the mode just at the moment. Besides, she was looked upon as rather serious, more so than most of the stars then shining, and directors desired and required types which where all that youth and beauty meant but without much

brains. They liked to provide the "thought." They say that when they think too much, or even a little, they lose that girlish something which is very much in demand at this time," one casting director explained. I am convinced that he spoke the truth. The annual movie output of that period should attest the soundness of his observation, I think.

Yet from time to time she was appearing in current successes, such as they were, and at a salary of three hundred and fifty to five hundred dollars a week There was a film comedian of some standing and considerable intelligence who was considered to be one of her best friends. In fact, there was a small circle of semi-intellectuals in that region who paid no little attention to her and with whom she was engaged socially when she was not working.

During all of a year after my arrival, just one incident brought her to mind again. That was the sight of Kinsey one spring evening strolling along Hollywood Boulevard. He was dressed correctly for Hollywood —white flannel trousers, light silk shirt, a short, belted, grey coat, and no hat. Under his arm were a couple of books and a light overcoat. (The evenings are always cool in Hollywood, winter and summer.) The thought came to me that there must have been a reunion, else why his presence here? I hoped so.

And then one day, perhaps as much as a month or six weeks later, I received a letter from Ernestine. She had seen my name in a paper, as I guessed, and something that was said caused her to be interested. Or perhaps it was Kinsey who had spoken of me. At any rate, it was an artfully worded invitation to meet someone who was most anxious to see me and who was presuming upon her ancient and brief contact with me for the opportunity. I could read or feel that there was something she wanted at this time. But what? The comparatively recent glimpse of Kinsey caused me to go back in thought to him. Psychically I caught something — the thought that-maybe there had been an attempt on her part to ward a reconciliation and that possibly, the thing having come to nothing, she had decided to use me in some way, possibly as a flag or a rag of a provoking shade to wave in his face. Could that be? I wondered.

Curious as to the import of this, I looked her up and found her in her very charming bungalow. It was a lovely place, really a tasteful and colourful thing, and suggestive of a genuine love of beauty in her. After my one sight of her at the party I was prepared to find her sensibilities hardened, but this was not the case. She was gracious, tactful, artful, not unlike her old self, and yet more interesting because more experienced. She told me much concerning the lives of movie celebrities, their interests, relative positions, moods, successes, failures. I was not only interested in but struck by a subtle undercurrent in her talk which seemed to suggest, if not actually blazon, a certain dissatisfaction with herself and the world in which she found herself. It was this, that — so hectic and yet in the main so shallow and vapid. After a little while she began talking earnestly of Kinsey and the old life. In short, becoming interested, she proceeded to outline carefully just why she had left him. He was too dictatorial, or was tending to become so, in connection with what she did, her work especially. All the while, though, she was plainly manifesting the keenest interest in him, yet without seeming to wish to do

so. It was noticeable. He had been out here, she said, in connection with a great folk drama which was being planned and for which — the money-raising and staging ends of it, at least — she had ventured to suggest his name. Not that she wished to re-establish the old relationship. Distinctly she hinted the reverse of this — but rather because he was so well fitted for the task and she could be of service to the enterprise and him also. He had come and gone and she had not seen him more than two or three times. He was as interesting as ever, but of course... And then she gave me to understand that the old relation was done for, and that she had definitely willed it to be so. I wondered.

As for the picture magnate, there was never a word which could be construed as an admission that there had even been anything but a strictly business arrangement between them. He, or rather some members of the organization he controlled, had seen her in some of the plays in which she had appeared in the east and had been interested in her possibilities on the screen. Later he had sent for her and had offered her the title role in one of his productions. "I know that some people think differently," she emphasized, "but that was all there was to it. During the first two years I starred in four of his productions, then another company sent for me and I did some work for them. Since then I have been freelancing, as most of the people in this work are." And she gave me an interesting account of the drawbacks that attend a five-or ten-year contract, assuming that one were so foolish as to make one at the opening of one's career. The one point that remained a point was that by these varying organizations, and since those first days; she had never been starred. I could see and feel that she had sold herself for "a mess of potash," as one of Thackeray's amusing characters used to say.

Followed a number of meetings during the course of which she gave me my first keen insight into the type of woman who was pressing to succeed in so many of the "sweet sixteen" romances of the hour. There was but one answer, of course in quite every such case, though she never said so in so many words. Making due allowance for such few celebrities as came to their positions because of a tremendous ability manifested before ever they were called to the screen, they were mostly female adventurers, if riot libertines, and, to a very marked extent, wasters. They had to sell themselves to the highest bidders or fall; and quite uniformly they sold themselves. They had no essential refinement; they were suffering from complexes relating to dress, beauty, and screen recognition, to say nothing of the personal approval of men they considered marvellous accomplishes, of this, that and the other, yet who, in the main, were bounders and dubs and wasters like themselves. The substance of her observations, along with those of others, is to be found in a series of articles published by me in one of the screen publications of the time. All that she reported could not be published, of course, owing to censorship limitations.

But it was not these things, irritating and discouraging as they were, but herself in relation to them and to such ideals as at any time she may have possessed, that interested me. She knew this and resented, I am sure, the worst phases of her career, and yet set up a purely material defence. Her bungalow, her clothes, her car, her friendships in this world, depended upon her accepting the

conditions as she found them, you see, and more, pretending to like them if actually she did not. I suspected, and am sure that I am right, that for some time she did like them, captivated by the flare and show and animal spirits of this realm. Her appearance at the party I attended indicated as much. Later, like the prodigal son, having had her fill of this particular kind of husk, her mood tended to revert, for a time, anyhow, to that other world of which Kinsey was a fair representative. She was overawed, if not actually captivated by the mental and artistic prestige which Kinsey and that world had represented to her and which this present world of hers did not.

And after a very little time, by the uses to which she attempted to put these contacts with me, I could see that such was the case. Despite all she had to say about the characters and methods of one and another of these seekers and beginners, to say nothing of those who were already successful, still, like every other person in that decidedly weedy field, she was endeavouring to get ahead herself as best she might. I began to see that one of the principal sins was to overawe some of these celebrities with her connexions and contacts in the Kinsey realm. Also that, after a time I was likely to be used to the same end. That is, being used as a stalking horse or decoy for another. She could scarcely suggest a walk, a drive, or a dinner, or a quiet hour's chat anywhere, without having as an ulterior purpose an ending-up at some cafe or club or bungalow or apartment where one was likely to meet one or another of the "bigwigs" and under such circum most certain to reflect credit upon her. And on such occasions she was almost insistent upon introductions and "Who's Who" explanations which could only prove disagreeable. More than once I was compelled to make it plain that I abhorred promiscuous introductions, especially in this field. I had no stomach for such manoeuvring as she was indulging in. Our friendship must rest upon simpler and less conspicuous things if it was to endure. This, as one hears it phrased these days, she accepted in principle but not in fact. And yet, in spite of all her faults, I liked her as a type and example and made strenuous efforts not to prove too irritable or inconvenient.

But it was not to be. In spite of all hints, and even definite objections, there was this tendency on nearly every occasion that we met. Irritated one afternoon by the sudden descent of a group when it had been plainly understood that there was to be no one, I left, and that in the face of the suddenly assembled company. Thereafter, our contacts were not so numerous, accidental mostly, in the streets or restaurants.

But during the time that I was with her I was really fascinated by the picture she presented of one who keenly realized the defects of the world in which she found herself and because of that I was troubled at the thought of an ideal implanted in her by Kinsey which she was unwilling to relinquish. Yet, at the same time, as I could see, she was still anxious to unite the two fields in some way, to make herself something in both. Once she brought out a book of poems written by Kinsey and showed me those she liked most. They were obviously about her and it was easy to see that she was still fascinated by the tribute. She spoke of his genius, his essential culture and superiority— so different from those with whom she was

now associated. In the room also was a portrait of her by an artist friend of Kinsey's, made at the time that they were still together. The painter had caught not a little of that remarkable appeal that was hers then. By contrast I was forced to note that after a lapse of about six years she had coarsened and hardened to some extent, and yet not so much as to make it disturbingly apparent. There was still about her at times, especially when she was made up to go out, that seeming freshness and youthfulness and inexperience which had characterized her when I first saw her, and which no doubt she sought consciously to retain. When she inquired if I thought she had changed any, I gallantly lied.

At the same time I was compelled to note that in so far as her speech, manners, and thoughts were concerned, especially when she was seriously engaged in conversation and not posing, many of the marks of her later sophistication were apt to become apparent. Little things like an expression, verbal or facial, or a word of reference to a place or person (such as the rooms of a wretched director whom I knew and who was subsequently debarred from any connexion with studios anywhere) threw an all but searing light upon her. I could see that in spite of anything she might say or do, she had drunk deep at this well, and now, curiously enough, was ashamed of the meaner aspects of it all. In so far as one might guess from her conversation, she had never been to any such party as the one described. (She never knew, of course, that I had actually seen her at one.) She wanted to be the woman whom Kinsey had idealized. That finer poetic something which was in him, and which she had once known and recognized, she now craved far more than anything else that could have come to her. At times there was something poignant in her references to him and the life they had known together.

About that time there came the first and most serious slump in the motion picture industry. For one or another of the various reasons assigned at the time — overproduction, importation of foreign films, extravagance on the part of those engaged in production, the determination of Wall Street to force a reduction of expenses and smaller salaries upon all principals, a falling off of attendance at movie theatres — production all but ceased for something over a year. Such salaries as were paid were cut to one-half or less. Perhaps as many as forty thousand workers of all sorts and descriptions were most disastrously affected for more than a year. Literally scores of directors, who posed as dictators and masters and had built for themselves imposing homes and strutted about with the air of princes, were compelled to close or dispose of these either permanently or temporarily. Stars, staresses, and starettes, of much or little repute, to say nothing of actors and actresses of the second lead, "heavies," "vamps," assistant leads, ingenues, camera men, assistant directors, scenarists, and so on, were compelled to abandon, for the time being anyhow, their almost luxurious fields of employment, and wait, making the best of a dreary period during which their incomes ceased. Literally hundreds of the most artistically fashioned and luxuriously furnished bungalows and homes of those connected with this industry were either offered for rent or after a time the leases and contents sold outright. The fifty or more once humming studios of that western metropolis stood silent and idle. Toward the end of the year absolute panic seemed to seize upon nearly all who had been waiting so

patiently for some signs of resumption, and by degrees they moved into other fields — vaudeville, the legitimate stage, designing, dress-making, millinery, beauty parlours — in fact, everything or anything that offered. By the beginning of the second year nearly all had returned to the east, hoping to sustain themselves in some way there until better times should come again. Indeed, a year and a half had passed before there was even a shadow of a change in this very depressed field.

During this time I saw very little of the woman whose career had thus far interested me. Once, in front of one of the larger studios, which was practically inoperative, I chanced in passing to see her and another actress just leaving the place. But there was no motor-car in sight. This was about eleven o'clock in the morning, and the absence of a car in her case at that time struck me as odd. During the days of her prosperity I knew that she never ventured anywhere unless in her own or another's car or a taxi. Later, meeting her upon the principal thoroughfare, I was told by her that she had been compelled to give up her home and her car because of conditions in the business. She had, however, she said, taken a rather charming apartment elsewhere, which I was to come and see. She was living much more simply now — everyone was. It had not been possible for her to maintain the old scale of living for some time past. No one knew when things would be better.

I did stop at her new place one day, and found it pleasing enough as to location, though far from being as attractive as her bungalow. The latter had represented an outlay of perhaps seven or eight thousand a year. This might have cost as much as fifteen hundred, furnished — no more. From a brief talk with her I gathered that she was dubious as to her future. She was apparently alone and at the time not interested in anyone, unless, perhaps, it was Kinsey, who was no longer interested in her. The tendency of those who planned and directed pictures, she complained, was ever away from these who were proficient, if ageing, however slightly, and toward those who were young and inexperienced. Inexperience, where joined with youth and charm, though not necessarily ability, was at a premium with most of the dominant directors because they could use .and mould these aspirants to their will and mood, taking all the credit for the result. Besides, here was this amazing slump, or cessation, the end of which no one could foresee. She hinted that she, too, might sell the furnishings of her house (which all this time had been carried on a lease), and return east, where, of course the legitimate stage was her only hope. Nevertheless, she still continued to carry a certain air of optimism and make-believe security such as is affected by most in that world.

Just about this time — a week or ten days before, I think — the papers had reported the death by suicide of a girl we both knew — one of the pleasing figures of the world of which Ernestine and Kinsey had been a part. The life and experiences of this girl are too long and too complicated to inject here; they would make a novel, and a powerful one. The thing that interested me, and that I foolishly commented upon at the time, was that particular atom's very courageous outlook on life and death. More than once I had heard her say, and this I now idly related, that she counted the years from six-teen to twenty-eight as the very best of those granted to women. After them came, more than likely, the doldrums. Come what might, her purpose was to spend these years as she chose. At the end... well.... And

it was so, at twenty-nine, that she had ended herself — with a sleeping potion — after an almost fantastic career.

Ernestine appeared to be intensely interested. She drummed on the table with her fingers as we talked, and after we had concluded seemed to be thinking deeply,

"I think she was right," she said, after a time. "I believe in that. I despise age myself. Anyone who had been really beautiful and knows what it means will understand."

I looked at her curiously. There was something intense and, I might say, predetermined in the way she spoke.

I saw nothing more of her. The next time I passed that way a "For Rent" sign posted in one of the windows of the apartment stared at me. So she has gone, I thought, and stopped to see if her name was still on the plate. But it had been removed. Later, I heard that she had sold all her furniture and gone back to New York. Three months later, the series of articles the data for which she had largely furnished having begun in one of the magazines, and the newspapers having reprinted some of the most startling and disturbing facts detailed therein, I received a laconic "Thanks" by wire, and so I understood that she had been reading them and approved. But after that I heard nothing until one morning all of the Los Angeles daily papers carried an extended dispatch from New York covering the suspected suicide in Greenwich Village of one Ernestine De Jongh, quondam screen star, who, in an apartment which formerly she had occupied while connected with the legitimate stage in New York, had turned on the gas. No data as to a probable cause was available. It was true that she had been connected with pictures and that these were now in the doldrums, but it was not believed that she was in need of money. Her family, so it was said, was well-to-do, and had been notified. No letters or least scrap of writing had been found. It was not known that she was in love with anybody, though it had been rumoured recently that she was engaged to a certain famous star. Subsequently he denied this, insisting that they had been merely friends.

But I thought I understood. Somehow also I thought I understood why she had returned to the scene of her older, and possibly happier, days with Kinsey. Or did I? At any rate, there she went, and there they found her. I never learned what, if any, part he played in that latest development. No one seemed to know that he had played any. It was said that he was very sad.

THEODORE DREISER (1871-1945)

Theodore Dreiser was the eleventh of thirteen children. His father was severe and, according to Dreiser, “mentally a little weak”; he was, in any case, unable to provide properly for his family and the family moved about often from house to house. His mother, on the other hand, did all she could to care for her numerous children. Both of his parents often appear in Dreiser’s fiction.

Dreiser did manage to attend one year of university, but most of his education came from his own reading, particularly of Thomas Huxley, Charles Darwin and from his work as a journalist. According to his views, human beings, along with all other living beings, are influenced by their environment and biological makeup.

Among his works should be mentioned the following: *Sister Carrie* – about a working girl advancing up the career ladder; and a trilogy about a principle-free and unscrupulous tycoon *The Financier; The Titan; The Stoic*

ERNESTINE

Some commentary for the text:

- W.Thackeray – a very famous British author (1811-1863). “Vanity Fair” is among his masterpieces (a poor orphan Becky Sharp went up the social ladder sometimes acting in not a very decent way).
- Greenwich Village (or Village) – a very prestigious district in New York known as a living place of artists and writes as well as other people engaged in this field.
- Little theatre movement – an amateur theatre; such theatres major in staging non-commercial experimental plays.

Active Vocabulary – Your home task is to find proper Russian equivalents for the following words and combinations, to learn them and get ready to write a quiz:

To compel – to force smb to do smth
Lecherous – a lecherous man shows his sexual desire for women in a way that is unpleasant or annoying
Covetous – having a very strong desire to have smth that smb else has
Sycophantic – praising important or powerful people too much because you want to get smth from them – used in order to show disapproval
Lax – not strict or careful enough about standards of behaviour, work, safety
Dissolute – having an immoral way of life(e.g. drinking too much alcohol or having sex with many people)
Malevolent – a malevolent person wants to harm other people
To aspire – to desire and work to achieve smth important

To meet the exigencies of life – the things you must do in order to deal with a difficult or urgent situation (demands)
To bag the game – be very skillful at smth, manage to get smth
Toady – smb who pretends to like an important person and does things for them, so that that person will help them – used to show disapproval
To be engrossed in – to be very much interested without noticing anything else
Conspicuous – great, impressive and very easy to notice
To further (the career of smb) – to help smth progress or be successful
To sustain – to make smth continue to exist or happen for a period of time
To keep up appearances – to dress and behave in the way in which people expect you to, especially to hide your true situation
To spare no expenses – to spend as much money or do everything necessary to make smth really good or successful
To take liberties with – to treat smb without respect
To attest – to show or prove that smth is true
Vapid – lacking intelligence, interest or imagination
A bounder – a man who has behaved in a way that is morally wrong
To be overawed – to make smb feel respect or fear, so that they are nervous or unable to say or do anything
Poignant – making you feel sad or full of pity
The doldrums – (in the doldrums) – if an industry, company, activity is in the doldrums, it is not doing well or developing
To make allowances for – to let smb behave in a way you do not normally approve of, because you know there are special reasons for their behaviour (to take into account)

Comment on the following sentences from the text:

- She was too much inclined, possibly, to look for worth in others – too little to compel it in herself.
- He was showing her the Village.
- His opinion confirmed my impression that after her fashion she was a personage, not a mere chemical salt upon the sensual hormones of the male.
- She was by no means an affectionate slave.
- Nevertheless the opportunity for the concomitant enormous financial returns was being grasped and responded to by attractive and ambitious girlhood the country over.
- She did as the Romans did.
- She knew this and resented the worst phases of her career, and yet set up a purely material defence.
- She was still anxious to unite the two fields in some way, to make herself something in both.
- In spite of anything she might say or do, she had drunk deep at this well, and now, curiously enough, was ashamed of the meaner aspects of it all.
- She still continued to carry a certain air of optimism and make-believe security such as is affected by most in that world.

– You have to sell yourself to the highest bidders or fall.

Quote the text to prove that:

- Ernestine was a very attractive young lady;
- Her beauty was envied by women;
- She was charmed and fascinated by people “connected with the arts and intellectual matters”;
- She had a good insight into people’s character;
- Van Kinsey was in love with Ernestine;
- Motion pictured irritated and infuriated Van Kinsey;
- Ernestine aspired for success;
- The world of the movie-making was cruel and deceitful;
- Kinsey implanted a kind of ideal in Ernestine.

Answer the questions:

- Can you guess the time and the place of the action of the story?
- Why did Ernestine stop being popular?
- Do you think Ernestine understood herself that she “had sold herself for “a mess of potash”?
- Did Ernestine really realize the tragedy of her position and her surroundings?
- Why did she try to get ahead herself as best she might?
- Do you think she regretted having changed?
- Do youth, charm and inexperience really matter in movie making?
- Did Ernestine really commit suicide?

The questions for home self-work and study, find any additional information and be ready to discuss in class:

- Why did the author mention the novel “Vanity Fair” by Thackeray? What is the role of this allusion in this story? Can you trace back the connection between these two works?

Prepare a brief character sketch of Ernestine

Analyze the episode where the crisis in movie making is described and draw your conclusions. What caused a dreary period in movie making?

Some topics for developing argumentation and rhetorical speech skills:

- It’s difficult for poetically-minded people to survive in the world of business.
- The lure of fame is hard to resist.
- The negative effects of coming into commercial power and affluence on a human soul.
- The shocking world of show business.
- The way to success: which matters - brains or appearance?

– People's vanity can sometimes make them vain.

Comment on the following and connect it with the plot of the story:

– A great obstacle to happiness is to expect too much happiness. (Fontenelle)
– There are two tragedies in life. One is not to get your heart's desire. The other is to get it. (G.B.Shaw)
– To get into the best society nowadays, one has either to feed people, amuse people, or shock people. (O.Wilde)

After all these exercises can you now formulate the message? (*message – the main or most important idea that someone is trying to tell people about in a film, book, speech).

SECTION II (the beginning of the XX-th century)

LITERARY CONTEXT

The inter-war period in American literary history was characterized by experimentation and creative inventiveness as writers attempted to come to terms with new philosophical and psychological interpretations of reality. The discovery of the subconscious and new concepts regarding time meant that the scope of literary reference was broadened and orthodox beliefs of the past were laid open to question.

Some critics backed up by certain writers launched their ferocious crusade against established literary conventions and authors. Their attacks on the narrow-minded, provincial aspects of much of rural American life was heralded as a “revolt against the village”.

One of the authors involved was the Midwestern Sherwood Anderson, whose collections of short stories *Winesburg, Ohio* were to have a considerable impact on both Hemingway and Faulkner. In *Winesburg, Ohio,* Anderson explores the character of small town inhabitants from a psychological point of view in a series of interrelated sketches and tales dealing with the inner emotions and hidden desires of the various characters as told by a newspaper-reporter narrator. The stories show the influence of Freud.

Sherwood Anderson

The Strength of God

The Reverend Curtis Hartman was pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Winesburg, and had been in that position ten years. He was forty years old, and by his nature very silent and reticent. To preach, standing in the pulpit before the people, was always a hardship for him and from Wednesday morning until Saturday evening he thought of nothing but the two sermons that must be preached on Sunday. Early on Sunday morning he went into a little room called a study in the bell tower of the church and prayed. In his prayers there was one note that always predominated. "Give me strength and courage for Thy work, 0 Lord!" he pleaded, kneeling on the bare floor and bowing his head in the presence of the task that lay before him.

The Reverend Hartman was a tall man with a brown beard. His wife, a stout, nervous woman, was the daughter of a manufacturer of underwear at Cleveland, Ohio. The minister himself was rather a favorite in the town. The elders of the church liked him because he was quiet and unpretentious and Mrs. White, the banker's wife, thought him scholarly and refined.

The Presbyterian Church held itself somewhat aloof from the other churches of Winesburg. It was larger and more imposing and its minister was better paid. He even had a carriage of his own and on summer evenings sometimes drove about town with his wife. Through Main Street and up and down Buckeye Street he

went, bowing gravely to the people, while his wife afire with secret pride, looked at him out of the corners of her eyes and worried lest the horse become frightened and run away.

For a good many years after he came to Winesburg things went well with Curtis Hartman. He was not one to arouse keen enthusiasm among the worshippers in his church but on the other hand he made no enemies. In reality he was much in earnest and sometimes suffered prolonged periods of remorse because he could not go crying the word of God in the highways and byways of the town. He wondered if the flame of the spirit really burned in him and dreamed of a day when a strong sweet new current of power would come like a great wind into his voice and his soul and the people would tremble before the spirit of God made manifest in him. "I am a poor stick and that will never really happen to me," he mused dejectedly, and then a patient smile lit up his features. "Oh well, 1 suppose I'm doing well enough," he added philosophically.

The room in the bell tower of the church, where on Sunday mornings the minister prayed for an increase in him of the power of God, had but one window. It was long and narrow and swung outward on a hinge like a door. On the window, made of little leaded panes, was a design showing the Christ laying his hand upon the head of a child. One Sunday morning in the summer as lie sat by his desk in the room with a large Bible opened before him, and the sheets of his sermon scattered about, the minister was shocked to see, in the upper room of the house next door, a woman lying in her bed and smoking a cigarette while she read a book. Curtis Hartman went on tiptoe to the window and closed it softly. He was horror stricken at the thought of a woman smoking and trembled also to think that his eyes, just raised from the pages of the book of God, had looked upon the bare shoulders and. white throat of a woman. With his brain in a whirl he went down into the pulpit and preached a long sermon without once thinking of his gestures or his voice. The sermon attracted unusual attention because of its power and clearness. "I wonder if she is listening, if my voice is carrying a message into her soul," he thought and began to hope that on future Sunday mornings he might be able to say words that would touch and awaken the woman apparently far gone in secret sin.

The house next door to the Presbyterian Church, through the windows of which the minister had seen the sight that had so upset him, was occupied by two women. Aunt Elizabeth Swift, a grey competent-looking widow with money in the Winesburg National Bank, lived there with her daughter Kate Swift, a school teacher. The school teacher was thirty years old and had a neat trim-looking figure. She had few friends and bore a reputation of having a sharp tongue. When he began to think about her, Curtis Hartman remembered that she had been to Europe and had lived for two years in New York City. "Perhaps after all her smoking means nothing," he thought. He began to remember that when lie was a student in college and occasionally read novels, good although somewhat worldly women, had smoked through the pages of a book that had once fallen into his hands. With a rush of new determination he worked on his sermons all through the week and forgot, in his zeal to reach the ears and the soul of this new listener, both his

embarrassment in the pulpit and the necessity of prayer in the study on Sunday mornings.

Reverend Hartman's experience with women had been somewhat limited. He was the son of a wagon maker from Muncie, Indiana, and had worked his way through college. The daughter of the underwear manufacturer bad boarded in a house where he lived during his school days and he had married her after a formal and prolonged courtship, carried on for the most part by the girl herself. On his marriage day the underwear manufacturer had given his daughter five thousand dollars and he promised to leave her at least twice that amount in his will. The minister had thought himself fortunate in marriage and had never permitted himself to think of other women.' He did not want to think of other women. What he wanted was to do the work of God quietly and earnestly.

In the soul of the minister a struggle awoke. From wanting to reach the ears of Kate Swift, and through his sermons to delve into her soul, he began to want also to look again at the figure lying white and quiet in the bed. On a Sunday morning when he could not sleep because of his thoughts he arose and went to walk in the streets. When he had gone along Main Street almost to the old Richmond place he stopped and picking up a stone rushed off to the room in the bell tower. With the stone he broke out a corner of the window and then locked the door and sat down at the desk before the open Bible to wait. When the shade of the window to Kate Swift's room was raised he could see, through the hole, directly into her bed, but she was not there. She also had arisen and had gone for a walk and the hand that raised the shade was the hand of Aunt Elizabeth Swift.

The minister almost wept with joy at this deliverance from the carnal desire to "peep" and went back to his own house "praising" God. In an ill moment he forgot, however, to stop the hole in the window. The piece of glass broken out at the corner of the window just nipped off the bare heel of the boy standing motionless and looking with rapt eyes into the face of the Christ.

Curtis Hartman forgot his sermon on that Sunday morning. He talked to his congregation and in his talk said that it was a mistake for people to think of their minister as a man set aside and intended by nature to lead a blameless life. "Out of my own experience I know that we, who are the ministers of God's word, are beset by the same temptations that assail you," he declared. "I have been tempted ana have surrendered to temptation. It is only the hand of God, placed beneath my head, that has raised me up. As he has raised me so also will he raise you. Do not despair. In your hour of sin raise your eyes to the skies and you will be again and again saved."

Resolutely the minister put the thoughts of the woman in the bed out of his mind and began to be something like a lover in the presence of his wife. One evening when they drove out together he turned the horse out of Buckeye Street and in the darkness on Gospel Hill, above Waterworks Pond, put his arm about Sarah Hartman's waist. When he had eaten breakfast in the morning and was ready to retire to his study at the back of his house he went around the table and kissed his wife on the cheek. When thoughts of Kate Swift came into his head, he smiled

and raised his eyes to the skies. "Intercede for me, Master," he muttered, "keep me in the narrow path intent on Thy work."

And now began the real struggle in the soul of the brown-bearded minister. By chance he discovered that Kate Swift was in the habit of lying in her bed in the evenings and reading a book. A lamp stood on a table by the side of the bed and the light streamed down upon her white shoulders and bare throat. On the evening when he made the discovery the minister sat at the desk in the study from nine until after eleven and when her light was put out stumbled out of the church to spend two more hours walking and praying in the streets. He did not want to kiss the shoulders and the throat of Kate Swift and had not allowed his mind to dwell on such thoughts. He did not know what he wanted. "1 am God's child and he must save me from myself," he cried, in the darkness under the trees as he wandered in the streets. By a tree he stood and looked at the sky that was covered with hurrying clouds. He began to talk to God intimately and closely. "Please, Father, do not forget me. Give me power to go tomorrow and repair the hole in the window. Lift my eyes again to the skies. Stay with me, Thy servant, in his hour of need."

Up and down through the silent streets walked the minister and for days and weeks his soul was troubled. He could not understand the temptation that had come to him nor could he fathom the reason for its coming. In a way he began to blame God, saying to himself that he had tried to keep his feet in the true path and had not run about seeking sin. "Through my days as a young man and all through my life here I have gone quietly about my work," he declared. "Why now should I be tempted? What have I done that this burden should be laid on me?"

Three times during the early fall and winter of that year Curtis Hartman crept out of his house to the room in the bell tower to sit in the darkness looking at the figure of Kate Swift lying in her bed and later went to walk and pray in the streets. He could not understand himself. For weeks he would go along scarcely thinking of the school teacher and telling himself that he had conquered the carnal desire to look at her body. And then something would happen. As he sat in the study of his own house, hard at work on a sermon, he would become nervous and begin to walk up and down the room. "I will go out into the streets," he told himself and even as he let himself in at the church door he persistently denied to himself the cause of his being there. "I will not repair the hole in the window and I will train myself to come here at night and sit in the presence of this woman without raising my eyes. I will not be defeated in this thing. The Lord has devised this temptation as a test of my soul and I will grope my way out of darkness into the light of righteousness."

One night in January when it was bitter cold and snow lay deep on the streets of Winesburg Curtis Hartman paid his last visit to the room in the bell tower of the church. It was past nine o'clock when he left his own house and he set out so hurriedly that he forgot to put on his overshoes. In Main Street no one was abroad but Hop Higgins the night watchman and in the whole town no one was awake but the watchman and young George Willard, who sat in the office of the Winesburg Eagle trying to write a story. Along the street to the church went the minister, plowing through the drifts and thinking that this time he would utterly give way to

sin. "I want to look at the woman and to think of kissing her shoulders and I am going to let myself think what I choose," he declared bitterly and tears came into his eyes. He began to think that he would get out of the ministry and try some other way of life. "I shall go to some city and get into business," he declared. "If my nature is such that I cannot resist sin, I shall give myself over to sin. At least I shall not be a hypocrite, preaching the word of God with my mind thinking of the shoulders and neck of a woman who does not belong to me."

It was cold in the room of the bell tower of the church on that January night and almost as soon as he came into the room Curtis Hartman knew that if he stayed he would be ill. His feet were wet from tramping in the snow and there was no fire. In the room in the house next door Kate Swift had not yet appeared. With grim determination the man sat down to wait. Sitting in the chair and gripping the edge of the desk on which lay the Bible he stared into the darkness thinking the blackest thoughts of his life. He thought of his wife and for the moment almost hated her. "She has always been ashamed of passion and has cheated me," he thought. "Man has a right to expect living passion and beauty in a woman. He has no right to forget that he is an animal and in me there is something that is Greek. I will throw off the woman of my bosom and seek other women. I will besiege this school teacher. I will fly in the face of all men and if I am a creature of carnal lusts I will live then for my lusts."

The distracted man trembled from head to foot, partly from cold, partly from the struggle in which he was engaged. Hours passed and a fever assailed his body. His throat began to hurt and his teeth chattered. His feet on the study floor felt like two cakes of ice. Still he would not give up. "I will see this woman and will think the thoughts I have never dared to think," he told himself, gripping the edge of the desk and waiting,

Curtis Hartman came near dying from the effects of that night of waiting in the church, and also he found in the thing that happened what he took to be the way of life for him. On other evenings when he had waited he had not been able to see, through the little hole in the glass, any part of the school teacher's room except that occupied by her bed. In the darkness he had waited until the woman suddenly appeared sitting in the bed in her white night robe. When the light was turned up she propped herself up among the pillows and read a book. Sometimes she smoked one of the cigarettes. Only her bare shoulders and throat were visible.

On the January night, after he had come near dying with cold and after his mind had two or three times actually slipped away into an odd land of fantasy so that he had by an exercise of will power to force himself back into consciousness, Kate Swift appeared. In. the room next door a lamp was lighted and the waiting man stared into an empty bed. Then upon the bed before his eyes a naked woman threw herself. Lying face downward she wept and beat with her fists upon the pillow. With a final outburst of weeping she half arose, and in the presence of the man who had waited to look and to think thoughts the woman of sin began to pray. In the lamplight her figure, slim and strong, looked like the figure of the boy in the presence of the Christ on the leaded window.

Curtis Hartman never remembered how he got out of the church. With a cry he arose, dragging the heavy desk along the floor. The Bible fell, making a great clatter in the silence. When the light in the house next door went out he stumbled down the stairway and into the street. Along the street he went and ran in at the door of the Winesburg Eagle to George Willard, who was tramping up and down in the office undergoing a struggle of his own, he began to talk half incoherently. "The ways of God are beyond human understanding," he cried, running in quickly and closing the door. He began to advance upon the young man, his eyes glowing and his voice ringing with fever," I have found the light," he cried. "After ten' years in this town, God has manifested himself to me in the body of a woman." His voice dropped and he began to whisper." I did not understand," he said. "What I took to be a trial of my soul was only a preparation for a new and more beautiful fervor of the spirit. God has appeared to me in the person of Kate Swift, the school teacher, kneeling naked on a bed. Do you know Kate Swift? Although she may not be aware of it, she is an instrument of God, bearing the message of truth."

Reverend Curtis Hartman turned and ran out of the office. At the door he stopped, and after looking up and clown the deserted street, turned again to George Willard. "I am delivered. Have no fear." He held up a bleeding fist for the young man to see. "I smashed the glass of the window," he cried. "Now it will have to be wholly replaced. The strength of God was in me and. I broke it with my fist."

The Teacher

Snow lay deep in the streets of Winesburg. It had begun to snow about ten o'clock in the morning and a wind sprang up and blew the snow in clouds along Main Street. The frozen mud roads that led into town were fairly smooth and in places ice covered the mud. "There will be good sleighing," said Will Henderson, standing by the bar in Ed Griffith's saloon. Out of the saloon he went and met Sylvester West the druggist stumbling along in the kind of heavy overshoes called arctics. "Snow will bring the people into town on Saturday," said the druggist. The two men stopped and discussed their affairs. Will Henderson, who had on a light overcoat and no overshoes, kicked the heel of his left foot with the toe of the right. "Snow will be good for the wheat," observed the druggist sagely.

Young George Willard, who had nothing to do, was glad because he did not like working that day. The weekly paper had been printed and taken to the post office Wednesday evening and the snow began to fall on Thursday. At eight o'clock, after the morning train had passed, he put a pair of skates in his pocket and went up to Waterworks Pond but did not go skating. Past the pond and along a path that followed Wine Creek he went until he came to a grove of beech trees. There he built a fire against the side of a log and sat down at the end of the log to think. When the snow began to fall and the wind to blow he hurried about getting fuel for the fire.

The young reporter was thinking of Kate Swift, who had once been his school teacher. On the evening before he had gone to her house to get a book she

wanted him to read and had been alone with her for an hour. For the fourth or fifth time the woman had talked to him with great earnestness and he could not make out what she meant by her talk. He began to believe she might be in love with him and the thought was both pleasing and annoying.

Up from the log he sprang and began to pile sticks on the fire. Looking about to be sure he was alone he talked aloud pretending he was in the presence of the woman. "Oh, you're just letting on you know you are," he declared. "I am going to find out about you. You wait and see."

The young man got up and went back along the path toward town leaving the fire blazing in the wood. As he went through the streets the skates clanked in his pocket. In his own room in the New Willard House he built a fire in the stove and lay down on top of the bed. He began to have lustful thoughts and pulling down the shade of the window closed his eyes and turned his face to the wall. He took a. pillow into his arms and embraced it thinking first of the school teacher, who by her words had stirred something within him, and later of Helen White, the slim daughter of the town banker, with whom he had been for a long time half in love.

By nine o'clock of that evening snow lay deep in the streets and the weather had become bitter cold. It was difficult to walk about. The stores were dark and the people had crawled away to their houses. The evening train from Cleveland was very late but nobody was interested in its arrival. By ten o'clock all but four of the eighteen hundred citizens of the town were in bed .

Hop Higgins, the night watchman, was partially awake. He was lame and carried a heavy stick. On dark nights he carried a lantern. Between nine and ten o'clock he went his rounds. Up and down Main Street he stumbled through the drifts trying the doors of the stores. Then he went into alleyways and tried the back doors. Finding all tight he hurried around the corner to the. New Willard House and beat on the door. Through the rest of the night he intended to stay by the stove. "You go to bed, I'll keep the stove going," he said to the boy who slept on a cot in the hotel office.

Hop Higgins sat down by the stove and took off his shoes. When the boy had gone to sleep he began to think of his own affairs. He intended to paint his house in the spring and sat by the stove calculating the cost of paint and labor. That led him into other calculations. The night watchman was sixty years old and wanted to retire. He had been a soldier in the Civil War and drew a small pension. He hoped to find some new method or making a living and aspired to become a professional breeder of ferrets. Already he had four of the strangely shaped savage little creatures, that are used by sportsmen in the pursuit of rabbits, in the cellar of his house. "Now I have one male and three females," he mused. "If I am 1ucky by spring I shall have twelve or fifteen. In another year I shall be able to begin advertising ferrets for sale in the sporting papers."

The night watchman settled into his chair and his mind became a blank. He did not sleep. By years of practice he had trained himself to sit for hours through the long nights neither asleep nor awake. In the morning he was almost as refreshed as though he had slept.

With Hop Higgins safely stowed away in the chair behind the stove only three people were awake in Winesburg. George Willard was in the office of the Eagle pretending to be at work on the writing of a story but in reality continuing the mood of the morning by the fire in the wood. In the bell tower of the Presbyterian Church the Reverend Curtis Hartman was sitting in the darkness preparing himself for a revelation from God, and Kate Swift, the school teacher, was leaving her house for a walk in the storm,

It was past ten o'clock when Kate Swift set out and the walk was unpremeditated. It was as though the man and the boy, by thinking of her, had driven her forth into the wintry streets. Aunt Elizabeth Swift had gone to the country seat concerning some business in connection with mortgages in which she had money invested and would not be back until the next day. By a huge stove, called a base burner, in the living room of the house sat the daughter reading a book. Suddenly she sprang to her feet and, snatching a cloak from a rack by the front door, ran out of the house.

At the age of thirty Kate Swift was not known in Winesburg as a pretty woman. Her complexion was not good and her face was covered with blotches that indicated ill health. Alone in the night in the winter streets she was lovely. Her back was straight, her shoulders square, and her features were as the features of a tiny goddess on a pedestal in a garden in the dim light of a summer evening.

During the afternoon the school teacher had been to see Doctor Welling concerning her health. The doctor had scolded her and had declared she was in danger of losing her hearing. It was foolish for Kate Swift to be abroad in the storm, foolish and perhaps dangerous.

The woman in the streets did not remember the words of the doctor and would not have turned back had she remembered. She was very cold but after walking for five minutes no longer minded the cold. First she went to the end of her own street and then across a pair of hay scales set in the ground before a feed barn and into Trunion Pike. Along Trunion Pike she went to Ned Winters' barn and turning east followed a street of low frame houses that led over Gospel Hill and into Sucker Road that ran down a shallow valley past Ike Smead's chicken farm to Waterworks Pond. As she went along, the bold, excited mood that had driven her out of doors passed and then returned again.

There was something biting and forbidding in the character of Kate Swift. Everyone felt it. In the schoolroom she was silent, cold, and stern, and yet in an odd way very close to her pupils. Once in a long while something seemed to have come over her and she was happy. All of the children in the schoolroom felt the effect of her happiness. For a time they did not work but sat back in their chairs and looked at her. .

With hands clasped behind her back the school teacher walked up and down in the schoolroom and talked very rapidly. It did not seem to matter what subject came into her mind. Once she talked to the children of Charles Lamb and made up strange, intimate little stories concerning the life of the dead writer. The stories were told with the air of one who had lived in a house with Charles Lamb and

knew all the secrets of his private life. The children were somewhat confused, thinking Charles Lamb must be someone who had once lived in Winesburg.

On another occasion the teacher talked to the children of Benvenuto Cellini. That time they laughed. What a bragging, blustering, brave, lovable fellow she made of the old artist! Concerning him also she invented anecdotes. There was one of a German music teacher who had a room above Cellini's lodgings in the city of Milan that made the boys guffaw. Sugars McNutts, a fat boy with red cheeks, laughed so hard that he became dizzy and fell off his seat and Kate Swift laughed with him. Then suddenly she became again cold and stern.

On the winter night when she walked through the deserted snow-covered streets, a crisis had come into the life of the school teacher. Although no one in Winesburg would have suspected it, her life had been very adventurous. It was still adventurous. Day by day as she worked in the schoolroom or walked in the streets, grief, hope, and desire fought within her. Behind a cold exterior the most extraordinary events transpired in her mind. The people of the town thought of her as a confirmed old maid and because she spoke sharply and went her own way thought her lacking in all the human feeling that did so much to make and mar their own lives. In reality she was the most eagerly passionate soul among them, and more than once, in the five years since she had come back from her travels to settle in Winesburg and become a school teacher, had been compelled to go out of the house and walk half through the night fighting out some battle raging within. Once on a night when it rained she had stayed out six hours and when she came home had a quarrel with Aunt Elizabeth Swift. "I am glad you're not a man," said the mother sharply. "More than once I've waited for your father to come home, not knowing what new mess he had got into. I've had my share of uncertainty and you cannot blame me if I do not want to see the worst side of him reproduced in you."

Kate Swift's mind was ablaze with thoughts of George Willard. In something he had written as a school boy she thought she had recognized the spark of genius and wanted to blow on the spark. One day in the summer she had gone to the Eagle office and finding the boy unoccupied had taken him out Main Street to the Fair Ground, where the two sat on a grassy bank and talked. The school teacher tried to bring home to the mind of the boy some conception of the difficulties he would have to face as a writer. "You will have to know life," she declared, and her voice trembled with earnestness. She took hold of George Wiliard's shoulders and turned him about so that she could look into his eyes. A passer-by might have thought them about to embrace. "If you are to become a writer you'll have to stop fooling with words," she explained. "It would be better to give up the notion of writing until you are better prepared. Now it's time to be living. I don't want to frighten you, but I would like to make you understand the import of what you think of attempting. You must not become a mere peddler of words. The thing to learn is to know what 'people are thinking about, not what they say."

On the evening before that stormy Thursday night when the Reverend Curtis Hartman sat in the bell tower of the church waiting to look at her body, young Willard had gone to visit the teacher and to borrow a book. It was then the thing happened that confused and puzzled the boy. He had the book under his arm and

was preparing to depart. Again Kate Swift talked with great earnestness. Night was coming on and the light in the room grew dim. As he turned to go she spoke his name softly and with an impulsive movement took hold of his hand. Because the reporter was rapidly becoming a man something of his man's appeal, combined with the winsomeness of the boy, stirred the heart of the lonely woman. A passionate desire to have him understand the import of life, to learn to interpret it truly and honestly, swept over her. Leaning forward, her lips brushed his cheek. At the same moment he for the first time became aware of the marked beauty of her features. They were both embarrassed, and to relieve her feeling she became harsh and domineering. “What's the use? It will be ten years before you begin to understand what I mean when I talk to you," she cried passionately.

On the night of the storm and while the minister sat in the church waiting for her, Kate Swift went to the office of the Winesburg Eagle, intending to have another talk with the boy. After the long walk in the snow she was cold, lonely, and tired. As she came through Main Street she saw the light from the printshop window shining on the snow and on an impulse opened the door and went in. For an hour she sat by the stove in the office talking of life. She talked with passionate earnestness. The impulse that had driven her out into the snow poured itself out into talk. She became inspired as she sometimes did in the presence of the children in school. A great eagerness to open the door of life to the boy, who had been her pupil and who she thought might possess a talent for the understanding of 1ife, had possession of her. So strong was her passion that it became something physical. Again her hands took hold of his shoulders and she turned him about. In the dim light her eyes blazed. She arose and laughed, not sharply as was customary with her, but in a queer, hesitating way. "I must be going," she said. "In a moment, if I stay, I'll be wanting to kiss you."

In the newspaper office a confusion arose. Kate Swift turned and walked to the door. She was a teacher but she was also a woman. As she looked at George Willard, the passionate desire to be loved by a man, that had a thousand times before swept like a storm over her body, took possession of her. In the lamplight George Willard looked .no longer a boy, but a man ready to play the part of a man.

The school teacher let George Willard take her into his arms. In the warm little office the air became suddenly heavy and the strength went out of her body. Leaning against a low counter by the door she waited. When he came and put a hand on her shoulder she turned and let her body fall heavily against him. For George Willard the confusion was immediately increased. For a moment he held the body of the woman tightly against his body and then it stiffened. Two sharp little fists began to beat on his face. When the school teacher had run away and left him alone, he walked up and down in the office swearing furiously.

It was into this confusion that the Reverend Curtis Hartman protruded himself. When he came in George Willard thought the town had gone mad. Shaking a bleeding fist in the air, the minister proclaimed the woman George had only a moment before held in his arms an instrument of God bearing a message of truth.

George blew out the lamp by the window and locking the door of the printshop went home. Through the hotel office, past Plop Higgins lost in his dream of the raising of ferrets, he went and up onto his own room. The fire in the stove had gone out and he undressed in the cold. When he got into bed the sheets were like blankets of dry snow.

George Willard rolled about in the bed on which he had Jain in the afternoon hugging the pillow and thinking thoughts of Kate Swift. The words of the minister, who he thought had gone suddenly insane, rang in his ears. His eyes stared about the room. The resentment, natural to the baffled male, passed and he tried to understand what had happened. He could not make it out. Over and over he turned the matter in his mind. Hours passed and he began to think it must be time for another day to come. At four o'clock he pulled the covers up about his neck and tried to sleep. When he became drowsy and closed his eyes, he raised a hand and with it groped about in the darkness. "I have missed something. I have missed something Kate Swift was trying to tell me," he muttered sleepily. Then he slept and in all Winesburg he was the last soul on that; winter night to go to sleep.

Loneliness

He was the son of Mrs. Al Robinson who once owned a farm on a side road leading off Trimion Pike, east of Winesburg and two miles beyond the town limits. The farm-house was painted brown and the blinds to all of the windows facing the road were kept closed. In the road before the house a flock of chickens, accompanied by two guinea hens, lay in the deep dust. Enoch lived in the house with his mother in those days and when he was a young boy went to school at the Winesburg High School Old citizens remembered him as a quiet, smiling youth inclined to silence. He walked in the middle of the road when he came into town and sometimes read a book. Drivers of teams had to shout and swear to make him realize where he was so that he would turn out of the beaten track and let them pass.

When he was twenty-one years old Enoch went to New York City and was a city man for fifteen years. He studied French and went to an art school, hoping to develop a faculty he had for drawing. In his own mind he planned to go to Paris and to finish his art education among the masters there, but that never turned out.

Nothing ever turned out for Enoch Robinson. He could draw well enough and he had many odd delicate thoughts hidden away in his brain that might have expressed themselves through the brush of a painter, but he was always a child and that was a handicap to his wordly development. He never grew up and of course he couldn't understand people and he couldn't make people understand him. The child in him kept bumping against things, against actualities like money and sex and opinions. Once he was hit by a street car and thrown against an iron post. That made him lame. It was one of the many things that kept things from turning out for Enoch Robinson.

In New York City, when he first went there to live and before he became confused and disconcerted by the facts of life, Enoch went about a good deal with young men. He got into a group of other young artists, both men and women, and in the evenings they sometimes came to visit him in his room. Once he got drunk and was taken to a police station where a police magistrate frightened him horribly, and once he tried to have an affair with a woman of the town met on the side walk before his lodging house. The woman and Enoch walked together three blocks and then the young man grew afraid ran away. The woman had been drinking and the incident amused her. She leaned against the wall of a building and laughed so heartily that another man stopped and laughed with her. The two went away together, still laughing, and Enoch crept off to his room trembling and vexed.

The room in which young .Robinson lived in New York faced Washington Square and was long and narrow like a hallway. It is important to get that fixed in your mind. The story of Enoch is in fact the story of a room almost more than it is the story of a man.

And so into the room in the evening came young Enoch's friends. There was nothing particularly striking about them except that they were artists of the kind that talk. Everyone knows of the talking artists. Throughout all of the known history of the world they have gathered in rooms and talked. They talk of art and are passionately, almost feverishly, in earnest about it. They think it matters much more than it does.

And so these people gathered and smoked cigarettes and talked and Enoch Robinson, the boy from the farm near Winesburg, was there. He stayed in a corner and for the most part said nothing. How his big blue childlike eyes stared about! On the walls were pictures he, had made, crude things, half finished. His friends talked of these. Leaning back in their chairs, they talked and talked with their heads rocking from side to side. Words were said about line and values and composition, lots of words, such as are always being said.

Enoch wanted to talk too but he didn't know how. He was too excited to talk coherently. When he tried he sputtered and stammered and his voice sounded strange and squeaky to him. That made him stop talking. He knew what he wanted to say, but he knew also that he could never by any possibility say it. When a picture he had painted was under discussion, he wanted to burst out with something like this: "You don't get the point," he wanted to explain, "the picture you see doesn't consist of the things you see and say words about. There is something else, something you don't see at all, something you aren't intended to see. Look at this one over here, by the door here, where the light from the window falls on it. The dark spot by the road that you might not notice at all is, you see, the beginning of everything. There is a clump of elders there such as used to grow beside the road before our house back in Winesburg, Ohio, and in among the elders there is something hidden. It is a woman, that's what it is. She has been thrown from a horse and the horse has run away out of sight. Do you not see how the old man who drives a cart looks anxiously about? That is Thad Grayback who has a farm up the road. He is taking corn to Winesburg to be ground into meal at

Comstock's mill. He knows there is something in the elders, something hidden away, and yet he doesn't quite know.

"It's a woman you see, that's what it is! It's a woman and, oh, she is lovely! She is hurt and is suffering but she makes no sound. Don't you see how it is? She lies quite still, white and still, and the beauty comes out from her and spreads over everything. It is in the sky back there and all around everywhere. I didn't try to paint the woman, of course. She is too beautiful to be painted. How dull to talk of composition and such things! Why do you not look at the sky and then run away as I used to do when I was a boy back there in Winesburg, Ohio?"

That is the kind of thing young Enoch Robinson trembled to say to the guests who came into his room when he was a young fellow in New York City, but he always ended by saying nothing. Then he began to doubt his own mind. He was afraid the things he felt were not getting expressed in the pictures he painted. In a half indignant mood he stopped inviting people into his room and presently got into the habit of locking the door. He began to think that enough people had visited him, that he did not need people any more. With quick imagination he began to invent his own people to whom he could really talk and to whom he explained the things he had been unable to explain to living people. His room began to be inhabited by the spirits of men and women among whom he went, in his turn saying words. It was as though every one Enoch Robinson had ever seen had left with him some essence of himself, something he could mould and change to suit his own fancy, something that understood all about such things as the wounded woman behind the elders in the pictures.

The mild, blue-eyed young Ohio boy was a complete egotist, as all children are egotists. He did not want friends for the quite simple reason that no child wants friends. He wanted most of all the people of his own mind, people with whom he could really talk, people he could harangue and scold by the hour, servants, you see, to his fancy. Among these people he was always self-confident and bold. They might talk, to be sure, and even have opinions of their own, but always he talked last and best. He was like a writer busy among the figures of his brain, a kind of tiny blue-eyed king he was, in a six-dollar room facing Washington Square in the city of New York.

Then Enoch Robinson got married. He began to get lonely and to want to touch actual flesh and bone people with his hands. Days passed when his room seemed empty. Lust visited his body and desire grew in his mind. At night strange fevers, burning within, kept him awake. He married a girl who sat in a chair next to his own in the art school and went to live in an apartment house in Brooklyn. Two children were born to the woman he married, and Enoch got a job in a place where illustrations are made for advertisements.

That began another phase of Enoch's life. He began to play at a new game. For a while he was very proud of himself in the role of producing citizens of the world. He dismissed the essence of things and played with realities. In the fall he voted at an election and he had a newspaper thrown on his porch each morning. When in the evening he came home from work he got off a street car and walked sedately along behind some business man, striving to look very substantial and

important. As a payer of taxes he thought he should post himself on how things are run. "I'm getting to be of some moment, a real part of things, of the state and the city and all that," he told himself with an amusing miniature air of dignity. Once coming home from Philadelphia, he had a discussion with a man met on a train. Enoch talked about the advisability of the government's owning and operating the railroads and the man gave him a cigar. It was Enoch's notion that such a move on the part of the government would be a good thing, and he grew quite excited as he talked. Later he remembered his own words with pleasure. "I gave him something to think about, that fellow," he muttered to himself as he climbed the stairs to his Brooklyn apartment.

To be sure, Enoch's marriage did not turn out He himself brought it to an end. He began to feel choked and walled in by the life in the apartment, and to "feel toward his wife and even toward his children as he had felt concerning the friends who once came to visit him”. He began to tell little lies about business engagements that would give him freedom to walk alone in the street at night and, the chance offering, he secretly re-rented the room facing Washington Square. Then Mrs. Al Robinson died on the farm, near Winesburg, and he got eight thousand dollars from the bank that acted as trustee of her estate. That took Enoch out of the world of men altogether. He gave the money to his wife and told her he could not live in the apartment any more. She cried and was angry and threatened, but he only stared at her and went his own way. In reality the wife did not care much. She thought Enoch slightly insane and was a little afraid of him. When it was quite sure that he would never come back, she took the two children and went to a village in Connecticut where she had lived as a girl. In the end she married a man who bought and sold real estate and was contented enough.

And so Enoch. Robinson stayed in the New York room among the people of his fancy, playing with them, talking to them, happy as a child is happy. They were an odd lot, Enoch's people. They were made, I suppose, out of real people he had seen and who had for some obscure reason made an appeal to him. There was a woman with a sword in her hand, an old man with a •long white beard who went, about followed by a dog, a young girl whose stockings were always coming down and hanging over her shoe tops. There must have been two dozen of the shadow people, invented by the child-mind of Enoch Robinson, who lived in the room with him.

And Enoch was happy. Into the room he went and locked the door. With an absurd air of importance he talked aloud, giving instructions, making comments on life. He was happy and satisfied to go on making his living in the advertising place until something happened. Of course something did happen. That is why he went back to live in Winesburg and why we know about him. The thing that happened was a woman. It would be that way. He was too happy. Something had to come into his world. Something had to drive him out of the New York room to live out his life, an obscure, jerky little figure, bobbing up and down on the streets of an Ohio town at evening when the sun was going down behind the roof of Wesley Moyer's livery barn.

About the thing that happened. Enoch told George Willard about it one night. He wanted to talk to someone, and he chose the young newspaper reporter because the two happened to be thrown together at a time when the younger man was in a mood to understand.

Youthful sadness, young man's sadness, the sadness of a growing boy in a village at the year's end opened the lips of the old man. The sadness was in the heart of George Willard and was without meaning, but it appealed to Enoch Robinson.

It rained on the evening when the two met and talked, a drizzly wet October rain. The fruition of the year had come and the night should have been fine with a moon in the sky and the crisp sharp promise of frost in the air, but it wasn't that way. It rained and little puddles of water shone under the street lamps on Main Street. In the woods in the darkness beyond the Fair Ground water dripped from the black trees. Beneath the trees wet leaves were pasted against tree roots that protruded from the ground. In gardens back of houses in Winesburg dry shriveled potato vines lay sprawling on the ground. Men who had finished the evening meal and who had planned to go uptown to talk the evening away with other men at the back of some store changed their minds. George Willard tramped about in the rain and was glad that it rained. He felt that way. He was like Enoch Robins on the evenings when the old man came down out of his room and wandered alone in the streets. He was like that only that George Willard had become a tall young man and did not think it manly to weep and carry on. For a month his mother had been very ill and that had something to do with his sadness, but not much. He thought about himself and to the young that always brings sadness.

Enoch Robinson and George Willard met beneath a wooden awning that extended out over the sidewalk before Voight's wagon shop on Mauraee Street just off the main street of Winesburg. They went together from there through the rain-washed streets to the older man's room on the third floor of the Heffner Block. The young reporter went willingly enough. Enoch Robinson asked him to go after the two had talked for ten minutes. The boy was a little afraid but had never been more curious in his life. A hundred times he had heard the old man spoken of as a little off his head and he thought himself rather brave and .manly to go at all. From the very beginning, in the street in the rain, the old man talked in a queer wav trying to tell the story of the room in Washington Square and of his life in the room. "You'll understand if you try hard enough," he said conclusively. "I have looked at you when you went past me on the street and I think you can understand. It isn't hard. All you have to do is to believe what I say, just listen and believe, that's all there is to it."

It was past eleven o'clock that evening when Old Enoch, talking to George Willard in the room in the Heffner Block, came to the vital thing, the story of the woman and of what drove him out of the city to live out his life alone and defeated in Winesburg. He sat on a cot by the window with his head in his hand and George Willard was in a chair by a table. A kerosene lamp sat on the table and the room, although almost bare of furniture, was scrupulously clean. As the man talked George Willard began to feel that he would like to get out of the chair and sit on

the cot also. He wanted to put his arms about the little old man. In the half darkness the man talked and the boy listened, filled with sadness.

"She got to coming in there after there hadn't been anyone in the room for years," said Enoch Robinson. "She saw me in the hallway of the house and we got acquainted. I don't know just what she did in her own room. I never went there. I think she was a musician and played a violin. Every now and then she came and knocked at the door and I opened it. In she came and sat down beside me, just sat and looked about and said nothing. Anyway, she said nothing that mattered."

The old man arose from the cot and moved about the room. The overcoat he wore was wet from the rain and drops of water kept falling with a soft little thump on the floor. When he again sat upon the cot George Willard got out of the chair and sat beside him.

"I had a feeling about her. She sat there in the room with me and she was too big for the room. I felt that she was driving everything else away. We just talked of little things, but I couldn't sit still. I wanted to touch her with my fingers and to kiss her. Her hands were so strong and her face was so good and she looked at me all the time."

The trembling voice of the old man became silent and his body shook as from a chill. "I was afraid," he whispered. "I was terribly afraid. I didn't want to let her come in a when she knocked at the door but I couldn't sit still. 'No, no,' I said to myself, but I got up and opened the door just the same. She was so grown up, you see. She was a woman. I thought she would be bigger than I was there in that room."

Enoch 'Robinson stared at George Willard, his childlike blue eyes shining in the lamplight. Again he shivered. "I wanted her and all the time I didn't want her," he explained. "Then I began to tell her about my people, about everything that meant anything to me. I tried to keep quiet, to keep myself to myself, but I couldn't. I felt just as I did about opening the door. Sometimes I ached to have her go away and never come back any more."

The old man sprang to his feet and his voice shook with excitement. "One night something happened. I became mad to make her understand me and to know what a big thing I was in that room. I wanted her to see how important I was. I told her over and over. When she tried to go away, I ran and locked the door. I followed her about. I talked and talked and then all of a sudden things went to smash. A look came into her eyes and I knew she did understand. Maybe she had understood all the time. I was furious. I couldn't stand it. I wanted her to understand but, don't you see, I couldn't let her understand. I felt that then she would know everything, that I would be submerged, drowned out, you see. That's how it is I don't know why."

The old man dropped into a chair by the lamp and the boy listened, tilled with awe. "Go away, boy," said the man. "Don't stay here with me any more. I thought it might be a good thing to tell you but it isn't. I don't want to talk any more. Go away."

George Willard shook his head and a note of command came into his voice. "Don't stop now. Tell me the rest of it," he commanded sharply," What happened? Tell me the rest of the story."

Enoch Robinson sprang to his feet and ran to the window that looked down into the deserted main street of Winesburg. George Willard followed. By the window the two stood, the tall awkward boy-man and the little wrinkled man-boy. The childish, eager voice carried forward the tale. "I swore at her," he explained. "I said vile words. I ordered her to go away and not to come back. Oh, I said terrible things. At first she pretended not to understand but I kept at it. I screamed and stamped on the floor. I made the house ring with, my curses. I didn't want ever to see her again and I knew, after some of the things I said, that I never would see her again."

The old man's voice broke and he shook his head. "Things went to smash," he said quietly and sadly. "Out she went through, the door and all the life there had been in the room followed her out. She took all of my people away. They all went out through the door after her. That's the way it was."

George Willard turned and went out of Enoch Robinson's room. In the darkness by the window, as he went through the door, he could hear the thin old voice whimpering and complaining. "I'm alone, all alone here; said the voice. "It was warm and friendly in my room but now I'm all alone."

SHERWOOD ANDERSON (1876-1941)

Anderson was born in Camden, Ohio, and, in the tradition of many great American writers, he left school young and went on to do many different jobs. In 1898 he fought in the Spanish-American War. Afterwards he went to Chicago where he began writing and won the recognition of important writers of the time, e.g. Theodore Dreiser.

Anderson’s first important success was his collection of short stories, *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919) when he was forty-three. This important work of experimental writing, a group of short stories in a simple prose style showing the essential frustrations and desires of his characters, inspired many younger writers.

THE STRENGTH OF GOD
THE TEACHER
LONELINESS

Some commentary for the stories:

– Presbyterian Church – a religious confession, a variant of Calvinism, can be traced back to the XVI-th century Scotland. Presbyterians reject the Church authorities such as Episcopacy (the rule of bishops). They only recognize the rule of the so-called Elder (пресвитер) chosen by the whole folk. Presbyterians stick to very strict morale and ethics principles.

Active Vocabulary: your home task is to find proper Russian equivalents for the following words and combinations, to learn them and get ready to write a quiz:

Reticent – reserved
A minister – a priest, a pastor, a vicar
Refined – over-polite and very well-educated
Aloof – unfriendly in an extreme way
Imposing – very impressive
In earnest – to begin in earnest = to begin properly; to be in earnest = to really mean what you are saying
The highways and byways (of the town) – the important and less important parts of smth, e.g. an activity or a subject (to explore the highways and byways of Russian music)
To be in a whirl – to feel very excited or confused
To bear a reputation of doing smth – to have a reputation
A zeal to do smth- eagerness to do smth
To delve (into her soul) – to search for smth; to try to find some information
The carnal desire – relating to sex or smb's body
Congregation – the people who usually go to a particular church
To be beset by (temptations) – to experience serious problems or dangers
To be assailed by (temptations) – to be worried and upset by unpleasant thoughts and feelings
To intercede – to speak in support of smb, especially in order to try to prevent them from being punished
To fathom the reason – to work out; to understand
A hypocrite – smb who pretends to have certain beliefs or opinions that they do not really have
To besiege – 1. to surround a city or castle with military force until the people inside let you take control; 2. if people, worries, thoughts besiege you, you are surrounded by them; 3. be besieged with letters or requests = to receive a very large number of letters and requests
To let on – to tell smb smth, especially smth you have been keeping secret
Lustful thoughts – feeling or showing strong sexual desire
To stir smth within smb – to make smb have a strong feeling or reaction
To go one's rounds (also to make or do the rounds) – to go around from one place to another, especially looking for work or advertising smth
To draw a pension – to receive an amount of money regularly
A revelation (from God) – an event, experience that are considered to be a message from God (a surprising fact about smb or smth that was previously secret and now is made known)
Unpremeditated – not planned in advance
To bring home to the mind of smb – to make smb realize smth
To have a faculty for drawing – a natural ability to do smth
To be vexed – to feel annoyed or worried

A handicap – a situation that makes it difficult for smb to do what they want
To talk coherently – to speak in a clear and easy to understand way
To submerge – to suppress, to hide feelings, ideas, or opinions and make yourself stop thinking about them

Comment on the following sentences from the text:
The Strength of God
- In his prayers there was one note that always predominated. "Give me strength and courage for Thy work, O Lord!"
- He was not one to arouse keen enthusiasm among the worshippers in his church but on the other hand he made no enemies.
- Out of my own experience I know that we, who are the ministers of God's word, are beset by the same temptations that assail you"
- The ways of God are beyond human understanding

The Teacher
- There was something biting and forbidding in the character of Kate Swift
- You must not become a mere peddler of words

Loneliness
- …but he was always a child and that was a handicap to his worldly development
- The story of Enoch is in fact the story of a room almost more that it is the story of a man
- He wanted servants to his fancy…He was like a writer busy among the figures of his brain, a kind of tiny blue-eyed king he was, in a six-dollar room facing Washington Square in the city of New York

Quote the text to prove that:
The Strength of God
- Curtis Hartman was eager for the spirit of God to make manifest in him
- Curtis Hartman morally suffered from his lust for Kate Swift
- Curtis Hartman really resisted his lust and didn't want to be a hypocrite

The Teacher
- Kate Swift was not a pretty woman
- Kate Swift could get the children interested in the subject she taught (she became inspired in the presence of the children in school)
- Kate Swift was a passionate soul

Loneliness
- Enoch Robinson was full of ambitious plans in his youth
- Enoch Robinson was a poor speaker
- The only thing that made Enoch get married was his loneliness

- Enoch didn't live real life but played different roles as if he were on the stage
- Enoch suffered from his family life
- The people who surrounded Enoch failed to understand his pictures

Answer the questions:
The Strength of God
- Did Curtis Hartman really believe in God?
- What made Curtis peep into Kate's window?
- Why was Curtis so frightened by his lust?
- What way did Curtis try to resist his temptation? Do you think he was really ready to surrender to his temptation?
- What kind of struggle took place in Curtis' soul?
- What did Curtis mean when he said Kate "bore the message of truth"?

The Teacher
- Was George Willard pleased or annoyed by Kate's attitude and feelings to him?
- Do you think Kate had a faculty for teaching?
- Deep in her heart Kate was a very creative and adventurous person, wasn't she?
- What was so appealing about George (from Kate's point of view)? What qualities of George were so much appreciated by Kate?

Loneliness
- Why did nothing turn out for Enoch Robinson?
- How did Enoch feel when nobody understood his painting?
- Why did Enoch inhabit his room with imaginary people?
- Why did Enoch get married?
- What made Enoch divorce his wife?
- Why was Enoch so eager to tell George about his life?
- Did that woman from Enoch's story really exist or was she just engendered by his fancy?

The questions for home self-work and study, find any additional information and be ready to discuss in class.
A teacher, a priest, a journalist and an artist – why were they chosen as main characters?
Can the life of a small town in the American Midwest be compared with that of in Russian towns described by Chekhov (the time of writing the stories is almost the same)? Focus on the people's problems and inner life they so much cared about.

Prepare brief character sketches of Curtis Hartman, Kate Swift and Enoch Robinson.

Analyze the end of any of the three stories and draw your conclusions.

Some topics for developing argumentation and rhetorical speech skills:

- People can sometimes be totally frustrated by their fears
- People's dread of feelings and strong emotions (love and friendship) may prevent them from living to the full
- What is friendship: a matter of mind or soul?
- We just do our duties in a course of daily routine without thinking of something really great and eternal
- Too much eagerness to eradicate sins can drive people mad
- Small towns – huge passions…
- The discrepancy between our duty and desire

Comment on the following and connect it with the plot of the stories:

- It is not the man who has little, but he who desires more, that is poor. (Seneca)
- I have always thought the actions of men the best interpreters of their thoughts. (J.Locke)
- No one is free who is a slave to the body. (Seneca)
- The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul.
- One is never as happy or as unhappy as one thinks. (La Rochefoucauld)
- Human life is everywhere in a state in which much is to be endured, and little to be enjoyed. (S.Johnson)
- Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction. (Pascal)
- We have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another. (J.Swift)

After all these exercises can you now formulate the message?

F.S.Fitzgerald

Babylon Revisited

"And where's Mr. Campbell?" Charlie asked.

"Gone to Switzerland. Mr. Campbell's a pretty sick man, Mr.Wales."

"I'm sorry to hear that. And George Hardt?" Charlie inquired.

"Back in America, gone to work."

"And where is the Snow Bird?"

"He was in here last week. Anyway, his friend, Mr. Schaeffer, is in Paris."

Two familiar names from the long list of a year and a half ago. Charlie scribbled an address in his notebook and tore out the page.

"If you see Mr. Schaeffer, give him this," .he said. "It's my brother-in-law's address. I haven't settled on a hotel yet."

He was not really disappointed to find Paris was so empty. But the stillness in the Ritz bar was strange and portentous. It was not an American bar any more — he felt polite in it, and not as if he owned it. It had gone back into France. He felt the stillness from the moment he got out of the taxi and saw the doorman, usually in a frenzy of activity at this hour, gossiping with a chasseur by the servants' entrance,

Passing through the corridor, he heard only a single, bored voice in the once-clamorous women's room. When he turned into the bar he traveled the twenty feet of green carpet with his eyes fixed straight ahead by old habit; and then, with his foot firmly on the rail, he turned and surveyed the room, encountering only a single pair of eyes that fluttered up from a newspaper in the corner. Charlie asked for the head barman, Paul, who in the latter days of the bull market had come to work in his own custom-built car — disembarking, however, with due nicety at the nearest corner. But Paul was at his country house today and Alix giving him information.

"No, no more," Charlie said, "I'm going slow these days."

Alix congratulated him: "You were going pretty strong a couple of years ago."

"I'll slick to it all right," Charlie assured him. "I've stuck to it for over a year and a half now."

"How do you find conditions in America?"

"I haven't been to America for months. I'm in business in Prague, representing a couple of concerns there. They don't know about me down there."

Alix smiled.

"Remember the night of George Hardt's bachelor dinner here?" said Charlie. "By the way, what's become of Claude Fessenden?"

Aiix lowered his voice confidentially: "He's in Paris, but he doesn't come here any more. Paul doesn't allow it. He ran up a bill of thirty thousand francs, charging all his drinks and his lunches, and usually his dinner, for more than a year. And when Paul finally told him he had to pay, he gave him a bad check."

Alix shook his head sadly.

"I don't understand it, such a dandy fellow. Now .he's all bloated up —" He made a plump apple of his hands.

Charlie watched a group of strident queens installing themselves in a corner.

"Nothing affects them," he thought. "Stocks rise and fall, people loaf or work, but they go on forever." The place oppressed him. He called for the dice and shook with Alix for the drink.

"Here for long, Mr. Wales?"

"I'm here for four or five days to see my little girl."

"Oh-h! You have a little girl?"

Outside, the fire-red, gas-blue, ghost-green signs shone smokily through the tranquil rain. It was late afternoon and the streets were in movement; the bistros gleamed. At the corner of the Boulevard des Capucines he took a taxi. The Place de la Concorde moved by in pink majesty; they crossed the logical Seine, and Charlie felt the sudden provincial quality of the Left Bank.

Charlie directed his taxi to the Avenue de l'Opera, which was out of his way. But he wanted to see the blue hour spread over the magnificent facade, and imagine that the cab horns, playing endlessly the first few bars of Le Plus que Lente, were the trumpets of the Second Empire. They were closing the iron grill in front of Brentano's Book-store, and people were already at dinner behind the trim little bourgeois hedge of Duval's. He had never eaten at a really cheap restaurant in Paris. Five-course dinner, four francs fifty, eighteen cents, wine included. For some odd reason he wished that he had.

As they rolled on the Left Bank and he felt its sudden provincialism, he thought, "I spoiled this city for myself. I didn't realize it, but the days came along one after another, and then two years were gone, and everything was gone, and I was gone."

He was thirty-five, and good to look at. The Irish mobility of his face was sobered by a deep wrinkle between his eyes. As he rang his brother-in-law's bell in the Rue Palatine, the wrinkle deepened till it pulled down his brows; he felt a cramping sensation in his belly. From behind the maid who opened the door darted a lovely little girl of nine who shrieked "Daddy!" and flew up, struggling like a fish, into his arms. She pulled his head around by one ear and set her cheek against his.

"My old pie," he said.

"Oh, daddy, daddy, daddy, daddy, dads, dads, dads!"

She drew him into the salon, where the family waited, a boy and a girl his daughter's age, his sister-in-law and her husband. He greeted Marion with his voice pitched carefully to avoid either feigned enthusiasm or dislike, but her response was more frankly tepid, though she minimized her expression of unalterable distrust by directing her regard toward his child. The two men clasped hands in a friendly way and Lincoln Peters rested his for a moment on Charlie's shoulder.

The room was warm and comfortably American. The three children moved intimately about, playing through the yellow oblongs that led to other rooms; the cheer of six o'clock spoke in the eager smacks of the fire and the sounds of French activity in the kitchen. But Charlie did not relax; his heart sat up rigidly in his body

and he drew confidence his daughter, who from time to time came close to him, holding in her arms the doll he had brought.

"Really extremely well," he declared in answer to Lincoln's question. "There's a lot of business there that isn't moving at all, but we're doing even better than ever. In fact, damn well. I'm bringing .my sister over from America next month to keep house for me. My income last year was bigger than it was when I had money. You see, the Czechs —"

His boasting was for a specific purpose; but after a moment, seeing a faint restiveness in Lincoln's eye, he changed the subject:

"Those are fine children of yours, well brought up, good manners."

"We think Honoria's a great little girl too."

Marion Peters came back from the kitchen. She was a tall woman with worried eyes, who had once possessed a fresh American loveliness. Charlie had never been sensitive to it and was always surprised when people spoke of how pretty she had been. From the first there had been an instinctive antipathy between them.

"Well, how do you find Honoria?" she asked.

"Wonderful. I was astonished how much she's grown in ten months. All the children are looking well."

"We haven't had a doctor for a year. How do you like being back in Paris?"

"It seems very funny to see so few Americans around."

"I'm delighted," Marion said vehemently. "Now at least you can go into a store without their assuming you're a millionaire. We've suffered like everybody, but on the whole it's a good deal pleasanter."

"But it was nice while it lasted," Charlie said. "We were a sort of royalty, almost infallible, with a sort of magic around us. In the bar this afternoon" — he stumbled, seeing his mistake — "there wasn't a man I knew."

She looked at him keenly. "I should think you'd have had enough of bars."

"I only stayed a minute. I take one drink every afternoon, and no more."

"Don't you want a cocktail before dinner?" Lincoln asked,

"I take only one drink every afternoon, and I've had that."

"I hope you keep to it," said Marion.

Her dislike was evident in the coldness with which she spoke, but Charlie only smiled; he had larger plans. Her very aggressiveness gave him an advantage, and he knew enough to wait. He wanted them to initiate the discussion of what they knew had brought him to Paris.

At dinner he couldn't decide whether Honoria was most like him or her mother. Fortunate if she didn't combine the traits of both that had brought them to disaster. A great wave of protectiveness went over him. He thought be knew what to do for her. He believed in character; he wanted to jump back a whole generation and trust in character again, as the eternally valuable element. Everything else wore out.

He left soon after dinner, but not to go home. He was curious to see Paris by night with clearer and .more judicious eyes than those of other days. He bought a

strapontin for the Casino and watched Josephine Baker go through her chocolate arabesques.

After an hour he left and strolled toward Montmartre, up the Rue Pigalle into the Place Blanche. The rain bad stopped and there were a few people in evening clothes disembarking from taxis in front of cabarets, and cocottes prowling singly or in pairs, and many Negroes. He passed a lighted door from which issued music, and stopped with the sense of familiarity; it was Brichtop's, where he had parted with so many hours and so much money. A few doors farther on he found another ancient rendezvous and incautiously put his head inside. Immediately an eager orchestra burst into sound, a pair of professional dancers leaped to their feet and a maitre d'hotel swooped toward him, crying, "Crowd just arriving, sir!" But he withdrew quickly.

"You have to be damn drunk," he thought.

Zelli's was closed, the bleak and sinister cheap hotels surrounding it were dark; up in the Rue Blanche there was more light and a local, colloquial French crowd. The Poet's Cave had disappeared, but the two great mouths of the Cafeof Heaven and the Cafeof Hell still yawned — even devoured, as he watched, the meager contents of a tourist bus — a German, a Japanese, and an American couple who glanced at him with frightened eyes.

So much for the effort and ingenuity of Montmartre. All the catering to vice and waste was on an utterly childish scale, and he suddenly realized the meaning of the word "dissipate" — to dissipate into thin air; to make nothing out of something. In the little hours of the night every move from, place to place was an enormous human jump, an increase of paying for the privilege of slower and slower motion.

He remembered thousand-franc notes given to an orchestra for playing a single number, hundred-franc notes tossed to a doorman for calling a cab.

But it hadn't been given for nothing.

It had been given, even the most wildly squandered sum, as an offering to destiny that he might not remember the things most worth, remembering, the things that now he would always remember — his child taken from his control, his wife escaped to a grave in Vermont.

In the glare of a brasserie a woman spoke to him. He bought her some eggs and coffee, and then, eluding her encouraging stare, gave her a twenty-franc note and took a taxi to his hotel.

II

He woke upon a fine fall day — football weather. The depression of yesterday was gone and he liked the people on the streets. At noon he sat opposite Honoria at Le Grand Vatel, the only restaurant he could think of not reminiscent of champagne dinners and long luncheons that began at two and ended in a blurred and vague twilight.

"Now, how about vegetables? Oughtn't you to have some vegetables?"

"Well, yes."

"Here's epinards and chou-fleur and carrots and haricots."

"I'd like chou-fleur."

"Wouldn't you like to have two vegetables?"

"I usually only have one at lunch."

The waiter was pretending to be inordinately fond of children." Qu'elle est mignonne la petite! Elle parle exactement comme une Francaise."

"How about dessert? Shall we wait and see?"

The waiter disappeared. Honoria looked at her father expectantly.

"What are we going to do?"

"First, we're going to that toy store in the Rue Saint-Honoreand buy you anything you like. And then we're going to the vaudeville at the Empire."

She hesitated. "I like it about the vaudeville, but not the toy store."

"Why not?"

"Well, you brought me this doll" She had it with her. "And I've got lots of things. And we're not rich any more, are we?"

"We never were. But today you are to have anything you want."

"All right," she agreed resignedly.

When there had been her mother and a French nurse he had been inclined to be strict; now he extended himself, reached out for a new tolerance; he must be both parents to her and not shut any of her out of communication.

"I want to get to know you," he said gravely. "First let me introduce myself. My name is Charles J. Wales, of Prague."

"Oh, daddy!" her voice cracked with laughter.

"And who are you, please?" he persisted, and she accepted a role immediately; "Honoria Wales, Rue Palatine, Paris."

"Married or single?"

"No, not married. Single."

He indicated the doll. "But I see yon have a child, madame."

Unwilling to disinherit it, she took it to her heart and thought quickly: "Yes, I've been married, but I'm not married now. My husband is dead."

He went on quickly, "And the child's name?"

"Simone. That's after my best .friend at school."

"I'm very pleased that you're doing so well at school."

"I'm third this month," she boasted. "Elsie" — that was her cousin — "is only about eighteenth, and Richard is about at the bottom."

"You like Richard and .Elsie, don't you?"

"Oh, yes, I like Richard quite well and I like her all right."

Cautiously and casually he, asked: "And Aunt Marion and Uncle Lincoln — which do you like best?"

"Oh, Uncle Lincoln, I guess."

He was increasingly aware of her presence. As they came in, a murmur of "...adorable" followed them, and now the people at the next table bent their silences upon her, staring as if she were something no more conscious than a flower.

"Why don't I live with you?" she asked suddenly. "Because mamma's dead?"

"You must stay here and barn more French. It would have been hard for daddy to take care of you so well."

"I don't really need much taking care of any more. I do everything for myself."

Going out of the restaurant, a man and a woman unexpectedly hailed him.

"Well, the old Wales!"

"Hello there, Lorraine... Dune."

Sudden ghosts out of the past: Duncan Schaeffer, a friend from college. Lorraine Quarries, a lovely, pale blonde of thirty; one of a crowd who had helped them make months into days in the lavish times of three years ago.

"My husband couldn't come this year," she said, in answer to his question. "We're poor as hell. So he gave me two hundred a month and told me I could do my worst on that... This your little girl?"

"What about coming back and sitting down?" Duncan asked.

"Can't do it." lie was glad for an excuse. As always, lie felt Lorraine's passionate, provocative attraction, but his own rhythm was different now.

"Well, how about dinner?" she asked.

"I'm not free. Give me your address and let me call you."

"Charlie, I believe you're sober," she said judicially. "I honestly believe he's sober, Dune. Pinch him and see if he's sober."

Charlie indicated Honoria with his head. They both laughed.

"What's your address?" said Duncan skeptically,

He hesitated, unwilling to give the name of his hotel.

"I'm not settled yet. I'd better call you. We're going to see the vaudeville at the Empire."

"There! That's what I want to do," Lorraine said. "I want to see some clowns and acrobats and jugglers. That's just what we'll do, Dune."

"We've got to do an errand first," said Charlie. "Perhaps we'll see you there."

"All right, you snob... Good-by, beautiful little girl"

"Good-by."

Honoria bobbed politely.

Somehow, an unwelcome encounter. They liked him because he was functioning, because he was serious; they wanted to see him, because lie was stronger than they were now, because they wanted to draw a certain sustenance from his strength.

At the Empire, Honoria proudly refused to sit upon her father's folded coat. She was already an individual with a code of her own, and Charlie was more and more absorbed by the desire of putting a little of himself into her before she crystallized utterly. It was hopeless to try to know her in so short a time.

Between the acts they came upon Duncan and Lorraine in the lobby where the band was playing.

"Have a drink?"

"All right, but not up at the bar. We'll take a table."

"The perfect father."

Listening abstractedly to Lorraine, Charlie watched Honoria's eyes leave their table, and he followed them wistfully about the room, wondering what they saw. He met her glance and she smiled.

"I liked that lemonade," she said.

What had she said? What had he expected? Going home in a taxi afterward, he pulled her over until her head rested against his chest.

"Darling, do you ever think about your mother?"

"Yes, sometimes," she answered vaguely.

"I don't want you to forget her. Have you got a picture of her?"

"Yes, I think so. Anyhow, Aunt Marion has. Why don't you want me to forget her?"

"She loved you very much."

"I loved her too."

They were silent for a moment.

"Daddy, I want to come and live with you," she said suddenly.

His heart leaped; he had wanted it to come like this.

"Aren't you perfectly happy?"

"Yes, but I love you better than anybody. And you love me better than anybody, don't you, now that mummy's dead?"

"Of course I do. But you won't always like me best, honey. You'll grow up and meet somebody your own age and go marry him and forget you ever had a daddy."

"Yes, that's true," she agreed tranquilly.

He didn't go in. He was coming back at nine o'clock and he wanted to keep himself fresh and new for the thing he must say then.

"When you're safe inside, just show yourself in that window."

"All right. Good-by, dads, dads, dads, dads."

He waited in the dark street until she appeared, all warm glowing, in the window above and kissed her fingers out into the night.

III

They were waiting. Marion sat behind the coffee service in a dignified black dinner dress that just faintly suggested mourning. Lincoln was walking up and down with the animation of one who had already been talking. They were as anxious as he was to get into the question. He opened it almost immediately:

"I suppose you know what I want to see you about — why I really came to Paris."

Marion played with the black stars on her necklace and frowned.

"I'm awfully anxious to have a home," he continued. "And I'm awfully anxious to have Honoria in it. I appreciate your taking in Honoria for her mother's sake, but things have changed now" — he hesitated and then continued more forcibly — "changed radically with me, and I want to ask you to reconsider the matter. It would be silly for me to deny that about three years ago I was acting badly —" .

Marion looked up at him with hard eyes.

“— but all that's over. As I told you, I haven't had more than a drink a day for over a year, and I take that drink deliberately, so that the idea of alcohol won't get too big in my imagination. You see the idea?"

"No," said Marion succinctly.

"It's a sort of stunt I set myself. It keeps the matter in proportion."

"I get you," said Lincoln. "You don't want to admit it's got any attraction for you."

"Something like that. Sometimes I forget and don't take it. But I try to take it. Anyhow, I couldn't afford to drink in my position. The people I represent are more than satisfied with what I've done, and I'm bringing my sister over from Burlington to keep house for me, and I want awfully to have Honoria too. You know that even when her mother and I weren't getting along well we never let anything that happened touch Honoria. I know she's fond of me and I know I'm able to take care of her and — well, there you are. How do you feel about it?"

He knew that now he would have to take a beating. It would last an hour or two hours, and it would be difficult, but if he modulated his inevitable resentment to the chastened attitude of the reformed sinner, he might win his point in the end.

Keep your temper, he told himself. You don't want to be justified. You want Honoria.

Lincoln spoke first: "We've been talking it over ever since we got your letter last month. We're happy to have Honoria here. She's a dear little thing, and we're glad to be able to help her, but of course that isn't the question—"

Marion interrupted suddenly. "How long are you going to stay sober, Charlie?" she asked.

"Permanently, I hope."

"How can anybody count on that?"

"You know I never did drink heavily until I gave up business and came over here with nothing to do. Then Helen and I began to run around with —"

"Please leave Helen out of it. I can't bear to hear you talk about her like that."

He stared at her grimly; be had never been certain how fond of each other the sisters were in life.

"My drinking only lasted about a year and a half - from the time we came over until I — collapsed."

"It was time enough."

"It was time enough," he agreed.

"My duty is entirely to Helen," she said. "I try to think what she would have wanted me to do. Frankly, from the night you did that terrible thing you haven't really existed for me. I can't help that. She was my sister."

"Yes."

"When she was dying she asked me to look out for Honoria. If you hadn't been in a sanitarium then, it might have helped matters."

He had no answer.

"I'll never in my life be able to forget the morning when Helen knocked at my door, soaked to the skin and shivering and said you'd locked her out."

Charlie gripped the sides of the chair. This was more difficult than he expected; he wanted to launch out into a long expostulation, and explanation, but he only said: "The night I locked her out —" and she interrupted, "I don't feel up to going over that again."

After a moment's silence Lincoln said: "We're getting off the subject. You want Marion to set aside her legal guardianship and give you Honona. I think the main point for her is whether she has confidence in you or not."

"I don't blame Marion," Charlie said slowly, "but I think she can have entire confidence in me. I had a good record up to three years ago. Of course, it's within human possibilities I might go wrong any time. But if we wait much longer I'll lose Honoria's childhood and my chance for a home." He shook his head, "I'll simply lose her, don't you see?"

"Yes, I see," said Lincoln.

"Why didn't you think of all this before?" Marion asked.

"I suppose I did, from time to time, but Helen and I were getting along badly. When I consented to the guardianship, I was flat on my back in a sanitarium and the market had cleaned me out. I knew I'd acted badly, and I thought if it would bring any peace to Helen, I'd agree to anything. But now it's different. I'm functioning, I'm behaving damn well, so far as —"

"Please don't swear at me," Marion said.

He looked at her, startled. With each remark the force of her dislike became more and more apparent. She had built up all her fear of life into one wall and faced it toward him. This trivial reproof was possibly the result of some trouble with the cook several hours before. Charlie became increasingly alarmed at leaving Honoria in this atmosphere of hostility against himself; sooner or later it would come out, in a word here, a shake of the head there, and some of that distrust would be irrevocably implanted in Honoria. But he pulled his temper down, out of his face and shut it up inside him; he had won a point, for Lincoln realized the absurdity of Marion's remark and asked her lightly since when she had objected to the word "damn."

"Another thing," Charlie said: "I'm able to give her certain advantages now. I'm going to take a French governess to Prague with me. I've got a lease on a new apartment —"

He stopped, realizing that he was blundering. They couldn't be expected to accept with equanimity the fact that his income was again twice as large as their own.

"I suppose you can give her more luxuries than we can," said Marion. "When you were throwing away money we were living along watching every ten francs... I suppose you'll start doing it again."

"Oh, no," he said. "I've learned. I worked hard for ten years, you know — until I got lucky in the market, like so many people. Terribly lucky. It won't happen again."

There was a long silence. All of them felt their nerves straining, and for the first time in a year Charlie wanted a drink. He was sure now that Lincoln Peters wanted him to have his child.

Marion shuddered suddenly; part of her saw that Charlie's feet were planted on the earth now, and her own maternal feeling recognized the naturalness of his desire; but she had lived for a long time with a prejudice — a prejudice founded on a curious disbelief in her sister's happiness, and which, in the shock of one terrible night, had turned to hatred for him. It had all happened at a point in her life where the discouragement of ill health and adverse circumstances made it necessary for her to believe in tangible villainy and a tangible villain.

"I can't help what I think!" she cried out suddenly. "How much you were responsible for Helen's death, I don't know. It's something you'll have to square with your own conscience."

An electric current of agony surged through him; for a moment he was almost on his feet, an unuttered sound echoing in his throat. He hung on to himself for a moment, another moment:.

"Hold on there," said Lincoln uncomfortably. "I never thought you were responsible for that."

"Helen died of heart trouble," Charlie said dully.

"Yes, heart trouble." Marion spoke as if the phrase had another meaning for her.

Then, in the flatness that followed her outburst, she saw him plainly and she knew he had somehow arrived at control over the situation. Glancing at, her husband, she found no help from him, and as abruptly as if it were a matter of no importance, she threw up the sponge,

"Do what you like!" she cried, springing up from her chair. "She's your child. I'm not the person, to stand in your way. I think if it were my child I'd rather see her — " She managed to check herself. "You two decide it. I can't stand this. I'm sick. I'm going to bed."

She hurried from the room; after a moment Lincoln said:

"This has been a hard day for her. You know how strongly she feels — " His voice was almost apologetic: "When a woman gets an idea in her head."

"Of course."

"It's going to be all right. I think she sees now that you — can provide for the child, and so we can't very well stand in your way or Honoria's way."

"Thank you, Lincoln."

"I'd better go along and see how she is."

"I'm going."

He was still trembling when he reached the street, but a walk down the Rue Bonaparte to the quais set him up, and as he crossed the Seine, fresh and new by the quai lamps, he felt exultant. But back in his room he couldn't sleep. The image of Helen haunted him. Helen whom he had loved so until they had senselessly begun to abuse each other's love, tear it into shreds. On that terrible February night that Marion remembered so vividly, a slow quarrel had gone on for hours. There was a scene at the Florida, and then he attempted to take her home, and then she

kissed young Webb at a table; after that there was what she had hysterically said. When he arrived home alone he turned the key in the lock in wild anger. How could he know she would arrive an hour later alone, that there would be a snowstorm in which she wandered about in slippers, too confused to find a taxi? Then the aftermath, her escaping pneumonia by a miracle, and all the attendant horror. They were "reconciled," but that was the beginning of the end, and Marion, who had seen with her own eyes and who imagined it to be one of many scenes from her sister's martyrdom, never forgot.

Going over it again brought Helen nearer, and in the white, soft light that steals upon half sleep near morning he found himself talking to her again. She said that he was perfectly right about Honoria and that she wanted Honoria to be with him. She said she was glad he was being good and doing better. She said a lot of other things — very friendly things —but she was in a swing in a white dress, and swinging faster and faster all the time, so that at the end he could not hear clearly all that she said.

IV

He woke up feeling happy. The door of the world was open again. He made plans, vistas, futures for Honoria and himself, but suddenly he grew sad, remembering all the plans he and Helen had made. She had not planned to die. The present was the thing — work to do and someone to love. But not to love too much, for he knew the injury that a father can do to a daughter or a mother to a son by attaching them too closely: afterward, out in the world, the child would seek in the marriage partner the same blind tenderness and, failing probably to find it, turn against love and life.

It was another bright, crisp day. He called Lincoln Peters at the bank where he worked and asked if he could count on taking Honoria when he left for Prague. Lincoln agreed that there was no reason for delay. One thing — the legal guardianship. Marion wanted to retain that a while longer. She was upset by the whole matter, and it would oil things if she felt that the situation was still in her control for another year. Charlie agreed, wanting only the tangible, visible child.

Then the question of a governess. Charles sat in a gloomy agency and talked to a cross Bearnaise and to a buxom Breton peasant, neither of whom he could have endured. There were others whom he would see tomorrow.

He lunched with Lincoln Peters at Griffons, trying to keep down his exultation.

"There's nothing quite like your own child," Lincoln said. "But you understand how Marion feels too."

"She's forgotten how hard I worked for seven years there," Charlie said. "She just remembers one night."

"There's another thing." Lincoln hesitated. "While you and Helen were tearing around Europe throwing money away, we were just getting along. I didn't touch any of the prosperity because I never got ahead enough to carry anything but

my insurance. I think Marion felt there was some kind of injustice in it - you not even working toward the end, and getting richer and richer."

"It went just as quick as it came," said Charlie.

"Yes, a lot of it stayed in the hands of chasseurs and saxophone players and maitres d'hotel — well, the big party's over now. I just said that to explain Marion's feeling about those crazy years. If you drop in about six o'clock tonight before Marion's too tired, we'll settle the details on the spot."

Back at his hotel, Charlie found a pneumatique that had been redirected from the Ritz bar where Charlie had left his address for the purpose of finding a certain man.

"Dear Charlie: You were so strange when we saw you the other day that I wondered if I did something to offend you. If so, I'm not conscious of it. In fact, I have thought about you too much for the last year, and it's always been in the back of my mind that I might see you if I came over here. We did have such good times that crazy spring, like the night you and I stole the butcher's tricycle, and the time we tried to call on the president and you had the old derby rim and the wire cane. Everybody seems so old lately, but I don't feel old a bit. Couldn't we get together some time today for old time's sake? I've grit a vile hang-over for the moment, but will be feeling better this afternoon and will look for yon about five in the sweet-shop at the Ritz. "Always devotedly,

"Lorraine."

His first feeling was one of awe that he had actually, in his mature years, stolen a tricycle and pedaled Lorraine all over the Etoile between the small hours and dawn. In retrospect it was a nightmare. Locking out Helen didn't fit in with any other act of his life, but the tricycle incident did — it was one of many. How many weeks or months of dissipation to arrive at that condition of utter irresponsibility?

He tried to picture how Lorraine had appeared to him then — very attractive; Helen was unhappy about it, though she said nothing. Yesterday, in the restaurant, Lorraine had seemed trite, blurred, worn away. He emphatically did not want Lo see her, and he was glad Alix had not given away his hotel address. It was a relief to think, instead, of Honoria, to think of Sundays spent with her and of saying good morning to her and of knowing she was there in his house at night, drawing her breath in the darkness.

At five he took a taxi and bought presents for all the Peters — a piquant cloth doll, a box of Roman soldiers, flowers for Marion, big linen handkerchiefs for Lincoln.

He saw, when he arrived in the apartment, that Marion had accepted the inevitable. She greeted him now as though he were a recalcitrant member of the family, rather than a menacing outsider. Honoria had been told she was going; Charlie was glad to see that her tact made her conceal her excessive happiness. Only on his lap did she whisper her delight and the question "When?" before she slipped away with the other children.

He and Marion were alone for a minute in the room, and on an impulse be spoke out boldly:

"Family quarrels are bitter things. They don't go according to any rules. They're not like aches or wounds; they're more like splits in the skin that won't heal because there's not enough material. I wish you and I could be on better terms."

"Some things are hard to forget," she answered. "It's a question of confidence." There was no answer to this and presently she asked, "When do you propose to take her?"

"As soon as I can get a governess. I hoped the day after tomorrow."

"That's impossible. I've got to get her things in shape. Not before Saturday."

He yielded. Coming back into the room, Lincoln offered him a drink.

"I'll take my daily whisky," he said.

It was warm here, it was a home, people together by a fire. The children felt very safe and important; the mother and father were serious, watchful. They had things to do for the children more important than his visit here. A spoonful of medicine was, after all, more important than the strained relations between Marion and himself. They were not dull people, but they were very much in the grip of life and circumstances. He wondered if he couldn't do something to get Lincoln out of his rut at the bank.

A long peal at the door-bell; the bonne atout faire passed through and went down the corridor. The door opened upon another long ring, and then voices, and the three in the salon looked up expectantly; Richard moved to bring the corridor within his range of vision, and Marion rose. Then the maid came back along the corridor, closely .followed by the voices, which developed under the light into Duncan Schaeffer and Lorraine Quarries.

They were gay, they were hilarious, they were roaring with laughter. For a moment Charlie was astounded; unable to understand how they ferreted out the Peters' address

"Ah-h-h!" Duncan wagged his finger roguishly at Charlie. "Ah-h-hl"

They both slid down another cascade of laughter. Anxious and at a loss, Charlie shook hands with them quickly and presented them to Lincoln and Marion. Marion nodded, scarcely spoiling. She had drawn back a step toward the fire; her little girl stood beside her, and Marion put an arm about her shoulder.

With growing annoyance at the intrusion, Charlie waited for them to explain themselves. After some concentration Duncan said:

"We came to invite you out to dinner. Lorraine and I insist that all this shishi, cagy business 'bout your address got to stop."

Charlie came closer to them, as if to force them backward down the corridor.

"Sorry, but I can't. Tell me where you'll be and I'll phone you in half an hour."

This made no impression. Lorraine sat down suddenly on the side of a chair, and focusing her eyes on Richard, cried, "Oh, what a nice little boy! Come here, little boy." Richard glanced at his mother, but did not move. With a perceptible shrug of her shoulders, Lorraine turned back to Charlie;

"Come and dine. Sure your cousins won' mine. See you so sel'om. Or solemn."

"I can't," said Charlie sharply. "You two have dinner and I'll phone you."

Her voice became suddenly unpleasant. "All right, we'll go. But I remember once when you hammered on my door at four A.M. I was enough of a good sport to give you a drink. Come on, Dune."

Still in slow motion, with blurred, angry faces, with uncertain feet, they retired along the corridor.

"Good night," Charlie said.

"Good night!" responded Lorraine emphatically.

When he went back into the salon Marion had not moved, only now her son was standing in the circle of her other arm. Lincoln was still swinging Honoria back and forth like pendulum from side to side.

"What an outrage!" Charlie broke out. "What an absolute outrage!"

Neither of them answered. Charlie dropped into an armchair, picked up his drink, set it down again and said:

"People I haven't seen for two years having the colossal nerve —"

He broke off. Marion had made the sound "Oh!" in one swift, furious breath, turned her body from him with a jerk and left the room.

Lincoln set down Honoria carefully.

"Yon children go in and start your soup," he said, and when they obeyed, he said to Charlie;

"Marion's not well and she can't stand shocks. That kind of people make her really physically sick."

"I didn't tell them to come here. They wormed your name out of somebody. They deliberately -"

"Well, it's too had. It doesn't help matters. Excuse me a minute."

Left alone, Charlie sat tense in his chair. In the next room he could hear the children eating, talking in monosyllables, already oblivious to the scene between their elders. He heard a murmur of conversation from a farther room and then the ticking bell of a telephone receiver picked up, and in a panic he moved to the other side of the room and out of earshot.

In a minute Lincoln came back. "Look here, Charlie. I think we'd better call off dinner for tonight. Marion's in bad shape."

"Is she angry with me?"

"Sort of," he said, almost roughly. "She's not strong and-"

"You mean she's changed her mind about Honoria?"

"She's pretty bitter right now. I don't know. You phone me at the bank tomorrow."

"I wish you'd explain to her I never dreamed these people would come here. I'm just as sore as you are."

"I couldn't explain anything to her now."

Charlie got up. He took his coat and hat and started down the corridor. Then he opened the door of the dining room and said in a strange voice, "Good night, children."

Honoria rose and ran around the table to hug him.

"Good night, sweetheart," he said vaguely, and then trying to make his voice more tender, trying to conciliate something. "Good night, dear children."

V

Charlie went directly to the Ritz bar with the furious idea of finding Lorraine and Duncan, but they were not there, and he realized that in any case there was nothing he could do. He had not touched his drink at the Peters, and now he ordered a whisky-and-soda. Paul came over to say hello.

"It's a great change," he said sadly. "We do about half the business we did. So many fellows I hear about back in the States lost everything, maybe not in the first crash, but then in the second. Your friend George Hardt lost every cent, I hear. Are you back in the States?" "No, I'm in business in Prague." "I heard that you lost a lot in the crash." I did," and he added grimly, "but I lost everything I wanted in the boom." "Selling short."

"Something like that"

Again the memory of those days swept over him like a nightmare — the people they had met traveling; then people who couldn't add a row of figures or speak a coherent sentence. The little man Helen had consented to dance with at the ship's party, who had insulted her ten feet from the table; the women and girls carried screaming with drink or drugs out of public places —

—The men who locked their wives out in the snow, because the snow of twenty-nine wasn't real snow. If you didn't want it to be snow, you just paid some money.

He went to the phone and called the Peters' apartment; Lincoln answered.

"I called up because this thing is on my mind. Has Marion said anything definite?"

"Marion's sick," Lincoln answered shortly. "I know this thing isn't altogether your fault, but I can't have her go to pieces about it. I'm afraid we'll have to let it side for six months; I can't take the chance of working her up to this state again." .

"I see."

"I'm sorry, Charlie."

He went back to his table. His whisky glass was empty, but he shook his head when Alix looked, at it questioningly. There wasn't much he could do now except send Honoria some things; he would send her a lot of things tomorrow. He thought rather angrily that this was just money — he had given so many people money...

"No, no more," he said to another waiter. "What do I owe you?"

He would come back some day; they couldn't make him pay forever. But he wanted his child, and nothing was much good now, beside that fact. He wasn't young any more, with a lot of nice thoughts and dreams to have by himself. He was absolutely sure Helen wouldn't have wanted him to be so alone.

Continuation:

For very different reasons another famous novelist for his spirit of social protest is F.Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940). In his critical exploration of the “American Dream” – the limitless possibilities of wealth, success and opportunity

in contemporary society – and his depiction of excess and the new morality of the young during the “Jazz Age” of the swinging 20s, Fitzgerald charted the social and moral decline of a post-war society clinging vainly to idle illusions. His short stories and novels form an impressive body of work characterized by s spare, carefully written prose style and deft use of symbolism.

F.Scott Fitzgerald, who became the epitome of the Jazz Age that he described in his novels and short stories, was born into a fairly well-to-do family in St. Paul, Minnesota. He later attended Princeton University. Fitzgerald enrolled in the army but the First World War ended before he saw active service. While stationed in Montgomery, Alabama, he met and courted the beautiful Zelda Zayre, but she turned him down. Fitzgerald decided to go to New York and make his fortune so that he could win the heart of Zelda, and with the highly fortunate publication of his first novel, “This Side of Paradise”, Fitzgerald succeeded. Zelda and F.Scott Fitzgerald then became important protagonists of this wild and carefree period, with both of them suffering greatly from its consequences: she with a mental breakdown, and he with alcoholism. Some of his famous works on the Jazz Age are two collections of short stories.

BABYLON REVISITED

Commentary:
Babylon – one of the most famous cities of antiquity. Under the Persians, Babylon retained most of its institutions, became capital of the richest satrapy in the empire, and, according to Herodotus, the world's most splendid city.

Active Vocabulary: your home task is to find proper Russian equivalents for the following words and combinations, to learn them and get ready to write a quiz.

Portentous – showing that smth important is going to happen, especially smth bad (+trying to appear important and serious)
In a frenzy (of activity) – a state if great anxiety and excitement, in which you cannot control your behaviour; a time when people do a lot of things very quickly
To encounter – to experience smth, especially problems or opposition; to meet smb without planning
Bull market – a stock market in which the price of shares is going up and people are buying them
To run up a bill – to use so much of smth, or borrow so much money, that you owe a lot of money
To be bloated up – full of liquid, gas, food so that you look or feel much larger than normal; if you describe an organization as bloated, you mean that it is too big and does not work effectively
To loaf – to spend time somewhere and not do very much

Infallible – always right and never making mistakes
To prowl – to move around the area slowly and quietly, especially being involved in a criminal activity
To elude – to escape from smb or smth, especially by ticking them; if smth that you want eludes you, you fail to find or achieve it
To do an errand – a short journey in order to do smth for smb, for example delivering or collecting smth for them (to run errands for smb; send smb on errands)
Wistfully – thinking sadly about smth you would like to have but cannot have, especially smth that you used to have in the past
A stunt – a dangerous action that is dome to entertain people, especially in a film; smth that is done to attract people's attention, especially in advertising or politics
A reproof – blame or disapproval (a remark that blames or criticizes)
To blunder (a blunder) – to make a big mistake, especially because you have been careless or stupid (a careless or stupid mistake)
Equanimity – calmness in the way that you react to things, which means that you do not become upset or annoyed
Adverse (circumstances) – not good or favourable
Tangible – clear enough or definite enough to be easily seen or noticed
Villain – the main bad character in a film, play, or story
To square smth with you conscience – to be in agreement; make yourself believe that what you are doing is morally right
To throw up (in) the sponge (towel) – to give up or lose all hope, especially in a competition or fight
Exultant – very happy or proud, especially because you have succeeded in doing smth
To haunt – if the soul of a dead person haunts a place, it appears there often
To oil things (the wheels) – to help smth to be done in business or politics successfully and easily
Dissipation – the process of making smth gradually weaker or less until it disappears; the enjoyment of physical pleasures in a way that is harmful; the act of wasting money, time, energy
To be in the grip of life and circumstances – to be experiencing a very unpleasant situation that cannot be controlled or stopped
Hilarious – extremely funny
To worm out – to avoid doing smth that you have been asked to do by making an excuse that is dishonest but clever
Oblivious to – not knowing about or not noticing smth that is happening around you (anaware)
To sell short – to deceive; to represent smth or smb as being less worthy than is actually true
Coherent – easy to understand because it is clear and reasonable

Comment on the following sentences from the text:

- I spoiled this city for myself.
- Her very agressiveness gave him an advantage, and he knew enough to wait.
- He believed in character; he wanted to jump back a whole generation and trust in character again as the eternally valuable element.
- All the catering to vice and waste was on an utterly childish scale, and he suddenly realized the meaning of the word "dissipate" – to dissipate into thin air; to make nothing out of something.
- …and Charlie was more and more absorbed by the desire of putting a little of himself into her before she crystallized utterly.
- …but it he modulated his inevitable resentment to the chastened attitude of the reformed sinner, he might win his point in the end.
- She had built up all her fear of life into one wall and faced it toward him.
- They couldn't be expected to accept with equanimity the fact that his income was again twice as large as their own.
- The image of Helen haunted him.
- The door of the world was open again.
- But not to love too much, for he knew the injury that a father can do to a daughter or a mother to a son by attaching them too closely: afterward, out in the world, the child would seek in the marriage partner the same blind tenderness and, failing probably to find it, turn against love and life.
- Family quarrels are bitter things.

Quote the text to prove that:

- Two feelings were struggling inside Charlie when he returned to Paris: those of disappointment and happiness.
- Charlie was accustomed to a quite wealthy way of life.
- Charlie was eager to combat his alcohol drinking habits.
- Honoria was anxious to live with her father.
- Charlie started to oppose a glamorous life style.
- Charlie didn't feel like going on with previous acquaintances.
- Charlie awfully regretted his past.
- Marion didn't have confidence in Charlie.
- Marion was hostile and envious of Charlie.

Answer the questions:

- Why didn't Charlie return straight to America but preferred to settle in Prague?
- Why didn't Marion give Charlie a warm welcome on his arrival?
- What was the purpose of Charlie's boasting on coming to his relatives' house?
- What factors triggered an antipathy between Charlie and Marion?
- What feelings did the encounter with his daughter Honoria arouse in Charlie's soul?
- Do you think Honoria was perfectly happy at her aunt and uncle's?

- Do you think Charlie and his wife used to be rather good parents?
- Why was it hard for Marion to trust Charlie?
- Why did Charlie desire so much to get Honoria back?
- On what prejudice did Marion build her hatred towards Charlie?
- Charlie used to love his wife, didn't he?
- What drove Charlie to mix up with his previous friends again?

Prepare brief character sketches of Charlie and Marion.

Analyze the episode of Charlie's friends' arrival at Marion's house and draw your conclusions.

Some topics for developing argumentation and rhetorical speech skills:
- Outrageous jealousy can drive people mad.
- Bad habits are the main obstacle on the way to happiness.
- The family values erosion.
- The ability to forgive is God's gift.
- Children can sometimes fall victims of their parents' vices.
- The importance of people's personal role as parents, husbands and wives in contrast to their social rank.

Comment on the following and connect it with the plot of the story:
- The man travels the world over in search of what he needs and returns home to find it. (J.Moore)
- In social life, we please more often by our vices than our virtues. (La Rochefoucauld)
- Life teachers us to be less severe with ourselves and others. (Goethe)
- Jealousy is always born with love, but does not always die with it. (La Rochefoucauld)
- Those who are faithless know the pleasures of love; it is the faithful who know love is tragedies. (O.Wilde)

After all these exercises can you now formulate the message and decipher the implication of the author's entitling the story? (Why was Paris likened to Babylon?)

F.S.Fitzgerald

The Last of The Belles

After Atlanta's elaborate and theatrical rendition of Southern charm, we all underestimated Tarleton. It was a little hotter than anywhere we'd been — a dozen rookies collapsed the first day in that Georgia sun — and when you saw herds of cows drifting through the business Streets, hi-yaed by colored drovers, a trance stole down over you out of the hot light: you wanted to move a hand or foot to be sure you were alive.

So I stayed out at camp and let Lieutenant Warren tell me about the girls. This was fifteen years ago, and I've forgotten how I felt, except that the days went along, one after another, better than they do now, and I was empty-hearted, because up north she whose legend I had loved for three years was getting married, I saw the Clippings and newspaper photographs. It was "a romantic wartime wedding," all very rich and sad. I felt vividly the dark radiance of the sky under which it took place and, as a young snob, was more envious than sorry.

A day came when I went into Tarleton for a haircut and ran into a nice fellow named Bill Knowles, who was in my time at Harvard. He'd been in the National Guard division, that preceded us in camp; at the last moment he had transferred to aviation and had been left behind.

"I'm glad I met you, Andy," he said with undue seriousness. "I'll hand you on all my information before I start for Texas. You see, there're really only three girls here-"

I was interested; there was something mystical about there being three girls.

"— and here's one of them now."

We were in front of a drug store and he marched me in and introduced me to a lady I promptly detested.

"The other two are Ailie Calhoun and Sally Carrol Mapper."

I guessed from the way he pronounced her name that he was interested in Ailie Calhoun. It was on his mind what she would be doing while he was gone; he wanted her to have a quiet, uninteresting time.

At my age I don't even hesitate to confess that entirely unchivalrous images of Ailie Calhoun — that lovely name —rushed into my mind, At twenty-three there is no such thing as a pre-empted beauty; though, had Bill asked me, I would doubtless have sworn in all sincerity to care for her like a sister. He didn't; he was just fretting out loud at having to go. Three days later he telephoned me that he was leaving next morning and he'd take me to her house that night.

We met at the hotel and walked uptown through the flowery, hot twilight. The four white pillars of the Calhoun house faced the street, and behind them the veranda was dark as a cave with hanging, weaving, climbing vines.

When we came up the walk a girl in a white dress tumbled out of the front door, crying, "I'm so sorry I'm late!" and seeing us, added: "Why, I thought I heard you come ten minutes —"

She broke off as a chair creaked and another man, an aviator from Camp Harry Lee, emerged from the obscurity of the veranda.

"Why, Canby!" she Cried. "How are you?"

He and Bill Knowles waited with the tenseness of open litigants.

"Canby, I want to whisper to you, honey," she said, after just a second, "you'll excuse us, Bill." They went aside. Presently Lieutenant Canby, immensely displeased, said in a grim voice, "Then we'll make it Thursday, but that means sure." Scarcely nodding to us, he went down the walk, the spurs with which he presumably urged on his aeroplane gleaming in the lamplight.. .

"Come in — I don't just know your name —"

There she was — the Southern type in all its purity. I would have recognized Ailie Calhoun if I'd never heard Ruth Draper or read Marse Chan. She had the adroitness sugar-coated with sweet, voluble simplicity, the suggested background of devoted fathers, brothers and admirers stretching back into the South's heroic age, the unfailing coolness acquired in the endless struggle with the heat. There were notes in her voice that ordered slaves around, that withered up Yankee Captains, and then soft, wheedling notes that mingled in unfamiliar loveliness with the night.

I could scarcely see her in the darkness, but when I rose to go — it was plain that I was not to linger — she stood in the orange light from the doorway. She was small and very blond; there was too much fever-colored rouge on her face, accentuated by a nose dabbed clownish white, but she shone through that like a star.

"After Bill goes I'll be sitting here all alone night after night. Maybe you'll take me to the country-club dances." The pathetic prophecy brought a laugh from Bill. "Wait a minute," Ailie murmured. "Your guns are all crooked."

She straightened my collar pin, looking up at me for a second with something more than curiosity. It was a seeking look, as if she asked, "Could it be you?" Like Lieutenant Canby, I marched off unwillingly into the suddenly insufficient night.

Two weeks later I sat with her on the same veranda, or rather she half lay in my arms and yet scarcely touched me — how she managed that I don't remember. I was trying unsuccessfully to kiss her, and had been trying for the best part of an hour. We had a sort of joke about my not being sincere. My theory was that if she'd let me kiss her I'd fall in love with her. Her argument was that I was obviously insincere,

In a lull between two of these struggles she told me about her brother who had died in his senior year at Yale. She showed me his picture — it was a handsome, earnest face with a leyendecker forelock — and told me that when she met someone who measured up to him she'd marry. I found this family idealism discouraging; even my brash confidence couldn't compete with the dead.

The evening and other evenings passed like that, and ended with my going back to camp with the remembered smell of magnolia flowers and a mood of vague dissatisfaction. I never kissed her. We went to the vaudeville and to the Country Club on Saturday nights, where she seldom took ten consecutive steps

with one man, and she took me to barbecues and rowdy watermelon parties, and never thought it was worth while to change what I felt for her into love. I see now that it wouldn't have been hard, but she was a wise nineteen and she must have seen that we were emotionally incompatible. So I became her confidant instead.

We talked about Bill Knowles. She was considering Bill; for, though she wouldn't admit it, a winter at school in New York and a prom at Yale had turned her eyes North.. She said she didn't think she'd marry a southern man. And by degrees I saw that she was consciously and voluntarily different from these other girls who sang nigger songs and shot craps in the country-club bar. That's why Bill and I and others were drawn to her. We recognized her.

June and July, while the rumors reached us faintly, ineffectually, of battle and terror overseas, Ailie's eyes roved here and there about the country-club floor, seeking for something among the tall young officers. She attached several, choosing them with unfailing perspicacity — save in the case of Lieutenant Canby, whom she claimed to despise, but, nevertheless, gave dates to "because he was so sincere" — and we apportioned her evenings among us all summer.

One day she broke all her dates — Bill Knowles, had leave and was coming. We talked of the event with scientific impersonality — would he move her to a decision? Lieutenant Canby, on the contrary, wasn't impersonal at all; made a nuisance of himself. He told her that if she married Knowles he was going to climb up six thousand feet in his aeroplane, shut off the motor and let go. He frightened her — I had to yield him my last date before Bill came.

On Saturday night she and Bill Knowles came to the country club. They were very handsome together and once more I felt envious and sad. As they danced out on the floor the three-piece orchestra was playing After You've Gone, in a poignant incomplete way that I can hear yet, as if each bar were trickling off a precious minute of that time. I knew then that I had grown to love Tarleton, and I glanced about half in panic to see if some face wouldn't come in for me out of that warm, singing, outer darkness that yielded up couple after couple in organdie and olive drab. It was a time of youth and war, and there was never so much love around.

When I danced with Ailie she suddenly suggested that we go outside to a car. She wanted to know why didn't people cut in on her tonight? Did they think she was already married?

"Are you going to be?"

"I don't know, Andy. Sometimes, when he treats me as if I were sacred, it thrills me." Her voice was hushed and far away. "And then — "

She laughed, her body, so frail and tender, was touching mine, her face was turned up to me, and there, suddenly, with Bill Knowles ten yards off, I could have kissed her at last. Our lips just touched experimentally; then an aviation officer turned a corner of the veranda near us, peered into our darkness and hesitated.

"Ailie."

"Yes."

"You heard about this afternoon?"

"What?" She leaned forward, tenseness already in her voice.

"Horace Canby crashed. He was instantly killed,"

She got up slowly and stepped out of the car.

"You mean he was killed?" she said.

"Yes. They don't know what the trouble was. His motor-"

. "Qh-h-h!" Her rasping whisper came through the hands suddenly covering her face. We watched her helplessly as she put her head on the side of the car, gagging dry tears. After a minute I went for Bill, who was standing in the stag line, searching anxiously about for her, and told him she wanted to go home.

I sat on the steps outside. I had disliked Canby, but his terrible, pointless death was more real to me then than the day's toll of thousands in France. In a few minutes Ailie and Bill came out, Ailie was whimpering a little, but when she saw me her eyes flexed and she came over swiftly.

"Andy" — she spoke in a quick, low voice — "of course you must never tell anybody what I told you about Canby yesterday. What he said, I mean."

"Of course not."

She looked at me a second longer as if to be quite sure. Finally she was sure. Then she sighed in such a quaint little way that I could hardly believe my ears, and her brow went up in what call only be described as mock despair.

"Andy!"

I looked uncomfortably at the ground, aware that she was calling my attention to her involuntarily disastrous effect on men.

"Good night, Andy!" called Bill as they got into a taxi.

"Good night," I said, and almost added: "You poor fool."

II

Of course I should have made one of those fine moral decisions that people make in books, and despised her.

On the contrary, I don't doubt that she could still have had me by raising her hand.

A few days later she made it all right by saying wistfully, "I know you think it was terrible of me to think of myself at a time like that, but it was such a shocking coincidence."

At twenty-three I was entirely unconvinced about anything, except that some people were strong and attractive and could do what they wanted, and others were caught and disgraced. I hoped I was of die former. I was sure Ailie was.

I had to revise other ideas about her. In the course of a long discussion with some girl about kissing — in those days people still talked about kissing more than they kissed — I mentioned the fact that Ailie had only kissed two or three men, and only when she thought she was in love. To my considerable disconcertion the girl figuratively just lay on the floor and howled.

"But it's true," I assured her, suddenly knowing it wasn't. "She told me herself."

"Ailie Calhoun! Oh, my heavens! Why, last year at the Tech spring house party —"

This was in September. We were going overseas any week now, and to bring us up to full strength a last batch of officers from the fourth training camp arrived. The fourth camp wasn't like the first three — the candidates were from the ranks; even from the drafted divisions. They had queer names without vowels in them, and save for a few young militiamen, you couldn't take it for granted that they came out of any background at all.

The addition to our company was Lieutenant Earl Schoen from New Bedford, Massachusetts; as fine a physical specimen as I have ever seen. He was six-foot-three, with black hair, high color and glossy dark-brown eyes. He wasn't very smart and he was definitely illiterate, yet he was a good officer, high-tempered and commanding, and with that becoming touch of vanity that sits well on the military. I had an idea that New Bedford was a country town, and set down his bumptious qualities to that.

We were doubled up in living quarters and he came into my hut. Inside of a week there was a cabinet photograph of some Tarleton girl nailed brutally to the shack wall.

"She's no jane or anything like that. She's a society girl; goes with all the best people here."

The following Sunday afternoon I met the lady at a semi-private swimming pool in the country. When Ailie and I arrived, there was Schoen's muscular body rippling out of a bathing suit at the far end of the pool.

"Hey, lieutenant!"

When I waved back at him he grinned and winked, jerking his head toward the girl at his side. Then, digging her in the ribs, he jerked his head at me. It was a form of introduction.

"Who's that with Kitty Preston?" Ailie asked, and when I told her she said he looked like a street-car conductor, and pretended to look for her transfer.

A moment later he crawled powerfully and gracefully down the pool and pulled himself up at our side. I introduced him to Ailie.

"How do you like my girl, lieutenant?" he demanded. "I told you she was all right, didn't I?" He jerked his head toward Ailie; this time to indicate that his girl and Ailie moved in the same circles. "How about us all having dinner together down at the hotel some night?"

I left them in a moment, amused as I saw Ailie visibly making up .her mind that here, anyhow, was not the ideal. But Lieutenant Earl Schoen was not to be dismissed so lightly. He ran his eyes cheerfully and inoffensively over her cute, slight figure, and decided that she would do even better than the other. Ten minutes later I saw them in the water together, Ailie swimming away with a grim little stroke she had, and Schoen wallowing riotously around her and ahead of her, sometimes pausing and staring at her, fascinated, as a boy might look at a. nautical doll.

While the afternoon passed he remained at her side. Finally Ailie came over to me and whispered, with a laugh: "He's a following me around. He thinks I haven't paid my carfare."

She turned quickly. Miss Kitty Preston, her face curiously flustered, stood facing us.

"Ailie Calhoun, I didn't think it of you to go out and delib'ately try to take a man away from another girl." — An expression of distress at the impending scene fitted over Ailie's face — "I thought you considered yourself above anything like that."

Miss Preston's voice was low, but it held that tensity that can be felt farther than it can be heard, and I saw Ailie's clear lovely eyes glance about in panic. Luckily, Earl himself was ambling cheerfully and innocently toward us.

"If you care for him you certainly oughtn't to belittle yourself in front of him," said Ailie in a flash, her head high.

It was her acquaintance with the traditional way of behaving against Kitty Preston's naive and fierce possessiveness, or if you prefer it, Ailie's "breeding" against the other's "commonness." She turned away.

"Wait a minute, kid!" Cried Earl Schoen. "How about your address? Maybe I'd like to give you a ring on the phone."

She looked at him in a way that should have indicated to Kitty her entire lack of interest.

"I'm very busy at the Red Cross this month," she said, her voice as cool as her slicked-back blond hair. "Good-by."

On the way home she laughed. Her air of having been unwittingly involved in a contemptible business vanished.

"She'll never hold that young man," she said. "He wants somebody new."

"Apparently he wants Ailie Calhoun."

The idea amused her.

"He could give me his ticket punch to wear, like a fraternity pin. What fun! If mother ever saw anybody like that come in the house, she'd just lie down and die."

And to give Ailie credit, it was fully a fortnight before he did come to her house, although he rushed her until she pretended to be annoyed at the next country-club dance.

"He's the biggest tough, Andy, she whispered to me. "But he's so sincere."

She used the word "tough" without the conviction it would have carried had he been a southern boy. She only knew it with her mind; her ear couldn't distinguish between one yankee voice and another. And somehow Mrs. Calhoun didn't expire at his appearance on the threshold. The supposedly ineradicable prejudices of Ailie's parents were a convenient phenomenon that disappeared at her wish. It was her friends who were astonished. Ailie, always a little above Tarleton, whose beaus had been very carefully the "nicest" men of the camp — Ailie and Lieutenant Schoen! I grew tired of assuring people that she was merely distracting herself — and indeed every week or so there was someone new — an ensign from pensacola, an old friend from New Orleans — but always, in between times, there was Earl Schoen.

Orders arrived for an advance party of officers and sergeants to proceed to the port of embarkation and take ship to France. My name was on the list. I had

been on the range for a week and when I got back to camp, Earl Schoen buttonholed me immediately.

"We're giving a little farewell party in the mess. Just you and I and Captain Craker and three girls."

Earl and I were to call for the girls. We picked up sally Carrol Happer and Nancy Lamar, and went on to Ailie's house; to be met at the door by the butler with the announcement that she wasn't home. ... ."Isn't home?" Earl repeated blankly. "Where is she?"

"Didn't leave no information about that; just said she wasn't home."

"But this is a darn funny thing!" he exclaimed. He walked around the familiar dusky veranda while the butler waited at the door. Something occurred to him. "Say," he informed me — "Say, I think she's sore."

I wailed. He said sternly to the butler, "You tell her I've got to speak to her a minute."

"How'm I goin' tell her that when she ain't home?"

Again Earl walked musingly around the porch. Then he nodded several times and said:

"She's sore at something that happened downtown."

In a few words he sketched out the matter to me,

"Look here; you wait in the car," I said. "Maybe I can fix this." And when he reluctantly retreated: "Oliver, you tell Miss Ailie I want to see her alone."

After some argument he bore this message and in a moment returned with a reply;

"Miss Ailie say she don't want to see that other gentleman about nothing never. She say come in if you like."

She was in the library. I had expected to see a picture of cool, outraged dignity, but her face was distraught, tumultuous, despairing. Her eyes were red-rimmed, as though she had been crying slowly and painfully, for hours.

"Oh, hello, Andy," she said brokenly. "I haven't seen you for so long. Has he gone?"

"Now, Ailie-"

"Now, Ailie!" she cried. "Now, Ailie! He spoke to me, you see. He lifted his hat. He stood there ten feet from me with that horrible — that horrible woman — holding her arm and talking to her, and then when he saw me he raised his hat. Andy, I didn't know what to do. I had to go in the drug store and ask for a glass of water, and I was so afraid he'd follow in after me that I asked Mr. Rich to let me go out the back way. I never want to see him or hear of him again."

I talked. I said what one says in such cases. I said it for half an hour. I could not move her. Several times she answered by murmuring something about his not being "sincere," and for the fourth time I wondered what the word meant to her. Certainly not constancy; it was, I half suspected, some special way she wanted to be regarded.

I got up to go. And then, unbelievably, the automobile horn sounded three times impatiently outside. It was stupefying. It said as plainly as if Earl, were in the room, "All right; go to the devil then! I'm not going to wait here all night."

Ailie looked at me aghast. And suddenly a peculiar look came into her face, spread, flickered, broke into a teary, hysterical smile.

"Isn't; he awful?" she cried in helpless despair. "Isn't he terrible?"

"Hurry up," I said quickly. "Get your cape. This is our last night."

And I can still feel that last night vividly, the candlelight that flickered over the rough boards of the mess shack, over the frayed paper decorations left from the supply company's party, the sad mandolin down a company street that kept picking My Indiana Home out of the universal nostalgia of the departing summer.

The three girls lost in this mysterious men's city felt something, too — a bewitched impermanence as though they were on a magic carpet that had lighted on the southern countryside, and any moment the wind would lift it and waft it away. We toasted ourselves and the south. Then we left our napkins and empty glasses and a little of the past on the table, and hand in hand went out into the moonlight itself. Taps had been played; there was no sound but the far-away whinny of a horse, and a loud persistent snore at which we laughed, and the leathery snap of a sentry coming to port over by the guardhouse. Craker was on duty; we others got into a waiting car, motored into Tarleton and left Craker's girl.

Then Ailie and Earl, Sally and I, two and two in the wide back seat, each couple turned from the other, absorbed and whispering, drove away into the wide, flat darkness.

We drove through pine woods heavy with lichen and Spanish moss, and between the fallow cotton fields along a road white as the rim of the world. We parked under the broken shadow of a mill where there was the sound of running water and restive squawky birds and over everything a brightness that tried to filter in anywhere — into the lost nigger cabins, the automobile, the fastnesses of the heart. The South sang to us — I wonder if they remember. I remember — the cool pale faces, the somnolent amorous eyes and the voices:

"Are you comfortable?"

"Yes; are you?"

"Are you sure you are?"

"Yes."

Suddenly we knew it was late and there was nothing more. We turned home.

Our detachment started for Camp Mills next day, but I didn't go to France after all. We passed a cold month on Long Island, marched aboard a transport with steel helmets slung at our sides and then marched off again. There wasn't any more war. I had missed the war. When I came back to Tarleton I tried to get out of the Army, but I had a regular commission and it took most of the winter. But Earl Schoen was one of the first to be demobilized. He wanted to find a good job "while the picking was good." Ailie was noncommittal, but there was an understanding between them that he'd be back.

By January the camps, which for two years had dominated the little city, were already fading. There was only the persistent incinerator smell to remind one of all that activity and bustle. What life remained centred bitterly about divisional headquarters building with the disgruntled regular officers who had also missed the war.

And now the young men of Tarleton began drifting back from the ends of the earth — some with Canadian uniforms, some with crutches or empty sleeves. A returned battalion of the National Guard paraded through the streets with open ranks for their dead, and then stepped down out of romance forever and sold you things over the counters of local stores. Only a few uniforms mingled with the dinner coats at the country-club dance.

Just before Christmas, Bill Knowles arrived unexpectedly one day and left the next —, either he gave Ailie 'an ultimatum or she had made up her mind at last. I saw her sometimes when she wasn't busy with returned heroes from Savannah and Augusta, but I felt like an outmoded survival — and I was. She was waiting for Earl Schoen with such a vast uncertainty that she didn't like to talk about it. Three days before I got my final discharge he came.

I first happened upon them walking down Market Street together, and I don't think I've ever been so sorry for a couple in my life; though I suppose the same situation was repeating itself in every city where there had been camps. Exteriorly Earl had about everything wrong with him that could be imagined. His hat was green, with a radical feather; his suit was slashed and braided in a grotesque fashion that national advertising and the movies have put an end to. Evidently he had been to his old barber, for his hair bloused neatly on his pink, shaved neck. It wasn't as though he had been shiny and poor, but the background of mill-town dance halls and outing clubs flamed out at you — or rather flamed out at Ailie. For she had never quite imagined the reality; in these clothes even the natural grace of that magnificent body had departed. At first he boasted of his fine job; it would get them along all right until he could "See some easy money." But from the moment he came back into her world on its own terms he must have known it was hopeless. I don't know what Ailie said or how much her grief weighed against her stupefaction. She acted quickly — three days after his arrival, Earl and I went North together on the train.

"Well, that's the end of that," he said moodily. "She's a wonderful girl, but too much of a highbrow for me. I guess she's got to marry some rich guy that'll give her a great social position. I can't see that stuck-up sort of thing." And then, later: "She said to come back and see her in a year, but I'll never go back. This aristocrat stuff is all right if you got the money for it, but —"

"But it wasn't real," he meant to finish. The provincial society in which he had moved with so much satisfaction for six months already appeared to him as affected, "dudish" and artificial.

"Say, did you see what I saw getting on the train?" he asked me after a while. "Two wonderful janes, all alone. What do you say we mosey into the next car and ask them to lunch? I'll take the one in blue." Halfway down the car he turned around suddenly. "Say, Andy," he demanded, frowning; "One thing — how do you suppose she knew I used to command a street car? I never told her that."

"Search me."

III

This narrative arrives now at one of the big gaps that stared me in the face when I began. For six years, while I finished at Harvard Law and built commercial aeroplanes and backed a pavement block that went gritty under trucks, Ailie Calhoun was scarcely more than a name on a Christmas Card; something that blew a little in my mind on warm nights when I remembered the magnolia flowers. Occasionally an acquaintance of Army days would ask me, "What became of that blond girl who was so popular?" but I didn't know. I ran into Nancy Lamar at the Montmartre in New York one evening and learned that Ailie had become engaged to a man in Cincinnati, had gone North to visit his family and then broken it off. She was lovely as ever and there was always a heavy beau or two. But neither Bill Knowles nor Earl Schoen had ever come back.

And somewhere about that time I heard that Bill Knowles had married a girl he met on a boat. There you are — not much of a patch to mend six years with.

Oddly enough, a girl seen at twilight in a small Indiana station started me thinking about going South. The girl, in stiff pink organdie, threw her arms about a man who got off our train and hurried him to a waiting car, and I felt a sort of pang. It seemed to me that she was bearing him off into the lost midsummer world of my early twenties, where time had stood still and charming girls, dimly seen like the past itself, still loitered along the dusky streets. I suppose that poetry is a Northern man's dream of the south. But it was months later that I sent off a wire to Ailie, and immediately followed it to Tarleton.

It was July. The Jefferson Hotel seemed strangely shabby and stuffy — a boosters' Club burst into intermittent song in the dining room that my memory had long dedicated to officers and girls. I recognised the taxi driver who took me up to Ailie's house, but his "Sure, I do, lieutenant," was unconvincing. I was only one of twenty thousand.

It was a curious three days. I suppose some of Ailie's first young lustre must have gone the way of such mortal shining, but I can't bear witness to it. She was still so physically appealing that you wanted to touch the personality that trembled on her lips. No — the change was more profound than that.

At once I saw she had a different line. The modulations of pride, the vocal hints that she knew the secrets of a brighter, finer antebellum day, were gone from her voice; there was no time for them now as it rambled on in the half-laughing, half-desperate banter of the newer South. And everything was swept into this banter in order to make it go on and leave no time for thinking — the present, the future, herself, me. We went to a rowdy party at the house of some young married people, and she was the nervous, glowing centre of it. After all, she wasn't eighteen, and she was as attractive in her role of reckless clown as she had ever been in her life.

"Have you heard anything from Earl Schoen?" I asked her the second night, on our way to the country-club dance.

"No." She was serious for a moment. "I often think of him. He was the —" She hesitated.

"Goon."

"I was going to say the man I loved most, but that wouldn't be true. I never exactly loved him, or I'd have married him any old how, wouldn't I?" She looked at me questioningly. "At least I wouldn't have treated him like that."

"It was impossible."

"Of course," she agreed uncertainly. Her mood changed; she became flippant: "How the Yankees did deceive us poor little southern girls. Ah, me"

When we reached the country club she melted like a chameleon into the — to me — unfamiliar crowd. There was a new generation upon the floor, with less dignity than the ones I had known, but none of them were more a part of its lazy, feverish essence than Ailie. Possibly she had perceived that in her initial longing to escape from Tarleton's provincialism she had been walking alone, following a generation which was doomed to have no successors. Just where she lost the battle, waged behind the white pillars of her veranda, I don't know. But she had guessed wrong, missed out somewhere. Her wild animation, which even now called enough men around her to rival the entourage of the youngest and freshest, was an admission of defeat.

I left her house, as I had so often left it that vanished June, in a mood of vague dissatisfaction. It was hours later, tossing about my bed in the hotel, that I realized what was the matter, what had always been the matter — I was deeply and incurably in love with her. In spite of every incompatibility, she was still, she would always be to me, the most attractive girl I had ever known. I told her so next afternoon. It was one of those hot days I knew so well, and Ailie sat beside me on a couch in the darkened library.

"Oh, no, I couldn't marry you," she said, almost frightened; "I don't love you that way at all... I never did. And you don't love me. I didn't mean to tell you now, but next month I'm going to marry another man. We're not even announcing it, because I've done that twice before." Suddenly it occurred to her that I might be hurt: "Andy, you just had a silly idea, didn't you? You know I couldn't ever marry a Northern man."

"Who is he?" I demanded.

"A man from Savannah."

"Are you in love with him?"

"Of course I am." We both smiled. "Of course I am! What are you trying to make me say?"

There were no doubts as there had been with other men. She couldn't afford to let herself have doubts. I knew this because she had long ago stopped making any pretensions with me. This very naturalness, I realized, was because she didn't consider me as a suitor. Beneath, her mask of an instinctive thoroughbred, she had always been on to herself, and she couldn't believe that anyone not taken in to the point of uncritical worship could really love her. That was what she called being "Sincere"; she felt most security with men like Canby and Earl Schoen, who were incapable of passing judgments on the ostensibly aristocratic heart.

"All right," I said, as if she had asked my permission to marry. "Now, would you do something for me?"

"Anything."

"Ride out to camp."

"But there's nothing left there, honey."

"I don't care."

We walked downtown. The taxi driver in front of the hotel repeated her objection: "Nothing there now, cap."

“Never mind. Go there anyhow."

Twenty minutes later he stopped on a wide unfamiliar plain powdered with new cotton fields and marked with isolated clumps of pine.

"Like to drive over yonder where you see the smoke?" asked the driver. "That's the new state prison."

"No. Just drive along this road. I want to find where I used to live."

An old race course, inconspicuous in the camp's day of glory, had reared its dilapidated grandstand in the desolation. I tried in vain to orient myself.

"Go along this road past that clump of trees, and then turn right — no, turn left."

He obeyed, with professional disgust.

"You won't find a single thing, darling," said Ailie. The contractors took it all down."

We rode slowly along the margin of the fields. It might have been here —

"All right. I want to get out," I said suddenly.

I left Ailie sitting in the car, looking very beautiful with the warm breeze stirring her long, curly bob.

It might have been here. That would make the company streets down there and the mess shack, where we dined that night, just over the way.

The taxi driver regarded me indulgently while I stumbled here and there in the knee-deep underbrush, looking for my youth in a clapboard or a strip of roofing or a rusty tomato can. I tried to sight on a vaguely familiar clump of trees, but it was growing darker now and I couldn't be quite sure they were the right trees.

"They're going to fix up the old race course," Ailie called from the car. "Tarleton's getting quite doggy in its old age."

No. Upon consideration they didn't look like the right trees. All I could be sure of was this place that had once been so full of life and effort was gone, as if it had never existed, and that in another month Ailie would be gone, and the south would be empty for me forever.

THE LAST OF THE BELLES

Commentary:

A Belle – (old-fashioned) – a beautiful girl or woman

Active Vocabulary: your home task is to find proper Russian equivalents for the following words and combinations, to learn them and get ready to write a quiz.

A rendition – smb's performance of a play, piece of music
To fret out – to worry about smth, especially when there is no need
To wheedle – to persuade smb to do or give you smth, for example by saying nice things to them that you don't mean (used to show disapproval)
A prophecy – a statement that smth will happen in the future, especially one made by smb with religious or magic powers
To measure up to – to be good enough to do a particular job or to reach a particular standard
To make a nuisance of oneself – to annoy other people with your behaviour
The day's toll – the number of people killed or injured in a particular accident, by a particular illness
Bumptious – too proud of your abilities in a way that annoys other people
Impending – an impending event or situation, especially an unpleasant one, is going to happen very soon
To be sore at – upset, angry and annoyed, especially because you have not been treated fairly
Stupefying – making you feel extremely surprised, tired, or bored
Disgruntled – annoyed or disappointed, especially because things have not happened in the way that you wanted
To get discharge – when you are officially allowed to leave the hospital or the job in the army, navy
Intermittent – stopping and starting often and for short periods
Flippant – not being serious about smth that other people think you should be serious about
Dilapidated – a dilapidated building, vehicle is old and in very bad condition

Comment on the following sentences from the text:

– There she was – the Southern type in all its purity;
– So I became her confident instead;
– A winter at school in New York and a prom at Yale had turned her eyes North;
– It was a time of youth and war, and there was never so much love around;
– But Lieutenant Earl Schoen was not to be dismissed so lightly.
– …being "sincere" meant some special way she wanted to be regarded;
– The three girls lost in this mysterious men's city felt something, too – a bewitched impermanence as though they were on a magic carpet that had lighted on the southern countryside, and any moment the wind would lift it and waft it away.
– A returned battalion of the National Guard paraded through the streets with open ranks for their dead, and then stepped down out of romance forever and sold you things over the counters of local stores. Only a few uniforms mingled with the dinner coats at the country-club dance.

- The provincial society in which he had moved with so much satisfaction for six months already appeared to him as affected, "dudish" and artificial;
- I suppose that poetry is a Northern man's dream of the south;
- Just where she lost the battle, waged behind the white pillars of her veranda, I don't know.
- Beneath her mask of an instinctive, thoroughbred she had always been on to herself, and she couldn't believe, that anyone not taken in to the point of uncritical worship could really love her.

Quote the text to prove that:

- Andy was fascinated by Ailie Calhoun;
- The feelings of contempt and love were struggling inside Andy;
- Andy was a morally strong person;
- Ailie took to Earl – despite her humiliating him, which revealed her inner interest towards him;
- Ailie's friends were astonished by her relationship with Earl, not her parents;
- Andy felt like "an outmoded survival";
- There were plenty of insuperable discrepancies and obstacles between Earl and Ailie;
- Ailie was deprived of self-assurance;
- "Ailie's pride was stung, her vanity vanished defeated at heart";
- Andy felt both pity and love for Ailie;

Answer the questions:

- Why did Andy describe himself as empty-hearted at the beginning of the story?
- Why, do you think, Ailie thought Andy and her were emotionally incompatible?
- In what way did Ailie differ from the other girls in the town?
- Do you think Ailie was cold-hearted and practical by nature?
- Why, do you believe, Ailie tried to seem contemptuous of Earl?
- What did it mean for Ailie to be regarded "sincerely"?
- Why did Ailie and Earl finally part?
- How do you account for Ailie's words about "poor little southern girls deceived by Yankees"?

The questions for home self-work and study, find any additional information and be ready to discuss in class:

- What was implied by the author by referring to the South's heroic age?
- Why is the story entitled "The Last of the Belles"?

Prepare brief character sketches of Andy, Ailie and Earl.

Analyze the last part of the story where Andy realized his love for Ailie and draw your conclusions. Why did the author speak about the south being empty for him forever?

Some topic for developing argumentation and rhetorical speech skills:

- There is a certain discrepancy in the way of perceiving life between those people who live in the North and the ones from
- the South of the USA.
- Psychological peculiarities of behaviour can be closely connected with historical and political events in this or that country (on the example of the USA and its history)
- The expectations and wishes of youth are sometimes destroyed by reality.
- Wars break both people's hearts and illusions leaving them lonely
- The author's way to juxtapose respectable romantic South and rational down-to-earth North
- People's eternal desire to return the "sweet" past and their impossibility to do it.

Comment on the following and connect it with the plot of the story:

- Be good and you will be lonesome. (M.Twain)
- No man is happy but by comparison. (Th.Shadwell)
- He that lives in hope dances without music. (G.Herbert)
- I love those who long for the impossible. (Goethe)

After all these exercises can you now formulate the message?

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