КОЛЛЕКТИВ АВТОРОВ

SHORT-STORIES

Коллектив авторов

Short-Stories

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Short-Stories:

Содержание

Short-Stories

A PREFATORY NOTE

This collection of short-stories does not illustrate the history of short-story writing, nor does it pretend that these are the ten best stories ever written, but it does attempt to present selections from a list of the greatest short-stories that have proved, in actual use, most beneficial to high school students.

The introduction presents a concise statement of the essentials of the history, qualities, and composition of the short-story. A brief biography of each author and a criticism covering the main characteristics of his writings serve as starting points for the recitation. The references following both the biography and criticism are given in order that the study of the short-story may be amplified, and that high school teachers may build a systematic and serviceable library about their class work in the teaching of the story. The collateral readings, listed after each story, will aid in the creation of a suitable atmosphere for the story studied, and explain many questions developed in the recitation. Only such definitions as are not easily found in school dictionaries are included in the notes.

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INTRODUCTION

HISTORY OF THE SHORT-STORY

Just when, where, and by whom story-telling was begun no

one can say. From the first use of speech, no doubt, our ancestors have told stories of war, love, mysteries, and the miraculous performances of lower animals and inanimate objects. The ultimate source of all stories lies in a thorough democracy, unhampered by the restrictions of a higher civilization. Many tales spring from a loathsome filth that is extremely obnoxious to our present day tastes. The remarkable and gratifying truth is, however, that the short-story, beginning in the crude and brutal stages of man's development, has gradually unfolded to greater and more useful possibilities, until in our own time it is a most flexible and moral literary form.

The first historical evidence in the development of the story shows no conception of a short-story other than that it is not so long as other narratives. This judgment of the short-story obtained until the beginning of the nineteenth century, when a new version of its meaning was given, and an enlarged vision of its possibilities was experienced by a number of writers almost simultaneously. In the early centuries of story-telling there was only one purpose in mind – that of narrating for the joy of the telling and hearing. The story-tellers sacrificed unity and totality of effect as well as originality for an entertaining method of reciting their incidents.

The story of *Ruth* and the *Prodigal Son* are excellent short tales, but they do not fulfill the requirements of our modern short-story for the reason that they are not constructed for one single impression, but are in reality parts of possible longer

stories. They are, as it were, parts of stories not unlike *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *A Lear of the Steppes*, and lack those complete and concise artistic effects found in the short-stories, *Markheim* and *Mumu*, by the same authors. Both *Ruth* and the *Prodigal Son* are exceptionally well told, possess a splendid moral tone, and are excellent prophecies of what the nineteenth century has developed for us in the art of short-story writing.

The Greeks did very little writing in prose until the era of their decadence, and showed little instinct to use the concise and unified form of the short-story. The conquering Romans followed closely in the paths of their predecessors and did little work in the shorter narratives. The myths of Greece and Rome were not bound by facts, and opened a wonderland where writers were free to roam. The epics were slow in movement, and presented a list of loosely organized stories arranged about some character like Ulysses or AEneas.

During the mediaeval period story-tellers and stories appeared everywhere. The more ignorant of these story-tellers produced the fable, and the educated monks produced the simple, crude and disjointed tales. The *Gesta Romanorum* is a wonderful storehouse of these mediaeval stories. In the *Decameron* Boccaccio deals with traditional and contemporary materials. He is a born story-teller and presents many interesting and well-told narratives, but as Professor Baldwin[1] has said, more than half

[1] *American Short-Stories*, by Charles Sears Baldwin, NewYork: Longmans, Green, & Company, 1904.

are merely anecdotes, and the remaining stories are bare plots, ingeniously done in a kind of scenario form. Three approach our modern idea of the short-story, and two, the second story of the second day and the sixth story of the ninth day, actually attain to our standard. Boccaccio was not conscious of a standard in short-story telling, for he had none in the sense that Poe and Maupassant defined and practiced it. Chaucer in England told his stories in verse and added the charm of humor and well defined characters to the development of story-telling.

In the seventeenth century Cervantes gave the world its first great novel, *Don Quixote*. Cervantes was careless in his work and did not write short-stories, but tales that are fairly brief. Spain added to the story a high sense of chivalry and a richness of character that the Greek romance and the Italian novella did not possess. France followed this loose composition and lack of beauty in form. Scarron and Le Sage, the two French fiction writers of this period, contributed little or nothing to the advancement of story-telling. Cervantes' *The Liberal Lover* is as near as this period came to producing a real short-story.

The story-telling of the seventeenth century was largely shaped by the popularity of the drama. In the eighteenth century the drama gave place to the essay, and it is to the sketch and essay that we must go to trace the evolution of the story during this period. Voltaire in France had a burning message in every essay, and he paid far greater attention to the development of the thought of his message than to the story he was telling. Addison

and Steele in the *Spectator* developed some real characters of the fiction type and told some good stories, but even their best, like *Theodosius and Constantia*, fall far short of developing all the dramatic possibilities, and lack the focusing of interest found in the nineteenth century stories. Some of Lamb's *Essays of Elia*, especially the *Dream Children*, introduce a delicate fancy and an essayist's clearness of thought and statement into the story. At the close of this century German romanticism began to seep into English thought and prepare the way for things new in literary thought and treatment.

The nineteenth century opened with a decided preference for fiction. Washington Irving, reverting to the *Spectator*, produced his sketches, and, following the trend of his time, looked forward to a new form and wrote *The Spectre Bridegroom* and *Rip Van Winkle*. It is only by a precise definition of short-story that Irving is robbed of the honor of being the founder of the modern short-story. He loved to meander and to fit his materials to his story scheme in a leisurely manner. He did not quite see what Hawthorne instinctively followed and Poe consciously defined and practiced, and he did not realize that terseness of statement and totality of impression were the chief qualities he needed to make him the father of a new literary form. Poe and Maupassant have reduced the form of the short-story to an exact science; Hawthorne and Harte have done successfully in the field of romanticism what the Germans, Tieck and Hoffman, did not do so well; Bjornson and Henry James have analyzed

character psychologically in their short-stories; Kipling has used the short-story as a vehicle for the conveyance of specific knowledge; Stevenson has gathered most, if not all, of the literary possibilities adaptable to short-story use, and has incorporated them in his *Markheim*.

France with her literary newspapers and artistic tendencies, and the United States with magazines calling incessantly for good short-stories, and with every section of its conglomerate life clamoring to express itself, lead in the production and rank of short-stories. Maupassant and Stevenson and Hawthorne and Poe are the great names in the ranks of short-story writers. The list of present day writers is interminable, and high school students can best acquire a reasonable appreciation of the great work these writers are doing by reading regularly some of the better grade literary magazines.

For a comprehensive view of specimens representing the history and

development of the short-story, students should have access to Brander

Matthews' *The Short Story*, Jessup and Canby's *The Book of theShort-Story*, and Waite and Taylor's *Modern Masterpieces of ShortProse Fiction*.

QUALITIES OF THE SHORT-STORY

It was not until well along in the nineteenth century that any one attempted to define the short-story. The three quotations given here are among the best things that have been spoken on this subject.

"The right novella is never a novel cropped back from the size of a tree to a bush, or the branch of a tree stuck into the ground and made to serve for a bush. It is another species, destined by the agencies at work in the realm of unconsciousness to be brought into being of its own kind, and not of another," – W.D. Howells, *North American Review*, 173:429.

"A true short-story is something other and something more than a mere story which is short. A true short-story differs from the novel chiefly in its essential unity of impression. In a far more exact and precise use of the word, a short-story has unity as a novel cannot have it… A short-story deals with a single character, a single event, a single emotion, or the series of emotions called forth by a single situation. – Brander Matthews, *The Philosophy of the Short-Story*.

"The aim of a short-story is to produce a single narrative effect with the greatest economy of means that is consistent with the utmost emphasis." – Clayton Hamilton, *Materials and Methods*

of Fiction.

The short-story must always have a compact unity and a direct simplicity. In such stories as Björnson's *The Father* and Maupassant's *The Piece of String* this simplicity is equal to that of the anecdote, but in no case can an anecdote possess the dramatic possibilities of these simple short-stories; for a short-story must always have that tensity of emotion that comes only in the crucial tests of life.

The short-story does not demand the consistency in treatment of the long story, for there are not so many elements to marshal and direct properly, but the short-story must be original and varied in its themes, cleverly constructed, and lighted through and through with the glow of vivid imaginings. A single incident in daily life is caught as in a snap-shot exposure and held before the reader in such a manner that the impression of the whole is derived largely from suggestion. The single incident may be the turning-point in life history, as in *The Man Who Was*; it may be a mental surrender of habits fixed seemingly in indelible colors in the soul and a sudden, inflexible decision to be a man, as in the case of *Markheim;* or it may be a gradual realization of the value of spiritual gifts, as Björnson has concisely presented it in his little story *The Father*.

The aim of the short-story is always to present a cross-section of life in such a vivid manner that the importance of the incident becomes universal. Some short-stories are told with the definite end in view of telling a story for the sake of exploiting a plot. *The*

Cask of Amontillado is all action in comparison with *The Masque of the Red Death. The Gold-Bug* sets for itself the task of solving a puzzle and possesses action from first to last. Other stories teach a moral. *Ethan Brand* deals with the unpardonable sin, and *The Great Stone Face* is our classic story in the field of ideals and their development. Hawthorne, above all writers, is most interested in ethical laws and moral development. Still other stories aim to portray character. Miss Jewett and Mrs. Freeman veraciously picture the faded-put womanhood in New England; Henry James and Björnson turn the x-rays of psychology and sociology on their characters; Stevenson follows with the precision of the tick of a watch the steps in Markheim's mental evolution.

The types of the short-story are as varied as life itself. Addison, Lamb, Irving, Warner, and many others have used the story in their sketches and essays with wonderful effect. *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* is as impressive as any of Scott's tales. The allegory in *The Great Stone Face* loses little or nothing when compared with Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. No better type of detective story has been written than the two short-stories, *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* and *The Purloined Letter*. Every emotion is subject to the call of the short-story. Humor with its expansive free air is not so well adapted to the short-story as is pathos. There is a sadness in the stories of Dickens, Garland, Page, Mrs. Freeman, Miss Jewett, Maupassant, Poe, and many others that runs the whole gamut from pleasing tenderness in *A Child's Dream of a Star* to unutterable horror in *The Fall of the*

House of Usher.

The short-story is stripped of all the incongruities that led Fielding, Scott, and Dickens far afield. All its parts harmonize in the simplest manner to give unity and "totality" of impression through strict unity of form. It is a concentrated piece of life snatched from the ordinary and uneventful round of living and steeped in fancy until it becomes the acme of literary art.

COMPOSITION OF THE SHORT-STORY

Any student who wishes to express himself correctly and pleasingly, and desires a keener sense for the appreciation of literary work must write. The way others have done the thing never appears in a forceful light until one sets himself at a task of like nature. Just so in the study of this text. To find and appreciate the better points of the short-story, students must write stories of their own, patterned in a small way on the technique of the masterpieces.

The process of short-story writing follows in a general way the following program. In the first place the class must have something interesting and suggestive to write about. Sometimes the class can suggest a subject; newspapers almost every day give incidents worthy of story treatment; happenings in the community often give the very best material for stories; and phases of the literature work may well be used in the development of students' themes. Change the type of character and place, reconstruct the plot, or require a different ending for the story, leaving the plot virtually as it is, and then assign to the class. Boys and girls should invariably be taught to see stories in the life about them, in the newspapers and magazines on their library tables, and in the masterpieces they study in their class

work.

After the idea that the class wishes to develop has been definitely determined and the material for this development has been gathered and grouped about the idea, the class should select a viewpoint and proceed to write. Sometimes the author should tell the story, sometimes a third person who may be of secondary importance in the story should be given the rôle of the story-teller, sometimes the whole may be in dialogue. The class should choose a fitting method.

Young writers should be very careful about the beginning of a story. An action story should start with a striking incident that catches the reader's attention at once and forecasts subsequent happenings. In every case this first incident must have in it the essence of the end of the story and should be perfectly logical to the reader after he has finished the reading. A story in which the setting is emphasized can well begin, with a description and contain a number of descriptions and expositions, distributed with a sense of propriety throughout the theme. A good method to use in the opening of a character story is that of conversation. An excellent example of a sharp use of this device is Mrs. Freeman's *Revolt of Mother*, where the first paragraph is a single spoken word.

Every incident included in the story should be tested for its value in the development of the theme. An incident that does not amplify certain phases of the story has no right to be included, and great care should be used in an effort to incorporate just the

material necessary for the proper evolution of the thought. The problem is not so much what can be secured to be included in the story, but rather, after making a thorough collection of the material, what of all these points should be cast out.

The ending must be a natural outgrowth of the development found in the body of the composition. Even in a story with a surprise ending, of which we are tempted to say that we have had no preparation for such a turn in the story, there must be hints – the subtler the better – that point unerringly and always toward the end. The end is presupposed in the beginning and the changing of one means the altering of the other.

Young writers have trouble in stopping at the right place. They should learn, as soon as possible, that to drag on after the logical ending has been reached spoils the best of stories. It is just as bad to stop before arriving at the true end. In other words there is only one place for the ending of a story, and in no case can it be shifted without ruining the idea that has obtained throughout the theme.

There are certain steps in the development of story-writing that should be followed if the best results are to be obtained. The first assignment should require only the writing of straight narrative. *The Arabian Nights Tales* and children's stories represent this type of writing and will give the teacher valuable aid in the presentation of this work. After the students have produced simple stories resembling the Sinbad Voyages, they should next add descriptions of persons and places and

explanations of situations to develop clearness and interest in their original productions. Taking these themes in turn students should be required to introduce plot incidents that complicate the simple happenings and divert the straightforward trend of the narrative. Now that the stories are well developed in their descriptions, expositions, and plot interests they should be tested for their emotional effects. Students should go through their themes, and by making the proper changes give in some cases a humorous and in others a pathetic or tragic effect. These few suggestions are given to emphasize the facts that no one conceives a story in all its details in a moment of inspiration, and that there is a way of proceeding that passes in logical gradations from the simplest to the most complex phases of story writing.

Franklin and Stevenson knew no rules for writing other than to practice incessantly on some form they wished to imitate. Hard work is the first lesson that boys and girls must learn in the art of writing, and a systematic gradation of assignments is what the teacher must provide for his students. Walter Besant gave the following rules for novel writers. Some of them may be suggestive to writers of the high school age, so the list is given in its complete form. "(1) Practice writing something original every day. (2) Cultivate the habit of observation. (3) Work regularly at certain hours. (4) Read no rubbish. (5) Aim at the formation of style. (6) Endeavor to be dramatic. (7) A great element of dramatic skill is selection. (8) Avoid the sin of writing about a character. (9) Never attempt to describe any kind of life except

that with which you are familiar. (10) Learn as much as you can about men and women. (11) For the sake of forming a good natural style, and acquiring command of language, write poetry."

SHORT-STORY LIBRARY

***BOOKS FOR REFERENCE*:**

American Short-Stories, Charles Baldwin, Longmans, Green, & Co.

A Study of Prose Fiction, Chapter XII, Bliss Perry, Houghton, Mifflin Co.

Composition Rhetoric, T.C. Blaisdell, American Book Co.

Forms of Prose Literature, J.H. Gardiner, Charles Scribner's Sons.

Materials and Methods of Fiction, Clayton Hamilton, The Baker and Taylor Co.

Principles of Literary Criticism, C.T. Winchester, The Macmillan Co.

Short-Story Writing, C.R. Barrett. The Baker and Taylor Co.

Specimens of the Short-Story, G.H. Nettleton, H. Holt & Co.

Story-Writing and Journalism, Sherwin Cody, Funk & Wagnalls Co.

Talks on Writing English, Arlo Bates, Houghton Mifflin Co.

The Writing of the Short-Story, L.W. Smith, D.C. Heath & Co.

The Philosophy of the Short-Story, Brander Matthews, Longmans, Green, & Co.

The World's Greatest Short-Stories, Sherwin Cody, A.C. McClurg & Co.

The Short-Story, Henry Canby, Henry Holt & Co.

The Short-Story, Evelyn May Albright, The Macmillan Co.

The Book of the Short-Story, Jessup and Canby, D. Appleton & Co.

Modern Masterpieces of Short Prose Fiction, Waite and Taylor, D. Appleton & Co.

The Short-Story, Brander Matthews, American Book Co.

Writing the Short-Story, Esenwein, Hinds, Noble & Eldredge.

A Study of the Short-Story in English, Henry Seidel Canby, Henry Holt & Co.

COLLECTIONS OF SHORT-STORIES:_

American Short-Stories, Charles S. Baldwin, Longmans, Green, & Co.

Great Short-Stories, 3 vols., William Patten, P.F. Collier & Son.

Little French Masterpieces, 6 vols. Alexander Jessup, G.P. Putnam's Sons.

Short-Story Classics (American), 5 vols., William Patten, P.F. Collier & Son.

Short-Story Classics (Foreign), 5 vols., William Patten, P.F. Collier & Son.

Stories by American Authors, 10 vols., Charles Scribner's Sons.

Stories by English Authors, 10 vols., Charles Scribner's Sons.

Stories by Foreign Authors, 10 vols., Charles Scribner's Sons.

Stories New and Old (American and English), Hamilton W. Mabie, The Macmillan Co.

World's Greatest Short-Stories, Sherwin Cody, A.C. McClurg & Co.

The American Short-Story, Elias Lieberman.

THE FATHER [2]

By Björnstjerne Björnson (1838-1910)

The man whose story is here to be told was the wealthiest and most influential person in his parish; his name was Thord Överaas. He appeared in the priest's study one day, tall and earnest.

"I have gotten a son," said he, "and I wish to present him for baptism."

"What shall his name be?"

"Finn, – after my father."

"And the sponsors?"

They were mentioned, and proved to be the best men and women of

Thord's relations in the parish.

"Is there anything else?" inquired the priest, and looked up. The peasant hesitated a little.

"I should like very much to have him baptized by himself," said he, finally.

"That is to say on a week-day?"

"Next Saturday, at twelve o'clock noon."

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[2] This story was written in 1860. Translated from the Norwegian by Professor Rasmus B. Anderson. It is printed by permission of and special arrangement with *Houghton Mifflin Co.*, publishers.

"Is there anything else?" inquired the priest,

"There is nothing else;" and the peasant twirled his cap, as though he were about to go.

Then the priest rose. "There is yet this, however." said he, and walking toward Thord, he took him by the hand and looked gravely into his eyes: "God grant that the child may become a blessing to you!"

One day sixteen years later, Thord stood once more in the priest's study.

"Really, you carry your age astonishingly well, Thord," said the priest; for he saw no change whatever in the man.

"That is because I have no troubles," replied Thord. To this the priest said nothing, but after a while he asked: "What is your pleasure this evening?"

"I have come this evening about that son of mine who is to be confirmed to-morrow."

"He is a bright boy."

"I did not wish to pay the priest until I heard what number the boy would have when he takes his place in the church to-morrow."

"He will stand number one."

"So I have heard; and here are ten dollars for the priest."

"Is there anything else I can do for you?" inquired the priest, fixing his eyes on Thord.

"There is nothing else."

Thord went out.

Eight years more rolled by, and then one day a noise was heard outside of the priest's study, for many men were approaching, and at their head was Thord, who entered first.

The priest looked up and recognized him.

"You come well attended this evening, Thord," said he.

"I am here to request that the banns may be published for my son: he is about to marry Karen Storliden, daughter of Gudmund, who stands here beside me."

"Why, that is the richest girl in the parish."

"So they say," replied the peasant, stroking back his hair with one hand.

The priest sat a while as if in deep thought, then entered the names in his book, without making any comments, and the men wrote their signatures underneath. Thord laid three dollars on the table.

"One is all I am to have," said the priest.

"I know that very well; but he is my only child; I want to do it handsomely."

The priest took the money.

"This is now the third time, Thord, that you have come here on your son's account."

"But now I am through with him," said Thord, and folding up his pocket-book he said farewell and walked away.

The men slowly followed him.

A fortnight later, the father and son were rowing across the lake, one calm, still day, to Storliden to make arrangements for

the wedding.

"This thwart[3] is not secure," said the son, and stood up to straighten the seat on which he was sitting.

At the same moment the board he was standing on slipped from under him; he threw out his arms, uttered a shriek, and fell overboard.

"Take hold of the oar!" shouted the father, springing to his feet, and holding out the oar.

But when the son had made a couple of efforts he grew stiff.

"Wait a moment!" cried the father, and began to row toward his son.

Then the son rolled over on his back, gave his father one long look, and sank.

Thord could scarcely believe it; he held the boat still, and stared at the spot where his son had gone down, as though he must surely come to the surface again. There rose some bubbles, then some more, and finally one large one that burst; and the lake lay there as smooth and bright as a mirror again.

For three days and three nights people saw the father rowing round and round the spot, without taking either food or sleep; he was dragging the lake for the body of his son. And toward morning of the third day he found it, and carried it in his arms up over the hills to his gard[4].

It might have been about a year from that day, when the priest,

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[3] 3:28 thwart. A seat, across a boat, on which the oarsman, sits.

[4] 4:21 gard. A Norwegian farm.

late one autumn evening, heard some one in the passage outside of the door, carefully trying to find the latch. The priest opened the door, and in walked a tall, thin man, with bowed form and white hair. The priest looked long at him before he recognized him. It was Thord.

"Are you out walking so late?" said the priest, and stood still in front of him.

"Ah, yes! it is late," said Thord, and took a seat.

The priest sat down also, as though waiting. A long, long silence followed. At last Thord said, —

"I have something with me that I should like to give to the poor; I want it to be invested as a legacy in my son's name."

He rose, laid some money on the table, and sat down again. The priest counted it.

"It is a great deal of money," said he.

"It is half the price of my gard. I sold it to-day."

The priest sat long in silence. At last he asked, but gently, —

"What do you propose to do now, Thord?"

"Something better."

They sat there for a while, Thord with downcast eyes, the priest with his eyes fixed on Thord. Presently the priest said, slowly and softly, —

"I think your son has at last brought you a true blessing."

"Yes, I think so myself," said Thord, looking up, while two big tears coursed slowly down his cheeks.

BIOGRAPHY

Björnstjerne Björnson, Norse poet, novelist, dramatist, orator, and political leader, was born December 8, 1832, and died in Paris, April 26, 1910. From his strenuous father, a Lutheran priest who preached with tongue and fist, he inherited the physique of a Norse god. He possessed the mind of a poet and the arm of a warrior. At the age of twelve he was sent to the Molde grammar school, where he proved himself a very dull student. In 1852 he entered the university in Christiana. Here he neglected his studies to write poetry and journalistic articles.

In politics Björnson was a tremendous force. Dr. Brandes has said; "To speak the name of Björnson is like hoisting the colors of Norway." He was honored as a king in his native land. He won this recognition by no party affiliation, but by his natural gifts as a poet. His magnetic eloquence, great message, and sterling character compelled his countrymen to follow and honor him. He says of his success in this field: "The secret with me is that in success as in failure, in the consciousness of my doing as in my habits, I am myself. There are a great many who dare not, or lack the ability, to be themselves." For his views on political issues the following references may well be used: *Independent.* January 31, 1901, pp. 253-257; *Current Literature*, November, 1906, p. 581; and *Independent*, July 13, 1905, pp. 92-94.

Björnson and Ibsen, the two foremost men of Norway, were very closely associated throughout life. They were schoolmates, and both were interested in writing and producing plays. Ibsen's son, Dr. Sigurd Ibsen, married Björnson's daughter,

Bergilot. These two great writers were direct contrasts in nearly everything: Björnson lived among his people, Ibsen was reserved; Björnson played the rôle of an optimistic prophet, Ibsen, that of a pessimistic judge; the former was always a conciliatory spirit, the latter a revolutionist; and Björnson proved himself a patriotic Norwegian, Ibsen, a man of the entire world.

Lack of space forbids the inclusion of a list of Björnson's writing's. High school teachers will find suitable selections in the list of collateral readings that follows. Those who wish a complete bibliography of his works will find it in *Bookman*, Volume II, p. 65. Translations of his works by Rasmus B. Anderson, Houghton Mifflin Co., and Edmund Gosse, the Macmillan Co., will furnish students extensive and standard readings of this master story-teller.

CRITICISMS

Björnson, in his masterly character delineations, seldom produces portraits. He gives the reader suggestive glimpses often enough and of the right quality and arrangement to produce a full and vigorous conception of his characters. His female parts are especially well done. His characters present themselves to the reader by unique thinking and choice expressions. Students should analyze *The Father* for this phase of character building. Note also the simplicity of the words, sentences, paragraphs, and complete story arrangement, the author's originality of story conception and expression, his short, passionate, panting sentences, the poetic atmosphere that sweetens and enriches his

virile writing, and the correct, religious pictures he paints of his beloved northland.

After having read a number of selections from Björnson, students will see that he has a wonderful breadth of treatment for every imaginable subject. He is so universal in his choice of subjects that Lemaître in his *Impressions of the Theatre* half-humorously and half-ironically puts these words in Björnson's mouth, "I am king in the spiritual kingdom," and "there are two men in Europe who have genius, I and Ibsen, granting that Ibsen has it."

GENERAL REFERENCES

Adventures in Criticism, A.T.Q. Couch.

Essays on Modern Novelists, William Lyon Phelps.

"Björnsoniana," *Dial*, January 16, 1903, pp. 37-38.

"Prophet-Poet of Norway," *Cosmopolitan*, April, 1903, pp. 621-631.

"Three Score and Ten," *Dial*, December, 1902, pp. 383-385.

COLLATERAL READINGS

Lectures, Volume I, John L. Stoddard.

The Making of an American, Chapters 1, 7, and Jacob Riis.

Myths of Northern Lands. Guerber.

Synnove Solbakken, Björnson.

A Happy Boy, Björnson.

The Fisher Maiden, Björnson.

The Bridal March, Björnson.

Magnhild, Björnson.

A Dangerous Wooing, Björnson.
The Eagle's Nest, Björnson.
The Bear Hunter, Björnson.
Master and Man, Leo Tolstoi.
The Doll's House, Henrik Ibsen.
The Minister's Black Veil, Nathaniel Hawthorne.
The Ambitious Guest, Nathaniel Hawthorne.
The Beeman of Orn, Frank R. Stockton.
A Branch Road, Hamlin Garland.
Mateo Falcone, Prosper Mérimée.
The Death of the Dauphin, Alphonse Dadoed.
The Birds' Christmas Carol, Kate Douglas Wiggin.
Tennessee's Partner, Bret Harte.

THE GRIFFIN AND THE MINOR CANAAN[5]

By Frank R. Stockton (1834-1902)

Over the great door of an old, old church which stood in a quiet town of a far-away land there was carved in stone the figure of a large griffin. The old-time sculptor had done his work with great care, but the image he had made was not a pleasant one to look at. It had a large head, with enormous open mouth and savage teeth; from its back arose great wings, armed with sharp hooks and prongs; it had stout legs in front, with projecting claws; but there were no legs behind, – the body running out into a long and powerful tail, finished off at the end with a barbed point. This tail was coiled up under him, the end sticking up just back of his wings.

The sculptor, or the people who had ordered this stone figure, had evidently been very much pleased with it, for little copies of it, also in stone, had been placed here and there along the sides of the church, not very far from the ground, so that people could easily look at them, and ponder on their curious forms. There were a great many other sculptures on the outside of this church, – saints, martyrs, grotesque heads of men, beasts, and

[5] Written in 1887. This story is used by permission of and special arrangement with *Charles Scribner's Sons*, publishers.

birds, as well as those of other creatures which cannot be named, because nobody knows exactly what they were; but none were so curious and interesting as the great griffin over the door, and the little griffins on the sides of the church.

A long, long distance from the town, in the midst of dreadful wilds scarcely known to man, there dwelt the Griffin whose image had been put up over the churchgoer. In some way or other, the old-time sculptor had seen him, and afterward, to the best of his memory, had copied his figure in stone. The Griffin had never known this, until, hundreds of years afterward, he heard from a bird, from a wild animal, or in some manner which it is not now easy to find out, that there was a likeness of him on the old church in the distant town. Now this Griffin had no idea how he looked. He had never seen a mirror, and the streams where he lived were so turbulent and violent that a quiet piece of water, which would reflect the image of anything looking into it, could not be found. Being, as far as could be ascertained, the very last of his race, he had never seen another griffin. Therefore it was, that, when he heard of this stone image of himself, he became very anxious to know what he looked like, and at last he determined to go to the old church, and see for himself what manner of being he was. So he started off from the dreadful wilds, and flew on and on until he came to the countries inhabited by men, where his appearance in the air created great consternation; but he alighted nowhere, keeping up a steady flight until he reached the suburbs of the town which had his image

on its church. Here, late in the afternoon, he alighted in a green meadow by the side of a brook, and stretched himself on the grass to rest. His great wings were tired, for he had not made such a long flight in a century, or more.

The news of his coming spread quickly over the town, and the people, frightened nearly out of their wits by the arrival of so extraordinary a visitor, fled into their houses, and shut themselves up. The Griffin called loudly for some one to come to him, but the more he called, the more afraid the people were to show themselves. At length he saw two laborers hurrying to their homes through the fields, and in a terrible voice he commanded them to stop. Not daring to disobey, the men stood, trembling.

"What is the matter with you all?" cried the Griffin. "Is there not a man in your town who is brave enough to speak to me?"

"I think," said one of the laborers, his voice shaking so that his words could hardly be understood, "that – perhaps – the Minor Canon – would come."

"Go, call him, then!" said the Griffin; "I want to see him."

The Minor Canon, who filled a subordinate position in the church, had just finished the afternoon services, and was coming out of a side door, with three aged women who had formed the week-day congregation. He was a young man of a kind disposition, and very anxious to do good to the people of the town. Apart from his duties in the church, where he conducted services every week-day, he visited the sick and the poor, counseled and assisted persons who were in trouble, and taught

a school composed entirely of the bad children in the town with whom nobody else would have anything to do. Whenever the people wanted something difficult done for them, they always went to the Minor Canon. Thus it was that the laborer thought of the young priest when he found that some one must come and speak to the Griffin.

The Minor Canon had not heard of the strange event, which was known to the whole town except himself and the three old women, and when he was informed of it, and was told that the Griffin had asked to see him, he was greatly amazed, and frightened.

"Me!" he exclaimed. "He has never heard of me! What should he want with *me?*"

"Oh! you must go instantly!" cried the two men.

"He is very angry now because he has been kept waiting so long; and nobody knows what may happen if you don't hurry to him."

The poor Minor Canon would rather have had his hand cut off than go out to meet an angry griffin; but he felt that it was his duty to go, or it would be a woeful thing if injury should come to the people of the town because he was not brave enough to obey the summons of the Griffin.

So, pale and frightened, he started off.

"Well," said the Griffin, as soon as the young man came near, "I am glad to see that there is some one who has the courage to come to me."

The Minor Canon did not feel very courageous, but he bowed his head.

"Is this the town," said the Griffin, "where there is a church with a likeness of myself over one of the doors?"

The Minor Canon looked at the frightful creature before him and saw that it was, without doubt, exactly like the stone image on the church. "Yes," he said, "you are right."

"Well, then," said the Griffin, "will you take me to it? I wish very much to see it."

The Minor Canon instantly thought that if the Griffin entered the town without the people knowing what he came for, some of them would probably be frightened to death, and so he sought to gain time to prepare their minds.

"It is growing dark, now," he said, very much afraid, as he spoke, that his words might enrage the Griffin, "and objects on the front of the church cannot be seen clearly. It will be better to wait until morning, if you wish to get a good view of the stone image of yourself."

"That will suit me very well," said the Griffin. "I see you are a man of good sense. I am tired, and I will take a nap here on this soft grass, while I cool my tail in the little stream that runs near me. The end of my tail gets red-hot when I am angry or excited, and it is quite warm now. So you may go, but be sure and come early to-morrow morning, and show me the way to the church."

The Minor Canon was glad enough to take his leave, and hurried into the town. In front of the church he found a great

many people assembled to hear his report of his interview with the Griffin. When they found that he had not come to spread ruin and devastation, but simply to see his stony likeness on the church, they showed neither relief nor gratification, but began to upbraid the Minor Canon for consenting to conduct the creature into the town.

"What could I do?" cried the young man, "If I should not bring him he would come himself and, perhaps, end by setting fire to the town with his red-hot tail."

Still the people were not satisfied, and a great many plans were proposed to prevent the Griffin from coming into the town. Some elderly persons urged that the young men should go out and kill him; but the young men scoffed at such a ridiculous idea. Then some one said that it would be a good thing to destroy the stone image so that the Griffin would have no excuse for entering the town; and this proposal was received with such favor that many of the people ran for hammers, chisels, and crowbars, with which to tear down and break up the stone griffin. But the Minor Canon resisted this plan with all the strength of his mind and body. He assured the people that this action would enrage the Griffin beyond measure, for it would be impossible to conceal from him that his image had been destroyed during the night. But the people were so determined to break up the stone griffin that the Minor Canon saw that there was nothing for him to do but to stay there and protect it. All night he walked up and down in front of the church-door, keeping away the men who brought

ladders, by which they might mount to the great stone griffin, and knock it to pieces with their hammers and crowbars. After many hours the people were obliged to give up their attempts, and went home to sleep; but the Minor Canon remained at his post till early morning, and then he hurried away to the field where he had left the Griffin.

The monster had just awakened, and rising to his fore-legs and shaking himself, he said that he was ready to go into the town. The Minor Canon, therefore, walked back, the Griffin flying slowly through the air, at a short distance above the head of his guide. Not a person was to be seen in the streets, and they proceeded directly to the front of the church, where the Minor Canon pointed out the stone griffin.

The real Griffin settled down in the little square before the church and gazed earnestly at his sculptured likeness. For a long time he looked at it. First he put his head on one side, and then he put it on the other; then he shut his right eye and gazed with his left, after which he shut his left eye and gazed with his right. Then he moved a little to one side and looked at the image, then he moved the other way. After a while he said to the Minor Canon, who had been standing by all this time:

"It is, it must be, an excellent likeness! That breadth between the eyes, that expansive forehead, those massive jaws! I feel that it must resemble me. If there is any fault to find with it, it is that the neck seems a little stiff. But that is nothing. It is an admirable likeness, – admirable!"

The Griffin sat looking at his image all the morning and all the afternoon. The Minor Canon had been afraid to go away and leave him, and had hoped all through the day that he would soon be satisfied with his inspection and fly away home. But by evening the poor young man was utterly exhausted, and felt that he must eat and sleep. He frankly admitted this fact to the Griffin, and asked him if he would not like something to eat. He said this because he felt obliged in politeness to do so, but as soon as he had spoken the words, he was seized with dread lest the monster should demand half a dozen babies, or some tempting repast of that kind.

"Oh, no," said the Griffin, "I never eat between the equinoxes. At the vernal and at the autumnal equinox I take a good meal, and that lasts me for half a year. I am extremely regular in my habits, and do not think it healthful to eat at odd times. But if you need food, go and get it, and I will return to the soft grass where I slept last night and take another nap."

The next day the Griffin came again to the little square before the church, and remained there until evening, steadfastly regarding the stone griffin over the door. The Minor Canon came once or twice to look at him, and the Griffin seemed very glad to see him; but the young clergyman could not stay as he had done before, for he had many duties to perform. Nobody went to the church, but the people came to the Minor Canon's house, and anxiously asked him how long the Griffin was going to stay.

"I do not know," he answered, "but I think he will soon be

satisfied with regarding his stone likeness, and then he will go away."

But the Griffin did not go away. Morning after morning he came to the church, but after a time he did not stay there all day. He seemed to have taken a great fancy to the Minor Canon, and followed him about as he pursued his various avocations. He would wait for him at the side door of the church, for the Minor Canon held services every day, morning and evening, though nobody came now. "If any one should come," he said to himself, "I must be found at my post." When the young man came out, the Griffin would accompany him in his visits to the sick and the poor, and would often look into the windows of the schoolhouse where the Minor Canon was teaching his unruly scholars. All the other schools were closed, but the parents of the Minor Canon's scholars forced them to go to school, because they were so bad they could not endure them all day at home, – griffin or no griffin. But it must be said they generally behaved very well when that great monster sat up on his tail and looked in at the schoolroom window.

When it was perceived that the Griffin showed no signs of going away, all the people who were able to do so left the town. The canons and the higher officers of the church had fled away during the first day of the Griffin's visit, leaving behind only the Minor Canon and some of the men who opened the doors and swept the church. All the citizens who could afford it shut up their houses and travelled to distant parts, and only the working people

and the poor were left behind. After some days these ventured to go about and attend to their business, for if they did not work they would starve. They were getting a little used to seeing the Griffin, and having been told that he did not eat between equinoxes, they did not feel so much afraid of him as before. Day by day the Griffin became more and more attached to the Minor Canon. He kept near him a great part of the time, and often spent the night in front of the little house where the young clergyman lived alone. This strange companionship was often burdensome to the Minor Canon; but, on the other hand, he could not deny that he derived a great deal of benefit and instruction from it. The Griffin had lived for hundreds of years, and had seen much; and he told the Minor Canon many wonderful things.

"It is like reading an old book," said the young clergyman to himself; "but how many books I would have had to read before I would have found out what the Griffin has told me about the earth, the air, the water, about minerals, and metals, and growing things, and all the wonders of the world!"

Thus the summer went on, and drew toward its close. And now the people of the town began to be very much troubled again.

"It will not be long," they said, "before the autumnal equinox is here, and then that monster will want to eat. He will be dreadfully hungry, for he has taken so much exercise since his last meal. He will devour our children. Without doubt, he will eat them all. What is to be done?"

To this question no one could give an answer, but all agreed

that the

Griffin must not be allowed to remain until the approaching equinox.

After talking over the matter a great deal, a crowd of the people went to the Minor Canon, at a time when the Griffin was not with him.

"It is all your fault," they said, "that that monster is among us. You brought him here, and you ought to see that he goes away. It is only on your account that he stays here at all, for, although he visits his image every day, he is with you the greater part of the time. If you were not here, he would not stay. It is your duty to go away and then he will follow you, and we shall be free from the dreadful danger which hangs over us."

"Go away!" cried the Minor Canon, greatly grieved at being spoken to in such a way. "Where shall I go? If I go to some other town, shall I not take this trouble there? Have I a right to do that?"

"No," said the people, "you must not go to any other town. There is no town far enough away. You must go to the dreadful wilds where the Griffin lives; and then he will follow you and stay there."

They did not say whether or not they expected the Minor Canon to stay there also, and he did not ask them any thing about it. He bowed his head, and went into his house, to think. The more he thought, the more clear it became to his mind that it was his duty to go away, and thus free the town from the presence of the Griffin.

That evening he packed a leathern bag full of bread and meat, and early the next morning he set out on his journey to the dreadful wilds. It was a long, weary, and doleful journey, especially after he had gone beyond the habitations of men, but the Minor Canon kept on bravely, and never faltered. The way was longer than he had expected, and his provisions soon grew so scanty that he was obliged to eat but a little every day, but he kept up his courage, and pressed on, and, after many days of toilsome travel, he reached the dreadful wilds.

When the Griffin found that the Minor Canon had left the town he seemed sorry, but showed no disposition to go and look for him. After a few days had passed, he became much annoyed, and asked some of the people where the Minor Canon had gone. But, although the citizens had been anxious that the young clergyman should go to the dreadful wilds, thinking that the Griffin would immediately follow him, they were now afraid to mention the Minor Canon's destination, for the monster seemed angry already, and, if he should suspect their trick, he would doubtless become very much enraged. So every one said he did not know, and the Griffin wandered about disconsolate. One morning he looked into the Minor Canon's schoolhouse, which was always empty now, and thought that it was a shame that every thing should suffer on account of the young man's absence.

"It does not matter so much about the church," he said, "for nobody went there; but it is a pity about the school. I think I will teach it myself until he returns."

It was the hour for opening the school, and the Griffin went inside and pulled the rope which rang the schoolbell. Some of the children who heard the bell ran in to see what was the matter, supposing it to be a joke of one of their companions; but when they saw the Griffin they stood astonished, and scared.

"Go tell the other scholars," said the monster, "that school is about to open, and that if they are not all here in ten minutes, I shall come after them." In seven minutes every scholar was in place.

Never was seen such an orderly school. Not a boy or girl moved, or uttered a whisper. The Griffin climbed into the master's seat, his wide wings spread on each side of him, because he could not lean back in his chair while they stuck out behind, and his great tail coiled around, in front of the desk, the barbed end sticking up, ready to tap any boy or girl who might misbehave. The Griffin now addressed the scholars, telling them that he intended to teach them while their master was away. In speaking he endeavored to imitate, as far as possible, the mild and gentle tones of the Minor Canon, but it must be admitted that in this he was not very successful. He had paid a good deal of attention to the studies of the school, and he determined not to attempt to teach them anything new, but to review them in what they had been studying; so he called up the various classes, and questioned them upon their previous lessons. The children racked their brains to remember what they had learned. They were so afraid of the Griffin's displeasure that they recited as

they had never recited before. One of the boys far down in his class answered so well that the Griffin was astonished.

"I should think you would be at the head," said he. "I am sure you have never been in the habit of reciting so well. Why is this?"

"Because I did not choose to take the trouble," said the boy, trembling in his boots. He felt obliged to speak the truth, for all the children thought that the great eyes of the Griffin could see right through them, and that he would know when they told a falsehood.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," said the Griffin. "Go down to the very tail of the class, and if you are not at the head in two days, I shall know the reason why."

The next afternoon the boy was number one.

It was astonishing how much these children now learned of what they had been studying. It was as if they had been educated over again. The Griffin used no severity toward them, but there was a look about him which made them unwilling to go to bed until they were sure they knew their lessons for the next day.

The Griffin now thought that he ought to visit the sick and the poor; and he began to go about the town for this purpose. The effect upon the sick was miraculous. All, except those who were very ill indeed, jumped from their beds when they heard he was coming, and declared themselves quite well. To those who could not get up, he gave herbs and roots, which none of them had ever before thought of as medicines, but which the Griffin had seen used in various parts of the world; and most of them

recovered. But, for all that, they afterward said that no matter what happened to them, they hoped that they should never again have such a doctor coming to their bedsides, feeling their pulses and looking at their tongues.

As for the poor, they seemed to have utterly disappeared. All those who had depended upon charity for their daily bread were now at work in some way or other; many of them offering to do odd jobs for their neighbors just for the sake of their meals, – a thing which before had been seldom heard of in the town. The Griffin could find no one who needed his assistance.

The summer had now passed, and the autumnal equinox was rapidly approaching. The citizens were in a state of great alarm and anxiety. The Griffin showed no signs of going away, but seemed to have settled himself permanently among them. In a short time, the day for his semi-annual meal would arrive, and then what would happen? The monster would certainly be very hungry, and would devour all their children.

Now they greatly regretted and lamented that they had sent away the Minor Canon; he was the only one on whom they could have depended in this trouble, for he could talk freely with the Griffin, and so find out what could be done. But it would not do to be inactive. Some step must be taken immediately. A meeting of the citizens was called, and two old men were appointed to go and talk to the Griffin. They were instructed to offer to prepare a splendid dinner for him on equinox day, – one which would entirely satisfy his hunger. They would offer him the fattest

mutton, the most tender beef, fish, and game of various sorts, and any thing of the kind that he might fancy. If none of these suited, they were to mention that there was an orphan asylum in the next town.

"Any thing would be better," said the citizens, "than to have our dear children devoured."

The old men went to the Griffin, but their propositions were not received with favor.

"From what I have seen of the people of this town," said the monster, "I do not think I could relish any thing which was prepared by them. They appear to be all cowards, and, therefore, mean and selfish. As for eating one of them, old or young, I could not think of it for a moment. In fact, there was only one creature in the whole place for whom I could have had any appetite, and that is the Minor Canon, who has gone away. He was brave, and good, and honest, and I think I should have relished him."

"Ah!" said one of the old men very politely, "in that case I wish we had not sent him to the dreadful wilds!"

"What!" cried the Griffin. "What do you mean? Explain instantly what you are talking about!"

The old man, terribly frightened at what he had said, was obliged to tell how the Minor Canon had been sent away by the people, in the hope that the Griffin might be induced to follow him.

When the monster heard this, he became furiously angry. He dashed away from the old men and, spreading his wings, flew

backward and forward over the town. He was so much excited that his tail became red-hot, and glowed like a meteor against the evening sky. When at last he settled down in the little field where he usually rested, and thrust his tail into the brook, the steam arose like a cloud, and the water of the stream ran hot through the town. The citizens were greatly frightened, and bitterly blamed the old man for telling about the Minor Canon.

"It is plain," they said, "that the Griffin intended at last to go and look for him, and we should have been saved. Now who can tell what misery you have brought upon us."

The Griffin did not remain long in the little field. As soon as his tail was cool he flew to the town-hall and rang the bell. The citizens knew that they were expected to come there, and although they were afraid to go, they were still more afraid to stay away; and they crowded into the hall. The Griffin was on the platform at one end, flapping his wings and walking up and down, and the end of his tail was still so warm that it slightly scorched the boards as he dragged it after him.

When everybody who was able to come was there the Griffin stood still and addressed the meeting.

"I have had a contemptible opinion of you," he said, "ever since I discovered what cowards you are, but I had no idea that you were so ungrateful, selfish, and cruel as I now find you to be. Here was your Minor Canon, who labored day and night for your good, and thought of nothing else but how he might benefit you and make you happy; and as soon as you imagine

yourselves threatened with a danger, – for well I know you are dreadfully afraid of me, – you send him off, caring not whether he returns or perishes, hoping thereby to save yourselves. Now, I had conceived a great liking for that young man, and had intended, in a day or two, to go and look him up. But I have changed my mind about him. I shall go and find him, but I shall send him back here to live among you, and I intend that he shall enjoy the reward of his labor and his sacrifices. Go, some of you, to the officers of the church, who so cowardly ran away when I first came here, and tell them never to return to this town under penalty of death. And if, when your Minor Canon comes back to you, you do not bow yourselves before him, put him in the highest place among you, and serve and honor him all his life, beware of my terrible vengeance! There were only two good things in this town: the Minor Canon and the stone image of myself over your church-door. One of these you have sent away, and the other I shall carry away myself."

With these words he dismissed the meeting, and it was time, for the end of his tail had become so hot that there was danger of its setting fire to the building.

The next morning, the Griffin came to the church, and tearing the stone image of himself from its fastenings over the great door, he grasped it with his powerful fore-legs and flew up into the air. Then, after hovering over the town for a moment, he gave his tail an angry shake and took up his flight to the dreadful wilds. When he reached this desolate region, he set the stone Griffin

upon a ledge of a rock which rose in front of the dismal cave he called his home. There the image occupied a position somewhat similar to that it had had over the church-door; and the Griffin, panting with the exertion of carrying such an enormous load to so great a distance, lay down upon the ground, and regarded it with much satisfaction. When he felt somewhat rested he went to look for the Minor Canon. He found the young man, weak and half-starved, lying under the shadow of a rock. After picking him up and carrying him to his cave, the Griffin flew away to a distant marsh, where he procured some roots and herbs which he well knew were strengthening and beneficial to man, though he had never tasted them himself. After eating these the Minor Canon was greatly revived, and sat up and listened while the Griffin told him what had happened in the town.

"Do you know," said the monster, when he had finished, "that I have had, and still have, a great liking for you?"

"I am very glad to hear it," said the Minor Canon, with his usual politeness.

"I am not at all sure that you would be," said the Griffin, "if you thoroughly understood the state of the case, but we will not consider that now. If some things were different, other things would be otherwise. I have been so enraged by discovering the manner in which you have been treated that I have determined that you shall at last enjoy the rewards and honors to which you are entitled. Lie down and have a good sleep, and then I will take you back to the town."

As he heard these words, a look of trouble came over the young man's face.

"You need not give yourself any anxiety," said the Griffin, "about my return to the town. I shall not remain there. Now that I have that admirable likeness of myself in front of my cave, where I can sit at my leisure, and gaze upon its noble features and magnificent proportions, I have no wish to see that abode of cowardly and selfish people."

The Minor Canon, relieved from his fears, lay back, and dropped into a doze; and when he was sound asleep the Griffin took him up, and carried him back to the town. He arrived just before daybreak, and putting the young man gently on the grass in the little field where he himself used to rest, the monster, without having been seen by any of the people, flew back to his home.

When the Minor Canon made his appearance in the morning among the citizens, the enthusiasm and cordiality with which he was received were truly wonderful. He was taken to a house which had been occupied by one of the vanished high officers of the place, and every one was anxious to do all that could be done for his health and comfort. The people crowded into the church when he held services, so that the three old women who used to be his week-day congregation could not get to the best seats, which they had always been in the habit of taking; and the parents of the bad children determined to reform them at home, in order that he might be spared the trouble of keeping up his former school. The Minor Canon was appointed to the highest

office of the old church, and before he died, he became a bishop.

During the first years after his return from the dreadful wilds, the people of the town looked up to him as a man to whom they were bound to do honor and reverence; but they often, also, looked up to the sky to see if there were any signs of the Griffin coming back. However, in the course of time, they learned to honor and reverence their former Minor Canon without the fear of being punished if they did not do so.

But they need never have been afraid of the Griffin. The autumnal equinox day came round, and the monster ate nothing. If he could not have the Minor Canon, he did not care for any thing. So, lying down, with his eyes fixed upon the great stone griffin, he gradually declined, and died. It was a good thing for some people of the town that they did not know this.

If you should ever visit the old town, you would still see the little griffins on the sides of the church; but the great stone griffin that was over the door is gone.

BIOGRAPHY

Frank Richard Stockton, one of America's foremost story-tellers and humorists, was born in Philadelphia in 1834. His father was a Presbyterian minister who devoutly wished that his son might study medicine. This wish was shattered early, for the son showed symptoms of being a writer while yet in the Central High School of Philadelphia. In competition with many of his schoolmates for a prize offered for the best story, young Stockton won easily.

After finishing his high school course, he adopted the profession of wood-engraver. Although he earned his living for several years by carving wood, he never lost his desire to write, and practised, at every spare moment, his favorite avocation. It was this careful and patient training during his apprenticeship that finally made him the expert story-teller that he is. It is very interesting to any one who cares for the acquirement of an excellent style to note how all the authors contained in this text have had to work with almost a superhuman force to reach the heights of successful short-story writing.

His first important publication, *Kate*, appeared in the *Southern Literary Messenger* in 1859. He then joined the staff of the *Philadelphia Morning Post*, where he did regular newspaper work and contributed to the *Riverside Magazine* and *Hearth and Home*. In 1872 his *Stephen Skarridge's Christmas* appeared in *Scribner's Monthly*. Dr. J.G. Holland, editor of *Scribner's*, was so impressed with the story that he made Mr. Stockton an assistant editor and persuaded him to move to New York. In 1873 he joined the staff of the *St. Nicholas Magazine*. His publication of the *Rudder Grange* series in *Scribner's Monthly* in 1878 made him famous. In 1882 he resigned all editorial work and spent his entire time in literary composition.

Mr. Stockton possessed a frail body and very little physical endurance. In spite of this physical handicap he was very vivacious and gay. He was a genial and companionable man, loved by all who knew him. He was very modest, even to the

point of shyness, exceptionally sincere, and quaintly humorous. He established homes in New Jersey and West Virginia, where he spent the greater part of his time from 1882 until his death in 1902.

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CRITICISMS

The writings of Frank R. Stockton are excellent representatives of the man himself. How closely allied writer and writings are is very well stated by Hamilton W. Mabie in the *Book-Buyer* for June, 1902, "His talk had much of the quality of his writing; it was full of quaint conceits, whimsicalities, impossible suggestions offered with perfect gravity. He was always perfectly natural; he never attempted to live up to his part; in talk, at least, he never forced the note. His attitude toward himself was slightly tinged with humor, and he knew how to foil easily and pleasantly too great a pressure of praise."

His tales are extravagantly impossible but extremely realistic in effect, filled with humorous situations and singular plots, and peopled with eccentric characters that afford amusement on every page. His most successful writing is done when he

explains contrivances upon which his story depends. He is an original and inventive expert juggler who moves with careless ease to the most effective ends. His characters are little more than pieces of mechanism that act when he pulls the string. They have little emotion and even in their love-making they show their emotion mostly for the sake of the reader's amusement. His negro characters are exceptions to his general treatment and are true to life. He inveigles the reader into believing the most extravagant incidents by having a reliable witness narrate them.

Stockton never stoops to the burlesque, cynic, or vulgar phases of life to secure amusement. He is grotesque and droll in his manner, and above all always restrained. His literary life is full of sprites and gnomes that frolic before young children and once before mature people. *The Griffin and the Minor Canon* is a beautiful fairy story lifted from childhood's thought and diction into a mature realm. His humor is plain and simple, cool and keenly calculating. A friendly critic has said of one of his stories, "With a gentle, ceaseless murmur of amusement, and a flickering twinkle of smiles, the story moves steadily on in the calm triumph of its assured and unassailable absurdity, to its logical and indisputable impossibility." This observation is very largely true of all his stories.

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THE PIECE OF STRING [6]

By Guy de Maupassant (1850-1893)

On all the roads about Goderville the peasants and their wives were coming toward the town, for it was market day. The men walked at an easy gait, the whole body thrown forward with every movement of their long, crooked legs, misshapen by hard work, by the bearing down on the plough which at the same time causes the left shoulder to rise and the figure to slant; by the mowing of the grain, which makes one hold his knees apart in order to obtain a firm footing; by all the slow and laborious tasks of the fields. Their starched blue blouses, glossy as if varnished, adorned at the neck and wrists with a bit of white stitchwork, puffed out about their bony chests like balloons on the point of taking flight, from which protrude a head, two arms, and two feet.

Some of them led a cow or a calf at the end of a rope. And their wives, walking behind the beast, lashed it with a branch still covered with leaves, to hasten its pace. They carried on their arms great baskets, from which heads of chickens or of ducks were thrust forth. And they walked with a shorter and quicker step than their men, their stiff, lean figures wrapped in scanty shawls pinned over their flat breasts, their heads enveloped in a

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[6] *The Piece of String* was written in 1884. Reprinted from *Little French Masterpieces*, by permission of the publishers, *G.P. Putnam's Sons*.

white linen cloth close to the hair, with a cap over all.

Then a *char-ŕ-bancs*[7] passed, drawn by a jerky-paced nag, with two men seated side by side shaking like jelly, and a woman behind, who clung to the side of the vehicle to lessen the rough jolting.

On the square at Goderville there was a crowd, a medley of men and beasts. The horns of the cattle, the high hats, with a long, hairy nap, of the wealthy peasants, and the head dresses of the peasant women, appeared on the surface of the throng. And the sharp, shrill, high-pitched voices formed an incessant, uncivilized uproar, over which soared at times a roar of laughter from the powerful chest of a sturdy yokel, or the prolonged bellow of a cow fastened to the wall of a house.

There was an all-pervading smell of the stable, of milk, of the dunghill, of hay, and of perspiration – that acrid, disgusting odor of man and beast peculiar to country people.

Master Hauchecorne, of Bréauté, had just arrived at Goderville, and was walking toward the square, when he saw a bit of string on the ground. Master Hauchecorne, economical like every true Norman, thought that it was well to pick up everything that might be of use; and he stooped painfully, for he suffered with rheumatism. He took the piece of slender cord from the ground, and was about to roll it up carefully, when he saw Master Malandain, the harness-maker, standing in his doorway and looking at him. They had formerly had trouble on

[7] 34:5 char-ŕ-bancs. A pleasure car.

the subject of a halter, and had remained at odds, being both inclined to bear malice. Master Hauchecorne felt a sort of shame at being seen thus by his enemy, fumbling in the mud for a bit of string. He hurriedly concealed his treasure in his blouse, then in his breeches pocket; then he pretended to look on the ground for something else, which he did not find; and finally he went on toward the market, his head thrust forward, bent double by his pains.

He lost himself at once in the slow-moving, shouting crowd, kept in a state of excitement by the interminable bargaining. The peasants felt of the cows, went away, returned, sorely perplexed, always afraid of being cheated, never daring to make up their minds, watching the vendor's eye, striving incessantly to detect the tricks of the man and the defect in the beast.

The women, having placed their great baskets at their feet, took out their fowls, which lay on the ground, their legs tied together, with frightened eyes and scarlet combs.

They listened to offers, adhered to their prices, short of speech and impassive of face; or else, suddenly deciding to accept the lower price offered, they would call out to the customer as he walked slowly away: —

"All right, Mast' Anthime. You can have it."

Then, little by little, the square became empty, and when the Angelus[8] struck midday those who lived too far away to go home

[8] 35:26 Angelus. A bell tolled at morning, noon, and night, according to the Roman Catholic Church custom, to indicate the time of the service of song and recitation in

betook themselves to the various inns.

At Jourdain's the common room was full of customers, as the great yard was full of vehicles of every sort – carts, cabriolets,[9] *char-ŕ-bancs*, tilburys,[10] unnamable carriages, shapeless, patched, with, their shafts reaching heavenward like arms, or with their noses in the ground and their tails in the air.

The vast fireplace, full of clear flame, cast an intense heat against the backs of the row on the right of the table. Three spits were revolving, laden with chickens, pigeons, and legs of mutton; and a delectable odor of roast meat, and of gravy dripping from the browned skin, came forth from the hearth, stirred the guests to merriment, and made their mouths water.

All the aristocracy of the plough ate there, at Mast' Jourdain's, the innkeeper and horse trader – a shrewd rascal who had money.

The dishes passed and were soon emptied, like the jugs of yellow cider. Every one told of his affairs, his sales and his purchases. They inquired about the crops. The weather was good for green stuffs, but a little wet for wheat.

Suddenly a drum rolled in the yard, in front of the house. In an instant everybody was on his feet, save a few indifferent ones; and they all ran to the door and windows with their mouths still full and napkins in hand.

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memory of the Virgin Mary. The name is taken from the first word of the recitation.

[9] 35:30 cabriolet. A cab. Originally a light, one-horse pleasure carriage with two seats.

[10] 35:30 tilbury. An old form of gig, seating two persons.

Having finished his long tattoo, the public crier shouted in a jerky voice, making his pauses in the wrong places: —

"The people of Goderville, and all those present at the market are informed that between – nine and ten o'clock this morning on the Beuzeville – road, a black leather wallet was lost, containing five hundred – francs, and business papers. The finder is requested to carry it to – the mayor's at once, or to Master Fortuné Huelbrčque of Manneville. A reward of twenty francs will be paid."

Then he went away. They heard once more in the distance the muffled roll of the drum and the indistinct voice of the crier.

Then they began to talk about the incident, reckoning Master Houlbrčque's chance of finding or not finding his wallet.

And the meal went on.

They were finishing their coffee when the corporal of gendarmes appeared in the doorway.

He inquired: —

"Is Master Hauchecorne of Bréauté here?"

Master Hauchecorne, who was seated at the farther end of the table, answered: —

"Here I am."

And the corporal added: —

"Master Hauchecorne, will you be kind enough to go to the mayor's office with me? Monsieur the mayor would like to speak to you."

The peasant, surprised and disturbed, drank his *petit verre*[11] at one swallow, rose, and even more bent than in the morning, for the first steps after each rest were particularly painful, he started off, repeating: —

"Here I am, here I am."

And he followed the brigadier.

The mayor was waiting for him, seated in his arm-chair. He was the local notary, a stout, solemn-faced man, given to pompous speeches.

"Master Hauchecorne," he said, "you were seen this morning, on the

Beuzeville road, to pick up the wallet lost by Master Huelbrčque of

Manneville."

The rustic, dumfounded, stared at the mayor, already alarmed by this suspicion which had fallen upon him, although he failed to understand it.

"I, I – I picked up that wallet?"

"Yes, you."

"On my word of honor, I didn't even so much as see it."

"You were seen."

"They saw me, me? Who was it saw me?"

"Monsieur Malandain, the harness-maker."

Thereupon the old man remembered and understood; and flushing with anger, he cried: —

[11] 37:20 petit verre. Little glass.

"Ah! he saw me, did he, that sneak? He saw me pick up this string, look, m'sieu' mayor."

And fumbling in the depths of his pocket, he produced the little piece of cord.

But the mayor was incredulous and shook his head.

"You won't make me believe, Master Hauchecorne, that Monsieur Malandain, who is a man deserving of credit, mistook this string for a wallet."

The peasant, in a rage, raised his hand, spit to one side to pledge his honor, and said: —

"It's God's own truth, the sacred truth, all the same, m'sieu' mayor.

I say it again, by my soul and my salvation."

"After picking it up," rejoined the mayor, "you hunted a long while in the mud, to see if some piece of money hadn't fallen out."

The good man was suffocated with wrath and fear.

"If any one can tell – if any one can tell lies like that to ruin an honest man! If any one can say – "

To no purpose did he protest; he was not believed.

He was confronted with Monsieur Malandain, who repeated and maintained his declaration. They insulted each other for a whole hour. At his own request, Master Hauchecorne was searched. They found nothing on him. At last the mayor, being sorely perplexed, discharged him, but warned him that he proposed to inform the prosecuting attorney's office and to ask

for orders.

The news had spread. On leaving the mayor's office, the old man was surrounded and questioned with serious or bantering curiosity, in which, however, there was no trace of indignation. And he began to tell the story of the string. They did not believe him. They laughed.

He went his way, stopping his acquaintances, repeating again and again his story and his protestations, showing his pockets turned inside out, to prove that he had nothing.

They said to him: —

"You old rogue, *va!*"

And he lost his temper, lashing himself into a rage, feverish with excitement, desperate because he was not believed, at a loss what to do, and still telling his story. Night came. He must needs go home. He started with three neighbors, to whom he pointed out the place where he had picked up the bit of string: and all the way he talked of his misadventure.

During the evening he made a circuit of the village of Bréauté, in order to tell everybody about it. He found none but incredulous listeners.

He was ill over it all night.

The next afternoon, about one o'clock, Marius Paumelle, a farmhand employed by Master Breton, a farmer of Ymauville, restored the wallet and its contents to Master Huelbrčque of Manneville.

The man claimed that he had found it on the road; but, being

unable to read, had carried it home and given it to his employer.

The news soon became known in the neighborhood; Master Hauchecorne was informed of it. He started out again at once, and began to tell his story, now made complete by the dénouement. He was triumphant.

"What made me feel bad," he said, "wasn't so much the thing itself, you understand, but the lying. There's nothing hurts you so much as being blamed for lying."

All day long he talked of his adventure; he told it on the roads to people who passed; at the wine-shop to people who were drinking; and after church on the following Sunday. He even stopped strangers to tell them about it. His mind was at rest now, and yet something embarrassed him, although he could not say just what it was. People seemed to laugh while they listened to him. They did not seem convinced. He felt as if remarks were made behind his back.

On Tuesday of the next week, he went to market at Goderville, impelled solely by the longing to tell his story.

Malandain, standing in his doorway, began to laugh when he saw him coming. Why?

He accosted a farmer from Criquetot, who did not let him finish, but poked him in the pit of his stomach, and shouted in his face: "Go on, you old fox!" Then he turned on his heel.

Master Hauchecorne was speechless, and more and more disturbed. Why did he call him "old fox"?

When he was seated at the table, in Jourdain's Inn, he set about

explaining the affair once more.

A horse-trader from Montvilliers called out to him: —

"Nonsense, nonsense, you old dodger! I know all about your string!"

"But they've found the wallet!" faltered Hauchecorne.

"None of that, old boy; there's one who finds it, and there's one who carries it back. I don't know just how you did it, but I understand you."

The peasant was fairly stunned. He understood at last. He was accused of having sent the wallet back by a confederate, an accomplice.

He tried to protest. The whole table began to laugh.

He could not finish his dinner, but left the inn amid a chorus of jeers.

He returned home, shamefaced and indignant, suffocated by wrath, by confusion, and all the more cast down because, with his Norman cunning, he was quite capable of doing the thing with which he was charged, and even of boasting of it as a shrewd trick. He had a confused idea that his innocence was impossible to establish, his craftiness being so well known. And he was cut to the heart by the injustice of the suspicion.

Thereupon he began once more to tell of the adventure, making the story longer each day, adding each time new arguments, more forcible protestations, more solemn oaths, which he devised and prepared in his hours of solitude, his mind being wholly engrossed by the story of the string. The more

complicated his defence and the more subtle his reasoning, the less he was believed.

"Those are a liar's reasons," people said behind his back.

He realized it: he gnawed his nails, and exhausted himself in vain efforts.

He grew perceptibly thinner.

Now the jokers asked him to tell the story of "The Piece of String" for their amusement, as a soldier who has seen service is asked to tell about his battles. His mind, attacked at its source, grew feebler.

Late in December he took to his bed.

In the first days of January he died, and in his delirium, of the death agony, he protested his innocence, repeating:

"A little piece of string – a little piece of string – see, here it is, m'sieu' mayor."

NOTES

BIOGRAPHY

Henri René Albert Guy de Maupassant, French novelist, dramatist, and short-story writer, was born in 1850. Until he was thirteen years old he had no teacher except his mother, who personally superintended the training of her two sons. Life for the two boys, during these early years, was free and happy, Guy was a strong and robust Norman, overflowing with animal spirits and exuberant with the joy of youthful life.

When thirteen years of age Maupassant attended the seminary at Yvetot, where he found school life irksome and a most

distasteful contrast to his former free life. Later he became a student in the Lycée in Rouen. His experience as a student here was very pleasant, and he easily acquired his degree. In 1870 he was appointed to a clerkship in the Navy, and a little later to a more lucrative position in the Department of Public Instruction. His work in these two positions suffered very materially because of his negligence and daily practice in writing verses and essays for Flaubert, the most careful literary technicist in the history of literature, to criticize. For seven years Maupassant served this severe task-master, always writing, receiving criticisms, and publishing nothing.

Immediately after the publication of his first story Maupassant was hailed as a finished master artist. From 1880 to 1890 he published six novels, sixteen volumes of short-stories, three volumes of travels, and many newspaper articles. This gigantic task was performed only because of his regular habits and splendid physique. He wrote regularly every morning from seven o'clock until noon, and at night always wrote out notes on the impressions from his experiences of the day.

Maupassant was a natural artist deeply in love with the technique of his work. He did not write for money, although he believed that a writer should have plenty of this world's possessions, nor did he write for art's sake. In fact he avoided talking on the subject of writing and to all appearances seemed to despise his profession. He wrote because the restless, immitigable force within him compelled him to work like a

slave. He thought little of morals, or religion, but was enamored with physical life and its insolvable problems. He was, above everything else, a truthful man. Sometimes his subjects are unclean and he treats them as such, but, if his subject is clean, his treatment is undefiled.

In 1887 the shadows of insanity began to creep athwart his life. Even in 1884 he seemed to feel a premonition of his coming catastrophe when he wrote: "I am afraid of the walls, of the furniture, of the familiar objects which seem to me to assume a kind of animal life. Above all, I fear the horrible confusion of my thought, of my reason escaping, entangled and scattered by an invisible and mysterious anguish." The dreaded disease developed until, in 1890, he had to suspend his writing. In 1892 he became wholly insane and had to be committed to an insane asylum where he died in a padded cell one year later.

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CRITICISMS

Maupassant's short-stories are generally conceded to be the best in French literature. He handles his materials with great care, and his descriptions of scenes and characters are unequalled. In his first writings he seems impassive to the point of frigidity. He is a recorder who sets down exactly the life before him. This is one of the lessons he learned from Flaubert. He was not

interested in what a character thought or felt, but he noted and fondled every action of his characters.

He loved life, despite the lack of solutions. At times his fondness for mere physical life leads him to the brutal stage. In his story, *On the Water*, he gives a confession of a purely sensual man: "How gladly, at times, I would think no more, feel no more, live the life of a brute, in a warm, bright country, in a yellow country, without crude and brutal verdure, in one of those Eastern countries in which one falls asleep without concern, is active and has no cares, loves and has no distress, and is scarcely aware that one is going on living!"

Maupassant was a keen observer, possessed an excellent but not lofty imagination, and never asserted a philosophy of life. His writings are all interesting, terse, precise, and truthful, but lack the glow that comes with a sympathetic and spiritual outlook on life. Zola says of him: "… a Latin of good, clear, solid head, a maker of beautiful sentences shining like gold…" He chooses a single incident, a few characteristics and then moulds them into a compact story. Nine-tenths of his stories deal with selfishness and hypocrisy.

Tolstoi wrote: "Maupassant possessed genius, that gift of attention revealing in the objects and facts of life properties not perceived by others; he possessed a beautiful form of expression, uttering clearly, simply, and with charm what he wished to say; and he possessed also the merit of sincerity, without which a work of art produces no effect; that is he did not merely pretend

to love or hate, but did indeed love or hate what he described."

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THE MAN WHO WAS [12]

By Rudyard Kipling (1865-)

Let it be clearly understood that the Russian is a delightful person till he tucks his shirt in. As an Oriental he is charming. It is only when he insists upon being treated as the most easterly of Western peoples, instead of the most westerly of Easterns, that he becomes a racial anomaly[13] extremely difficult to handle. The host never knows which side of his nature is going to turn up next.

Dirkovitch was a Russian – a Russian of the Russians, as he said – who appeared to get his bread by serving the czar as an officer in a Cossack regiment, and corresponding for a Russian newspaper with a name that was never twice the same. He was a handsome young Oriental, with a taste for wandering through unexplored portions of the earth, and he arrived in India from nowhere in particular. At least no living man could ascertain whether it was by way of Balkh, Budukhshan, Chitral, Beloochistan, Nepaul, or anywhere else. The Indian government, being in an unusually affable mood, gave orders that he was to be civilly treated, and shown everything that was to be seen; so he drifted, talking bad English and worse French, from one city

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[12] *The Man Who Was* was written in 1889.

[13] 46:6 anomaly. Deviation from type.

to another till he forgathered with her Majesty's White Hussars[14] in the city of Peshawur,[15] which stands at the mouth of that narrow sword-cut in the hills that men call the Khyber Pass. He was undoubtedly an officer, and he was decorated, after the manner of the Russians, with little enameled crosses, and he could talk, and (though this has nothing to do with his merits) he had been given up as a hopeless task or case by the Black Tyrones[16], who, individually and collectively, with hot whisky and honey, mulled brandy and mixed spirits of all kinds, had striven in all hospitality to make him drunk. And when the Black Tyrones, who are exclusively Irish, fail to disturb the peace of head of a foreigner, that foreigner is certain to be a superior man. This was the argument of the Black Tyrones, but they were ever an unruly and self-opinionated regiment, and they allowed junior subalterns of four years' service to choose their wines. The spirits were always purchased by the colonel and a committee of majors. And a regiment that would so behave may be respected but cannot be loved.

The White Hussars were as conscientious in choosing their wine as in charging the enemy. There was a brandy that had been purchased by a cultured colonel a few years after the battle of Waterloo. It has been maturing ever since, and it was a marvelous brandy at the purchasing. The memory of that liquor

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[14] 47:1 Hussars. Light-horse troopers armed with sabre and carbine.

[15] 47:1 Peshawur. City in British India.

[16] 47:7 Tyrones. From a county in Ireland by this name.

would cause men to weep as they lay dying in the teak forests of upper Burmah[17] or the slime of the Irrawaddy[18]. And there was a port which was notable; and there was a champagne of an obscure brand, which always came to mess without any labels, because the White Hussars wished none to know where the source of supply might be found. The officer on whose head the champagne choosing lay was forbidden the use of tobacco for six weeks previous to sampling.

This particularity of detail is necessary to emphasize the fact that that champagne, that port, and above all, that brandy – the green and yellow and white liqueurs did not count – was placed at the absolute disposition of Dirkovitch, and he enjoyed himself hugely – even more than among the Black Tyrones.

But he remained distressingly European through it all. The White Hussars were – "My dear true friends," "Fellow-soldiers glorious," and "Brothers inseparable." He would unburden himself by the hour on the glorious future that awaited the combined arms of England and Russia when their hearts and their territories should run side by side, and the great mission of civilizing Asia should begin. That was unsatisfactory, because Asia is not going to be civilized after the methods of the West. There is too much Asia, and she is too old. You cannot reform a lady of many lovers, and Asia has been insatiable in her flirtations aforetime. She will never attend Sunday school, or learn to vote

[17] 47:26 Burmah. In southeastern Asia. Part of the British Empire.

[18] 47:27 Irrawaddy. Chief river of Burma.

save with swords for tickets.

Dirkovitch knew this as well as any one else, but it suited him to talk special-correspondently and to make himself as genial as he could. Now and then he volunteered a little, a very little, information about his own Sotnia[19] of Cossacks, left apparently to look after themselves somewhere at the back of beyond. He had done rough work in Central Asia, and had seen rather more help-yourself fighting than most men of his years. But he was careful never to betray his superiority, and more than careful to praise on all occasions the appearance, drill, uniform, and organization of her Majesty's White Hussars. And, indeed, they were a regiment to be admired. When Mrs. Durgan, widow of the late Sir John Durgan, arrived in their station, and after a short time had been proposed to by every single man at mess, she put the public sentiment very neatly when she explained that they were all so nice that unless she could marry them all, including the colonel and some majors who were already married, she was not going to content herself with one of them. Wherefore she wedded a little man in a rifle regiment – being by nature contradictious – and the White Hussars were going to wear crape on their arms, but compromised by attending the wedding in full force, and lining the aisle with unutterable reproach. She had jilted them all – from Basset-Holmer, the senior captain, to Little Mildred, the last subaltern, and he could have given her four thousand a year and a title. He was a viscount, and on his arrival

[19] 48:27 Sotnia. Company of the Cossacks.

the mess had said he had better go into the Guards, because they were all sons of large grocers and small clothiers in the Hussars, but Mildred begged very hard to be allowed to stay, and behaved so prettily that he was forgiven, and became a man, which is much more important than being any sort of viscount.

The only persons who did not share the general regard for the White Hussars were a few thousand gentlemen of Jewish extraction who lived across the border, and answered to the name of Pathan. They had only met the regiment officially, and for something less than twenty minutes, but the interview, which was complicated with many casualties, had filled them with prejudice. They even called the White Hussars "children of the devil," and sons of persons whom it would be perfectly impossible to meet in decent society. Yet they were not above making their aversion fill their money belts. The regiment possessed carbines, beautiful Martini-Henri carbines, that would cob a bullet into an enemy's camp at one thousand yards, and were even handier than the long rifle. Therefore they were coveted all along the border, and since demand inevitably breeds supply, they were supplied at the risk of life and limb for exactly their weight in coined silver – seven and one half pounds of rupees[20], or sixteen pounds and a few shillings each, reckoning the rupee at par. They were stolen at night by snaky-haired thieves that crawled on their stomachs under the nose of the sentries; they disappeared mysteriously from armracks; and in

[20] 50:14 rupee. Indian coin worth about forty-eight cents.

the hot weather, when all the doors and windows were open, they vanished like puffs of their own smoke. The border people desired them first for their own family vendettas[21] and then for contingencies. But in the long cold nights of the Northern Indian winter they were stolen most extensively. The traffic of murder was liveliest among the hills at that season, and prices ruled high. The regimental guards were first doubled and then trebled. A trooper does not much care if he loses a weapon – government must make it good – but he deeply resents the loss of his sleep. The regiment grew very angry, and one night-thief who managed to limp away bears the visible marks of their anger upon him to this hour. That incident stopped the burglaries for a time, and the guards were reduced accordingly, and the regiment devoted itself to polo with unexpected results, for it beat by two goals to one that very terrible polo corps the Lushkar Light Horse, though the latter had four ponies apiece for a short hour's fight, as well as a native officer who played like a lambent flame across the ground.

Then they gave a dinner to celebrate the event. The Lushkar team came, and Dirkovitch came, in the fullest full uniform of Cossack officer, which is as full as a dressing-gown, and was introduced to the Lushkars, and opened his eyes as he regarded them. They were lighter men than the Hussars, and they carried themselves with the swing that is the peculiar right of the Punjab[22] frontier force and all irregular horse. Like everything

[21] 50:21 vendettas. Private blood-feuds.

[22] 51:14 Punjab. Country of five rivers, tributaries of the Indus.

else in the service, it has to be learned; but unlike many things, it is never forgotten, and remains on the body till death.

The great beam-roofed mess room of the White Hussars was a sight to be remembered. All the mess plate was on the long table – the same table that had served up the bodies of five dead officers in a forgotten fight long and long ago – the dingy, battered standards faced the door of entrance, clumps of winter roses lay between the silver candlesticks, the portraits of eminent officers deceased looked down on their successors from between the heads of sambhur[23], nilghai[24], maikhor, and, pride of all the mess, two grinning snow-leopards that had cost Basset-Holmer four months' leave that he might have spent in England instead of on the road to Thibet, and the daily risk of his life on ledge, snowslide, and glassy grass slope.

The servants, in spotless white muslin and the crest of their regiments on the brow of their turbans, waited behind their masters, who were clad in the scarlet and gold of the White Hussars and the cream and silver of the Lushkar Light Horse. Dirkovitch's dull green uniform was the only dark spot at the board, but his big onyx eyes made up for it. He was fraternizing effusively with the captain of the Lushkar team, who was wondering how many of Dirkovitch's Cossacks his own long, lathy down-countrymen could account for in a fair charge. But one does not speak of these things openly.

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[23] 81:26 Sambhur. A rusine deer found in India.

[24] 51:26 nilghai. Antelope with hind legs shorter than its fore-legs.

The talk rose higher and higher, and the regimental band played between the courses, as is the immemorial custom, till all tongues ceased for a moment with the removal of the dinner slips and the First Toast of Obligation, when the colonel, rising, said, "Mr. Vice, the Queen," and Little Mildred from the bottom of the table answered, "The Queen, God bless her!" and the big spurs clanked as the big men heaved themselves up and drank the Queen, upon whose pay they were falsely supposed to pay their mess bills. That sacrament of the mess never grows old, and never ceases to bring a lump into the throat of the listener wherever he be, by land or by sea. Dirkovitch rose with his "brothers glorious," but he could not understand. No one but an officer can understand what the toast means; and the bulk have more sentiment than comprehension. It all comes to the same in the end, as the enemy said when he was wriggling on a lance point. Immediately after the little silence that follows on the ceremony there entered the native officer who had played for the Lushkar team. He could not of course eat with the alien, but he came in at dessert, all six feet of him, with the blue-and-silver turban atop, and the big black top-boots below. The mess rose joyously as he thrust forward the hilt of his saber, in token of fealty, for the colonel of the White Hussars to touch, and dropped into a vacant chair amid shouts of "*Rung ho*! Hira Singh!" (which being translated means "Go in and win!"). "Did I whack you over the knee, old man?" "Ressaidar Sahib, what the devil made you play that kicking pig of a pony in the last ten minutes?" "Shabash,

Ressaidar Sahib!" Then the voice of the colonel, "The health of Ressaidar Hira Singh!"

After the shouting had died away, Hira Singh rose to reply, for he was the cadet of a royal house, the son of a king's son, and knew what was due on these occasions. Thus he spoke in the vernacular: —

"Colonel Sahib and officers of this regiment, much honor have you done me. This will I remember. We came down from afar to play you; but we were beaten." ("No fault of yours, Ressaidar Sahib. Played on our own ground, y' know. Your ponies were cramped from the railway. Don't apologize.") "Therefore perhaps we will come again if it be so ordained." ("Hear! Hear, hear, indeed! Bravo! Hsh!") "Then we will play you afresh" ("Happy to meet you"), "till there are left no feet upon our ponies. Thus far for sport." He dropped one hand on his sword hilt and his eye wandered to Dirkovitch lolling back in his chair. "But if by the will of God there arises any other game which is not the polo game, then be assured, Colonel Sahib and officers, that we shall play it out side by side, though *they*" – again his eye sought Dirkovitch – "though *they*, I say, have fifty ponies to our one horse." And with a deep-mouthed *Rung ho*! that rang like a musket butt on flagstones, he sat down amid shoutings.

Dirkovitch, who had devoted himself steadily to the brandy – the terrible brandy aforementioned – did not understand, nor did the expurgated[25] translations offered to him at all convey

[25] 54:9 expurgated. Purified.

the point. Decidedly the native officer's was the speech of the evening, and the clamor might have continued to the dawn had it not been broken by the noise of a shot without that sent every man feeling at his defenseless left side. It is notable that Dirkovitch "reached back," after the American fashion – a gesture that set the captain of the Lushkar team wondering how Cossack officers were armed at mess. Then there was a scuffle, and a yell of pain.

"Carbine stealing again!" said the adjutant, calmly sinking back in his chair. "This comes of reducing the guards. I hope the sentries have killed him."

The feet of armed men pounded on the veranda flags, and it sounded as though something was being dragged.

"Why don't they put him in the cells till the morning?" said the colonel, testily. "See if they've damaged him, sergeant."

The mess-sergeant fled out into the darkness, and returned with two troopers and a corporal, all very much perplexed.

"Caught a man stealin' carbines, sir," said the corporal.

"Leastways 'e was crawling toward the barricks, sir, past the main-road sentries; an' the sentry 'e says, sir – "

The limp heap of rags upheld by the three men groaned. Never was seen so destitute and demoralized an Afghan. He was turbanless, shoeless, caked with dirt, and all but dead with rough handling. Hira Singh started slightly at the sound of the man's pain. Dirkovitch took another liqueur glass of brandy.

"*What* does the sentry say?" said the colonel.

"Sez he speaks English, sir," said the corporal.

"So you brought him into mess instead of handing him over to the sergeant! If he spoke all the tongues of the Pentecost you've no business – "

Again the bundle groaned and muttered. Little Mildred had risen from his place to inspect. He jumped back as though he had been shot.

"Perhaps it would be better, sir, to send the men away," said he to the colonel, for he was a much-privileged subaltern. He put his arms round the rag-bound horror as he spoke, and dropped him into a chair. It may not have been explained that the littleness of Mildred lay in his being six feet four, and big in proportion. The corporal, seeing that an officer was disposed to look after the capture, and that the colonel's eye was beginning to blaze, promptly removed himself and his men. The mess was left alone with the carbine thief, who laid his head on the table and wept bitterly, hopelessly, and inconsolably, as little children weep.

Hira Singh leaped to his feet with a long-drawn vernacular oath

"Colonel Sahib," said he, "that man is no Afghan, for they weep '*Ai! Ai*!' Nor is he of Hindustan, for they weep,'*Oh! Ho*!' He weeps after the fashion of the white men, who say '*Ow! Ow*!'"

"Now where the dickens did you get that knowledge, Hira Singh?" said the captain of the Lushkar team.

"Hear him!" said Hira Singh, simply, pointing at the crumpled figure that wept as though it would never cease.

"He said, 'My God!'" said Little Mildred, "I heard him say it."

The colonel and the mess room looked at the man in silence. It is a horrible thing to hear a man cry. A woman can sob from the top of her palate, or her lips, or anywhere else, but a man cries from his diaphragm, and it rends him to pieces. Also, the exhibition causes the throat of the on-looker to close at the top.

"Poor devil!" said the colonel, coughing tremendously, "We ought to send him to hospital. He's been manhandled."

Now the adjutant loved his rifles. They were to him as his grandchildren – the men standing in the first place. He grunted rebelliously: "I can understand an Afghan stealing, because he's made that way. But I can't understand his crying. That makes it worse."

The brandy must have affected Dirkovitch, for he lay back in his chair and stared at the ceiling. There was nothing special in the ceiling beyond a shadow as of a huge black coffin. Owing to some peculiarity in the construction of the mess room this shadow was always thrown when the candles were lighted. It never disturbed the digestion of the White Hussars. They were, in rather proud of it.

"Is he going to cry all night?" said the colonel, "or are we supposed to sit up with Little Mildred's guest until he feels better?"

The man in the chair threw up his head and stared at the mess. Outside, the wheels of the first of those bidden to the festivities crunched the roadway.

"Oh, my God!" said the man in the chair, and every soul in

the mess rose to his feet. Then the Lushkar captain did a deed for which he ought to have been given the Victoria Cross – distinguished gallantry in a fight against overwhelming curiosity. He picked up his team with his eyes as the hostess picks up the ladies at the opportune moment, and pausing only by the colonel's chair to say, "This isn't *our* affair, you know, sir," led the team into the veranda and the gardens. Hira Singh was the last, and he looked at Dirkovitch as he moved. But Dirkovitch had departed into a brandy paradise of his own. His lips moved without sound, and he was studying the coffin on the ceiling.

"White – white all over," said Basset-Holmer, the adjutant. "What a pernicious renegade[26] he must be! I wonder where he came from?"

The colonel shook the man gently by the arm, and "Who are you?" said he.

There was no answer. The man stared round the mess room and smiled in the colonel's face. Little Mildred, who was always more of a woman than a man till "Boot and saddle" was sounded, repeated the question in a voice that would have drawn confidences from a geyser. The man only smiled. Dirkovitch, at the far end of the table, slid gently from his chair to the floor, No son of Adam, in this present imperfect world, can mix the Hussars' champagne with the Hussars' brandy by five and eight glasses of each without remembering the pit whence he has been digged and descending thither. The band began to

[26] 57:23 renegade. One who deserts his faith.

play the tune with which the White Hussars, from the date of their formation, preface all their functions. They would sooner be disbanded than abandon that tune. It is a part of their system. The man straightened himself in his chair and drummed on the table with his fingers.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.