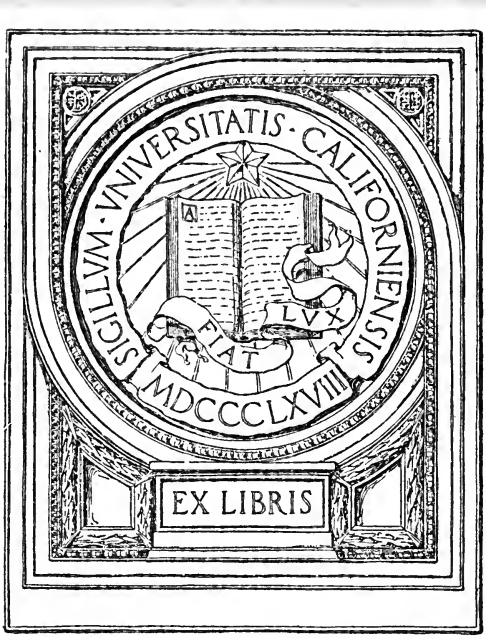
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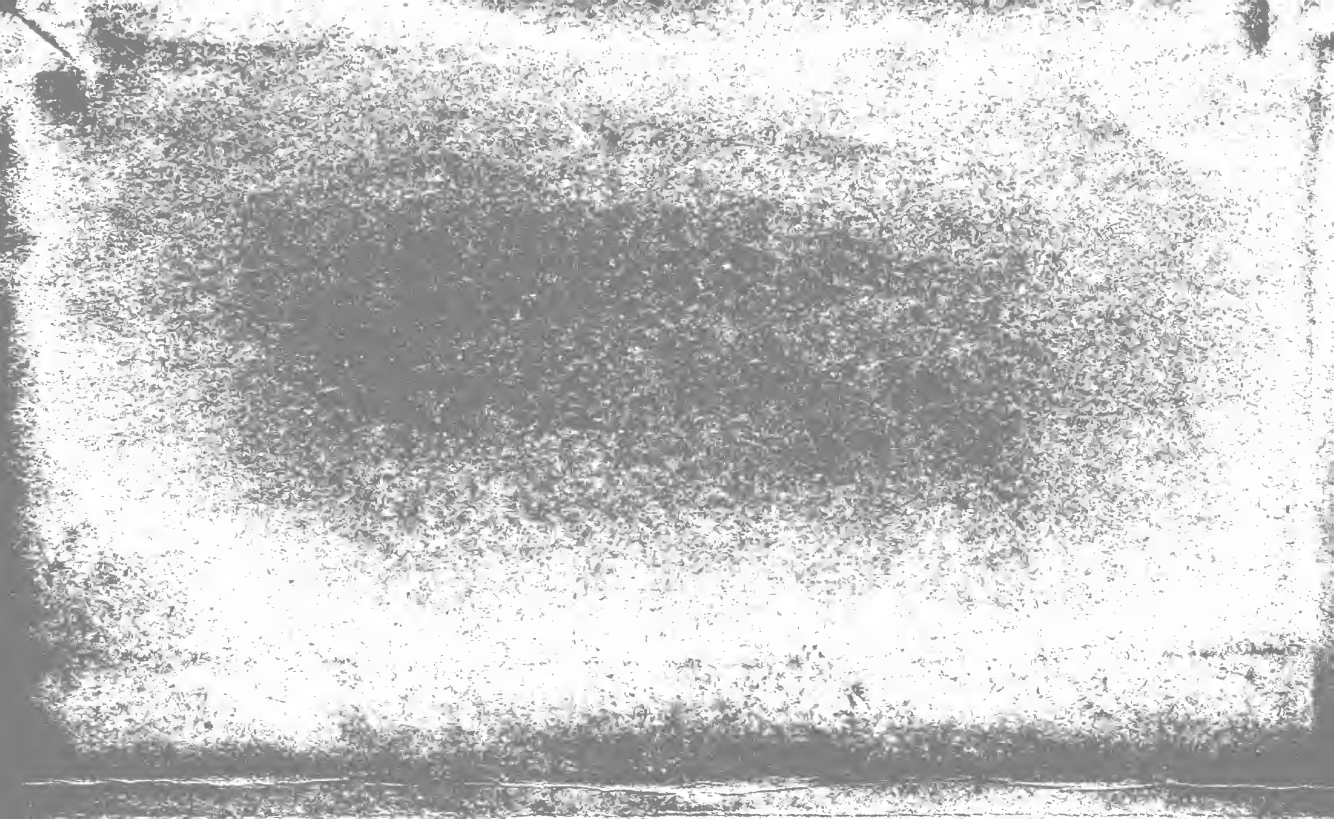

A COURSE IN

NARRATIVE WRITING

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PREFACE.

No form of composition is perhaps more inherently interesting to students of all ages than is narration. Once fairly launched upon the task of representing in story-form some section of life as observed or imagined by them, neither time nor effort looms large in comparison with the joy of the attempt. The "drudgery of composition" seems in this field more frequently than in any other to be performed without consciousness of its being drudgery, the "laws of discourse" to exemplify themselves painlessly in the written product, sentences to acquire somewhat spontaneously a firm standing and a decisive movement, "fine writing" voluntarily to efface itself and a simple, effective, and at times even a relatively fine-wrought style to develop.

For this delightful outcome the subject-matter of narration is doubtless largely responsible. Its concern with "human documents," with concrete action and events, with feeling as well as thought, gives it in point of the student's interest marked advantages over descriptive, expository, or argumentative writing.

But aside from the claims of the material, the story-form seems in some respects notably adapted to purposes of composition-teaching. In the simpler, more pedestrian narratives, the essential structure is easily grasped as a whole by immature minds and may serve to initiate a general sense of organization in discourse, capable of being carried over into all the various types. This simple structure, moreover, if traced throughout its development into the highly sophisticate forms of the story, admits of the finest discriminations of which the mature intelligence is capable, while the details of technical workmanship carry far into the field of literary art. The range of study in narrative construction is thus practically co-extensive with the entire period of education. It may be entered upon by the child in the primary grades, —Quintilian suggests it as the first exercise in composition,—and yet will profitably engage the college senior.*

As an offset to these obvious advantages of narration as a field of training in composition, certain equally obvious difficulties declare themselves at the outset. The very idea of writing stories usually appears to the literal-minded majority of students an incredible presumption and absurdity. "I never wrote a story in my life," "I simply can't make

* The treatment of the subject in these pages is designed fo students of college age, though advanced pupils in good secondary schools ought to be capable of using it intelligently.

up a story, you know," "Nothing exciting ever happened to me, and I haven't a particle of imagination," are familiar asseverations at the beginning of a course in narration. The presupposition is that story-writing is an occult art, due to the direct inspiration of genius, inscrutable in its processes and unassailable in its results. Such a notion need not be formally combated, since it yields inevitably to a closer acquaintance with the process of narrative construction. Why one should be able to write a story who has no more definite notion of its structure than that something happens in it, is difficult to say. One might as well set out to paint a picture on the sole basis of knowledge that a canvas and brushes are requisite, or to construct a steam-engine under the vague impression that it consists of iron and steel, and comprises among other things a boiler and wheels. With even a crude idea, however, regarding the essential nature and structure of narrative composition, an intelligent attempt may be made to write a story.

The lack of material is an obstacle less easily surmounted. In spite of the student's greater interest in human beings than in abstract ideas or in natural scenery, he knows little more about the one than about the other. Here, however, as in all training, the use of what one has tends infallibly to increase one's stores, and the preëxisting interest hastens markedly the progress of acquisition. It is in view

of the untrained student's inability to discover and develop story-material in the earlier stages of its organization that considerable stress has been laid in this book on the finding of suitable matter and becoming thoroughly acquainted with it, the fixing of a point of view from which the story is to be told, the marking of terminal points and the choice of essential scenes between these points. The writer's experience has yielded a firm conviction that these initial stages present by far the greatest difficulties to the young student. Let him but once get the idea of a possible story and come to understand, by exploration of its capacities, what opportunities are offered by the material itself, and the teacher's function is thenceforth that of the rein rather than the goad. The getting of the raw material is, of course, in last analysis, a question of individual perception; but certain quickening influences have been here suggested, which in the practice of many years have availed to reveal to students of widely varying imaginative powers the resources of their own heretofore unnoted experience and observation.

The study of narrative writing may abundantly be justified as training in composition; but its best fruits are perhaps, after all, those of appreciative reading. As a corrective of the indiscriminate swallowing of fiction, good, bad, and indifferent, unfortunately so all but universal even among supposedly educated young people, the development of a sense of literary

workmanship stands unsurpassed. A dawning consciousness of structural values alone in this form of writing goes far to quicken the reader's pleasure in a well articulated story and to cause at least a vague dissatisfaction with one carelessly thrown together, however gorgeously the slovenly edifice may be hung with meretricious ornament. The intellectual satisfaction yielded by artistic technique, even crudely apprehended, is not to be despised as a source of delight in itself, while, as in some degree a test and an educator of taste in fiction, it meets a genuine need.

Narrative writing has herein been treated primarily and almost exclusively from the point of view of structure, considerations of style in the more detailed sense of the term having been left to the numerous manuals of composition in general, which treat elements common to all the forms of discourse. Granted that there is a narrative style as distinct from descriptive or expository or argumentative style, the best way of acquiring it would seem to be through directing the attention not specifically to this narrative style, but rather to the larger structural features which condition and determine it. If Stevenson's principle holds, that there should be no word which "looks another way" from the trend of the action, the style of any narrative is the creation of its unerring progress, and is brought to highest efficiency only by the author's vigilant furthering of that progress.

Since the essential outlines of narrative structure can be most easily studied in a form less highly organized and condensed than the modern short story, six larger pieces of narrative are used for comparative analysis at the outset and for reference throughout the course. These narratives, namely, *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *The Mill on the Floss*, *Treasure Island*, and *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, have been chosen primarily as representing different but always sound and careful methods of work, secondarily for the probable familiarity of most students in the college or the secondary school with all except perhaps the last named.* Other texts can of course be readily substituted; and the actual reading of the students should in addition be freely employed for illustrative applications. Some good collection of short stories, such as Jessup and Canby's *Book of the Short Story*, Cody's *World's Greatest Short Stories*, or Nettleton's *Specimens of the Short Story*, should be in the hands of each student for continual reference. Mr. Bliss Perry's *A Study of Prose Fiction* may be profitably used as a handbook of criticism and a storehouse of inspiration, while some acquaintance with the development of the English novel as presented in various recent text-books would prove a valuable adjunct to the constructive work, should time allow.

* The illustrative material in the text has been limited so far as possible to these novels and a narrow range of short stories, that the reading-time of the student might not be too far taxed.

The thanks of the authors are hereby rendered to Professor Fred. Newton Scott of the University of Michigan for kind permission to draw from his *Materials for the Study of Rhetoric and Composition* Exercise 10 in Chapter V of this book, and also the illustrative application, made in the same chapter, of a passage from Froude's *Thomas Becket.* An apparent indebtedness to Mr. Bliss Perry's use of Hawthorne's *Note-books* in connection with the study of *Ethan Brand* * and to Mr. H. S. Canby's theory of the "impressionistic" origin of a certain type of short stories,† would seem to demand a similar acknowledgment; but as a matter of fact the more or less coincident passages in *Narrative Writing* ‡ were of independent origin, having been several times presented to classes virtually in their present form, prior to the publication of either of the books mentioned. To Professor Laura Johnson Wylie of Vassar College and to Miss Katharine Warren, formerly instructor in English in Vassar College, especial gratitude is due for invaluable counsel and criticism during the preparation of this book.

* *A Study of Prose Fiction*, Appendix V, *b*.

† *The Book of the Short Story*, Introduction, p. 13.

‡ Ch. I, Ex. 2 and Ch. I.

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A COURSE IN
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CHAPTER I.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE STORY.

THE actual construction of original stories is doubtless a long day's journey from the "comfortable, good-humored feeling" of the average reader "that a novel is a novel, as a pudding is a pudding," * and that consequently our only business with it can be to swallow it. But however remote from our goal, no starting-point is so universally accessible. And even the cursory consideration of a few familiar tales which unthinking readers have for generations swallowed as mere "pudding" must bring to light the fundamental story-type, thus suggesting, for the story-teller's inspiration no less than for his guidance, the larger limits and conditions of his task.

The primary elements in the story-form as such will of course condition all the numerous varieties of fictitious narrative, the folk-tale, the novel, the romance, the epic, the short story,—to mention only a few of the species. But they will stand out most boldly in the

The Story in its Simplest Form. Preliminary Definitions.

* Henry James: *The Art of Fiction.*

simplest of these narrative types, such as the folk-tale or fairy-story. It is then to these that we must first turn, for a working hypothesis of story-structure.

Recalling *Cinderella* and *Jack and the Bean-stalk*, as typical examples of the folk-tale, it is apparent that these are not only narrative, in the sense of relating a succession of events, but that each is *a* narrative; each has a certain wholeness or unity in itself. This unity may in part be due to the fact that the events of each story have to do directly or indirectly with one person, Cinderella in the one case, Jack in the other; but there is a closer unity here than that derived from character merely, a unity also of action. Every event and circumstance in these stories is not only concerned with the principal character, but it has to do with the outcome of the story, it either furthers or opposes that attainment of happiness and prosperity which is the objective point of both stories alike. Cinderella reaches this end by marrying the Prince, Jack by avenging his father and recovering his stolen wealth. In both stories the hero or heroine is aided to attain the end by various persons (notably in each case the fairy godmother), and hindered by various other persons, the giant being Jack's most formidable antagonist, Cinderella's her cruel stepmother and sisters.

The activity of these two groups of persons gives rise to events of two kinds: those that mark an advance toward the attainment of the end, and those

that put its attainment in jeopardy. In each story these events are so disposed that the enemies of the hero or heroine are at first successful, but later on are worsted, and we can easily see just when the transfer of power from one side to the other begins to take place. In both stories, as it chances, this happens at the appearance of the fairy godmother. Neither Cinderella nor Jack has at this point actually attained the end, but the friendly powers which are ultimately to bring this about now begin to act decisively. This point of transfer may be called the turning-point of the story, the activity of the hero and his friends may be united under the name of the favoring or positive forces, while that of his enemies or antagonists may be collectively termed the adverse or negative forces.

We have here in one of its simplest forms the typical "conflict of forces," which constitutes the essential structure of all fictitious narrative as well as of all dramatic compositions. And upon this basis it is possible at once to distinguish the art-form which has been termed "fictitious narrative" from those more utilitarian chronicles of actual events which are also included under the general name of narration. The recital in their chronological order of events occupying a certain period or concerning a certain nation or individual may constitute historical or biographical narrative of a certain type, and serves every purpose of the diary or the ship's log, but fictitious narrative

consists in the recital of such and such only of these events as have part in a vigorously contested progress toward a given end. It is with this art of fictitious narrative that we are henceforth to be concerned, and to this art or its products the term "narrative" when hereafter used may be understood to refer.

The art of narrative, however simple in its early estate, has shown itself in modern times capable of a high degree of complication; and even the most elementary conception of the story's essential structure must provide for such growth and modification as inevitably takes place once the narrative type has been fairly evolved. The possibility of numerous variations upon the essential features of the story-structure appears, in fact, in even the primitive tales. The two stories whose structure has been roughly indicated have, like most fairy-tales, "a happy ending"; but it is of course quite conceivable that the hero shall fail, rather than succeed, in reaching the objective point. Almost the sole example of such an outcome among our traditional nursery tales is found in "Little Red Riding Hood," and even this has a version according to which Red Riding Hood escaped the wolf. In the accustomed reading of this story, however, the adverse forces triumph; there is a negative instead of a positive outcome.

Moreover, the positive and the negative forces seem, on further scrutiny, less simple and less uniform in type than at first they may have appeared. Among

the influences which further or retard the hero's success must be included not only "friends" and "enemies" in the ordinary sense, but also lucky or unlucky accidents (such as the throwing of Jack's beans out of the window), and fortunate or unpropitious surroundings (such as the obscurity and squalor of Cinderella's environment). The hero may be ruined by those he loves, or helped on to success by those who hate him; his own qualities may contribute to his downfall, as well as hew out his fortune. The forces, then, whose duel constitutes the story are infinitely varied in character and sometimes divisible in function, a single force operating in two directions, in one aspect furthering and in another impeding the attainment of the story's end.

These variations upon the typical structure of the story continually increase as we examine more complex narratives. *Robinson Crusoe*, like the two folk-tales, has a definite objective point, in this case the hero's restoration to the world he has lost. All the events narrated have a bearing upon the outcome, and, as in the other cases, may be classified under positive or negative forces according to their effect in furthering or retarding the attainment of this end. It will, of course, be noted at once that the end is really twice attained, and decisively attained: once when Crusoe settles in Brazil and again when he returns to England. The story is, therefore, quite rightly divided

More Complex Forms of the Story. The Forces of Environment and of Character.

into two parts, which are strictly two stories with the same hero. Treated as such, their parallelism of structure with the other tales is clear enough. Each part has its own turning-point. In Part I it may be placed at the moment of Crusoe's escape from his Turkish master; in Part II at the moment when, cast alone and defenceless upon the rocks of his desert island, he realizes that life yet remains to him and must for the future be maintained by his own exertions. In each instance the story up to the turning-point shows the hero going from better fortune to worse, until the lowest depth is reached, after which it shows him rising from worse to better.

Considered with reference to broad structural features, then, *Robinson Crusoe* is like the two fairy-stories. But there are also certain differences which cannot be overlooked. Not only does *Robinson Crusoe* involve an enormous increase in the number of the forces operative in each direction, but these forces are more varied in character and sustain somewhat more complicated relations with one another. In *Jack and the Bean-stalk* the end is reached by the simple transfer of wealth from the thief to the rightful owner, in *Cinderella* by a brilliant marriage, the marriage itself being brought about by equally simple means. But Crusoe wins back the world he has lost, not by a single stroke, but as the result of long-continued activity in many directions, depending upon special conditions of climate, of civilization, of physi-

cal health and moral character, and coming about at last only through mutual adjustment of all these.

But that which is perhaps most noteworthy in *Robinson Crusoe* is the part played by material things, by those features of land and water, of vegetation and animal life, which are summed up in the term physical environment. Cinderella and Jack virtually had no environment. They lived nowhere in particular, and the forces operative in their lives were confined to a few human agencies (the superhuman ones are really treated as human), acting in a comparatively restricted field. In *Robinson Crusoe* there is a clear recognition of the hero's dependence upon impersonal things, and a consequent broadening of the field of interest to include the phenomena of animate and inanimate nature.

This inclusion of the natural world among the forces of the story enriches the narrative by a certain amount of description. In the fairy-stories there is almost no description, but *Robinson Crusoe* is full of it. There are representations to the reader's senses of the island's shores, of its rocks, its capes, its woods, of the animals that lived there. Yet such description is always in effect narrative, because it is introduced in the service of the story:—these things are not depicted for their own sake, because of any special beauty or interest which they possess, but solely because, in one way or another, they influenced Crusoe's ultimate fate. The rocks and capes and beaches

conditioned both his shipwreck and his life upon the island, the streams gave harborage to his canoe and furnished him fish, the woods offered him shelter and supplied him with timber and fruit, the animals gave him furs and meat, and these find their place in the story only by virtue of their effect upon its final outcome.

If such a story as *The Vicar of Wakefield* be set beside the three already considered, we shall find it suggestive of certain further modifications of the typical narrative structure. Here, as in the other stories, there are at first a number of misfortunes, and then a turn in affairs, finally resulting in prosperity and happiness. There is the conflict of positive and negative forces, there is the turning point—obviously at the rescue of Sophia—followed by continued reinforcement to the strength of the positive forces, until the negative forces are completely vanquished and the end is attained.

But though positive and negative forces are present, they are disposed in a new way. In the two fairy-stories the turning-point falls near the beginning. At the very outset Jack and Cinderella are nearly as miserable as they can be, and the turn for the better comes early, the bulk of the story being occupied with the consummation of the change thus begun. In *Robinson Crusoe*, though the negative forces are given more space,—the perils of the voyage and the shipwreck being recounted at some length,—yet their

relative bulk is no greater, and the larger part of the story deals with the events after the turning-point that is, with the victorious positive forces.

In *The Vicar*, on the other hand, the proportions are reversed: the greater part of the story is concerned with the adverse forces by which the Primrose family are dragged into deeper and deeper distress. The turning-point, when they are as far as possible from their former prosperity, but begin to rise toward it, does not come until very near the close of the story. Naturally, the upward movement, when once started, is decided and swift, good news treads the heels of good news, and the misfortunes which have been the accumulation of months are retrieved in a few hours.

But besides this difference in the plan according to which the forces are disposed, there is a further difference between *The Vicar* and the other three stories,—a difference found in the essential nature of the forces themselves. Hitherto the forces inherent in character have been of the simplest order. In the fairy-stories, the characters were broadly drawn in mere outline. A cruel step-mother, arrogant sisters, a gentle and beautiful girl, a beneficent godmother, a lazy, adventurous boy, a sad widow, a ruthless giant—these are set types with corresponding parts to enact for or against the interests of the hero. They can always be counted on to be cruel or arrogant or gentle or lazy, and to be only that. Robinson Crusoe, although he

has more qualities, has still not emerged out of the typical. He is the strong, resourceful, persistent man, the pioneer type. But in *The Vicar of Wakefield*, a certain degree of real individuality appears. Its characters, though they have not developed far from the type, cannot be summed up by single adjectives. They are many-sided, hence their relations with one another are comparatively complicated. In the fairy-stories we found it easy to separate the actors into two groups, friends and enemies of the hero. This could still be done in *Robinson Crusoe*, although the human element in the story aside from the hero is almost too small to count at all. But in *The Vicar*, nothing of the sort is possible. With the exception of Squire Thornhill and his two women of fashion from the city, no person can be assigned absolutely and exclusively to the side of the negative or to that of the positive forces. Such of the family's misfortunes as are not the result of accident, are as frequently traceable to certain qualities in their own characters as to the actions of their "enemies." Olivia's misfortunes are brought on as much by her own and her mother's foolish vanity as by the villainy of the Squire. The Vicar, on his visit to the fair, brings ill-luck upon himself by his own simplicity and openness to flattery; and it should perhaps be noted, as a further complication of the forces, that another phase of this same simplicity wins the esteem of the rogue who duped him, and thus ultimately

helps to bring about the exposure of Squire Thornhill. Accident, it is true, has its place as in the fairy-tales—the burning of the Vicar's house, the meeting of the Vicar with George and the Wilmots, and later with Olivia, the opportune arrival at the prison of all the persons concerned in the event; but the forces which are derived from the characters of the actors have become markedly more complex both in themselves and in their relations to one another.

Thus, as in *Robinson Crusoe* we find the scope of the story enlarged through recognition of the forces of environment, in *The Vicar of Wakefield* it is enlarged by a fuller recognition and development of the forces of character. And as the emphasis on environment involved the abundant use of description applied to natural phenomena, so the emphasis on character in *The Vicar* involves the employment of character-exposition. When character is a source of the action, it must be understood by the reader or the significance of the action cannot be fully grasped. It was sufficient to say that Cinderella's mother was "cruel," but Olivia's mother cannot be dismissed with any single adjective. Cinderella may be briefly described as "sweet and gentle," but the amiability of Olivia and Sophia must be delicately differentiated. To this end description is again pressed into service, this time, however, as applied to persons. Cinderella was called "beautiful" simply, but Olivia's beauty is analyzed to discover its peculiar characteristic as compared with

the beauty of her sister Sophia, and by this means some of the spiritual traits of the two girls are brought out and contrasted. Descriptions of dress, manner, bearing, are similarly employed for purposes of characterization, but, as in *Robinson Crusoe*, description or direct characterization is always in essence narrative, because employed directly in the service of the story. The portraits are not painted for their own sakes, but that we may see and understand, as if it went on before our eyes, the action in which the characters delineated have part.

The further development of individual character in *The Vicar of Wakefield* reacts upon the organization of the story as a whole and upon the nature of its component parts. In the other three tales the constituent events or incidents were of a structure relatively simple and unvarying. Only relatively, however, for even the incidents of the folk-tale are, as examination discloses, in reality miniature stories, each with its own definite outcome determined by a duel of forces. Thus Jack's first visit to the Giant's house may be analyzed into the forces which further and those which oppose his final successful escape with his plunder. The Giant's wife, after some parley, it will be remembered, admits him to the castle (positive force): inside the castle Jack gets a good meal (positive), and then the Giant knocks at the gate (negative): Jack is hidden in the oven (positive), but the Giant smells "fresh meat"

Further Definitions: Incident and Subplot; the Hero; the End or Goal; the Turning-Point.

(negative): his wife pacifies him (positive), the Giant falls asleep (positive), Jack steals the hen that lays the golden eggs, and escapes (positive).

In like manner might be analyzed any one of the constituent incidents in Robinson Crusoe, such as, for instance, the rescue of Friday. The end, namely, the acquisition of a servant and companion, is attained. The savages land with prisoners (positive force). The large number of savages threatens to defeat Crusoe's hopes (negative). But one of their victims escapes and runs in Crusoe's direction (positive). Three savages pursue him (negative). The fugitive outstrips them (positive) and swims a creek, which turns back one of the pursuers (positive). The other two swim over (negative). Crusoe now interferes and clubs one pursuer (positive). The other aims an arrow at Crusoe (negative), but Crusoe kills him with a musket-ball (positive). The other pursuer, only stunned, recovers (negative), but is killed by the fugitive (positive), who then expresses submission to Crusoe as his savior (positive).

The incidents of the fairy-stories and of *Robinson Crusoe* vary somewhat in number of constituent events; but the principal actor in each is almost without exception the hero of the story, and the minor actors maintain approximately the same relations to one another in each incident. In *The Vicar of Wakefield*, however, as event succeeds event, the grouping of persons involved constantly shifts,—now it is the

Vicar and Mr. Burchell, then Sophia and Mr. Burchell, then Squire Thornhill and the whole Primrose family, then the Vicar and George, the Vicar and the Wilmots, the Vicar and the Squire, etc. The hero of these incidents, too, is first one character and then another—Olivia, Moses, the Vicar, Sophia—so that each incident stands out distinctly from the story, and we follow its course as if there were no other interests involved, until at its completion we are reminded that the result has a bearing upon the main issue, and is to be scored up *pro* or *con* in the final record.

For example, in the episode of Moses's visit to the county fair, Moses is the hero, the end is the bartering of the colt for good value. This end is not attained, as Moses is swindled by a sharper and returns home with a case of worthless green spectacles, thus adding one more misfortune to those that have befallen the Primrose family. That is, the incident contributes one of the negative forces to the main story. The Vicar's day at the fair is similar in purport but more elaborate in structure. The Vicar is the hero, the objective point is his successful sale of their old blind horse. The Vicar's first setback is in the disparaging comments of the chapmen. This is followed by his meeting with "the venerable old man,"—really the sharper Jenkinson in disguise. A long talk between them ensues, in which the Vicar's confidence is completely won, and at its conclusion he is easily

hoodwinked into parting with his horse in return for a worthless draft. The end is not attained. Again the incident contributes to the negative forces in the main story.

Yet further complicated is the episode, or series of episodes, dealing with the Vicar's search for Olivia. The Vicar is once more the hero; the outcome is his discovery of the girl. At the beginning the adverse forces are in the ascendant; he is led astray by false clues, goes seventy miles in the wrong direction, is stricken with fever and lies for weeks in a wayside inn. He is assisted, however, by a chance-sent friend, and on his recovery makes a second start for home. Here there breaks in an entirely different set of interests, centering around George and the Wilmots, and only after several chapters does the Olivia-interest again come to the front, when the Vicar resumes his journey homeward. He stops at an inn, and by chance discovers that it harbors his daughter also. The end is attained; the incident scores for the positive forces in the main story.

This third example is given not only to illustrate the degree of elaboration reached by the incidents, but also to show how they insensibly expand into incident-groups or series. For the development of the forces of character affects not merely the single incidents, but also the relation of the incidents to one another. Naturally, the influence of any one person is not exerted equally upon every other. It acts

strongly upon one or two, less strongly or not at all upon others, and according to the closeness of their connections with one another the persons in the story fall into various groups, not wholly independent, often overlapping as to their personnel, yet having partially distinct interests. Thus, in *The Vicar*, the grouping is, in part, (1) Sophia—Mr. Burchell; (2) Olivia—Mrs. Primrose—Squire Thornhill—the Vicar—Farmer Williams; (3) George—Arabella—the Vicar—Mr. Wilmot—Squire Thornhill; (4) Jenkinson—the Vicar—Squire Thornhill—Mr. Burchell. Each of these groups appears in a corresponding set of incidents closely interlinked, and extending through a greater or smaller portion of the story according to the nature of the interests involved. Thus it would be possible to select the parts of the narrative referring to Sophia and Mr. Burchell and combine them so as to make a separate love-story in outline; the same could be done with the events in which the characters grouped about Olivia or about George are chiefly concerned. If such an interlinked series of events be extended enough and intricate enough, it is called a subplot, but the term should not be too rigidly defined, since differences of extent and complexity seem chiefly to distinguish the elaborate incident, like the Vicar's visit to the fair, from the shorter incident-series, like the Vicar's search for Olivia, and from the longer incident-series, like that setting forth the story of Olivia and Squire Thornhill. With this proviso, it may be

said, however, as a rough approximation to a definition, that a subplot is a sequence of events, having the story-structure, and partially separable from the main story in virtue of having a different objective point, yet not wholly separable because its outcome affects and is affected by the main story and its forces are at least partially drawn from those of the main story.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, for instance, the subplots of Jane and Bingley, and of Lydia and Wickham, are closely affiliated with the main story: Wickham's misrepresentations furnish the basis for Elizabeth's early dislike of Darcy, in which she is further confirmed by Darcy's interference with Bingley's love-affair. The subsequent history of Lydia and Wickham serves, first to shake Elizabeth in her set opinions, and finally to convert dislike and contempt for Darcy into admiration and gratitude, while his change of attitude toward Jane and Bingley clears away the last obstacle to a happy understanding. On the other hand, in *Middlemarch* the main plot [Dorothea—Casaubon—Ladislaw] is almost completely severed from the two subplots, and the three sets of interests have only a little more to do with one another than would those of three serials running side by side in the same magazine. The book really presents, not a main story with two subplots, but three stories, of a structural importance almost equal.

In the light of more complex stories, such as those

which have just been instanced, the popular understanding of what an incident is and what it may develop into must be considerably modified and enlarged. The same must be the case with those conceptions of the hero, the end, and the turning-point which were based upon an examination of the simpler tales. Consider first the hero.

In the fairy-stories and in *Robinson Crusoe* the person and status of the hero were so simple that they scarcely invited discussion. He dominated every incident; he was directly concerned in every issue. But in *The Vicar of Wakefield* the multiplicity of characters, their alternating predominance, the intricacy of their relations, create a somewhat more difficult problem. Even the question, Who is the hero? does not suggest at once its positive and unchallenged answer. The Vicar, indeed, has the title-rôle, but it is at a glance apparent that he is not the hero in the same sense as was Robinson Crusoe, or Jack, or Cinderella. For though the story contains a large number of incidents in whose individual structure he is clearly the hero, it includes also a considerable number in which he as clearly is not. In some of the scenes relating to his loss of fortune, his removal to a poorer parish, his further losses through his own folly, his imprisonment for debt and his restoration to wealth, he is the chief actor, but on the other hand Sophia and Mr. Burchell, Olivia and the Squire, George and Arabella, are chief actors in other series of events in which the

Vicar plays a subordinate part. To a lesser degree it is true of the Vicar as of Olivia, Sophia, Arabella and the rest, that each is concerned only with portions of the whole story; that the fate of each, individually considered, constitutes but a part of the entire *dénouement*. The only objective point for the story as a whole is evidently the prosperity of the Primrose family *as a family*, and the structural hero thus becomes the family as a whole, or possibly the Vicar considered not as the man but as the *paterfamilias*. So intimate is the family unity that it does not permit the singling out of any member save in this representative capacity. The success of each is bound up in the success of all, and no prosperity or well-being can be complete for any member unless it is shared by the others also.

This point may be clearer in the light of such a story as *The Mill on the Floss*, wherein the Tulliver family is always kept subordinate to one of its members, Maggie. What happens to the others is significant merely in its relation to her, and is given only sufficient place to show this relation. For example, in *The Vicar*, George's love affair with Arabella receives as much attention as Sophia's with Mr. Burchell, but in *The Mill on the Floss* Maggie's relations with Philip Wakem, and afterwards with Stephen Guest, are portrayed in minute detail, while Tom's hopeless love for his cousin Lucy is merely hinted at in passing, and this only when it becomes a factor in

Maggie's life by affecting Tom's attitude towards her.

In this connection the important point to be noted is that the answer to the question, Who is the hero? does not depend upon the reader's personal preferences, or upon mere bulk of scenes, but upon plot-structure. The hero is not necessarily the most agreeable person in the story, nor the most interesting, nor the strongest, though he may be, and often is, all these; he is the person who is the structural center of events, that is, the person who is ultimately affected by all the forces, both positive and negative, and consequently whose attainment or non-attainment of the objective point constitutes the story.

As the story becomes more complicated an immense variation appears also in the character of the end or objective point. In the fairy-stories analyzed this end was the attainment of a purely material advantage; in *Robinson Crusoe* it was success in overcoming the difficulties of a physical world; in *The Vicar of Wakefield* it was the establishing of the entire family on a footing of permanent prosperity, social as well as material. In all these cases the attainment of the end consists chiefly in an adaptation, more or less material and external, of the hero's surroundings to the hero's needs. But in such a story as *The Mill on the Floss*, an attainment of the end demands not a material but a spiritual adaptation of the heroine's environment to her character, since the reconciliation

between Maggie and her social world could never be attained merely by its bestowal upon her of wealth or position, but only through its vouchsafing to her a broader and deeper and more delicate sympathy. Moreover, whereas in the other instances the adaptation demanded was all on the side of the environment, for Maggie no adaptation of this kind, whether material or spiritual, was possible without as great an adjustment on her part. Her reconciliation with her world demanded not only a change in that world, but a change in herself—a gain in steadiness and charity that could come only from complete self-mastery. Thus with the variation of the end, the theatre of the story's action is enlarged to include internal as well as external circumstances.

This change in the character of the objective point reacts vitally upon the forces of the story. When the narrative is primarily one of spiritual development, the agencies involved will be chiefly spiritual, and the details of physical environment will win significance only in so far as they tend to further or to retard this development. And not only will the character of the forces vary, but their disposition in the plot must be altered. The simple heaping up of misfortunes, one upon another, as in *The Vicar*, and the subsequent removal of each, "with, for evil, so much good more," will no longer serve. In the complex modern story evil and good are often subtly intermingled, victory and defeat wear

masks that are interchangeable. Hence the turning-point frequently becomes obscured or ambiguous. We called it the moment when the ascendancy begins to be transferred to the side which is ultimately to be successful, and this moment was, in the more external plots, easily discovered. But in Maggie's story, where shall we find it? The struggle in which she is all her life to be involved has begun in the very first scenes, when we see her trying hard to be good and to please people, and succeeding only in being "naughty" and falling into disgrace. From this time on there is always the same passionate endeavor, the same bewildering failure, save that the issues grow larger, the interests involved grow more and more serious, until she is confronted with her two sharpest ordeals, embodied in Philip Wakem and Stephen Guest. The first issue she tries to evade, and her integrity is thereby weakened. The second forces upon her a choice between her heart's desire, and her sternest instincts of loyalty and right. She begins to drift unresistingly toward the joy offered her, and then, when sacrifice has lost all its apparent efficacy, succeeds in making it. Her own highest sense of duty has been satisfied, but the outer world—with Tom—is alienated. Maggie has triumphed as an individual, but it is become clearly evident that her adjustment to her world can never be achieved, that it is inherently impossible, and that the final moments of sympathy between her and Tom could

never have stood the test of rescue and a life together. The turning-point is perhaps to be placed at the moment when she leaves Stephen. In that moment she rose to the supreme test; in that moment she cut herself off from her world; yet this act was only the manifestation of a spiritual condition which had been maturing through all the years from her childhood on. The break with her social environment only made formal and open the alienation that had always really existed. No new forces come into play, only the same old ones are somewhat differently massed, and the episode is but the outer culmination of a long process, every step of which formed a turning-point of an importance really though not apparently as great.

The turning-point then, like the hero, the end, and the antagonistic forces of the plot, becomes less obvious and less rigidly determinable as one passes from the primitive to the relatively sophisticate stories. This chapter has indicated not only the ruder, more unmistakable appearances of these primary structural elements, as in the fairy-tales, but certain variations and refinements which tend to disguise or obscure them in such highly modern narrative forms as the realistic novel. Not formally, but in a large and vital sense, they should be recognized by the student as the logical framework alike of the primitive and of the highly organized modern story. Further analysis may, however, profitably be deferred until some attempts at construction have aroused questions answerable only by a

more detailed study of the methods of the masters. A certain general knowledge of what a story is and what it is not, a vital, informal conception of its primary structural elements may fairly be held to constitute all legitimate and advantageous preparation for the first attempt at plot-making. With these one is perhaps as ready as he ought to be to find his story.

EXERCISES.

1. Write out from memory the stories of *Cinderella* and *Jack and the Bean-stalk*. Compare each carefully with some good printed version of the same story, as primitive as may be obtained. What are the essential differences between the two renderings? Which is the simpler in sentence-structure and wording, the less verbose, the less specific in details? Which of these characteristics may rightly be attributed to the primitive story?

2. Tell orally some folk-tale or fairy-story other than those mentioned in the text. What end does the hero (or heroine) achieve? What helps him towards this end? What hinders him? At what point does the one set of forces begin to gain over the other?

3. How would the biographies of Jack and Cinderella differ from these stories about them? Show how *The Vicar of Wakefield* must be altered to make it a biography of Dr. Primrose.

4. Compare carefully the following entries from Pepys's *Diary* with any six consecutive events from the stories of *Jack and the Bean-stalk*, or *Cinderella*, or *Robinson Crusoe*. What connection is there between the events recorded in the diary? What between the events of the story?

> "19th. This morning I was sent for to Mr. Downing, and at his bedside he told me that he had a kindness for me, and that he thought that he had done me one; and that was, that he had got me to be one of the Clerks of the Council; etc.
>
> 20th. In the morning I met Lord Widdrington in the street, going to seal the patents for the judges to-day, and so could not come to dinner, etc.
>
> 22d. [Lord's day.] To church in the afternoon to Mr. Herring, where a lazy, poor sermon. This day I began to put on buckles to my shoes.
>
> 23d. This day the Parliament sat late, and resolved of the declaration to be printed for the people's satisfaction, promising them a great many good things. In the garden at White Hall, going through to the Stone Gallery, I fell in a ditch, it being very dark.
>
> 24th. I took my wife to Mr. Pierce's, she in her way being exceedingly troubled with a pair of new pattens, and I vexed to go so slow, it being late, etc.

25th. Coming home, heard that in Cheapside, there had been but a little before a gibbet set up, and the picture of Huson hung upon it in the middle of the street. I called at Paul's Churchyard, where I bought Buxtorf's Hebrew Grammar; etc.

26th. Called for some papers at Whitehall for Mr. Downing, one of which was an order of the Council for 1800*l.* per annum, etc. . . . Home from my office to my Lord's lodgings, where my wife had got ready a very fine dinner; etc." *

5. What differences can you note between such a journal as that of Marian Halcombe in *The Woman in White* and a real diary, such as that of Pepys? How do you account for these differences?

6. Write a simple account of your first day at school as you remember it, of what seemed to you the longest day of your life, of a trip you have taken recently, of what you did on a certain holiday or a long vacation, or of what happened every day on a yacht's cruise or on a voyage across the ocean. Reconstruct this account so as to make it a story.

7. Write a statement as exact as for a court of law, of what you did between certain hours on a certain day recently. Why is this statement not a story? How could it be made part of a story?

8. Summarize the story of *Robinson Crusoe* (Part

* Entries for 1659–60.

II only). Does the summary produce the same illusion of reality as the unabridged story? Account for this. To a modern reader has the folk-tale such verisimilitude as *Robinson Crusoe* or *The Vicar of Wakefield?* Give reasons for your answer.

9. Write down in their chronological order all the misfortunes of the Primrose family. Opposite each misfortune write the corresponding good fortune, indicating the time-order by numbers. What is the effect upon the reader of the almost perfect symmetry of this opposition?

10. Suggest another plot for *The Vicar of Wakefield*, using the same characters and moving toward the same end, but employing different incidents throughout. Criticise these incidents for their suitability to the times and to the characters involved.

11. Can you account in the structural proportions of the two stories for the fact that the reader's interest in *Robinson Crusoe* is usually keenest before and shortly after the turning-point, while in *The Vicar of Wakefield* it is likely to rise much more slowly and to reach its height just before the outcome? Are other than structural reasons partly accountable for this difference? Is it observable in readers of all ages?

12. Criticise the following summary of *The Vicar of Wakefield.* Does it present, in proper proportions, the main structural outlines of the story? How far does it maintain the tone of the original story? What has been omitted? What value have these omitted

portions in the original story? Make such revision of the summary as seems desirable.

The Primrose family, consisting of the Vicar, his wife and six children, were living in prosperous circumstances at the time when the eldest son, George, became betrothed to a young lady of wealth, Arabella Wilmot. On the eve of the wedding, however, the Vicar lost his fortune, Mr. Wilmot broke off the engagement, and George set out for London to seek his fortune. The rest of the family moved to a poor parish, where, in spite of further losses, they lived in contentment. They made the acquaintance of Mr. Burchell, a poor and unknown gentleman, who paid marked attentions to the younger daughter, Sophia, while their landlord, young Squire Thornhill, flattered Olivia, the elder. He finally induced her to run away with him, and then deserted her. The Vicar, while searching for her, discovered his son George in a company of travelling players, and in the same town met the Wilmots. Arabella and George were thus brought together again, and their mutual affection proved undiminished, although Squire Thornhill was now wooing Arabella. With apparent friendliness he procured a West Indian appointment for George, who went back to London.

The Vicar on his way home found Olivia and brought her back. The same night his house burned down, and the Primrose family were reduced to living in an outhouse. After a time, Squire Thornhill,

failing to overcome the Vicar's vehement opposition to his pending marriage with Arabella, had him imprisoned for debt. The Vicar endured his misfortunes with equanimity, and set about reforming his fellow prisoners. His family, supported by the second son, Moses, lived near the prison, but Olivia's health steadily failed, and the Vicar was finally informed of her death. He then wrote to Squire Thornhill sanctioning his marriage and begging for leniency on behalf of his family, but the Squire remained obdurate. At the same time, Sophia was forcibly carried off by an unknown man, and George was brought to prison wounded and charged with a serious crime. He had challenged the Squire, who had sent his servants against him. George had wounded one of these, apparently mortally, and was held for trial. Even these misfortunes the Vicar met with firmness, and soon Sophia was restored to him, having been rescued by Mr. Burchell. The Vicar offered him her hand in marriage, and Mr. Burchell was now discovered to be Sir William Thornhill, the wealthy uncle of the young Squire. Squire Thornhill himself now arrived at the prison on his uncle's summons, to answer the charges against him, and he seemed about to clear himself when his servants turned against him and by their testimony convicted him not only of guilt in regard to Olivia, but also of the attempt to abduct Sophia. At this juncture Arabella Wilmot and her father arrived at the prison, the engage-

ment with the Squire was broken off and that with George was renewed. The squire boldly claimed the Wilmot dowry, which had been already deeded to him, but his claim was quashed by further testimony proving that his marriage to Olivia, which he supposed a mock one, was really binding. Olivia's position was thus legally assured. A double wedding followed, between Sir William and Sophia, George and Arabella; and finally it was learned that the Vicar's fortune had been recovered.

13. Make a rough tabulation of the forces involved in *Cinderella* and in *Jack and the Bean-stalk*. Arrange these forces for each story under two heads, on the basis of their influence in furthering or in retarding the hero's attainment of the end. Make a similar tabulation of the chief agencies involved in *Robinson Crusoe* (Part II only). After comparing these lists in detail, how would you either supplement or revise the statements of the text as to the differences between the forces employed in the fairy-tales and in *Robinson Crusoe?*

14. Make a list of the main forces in *The Mill on the Floss* which oppose and another of those which further Maggie's adjustment to the circumstances of her life. Could any of these forces be spared? Can you classify the characters as "friends" and "enemies" of Maggie? Can you imagine an outcome more satisfactory than that chosen by George Eliot? Rewrite the concluding chapter supplying such

an outcome, and indicate any further changes which this alteration necessitates in the earlier portions of the story.

15. Choose for analysis some good novel or short story with which you are already familiar. Determine the structural end of the story, name the hero, and tabulate the principal forces involved, noting the approximate turning-point of the action. Are the forces equal enough to make the story interesting? Are they unequal enough to make the outcome convincing? Substitute some other objective point for the story and state the changes which then become necessary in the plot. Indicate the changes which must be made in structure if a different hero were chosen from among the characters in the story.

CHAPTER II.

FINDING THE STORY.

STEVENSON once said, "There are, so far as I know, three ways, and three ways only, of writing a story. You may take a plot and fit characters to it, or you may take a character and choose incidents and situations to develop it, or lastly —you must bear with me while I try to make this clear—you may take a certain atmosphere and get action and persons to express and realize it." *

Three Starting-points.

Illustration of these three ways of writing a story may be found in Stevenson's own work. In *Weir of Hermiston*, he started with a single character, the historic figure of Lord Braxfield, whose grim personality, as embodied in portraiture, in record and tradition, had laid hold upon him years before. The extent to which the old judge dominated Stevenson's imagination is evident from many hints in his letters: "For the portrait of Braxfield, much thanks! It is engraved from the same Raeburn portrait that I saw in '76 or '77 with so extreme a gusto that I have ever since been

The Suggestion of Character.

* Graham Balfour: *Life of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ii. 168, 169.

Braxfield's humble servant, and am now trying, as you know, to stick him into a novel. Alas, one might as well try to stick in Napoleon." * And again: "*Weir of Hermiston* is a much greater undertaking, and the plot is not good, I fear; but Lord Justice Clerk Hermiston ought to be a plum." †

The phrase, "to stick him into a novel," suggests an artificial separation between character and action which Stevenson, however valiantly he defended it in his critical writings, ‡ assuredly did not maintain in his romances. But the inexperienced writer, beginning a story at the character end, too often finds it possible to proceed only by "sticking into" a plot organically unrelated with it, the character he has conceived. Plainly this will not do, unless the happenings of the story are to be quite independent of the persons, and the persons of their adventures—an unthinkable condition. But what is the alternative? Not, assuredly, having chosen a character from real life, to make use of such circumstances of his actual career as may be known to the writer. Aside from valid ethical objections to such use of private history when available, this procedure, though securing an obvious organic relation between action and character, would nevertheless limit the writer too narrowly, not only to actual occurrences in the life of his hero,

* Robert Louis Stevenson: *Letters;* ii. 437.

† Ibid. ii. 343.

‡ See *A Gossip on Romance,* in *Memories and Portraits.*

but even to his personal knowledge of them. It may be that to the character chosen no romantic or exciting event worth the telling has ever happened, or, more probably, that such exciting or romantic event is unknown to the writer. But as his mind plays about the character, it becomes increasingly evident that something worth telling might easily have happened to this person had circumstances only shifted a trifle at this or that point. Something distinctly worth telling might even happen to him now—indeed must happen if his nature is ever to develop certain of its sinister or heroic possibilities, to meet a strain at its weakest point, in brief, to become the scene of dramatic conflict. A story may, and often does, take its rise from the initial conception of a single real character, but it can develop organically from this starting-point only when the writer follows the suggestions for appropriate action given by the character itself.

The Suggestion of Plot or Incident.

In *Heathercat*, a romance never completed, Stevenson evidently began with the suggestion of a plot in a volume of *Decisions of the Lords of Council*, where there is mention of an attempt in 1685 to "apprehend the person of Janet Pringle." A few words in one of his letters serve to show how his mind was working at the details of what was to be his story. He quotes the entries that had attracted his notice, and adds:

"The above is my story, and I wonder if any light can be thrown on it. I prefer the girl's father dead; and the question is, How in that case could Lieutenant George Murray get his order to 'apprehend' and his power to 'sell' her in marriage? Or—might Lieutenant G. be her tutor, and she fugitive to the Pringles, and on the discovery of her whereabouts hastily married? A good legal note on these points is very ardently desired by me; it will be the corner-stone of my novel." *

The novel was never written, so we cannot follow out these hints as they developed under the writer's hand into a complete story, although we may guess at its character from Stevenson's other tales of adventure.

For Hawthorne's little sketch *Wakefield* the starting-point was also an actual occurrence. There arose, he says, in his mind, the memory of a magazine or newspaper account, briefly stating that a certain man abandoned his wife for twenty years, living the while on the next street, and at the end of that time, "entered the house one evening, quietly, as from a day's absence, and became a loving spouse till death." Stimulated by this suggestion, the author began to construct the character of Wakefield. What were his motives? What led to the first step? What held

* Robert Louis Stevenson: *Letters;* ii. 369, 370.

him to his later course? What instigated his final return? What was there in the character of his wife that made such action possible? But the sketch remains a sketch, for these problems are worked out only in part.

In these last cases the plot has been suggested as a whole, free from extraneous material, and relatively far advanced toward the story. The writer's task is that indicated by the procedure of Stevenson and Hawthorne—to develop a conception of the characters involved, which shall be consonant with their action, and perhaps also to enrich and vary the action as the developing personalities and situations may suggest. But the occurrence which serves as starting-point may often be slighter than these, often more complex. It is easily conceivable that such a trivial and familiar circumstance in real life as the enforced refusal of work to a person accused of theft, or the decision not to lodge in the house of such a person, may have given rise to Miss Wilkins's story called *Calla Lilies and Hannah*,* in which these incidents serve to develop the well-worn theme of false accusation, here redeemed to fresh interest by significant variations of the typical situation and characters. In like manner, a child's observed reluctance to the caresses of a doting grandfather might suggest to a trained story-seer like Miss Wilkins her study of the family relations represented by this incident in *A Village Lear*.

* Published in *A New England Nun*.

The tracing of such apparently trivial incidents to their roots in a deeply dramatic situation affording genuine story material, requires of the writer a sympathetic penetration gained hardly enough. Quite as essential, however, though perhaps less subtle, are the qualifications enabling him to sift a complex occurrence for the one story available in it, to disentangle the single thread of narrative intertwined with a dozen others in some "interesting" section of life. To take a conventional instance, suppose one reads an account of a railroad disaster, involving rather striking circumstances in the coolness of the engineer, the behavior of some of the passengers, the bravery and cleverness of an outsider who averted the complete wrecking of the train. All this may be promising enough, but it is not yet a story. It contains the possibilities of many stories, all having much in common in the forces involved, but each with its own hero and end, its own focus and direction of movement. The story may, for example, resolve itself into that of a girl passenger, hurrying to a sick father, or of an engineer given the train on probation, with much hanging upon his success, or of a little boy living near the tracks and saving the train by some quick-witted device. All these stories have been made out of such material; and Mr. Kipling has, in *007*, written one wherein the engine itself is the hero, while the passengers, the engineer, the outside world, all sink into the comparative obscurity of side interests.

Of the third way of finding the story, Stevenson expressly adduces his own *The Merry Men* as an example: "There I began with the feeling of one of those islands on the west coast of Scotland and I gradually developed the story to express the sentiment with which that coast affected me." *

The Suggestion of Atmosphere or Theme.

The suggestion of a story by the atmosphere of certain places is still more vigorously insisted upon in *A Gossip on Romance.* "Some places," says Stevenson, "speak distinctly. Certain dank gardens cry aloud for murder; certain old houses demand to be haunted; certain coasts are set apart for shipwreck." Such an origin, by Stevenson's confession in this same essay, had *Kidnapped*; such, doubtless, had Hawthorne's *Legends of the Province House, The House of the Seven Gables, The Marble Faun.* This may, in fact, be considered the typical suggestion for the pure romance, though the allegorical romance, best represented by the major number of Hawthorne's stories and by such a tale as Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,* seems rather to take its rise in what we roughly call the "moral," perhaps more strictly the theme or the meaning of the action. In Hawthorne's *Note Books* we find innumerable evidences that he often hit upon a somewhat abstract theme for a story and gradually thought out a situation and

* Graham Balfour: *Life of Stevenson;* ii. 169.

characters suitable for developing it. The theme of *The Great Stone Face* is suggested in the following entry:

> "The semblance of a human face to be formed on the side of a mountain, or in the fracture of a small stone by a *lusus naturæ*. The face is an object of curiosity for years or centuries, and by and by a boy is born, whose features gradually assume the aspect of that portrait. At some critical juncture, the resemblance is found to be perfect. A prophecy may be connected." *

Egotism or The Bosom Serpent can be traced to the following note:

> "A snake, taken into a man's stomach and nourished there from fifteen years to thirty-five, tormenting him most horribly. A type of envy, or some other evil passion." †

The White Old Maid seems to be indicated by the following suggestion:

> "A change from a gay girl to an old woman; the melancholy events which have clustered around her character and gradually imbued it with their influence, till she becomes a lover

* *American Note Books*, 1839.
† Ibid., 1836.

of sick-chambers, taking pleasure in receiving dying breaths and in laying out the dead; also having her mind full of funeral reminiscences and possessing more acquaintances beneath the turf than above it." *

The starting-point for *The Great Carbuncle* appears in still another entry:

"Some very famous jewel or other thing much talked of all over the world. Some person to meet with it and get possession of it in some unexpected manner, amid homely circumstances." †

The initial conception of *The Birthmark* can be seen to grow through successive entries:

"A person to be in the possession of something as perfect as mortal man has a right to demand; he tries to make it better, and ruins it entirely." †

"A person to spend all his life and splendid talents in trying to achieve something naturally impossible,—as to make a conquest over Nature." †

From these two notes, made either at the same

* *American Note Books*, 1835.
† Ibid., 1837.

time or in close sequence, we may judge in how general a form the idea first presented itself—"a person," "something perfect"—and, closely following, the thought of achievement in natural science, with the implication that the "person" was to be a scientist, and a talented one. The next note on the subject does not occur until three years later, and in the meantime we may suppose the author's imagination to be dwelling now and then on the theme whose possibilities had attracted him. What must this almost perfect possession be? Might it be a nearly flawless cameo, statue or picture? But the idea of natural science suggested working with organic rather than with inorganic material. Some living natural product, then; but of what sort? Suppose the "possession" be that work of nature susceptible of the highest perfection—what other than a human being? Yet it is to be his "possession"—his child, then, or his wife. And in 1839 we find a note:

> "A person to be the death of his beloved in trying to raise her to more than mortal perfection; yet this should be a comfort to him for having aimed so highly and holily." *

These three entries are all that furnish any clue to the development of the theme, but the author must have continued to brood upon it. What should be the

* Hawthorne: *American Note Books*, 1839.

nature of the imperfection? It must be some apparently slight physical flaw, such as should seem almost within the reach of natural science, yet be really beyond it. And what should be the characters of the two persons involved? That of the scientist-lover is already suggested in the idea of his talent and his "high and holy" aim. What, then, was the attitude of "his beloved" toward his aspirations? Did she share them? Was she a willing or an unwilling victim? Through some such fashion of questioning the general theme must have developed, until it took final shape in the story of *The Birthmark.*

In the case of Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,* we have no such clues as these of the note books, to suggest the stages by which the abstract theme attained concreteness. The process, though doubtless essentially similar, seems to have been a more rapid and less conscious one on the author's part. Mr. Balfour gives the following account of the story's origin:

> "A subject much in his thoughts at this time was the duality of man's nature and the alternation of good and evil; and he was for a long while casting about for a story to embody this central idea. Out of this frame of mind had come the sombre imagination of *Markheim,* but that was not what he required. The true story still delayed, till suddenly one

night he had a dream. He awoke, and found himself in possession of two, or rather three, of the scenes in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.*" *

The Following of Clues.

We have apparently added one to Stevenson's three ways of finding a story; but the enumeration is not yet necessarily complete. The writer may approach a story from many different sides, lay hold on it by many handles. The prime essential is that he shall lay hold on it. The power to see stories as yet unwritten is a pre-requisite to the power of writing them. The raw material lies about one everywhere, in one's own experiences and those of one's friends, in chance items of the newspaper columns, in the fragmentary conversations heard in public places, in the faces carelessly noted in passing. But until such suggestions speak to the mind as well as to the senses, there are for the thoughtless observer no stories save those already printed and bound. The power of seeing stories may, however, like any other power, be cultivated. Most people have seen one or two potential stories in real life; and many more must be seen by anyone who has learned to think habitually about the implications of a chance incident, the deeper situation it reveals, the possibilities of character-modification or character-development it suggests. After all, to find a

* Graham Balfour: *Life of Stevenson;* ii. 15.

story demands only that one follow any clue far enough. Character will lead to it; incident, place, moral, all yield it if sufficiently entreated. The limitation of the amateur story-teller is that he sees all these things as unrelated. An incident ends with itself; a character is static, self-sufficing, to his mind; the most "romantic" place suggests little more than the adjective; the "moral" has no dramatic implications. Once let him, however, acquire the habit of challenging these isolated elements for their significance, and he can hardly escape the story anywhere.

In *The Art of Fiction*,* Mr. Henry James both enriches and clarifies Sir Walter Besant's injunction to the young novelist, "Write from experience and from experience only," by the following definition of experience: "The power to guess the unseen from the seen, to trace the implications of things, to judge the whole piece by the pattern." It is in this sense only that "experience" may be named as the exclusive source of story material. The fleeting glimpses that we catch without recognizing them as clues are but disconnected and relatively meaningless impressions, all but useless to the writer, until he bring to bear upon them this "power to judge the seen from the unseen, to trace the implications of things." Then and then

* James's essay, Besant's with the same title, Stevenson's *Gossip on Romance* and *A Humble Remonstrance* (both in *Memories and Portraits*), and Howells's *Criticism and Fiction*, may very profitably be read by the student.

only do they become potential stories, roughly conceived as yet, it is true, but such as have caught "the color of life itself."

The potential story does not, however, become actual, the story is not in any thorough-going sense "found" until the writer has familiarized himself with its subject-matter, making it profoundly and minutely his own. Such careful workmen as Balzac, Flaubert, Stevenson, were accustomed to master completely the material of a projected story before attempting to embody it in anything approaching the final form. Thorough mastery of the material, as they conceived it, involved something more than the ability to outline the chief and the minor incidents, and to name the characters and their rôles. It demanded the realizing of the incidents, even to such remoter issues as might not appear at all in the plot, together with a knowledge of the characters so intimate that the author could predict what they would do and how they would feel in all circumstances, not alone in those postulated by the story. To attain such mastery as this a considerable amount of preliminary writing may be essential to the student. Character sketches, descriptions, analyses of motives, dialogue, bits of incident should be constructed until the writer feels his knowledge of characters and action complete. The writing out of dialogue will be found especially helpful—not necessarily dialogue that is to occur in the course of the action, but merely such as might

The Mastery of the Material.

have occurred between certain of its persons under circumstances definitely conceived.

In the process of such preliminary thinking and writing, the details of the plot will necessarily define themselves. These will, undoubtedly, be subjected to considerable change during the later writing out, but it is none the less conducive to a vividly pictorial and well-organized narrative that the writer should start with a circumstantial knowledge of the story according to some definite plan of development. Stevenson, notably a master of plot-structure, always did this. Usually his stories were constructed at intervals extending over months or years. He thought over their possibilities, discussed or sketched their details, made sure of the links between situation and situation, and even set down a complete list of the chapters, before he began on the actual writing. The close-knit structure of his tales bears witness to the efficacy of this careful planning.

The value of such preliminary acquaintance with the story can scarcely be overestimated. Carried far enough, it often creates in the author's mind an illusion of the reality of the characters, so that they seem to have independent existence, and he is no longer conscious of controlling their actions. Jean Paul once said that after his characters were conceived they made their own story, independently of any will of his, and Stevenson records a similar experience in the case of *Kidnapped:*

> "In one of my books, and in one only, the characters took the bit in their teeth; all at once they became detached from the flat paper, they turned their backs on me and walked off bodily; and from that time my task was stenographic—it was they who spoke, it was they who wrote the remainder of the story." *

Such experiences are by no means universal, though doubtless oftener known than recorded. We must grant, however, that much is gained in convincing quality by the story whose writer has passed beyond the consciousness of arbitrarily constructing it. His sense of its objective reality will, if not stayed by serious blunders of workmanship, communicate itself to his readers. To use what Stevenson calls Mr. James's "daring phrase," † a story which has thus become to its author a real thing, his by virtue rather of discovery than of creation, may hope successfully to 'compete with life." ‡

EXERCISES.

1. Begin a note-book in which to enter all suggestions for stories that occur to you. Set down not only plots, but suggestive incidents, accounts of interesting characters, descriptions of people and places, even

* Balfour: *Life of Stevenson;* ii. 19.
† *A Humble Remonstrance.*
‡ *The Art of Fiction.*

notes on significant garb, manners, names, bits of conversation. Examine Hawthorne's methods of note-taking in *American Note Books*, studying particularly the entries from May 11th to August 11th, 1838, inclusive. What service do these detailed observations of people and things render to stories so imaginative as Hawthorne's?

2. After reading carefully Hawthorne's story of *Ethan Brand*, search the *American Note Books* for the sources of the material used there. Find not only hints of the main idea or theme of the story, but suggestions of such characters as the decayed lawyer turned soap-boiler, the doctor, the old man whose daughter had joined a circus, the blacksmith, and the charcoal-burner; of such incidents as the showman's exhibition, and the old dog playing with his tail; of such elements in the setting as the lime-kiln, the forest at night, the clouds over the valley in the morning.

3. Show how the suggestions of the following entries might have been developed into Hawthorne's story of *The Threefold Destiny*.

(*a*) "A young man and girl meet together, each in search of a person to be known by some particular sign. They watch and wait a great while for that person to pass. At last some casual circumstance discloses that each is the one that the other is waiting for. Moral,—

that what we need for our happiness is often close at hand, if we knew but how to seek for it." *

(*b*) "A young man in search of happiness,—to be personified by a figure whom he expects to meet in a crowd, and is to be recognized by certain signs. All these signs are given by a person in various garbs and actions, but he does not recognize that this is the sought-for person till too late." †

4. Trace out in imagination the process by which the idea or theme of *The Great Carbuncle* and *The Great Stone Face* respectively developed in Hawthorne's mind into the completed stories.‡

5. Work out for yourself, in connection with certain actual characters known to you, such a problem as any of these proposed by Hawthorne in the following notes:

(*a*) "To consider well the characters of a family of persons in a certain condition—in poverty, for instance—and endeavor to judge how an altered condition would affect the character of each. §

(*b*) "Sorrow to be personified, and its effect on a

* *American Note Books*, 1837.
† *Ibid.*, 1839.
‡ See entries quoted pp. 39 and 40.
§ *American Note Books*, 1837.

family represented by the way in which the members of the family regard this dark-clad and sad-browed inmate." *

(*c*) "A dreadful secret to be communicated to several people of various characters—grave or gay,—and they all to become insane, according to their characters, by the influence of the secret." †

6. Write a rough sketch of a plot based on some very general suggestion from the *Note Books;* for instance the following:

(*a*) "A well-concerted train of events to be thrown into confusion by some misplaced circumstance, unsuspected till the catastrophe, yet exerting its influence from beginning to end." ‡

(*b*) "A person to consider himself as the prime mover of certain remarkable events, but to discover that his actions have not contributed in the least thereto. Another person to be the cause, without suspecting it." §

(*c*) "A series of strange, mysterious, dreadful events to occur, wholly destructive of a person's happiness. He to impute them to various persons and causes, but ultimately finds that he is him-

* *American Note Books,* 1837.
† Ibid., 1838.
‡ Ibid., 1835.
§ Ibid.

self the sole agent. Moral, that our welfare depends on ourselves." *

7. Write a sketch of some interesting character, known to you in the actual circumstances of his or her life. Imagine these circumstances as totally different, and describe the person's appearance and actions in the new conditions.

8. For the character involved in certain romantic or exciting events known to you, substitute a character radically different in every essential feature. Imagine and record the actions of this substituted hero or heroine.

9. Describe some place which seems to you fitted for a certain type of story, endeavoring to convey through the description what it suggests to you. Outline a story capable in Stevenson's phrase of "expressing the atmosphere" of the place.

10. Relate an incident which you have witnessed and which seems to you suggestive of a possible story. Sketch the story you have inferred and think out the material thoroughly, describing the personal appearance, dress, and manners of the characters involved, explaining fully their mental and moral peculiarities, and writing imagined conversations between them. Exchange these exercises with another student for criticism, and then revise so as to make clear and

* *American Note Books*, 1838.

self-consistent whatever does not seem so to your reader.

11. From a newspaper clipping plan a story, modifying the facts given in any way desired.

12. From the newspaper reports of a complex event, involving several people, disentangle the possible stories involved. Plan in some detail any one of these stories that seems to you promising.

13. Before beginning a story, Turgénieff "wrote out a sort of biography of each of his characters, and everything that they had done and that had happened to them up to the opening of the story." *

Write such a condensed biography for each of the characters in a projected story of your own. Be sure that each of the events noted has taken visual form and substance in your mind. Be able literally to see the life of each character up to the point at which the story begins.

14. Separate *Middlemarch* into its three constituent stories. Determine which of these is best adapted for the main plot, and indicate the modifications which must be made in order to subordinate to it as a sub-plot one or both of the other stories.

* Henry James: *Partial Portraits, Ivan Turgénieff.*

CHAPTER III.

THE POINT OF VIEW.

WHEN the story has been "found," this process including the thorough mastery of its material, the writer is confronted with the problem of actual construction. He must make what Vernon Lee describes as "that most subtle choice of the literary craftsman: choice of the point of view whence the personages and action of a novel are to be seen." What is meant by the "point of view" as applied to fiction she undertakes to explain in the sentences immediately following.

Two Possible Points of View.

> "For you can see a person, or an act, in one of several ways, and connected with several other persons or acts. You can see the person from nobody's point of view, or from the point of view of one of the other persons, or from the point of view of the analytical, judicious author. Thus, Casaubon may be seen from Dorothea's point of view, from his own point of view, from Ladislaw's point of view, or from the point of view of George Eliot; or he may

be merely made to talk and act without any explanation of why he is so talking and acting, and that is what I call nobody's point of view. Stories of adventure in which the mere incident is what interests, without reference to the psychological changes producing or produced by that incident, are usually written from nobody's point of view. Much of Wilkie Collins and Miss Braddon is virtually written from nobody's point of view; and so are the whole of the old Norse sagas, the greater part of Homer and the "Decameron," and the whole of "Cinderella" and "Jack the Giant-killer." *

The fundamental nature of this choice will appear more unmistakably if put in terms of the question: Who shall tell the story? The hero himself, or some minor participant in the action? Or some person quite outside of the group of characters—Miss Paget's "analytical, judicious author?" "Nobody's point of view" must, upon consideration, be referred to the last-named type of narrator. However impersonal and disinterested his attitude may be, there is some agent through whose selection and ordering a character is "made to talk and act without any explanation of why he is so talking and acting." A story thus presented in dramatic, external fashion, is told not

* Vernon Lee: *On Literary Construction*, Contemp. Rev., Vol. 68, 413–414.

by "nobody," but by the author as distinct from any one of the characters, the author not perhaps obviously "analytical" and "judicious," but self-effacing, restrained and observant, maintaining the attitude rather of spectator than of expositor. All the points of view, then, suggested by Miss Paget fall into one of two classes: either the story is ostensibly told by one of its actors, or it is told by an outside observer, "the author."

Both classes furnish great examples: Robinson Crusoe told his own story, partly through his diary, partly from memory; Esmond wrote his reminiscences; John Ridd wrote the tale of Lorna Doone and his winning of her; Jane Eyre, David Balfour, the Vicar of Wakefield, wrote the records of their lives; the tragedy of Paul and Virginia was narrated by the old man who had been a member of their small circle; the exploits of Dupin were recounted by his friend. In the second class, stories told by "the author," fall the stories handed down by tradition: fairy tales, legends, fables, the epics of Job, of Achilles, of Ulysses, of Beowulf; and the larger proportion of modern realistic novels and short stories.

The Actor-Narrator: His Advantages.

Each method has its advantages and its drawbacks. If the hero be spokesman, the narrative gains whatever charm of dignity, grace or humor his personality can impart to its style. Moreover it has an obvious center, about which all other elements of the plot group them-

selves in definitely subordinate relations. There is less danger of the story's rambling or falling apart. Thus Esmond is closer-knit than Vanity Fair, although it deals with less propitious material, the splendid personality of Beatrix offering to the writer a continual enticement to swerve from the highway of his story into the tangled paths where she walked.

Moreover, narration by one of the characters necessitates a kind of externality or objectivity in the writer's attitude that convinces of the story's reality because it is in accord with our own experience. The very act of making himself one of the people in the story helps the writer to regard them as one does one's companions in real life: he cannot write directly about their thoughts and moods, because he has not, like the professed "author," a superior title to know them. He knows only his own. Hence, instead of telling us what they felt, what they meant, what they said to themselves in soliloquy, he can tell us only what they looked as though they felt and meant, what they said to him or to other people in his presence.

Finally, the tale of the actor narrator appeals to us by its plausibility. If the dramatic proprieties are observed, if the narrator maintains his place, speaks in character, tells only what he could really have seen or heard, his story acquires thereby not only the peculiar charm of his own personality, but a certain convincing power. Such is the appeal made to us by Esmond's grave narrative, by John Ridd's "plain"

account of his adventures, by Crusoe's naïvely detailed history. And writers, seeking always for ways of making their readers believe that the events of the narrative really happened, are prone to seize this means of persuasion. Singular, too, has been their occasional success, where they have seriously set out to attain this kind of reality. Crusoe's island has been searched for; government records and old genealogies have been studied for further information regarding Mr. Edward Everett Hale's *Man Without a Country*.

Yet, although the use of one of the actors as spokesman makes for unity and concentration, for objectivity and for plausibility, these qualities may often be otherwise attained, while the fundamental postulate, that the writer is a participant in the action of the story, frequently imperils the very credibility which he is aiming to establish. In the first place, if the story is to carry conviction, there must be found a reasonable pretext for an actor's telling it at all, and not many authors are so happily inspired as was Coleridge when he made the Ancient Mariner's narrative impulse a part of the curse which lay upon him. The writing of letters to some relative or confidential friend has since the days of *Evelina* and *Pamela*, furnished a reason for narrating events which otherwise the hero or heroine would have no sufficient motive for divulging. Here, however, no less than in stories told by journal-entries or by word of mouth, the motive

His Difficulties.

must be adequate to justify the recounting by the person most concerned of all the circumstances essential to the plot. One difficulty involved in this requirement is apparent in the case of many stories of adventure and some love-stories. If the hero be the narrator, it plainly becomes a problem how to allow him the necessary license in recounting his own exploits without divesting him of all modesty and sense of propriety.

In *Lorna Doone* this difficulty is, indeed, cleverly met. Where it becomes necessary for John Ridd to relate one of his acts of prowess, he does so with the naïve manner of a bashful but self-respecting man, who knows exactly what he has done and what he has not done, and who finds it necessary on occasion to correct the exaggerated reports of his feats. Where his tale touches upon his relations with Lorna, he is reticent, and with a touch of mingled humor and shamefacedness that is one of his most attractive qualities, he now and then stops abruptly, and gives the reader to understand that the rest of this particular incident is not to be told, since it is strictly a part of John Ridd's private business. Esmond's narrative also seems sufficiently motived in being the memoirs of an old man whose life had covered troublous times, and whose temperament inclined him toward analytic reminiscence; while the reserve with which the more personal portions of the story are treated is in keeping with his character. But such successes are

rare. St. Ives, telling his own love-story, is, even with his self-conscious, sophisticated nature, but barely conceivable. David Balfour, as the narrator of his own early adventures, figures improbably enough, while in the sequel, when we find him writing out the most intimate details of his own love-story, and this apparently for the entertainment of his children, we draw back incredulous and wish that Stevenson had here at least spoken in his own person.*

Moreover, the hero must be able to tell his story well, yet by the very terms of the story he may not be thus gifted. St. Ives undoubtedly was, but David Balfour as surely was not, while in *Lorna Doone* some pains is taken to account for "plain" John Ridd's command of language. He represents himself as a devoted lover of Shakespeare, though no reader else, and in this way justifies the deftness of his speech, and its adaptability, simple though it be, to every exigency of the narrative.

Again, the hero is often hard-pressed to show how

* In a letter to Mr. Edmund Gosse, Stevenson professes to explain his preference for first-person narrative: "And the difficulty of according the narrative and the dialogue (in a work in the third person) is extreme. That is one reason out of half a dozen why I so often prefer the first. It is much in my mind just now, because of my last work, just off the stocks three days ago, *The Ebb Tide*: a dreadful, grimy business in the third person, where the strain between a vilely realistic dialogue and a narrative style pitched about (in phrase) 'four notes higher' than it should have been has sown my head with grey hairs; or I believe so—if my head escaped, my heart has them." *Letters;* ii. 348–349.

he came to possess information which he would not naturally gain, yet which it is necessary for the reader to know, and to know at a certain point in the narrative. Henry Esmond is frequently obliged to pause and explain apologetically to the following effect: "I did not know this at the time, and learned it only years afterwards, but I insert it here for the reader's convenience."

Some of these difficulties are met, however, as in *Paul and Virginia*, and in Poe's and Mr. Conan Doyle's detective stories, by making the narrator an actor other than the hero. If he is the hero's friend a motive for the narrative is at once supplied in love and admiration. The intimacy of the relationship justifies a deeper knowledge of the hero's feelings than any one but himself is likely to possess, while many things are fit and proper when spoken by a friend, which come with indifferent grace from the hero's own lips. Moreover, the postulate of narrative talent in a minor actor is more readily granted than in the hero himself. Finally, there is less difficulty in accounting for the possession of information, since there are now two eye-witnesses instead of one. What the hero could not know his friend might learn, what the friend did not see the hero tells him, and their resources are thus greatly augmented.

The vividness of the story told by an eye-witness is sometimes attained even by allotting different parts of the narrative to different actors, according to their

opportunities for witnessing its action; and clumsy though the plan would appear it is carried through by Wilkie Collins in *The Woman in White* and by Mr. Kipling in *My Lord the Elephant* with great effectiveness. This distribution of the narrative rôle among the various characters may, of course, be effected by the exchange of letters among the persons concerned, as in Jane Austen's unfinished novel *Lady Susan* and Mr. Howells's recent *Letters Home;* but the inherent difficulty of fusing into a single harmonious impression the products of so many different points of view still remains, while certain further disadvantages peculiar to the letter-form are also incurred. Among these disadvantages it will be sufficient to note the characteristic tendency of the letter-form when serving a narrative purpose, on the one hand to impede and confuse the action by the introduction of material strictly irrelevant to it, or, on the other, to sacrifice even the remote resemblance to a discursive, friendly correspondence by an exclusive limitation of epistolary material to those events directly concerned with the story.

The Author-Narrator: His Manner, Self-Effacing or Self-Asertive.

Whether from a clearer recognition of the difficulties incident to narrative of the first person, or for obscurer reasons connected with the general movement toward a more dramatic mode of narration, the modern writer has for the most part reverted to the ancient practice of telling his story from a point of view wholly outside

the circle of the characters. Some stories must be told in this way if at all; just as others refuse to yield themselves into the hands of "the author." In the latter case this reluctance sometimes yields to a slight shift either of attitude or of manner on the part of the author-narrator. As to manner, our familiar fiction has its great examples both of the self-assertive and the self-effacing writer. All traditional stories—myths, legends, fairy-tales—are told by the self-effacing author, who succeeds so perfectly in obliterating himself that we never think of him at all. Anybody, "nobody," as Miss Paget says, seems to be telling the story. Almost it seems to tell itself, to take place before our eyes. This is the manner attempted, and in some degree achieved, by the modern realists. Jane Austen at times lapses from it, Mr. Henry James often, Mr. Howells and Miss Wilkins virtually never.

The self-assertive author, on the other hand, makes the reader continually aware of the story-teller behind the story. He shows it off as a salesman might display his goods, holding up now this and now that bit of its web for our closer attention, commenting, discriminating, selecting, grouping, contrasting. The stock example of this manner is Thackeray, of whom Mr. Howells said with perhaps undue causticity that he was accustomed "to stand about in his scene, talking it over with his hands in his pockets, interrupting the action and spoiling the illusion"; and further

that "he never hesitated . . . to make a foray among his characters, and catch them up to show them to the reader and tell him how beautiful or ugly they were; and cry out over their amazing properties."*

This criticism may perhaps seem to ignore the almost universal pleasure of readers in just this lounging commentary on the part of the inspired author. But such compensatory pleasure ought really to be guaranteed by the writer who essays to follow a Thackeray or a Trollope in his triumphant disregard of the structural principle implied by Mr. Howells, namely, that the narrator should not get in the way of his story's progress.

The manner in which the author tells his tale is perhaps dependent less upon conscious choice than upon the unconscious preferences of his individual temperament. He may, however, somewhat more deliberately choose between an external or dramatic and an internal, intimate attitude toward the characters of the story. By our original hypothesis, the author-narrator has no part in the action of the tale; hence he will necessarily view it with none of the limitations imposed upon any participant. Will he, however, accept even the limitations of the spectator's point of view, or will he insist upon the privileges of the omniscient author? The author who holds by his

His Attitude, Omniscient or Observant.

Criticism and Fiction, Ch. XV.

traditional rights has cognizance of every action, however secret, of every motive, however deeply buried, can see in the dark, is present when his people are most alone, knows their thoughts as though they were uttered aloud, sees through appearances to realities, and may lay bare whatsoever hidden thing he choose without pausing to justify his knowledge. Obviously, this position gives him certain considerable advantages; it seems even essential to the successful handling of situations which involve spiritual experiences having, by the terms of the case, no adequate outward expression. Mr. Henry James, notably external in *The Other House*, shifts ground completely when, in the curious study *In the Cage*, he sets forth the whimsical experience of the girl telegrapher. He assumes omniscience as frankly as Mr. Meredith does in dealing with Clara Middleton, and both heroines demand this treatment, because both are, though for widely different reasons, debarred from self-expression and in need of an interpreter.

The danger is, of course, that such omniscience may at any moment be challenged. There are those whom an account of the hero's secret thoughts instantly provokes to the sharp query, "How do you know?" and to whom such a passage as the following from Mr. Meredith's *Rhoda Fleming*, with the author's parenthesized interpretations of conversation, affords but a faltering conviction:

"'I've always thought you were born to be a lady.' (You had that ambition, young madam.)

She answered: 'That's what I don't understand.' (Your saying it, O my friend!)

'You will soon take to your new duties.' (You have small objection to them even now.)

'Yes, or my life won't be worth much.' (Know, that you are driving me to it.)

'And I wish you happiness, Rhoda.' (You are madly imperilling the prospect thereof.)

To each of them the second meaning stood shadowy behind the utterances. And further,—

'Thank you, Robert.' (I shall have to thank you for the issue.)

'Now it's time to part.' (Do you not see that there's a danger for me in remaining?)

'Good night.' (Behold, I am submissive.)

'Good night, Rhoda.' (You were the first to give the signal of parting.)

'Good night.' (I am simply submissive.)"*

2. The author observant, on the other hand, avoids the assumption of omniscience by undertaking only to view events and people from the outside, to see only what any one equally penetrating might discern if he chanced to be present at the time. Indeed, the chief difference between him and the actor-narrator is that, not being

* George Meredith: *Rhoda Fleming*, Chap. XLIII.

by postulate actually a participant, he is relieved from the necessity of accounting for his presence in every scene, and has thus a wider range, even venturing sometimes, like the author omniscient, to recount simultaneous occurrences in different places. Esmond, bound always by the conditions of his rôle, can give his tale no touch like that in *Vanity Fair*, at the close of the battle of Waterloo:

> "No more firing was heard at Brussels—the pursuit rolled miles away. Darkness came down on the field and city: and Amelia was praying for George, who was lying on his face, dead, with a bullet through his heart." *

The Choice of the Point of View.

Perhaps neither the omniscient nor the observant attitude is preserved by any story-writer with absolute consistency. In the kindred art of the drama, indeed, the author is, by the conditions of his form, obliged to work quite objectively, and those novels which hold most consistently to this manner will be found closely to resemble plays with unusually full stage directions. Mr. Henry James's *The Other House* comes as near preserving a uniformly observant attitude as anything not formally dramatic. It offers no explanation of motives, no revelation of thought unspoken, but only an orderly setting down of word and act, of gesture, bearing, and expression. A free use of brackets would, almost

* Thackeray: *Vanity Fair*, Vol. II. Chap. VII.

without other change, transform it into a two-act play. Mr. Meredith tends habitually to assume the omniscient attitude. His account of Clara Middleton' shifting moods during that night when she resolved to run away from Patterne Hall—moods which no one but Clara could ever know, and of which even she was only imperfectly conscious—involves a bold assumption of omniscience only justified by its complete success.* George Eliot is more variable. In *Middlemarch* she is behind or within each of her characters in turn, though never failing to depict also the faces which they showed to their fellow men, but in *The Mill on the Floss* she reserves this intimate, internal attitude chiefly for Maggie, treating the other characters almost wholly from the outside. In *The Rise of Silas Lapham* Mr. Howells is for the most part rigidly external, but when he has to do with Lapham himself, or even with Mrs. Lapham, he often deals directly with the inner experience of each. In *Pride and Prejudice* Jane Austen rarely presses beyond the spoken word save in the case of Elizabeth, but her she follows, through all her phases of feeling during her transition from violent dislike of Darcy to avowed affection for him. At the *dénouement* Elizabeth's own family are amazed at her transformation, but we, because the novel has been written from her point of view, have known about it for a long time.

* George Meredith: *The Egoist*, Chap. XXI.

Yet regarding Darcy's experiences during the same period we are left quite as much in the dark as is Elizabeth herself; in fact, the story as a whole is seen through her eyes almost as if it had been revealed through daily entries in her journal.

In the face of the varying practice of great novelists and their apparently equal success with diverse attitudes, manners, and points of view, it is futile to pronounce one inherently superior to every other. For any particular story, however, there is almost invariably one best narrator; and this the writer is bound to discover before entering upon the actual construction of the tale, weighing carefully both the advantages and the disadvantages of every possible point of view, with explicit reference to the particular events and characters he has in mind. For purposes of training, it may further be said, he cannot do better than to accept for at least one story what will doubtless seem to him the unnecessarily rigid and infertile limitations of the author observant and self-effacing. It cannot be a fact wholly without significance that the stories which have lived longest—epics, sagas, fairy-stories—have been those in which the narrator's standpoint was somewhat external and dramatic. Moreover, the present tendency is undoubtedly toward a fuller development of the possibilities inherent in this point of view, which thus bids fair to embody in itself the advantages especially characteristic of each of the others. The author

observant attains the vividness of the actor-narrator while working with a freer hand; he effaces himself yet preserves the dominating effectiveness of the assertive author at his best, through such a careful ordering of his material as secures proper emphasis without the use of the showman's pointer. He retains the satisfying completeness of the author omniscient by making the recorded acts self-illuminating, so that they need no further elucidation by analysis of the psychic processes behind them. Thus the modern story-teller seems to be working at once toward a greater realism in content and a fuller freedom and suggestiveness in method.

EXERCISES.

1. What does *The Vicar of Wakefield* gain, structurally, from the choice of Dr. Primrose for narrator? What does it gain in any other ways? Write a small section of the story as told by Mrs. Primrose, by Mr. Burchell, or by Jenkins.

2. After reading carefully some standard novel not discussed in the text, state either orally or in writing: (*a*) the point of view from which it is written; (*b*) whether or not this point of view has been wisely chosen; (*c*) whether it is consistently maintained throughout; (*d*) whether each shift in the point of view is inevitable, or could have been avoided without loss to the story; (*e*) in case the point of view is that

of the "the author," whether his attitude is omniscient or simply observant, his manner self-assertive or self-effacing. Where the answers to these questions involve judgment rather than mere fact, give reasons.

3. Write a statement of the advantages and the disadvantages involved in the choice of every possible point of view for some story you are planning to write. On the basis of this statement defend your choice of one of these points of view.

4. Recall standard novels or stories written in the form of letters either from one or from several persons. What would be gained and what lost by recasting from the point of view of the author-narrator?

5. Could *The Woman in White* (or any other story told from several different points of view) be effectively written from the point of view of some one person outside the circle of characters? Give reasons for your answer.

6. Why was Phineas Fletcher chosen to tell the story of *John Halifax?* Why Lawyer Utterson, to tell the story of *Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde?* Esther Summerson, to tell the story of *Bleak House?*

7. Could *The Man Without a Country* tell his own story as effectively as it is told by his young friend? Explain the advantages and the difficulties involved in his doing so.

8. Define carefully the author's attitude toward the persons and events of *The Scarlet Letter.* Does this attitude change? How far does it seem to you

adapted to dealing with a situation essentially psychological or spiritual?

9. Discuss the point of view from which Scott's *Redgauntlet* is written.

10. Plan the reconstruction of *The Mill on the Floss* so that it shall be told through Maggie's journal. Note the resulting differences, both in structure and in total effect.

11. Discuss the effect of recasting *The Marble Faun* from Hilda's point of view, and try the experiment for one of the crucial chapters, such as 18, 19, or 23.

12. Examine somewhat thoroughly the work of any one writer of fiction and attempt to define his habitual or at least characteristic choice of a point of view. Account for this choice so far as you can on grounds of the subject-matter of his stories.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BEGINNING AND THE END OF THE STORY.

So long as he is "finding" the story, the writer continually extends and enriches his knowledge of the material to be employed. When, however, he adopts a certain point of view for the narrative, the process of selection and organization has already begun. The events and characters fall into ordered relations one to another: some assume positions of primary importance, while others subordinate themselves or drop out altogether. But the selection and organization of materials is to proceed much further than this before the story takes final form. And once past the determination of the point of view it must soon limit the range of the writer's labor by fixing approximate terminal points for the written story.

The Problem Stated.

This seems a task simple enough. The story is in mind to be told; what could be easier than to begin at the beginning and tell it straight through to the end? Yet the beginning of the story as it is told and the beginning of the story's

action are most frequently two different points, so that the word "beginning" as applied to narrative stands in need of definition. And deferring to the following chapter the difficulties of selection and omission lurking under the direction to tell the story "straight through," it remains to fix the exact relation between the end of the written story and its structural end, the outcome of its action.

The beginning of the story, so far as the structure of its plot is concerned, can be very easily determined. If the story is essentially a struggle of forces, its real beginning cannot antedate the appearance of the two forces upon the field of combat. Thus, structurally speaking, the action of *Cinderella* begins with the advent of her fairy godmother, of *Jack and the Bean-stalk* with his intrusion into the giant's territory, of *The Vicar of Wakefield* with the loss of the Vicar's money and the breaking of George's engagement. But the situation previous to this beginning of the action must be understood by the reader or the action wants background and fails of its due significance. Thus *Cinderella* must begin with the explanation: "There was once upon a time a beautiful girl, who was living with a cruel stepmother, for her own mother had died, and her father had married a woman with two grown-up daughters who were very vain, selfish, and ill-natured," etc. And the Vicar describes in the first chapter in some detail not only the characters of his wife and daughters, but how the Primrose

family had lived up to the time when their misfortunes began, their domestic felicity, the Vicar's usefulness and happiness in his parish relations, the prospects of an advantageous marriage for George.

The Explanatory Prologue.

This preliminary explanation, variable in length, is most often given in its natural position, before the first onset of the conflicting forces is chronicled. It is a time-worn device of the drama to convey it through the medium of a conversation between two servants in the opening scene. The invariable prelude of the fairy story, "Once upon a time there was," etc., embodies such information as is absolutely essential to the reader in the compactest possible form. Nor has this use of an explanatory prologue been abandoned by our most recent writers. Of Mr. Kipling's stories, *The Tomb of His Ancestors* begins with an account of the three generations of Chinns; *The Bridge-builders* opens not with action, but with a description of Findlayson's work on the bridge; *Thrown Away* is prefaced by an explanation in the form of allegory applicable to the case in hand. Mrs. Ward's *Robert Elsmere* is introduced by pages of description, covering, first, the general aspect of the Westmoreland valley, then that of a particular locality where stood a house, finally the house itself, into which the notes of a violin heard without lead us to the real action of the story.

The obvious disadvantage of this method of

beginning is that it delays the opening of the action and hence often tends to discourage the reader rather than incite him to further perusal. To meet this objection the simple expedient is often employed of plunging first into the action of the story, and then, when the reader has presumably become interested, pausing to explain the situation. This involves no structural change, since it merely inverts two sections of the story by a postponement of the explanatory prologue. A somewhat flagrant example of this device appears in Mrs. Ward's *Marcella*. The story begins with Marcella's exclamation of delight at her new home. A partial description of this follows, and then the young girl's past life is reviewed, from her ninth year to the present moment. This review extends over two chapters, at the close of which the reader is invited to "go downstairs," and the action is resumed. Turgénieff's procedure in *Liza* is similar, though even more complicated. The tale centers in the unhappy love-story of Liza and Lavretsky, and, perhaps to indicate this at once, the novel opens with the day of their meeting. The first chapter begins by stating the season, the time of day, the year, the place, then tells us that two ladies sat at a house window. Each in turn is described, and her past history and present situation briefly set forth. Only then does the action of the present story begin. The next important character, Panshine, is soon introduced, but after a

The Explanatory Prologue Inverted.

few words from him the narrative is interrupted for a recital of his past life and present circumstances. The old musician, Lemm, next enters, and a chapter is devoted to his life. At length the appearance of the hero Lavretsky introduces nine chapters containing an account not only of his own life, but of those of his ancestors through three generations. The narrative then goes forward, until a point is reached where Liza's action must be accounted for. This is done in a chapter which relates the chief events of her life from childhood on, and the story is then brought quickly to its close. The incessant and long-continued interruptions of the narrative in this case seem hardly justifiable, though the author's purpose is sufficiently apparent, namely, to center the story about its crucial point, while grounding its motives in a remote and complicated past.

There is even more obvious objection to such a violent wrench of orderly sequence as is observed in stories of the type of Mr. Maarten Maartens's *God's Fool.* The first chapter begins abruptly: "Suddenly the horses shook themselves," and without a word of explanation it relates a number of incidents, connected with a cab, a coachman, and a little country house, and culminating in the announcement of "Murder! most awful murder!" The next chapter introduces "the Fool," likewise without explanation, and then goes back thirty years to begin the narrative that is to account for him, and, presumably,

for the murder. The rest of the book is occupied with the events of these thirty years, and after some four hundred pages the narrative overtakes the beginning of the first chapter and recounts the murder in full by way of conclusion. Obviously, the purpose in this inversion of chronological order is merely enticing mystification. The first chapter says to the reader, "There is a murder in this story; read till you see how it happened." In such cases as this there is, of course, a touch of the meretricious about the inverted prologue.* It is so palpably a bait to the reader that one is conscious of a certain loss of dignity in the author. Its great advantage over the prologue which occupies its natural place, that of leaving the story free of explanations until it is well under way, is not seldom overbalanced by this suggestion of gallery-play on the part of the writer. The kindred disguise often adopted, that of breaking up the necessary explanation into small bits and tucking them in at intervals as the story proceeds, is sometimes measurably

* There is no such inversion, it should be noted, in the typical "detective story," although it is, indeed, accustomed to begin with a crime of some sort. Since, however, its subject-matter is not the commission of the crime, but rather the discovery of how, why, and by whom it was committed, the hero being not the criminal but some dashing adventurer in the world of hypotheses and inferences, some Dupin or Sherlock Holmes, the narrative actually starts from the initial point of the action, the occurrence of the crime, this furnishing the data from which the detective can begin to work.

successful, though likely to become irritating to the reader if noticeable as a device.

Every advantage of the inverted prologue may, however, be blamelessly secured by the writer who can succeed in making his explanations an integral part of the narrative itself. This is achieved, though in relatively naïve fashion, in the *Odyssey*. As in *Liza*, the purpose obviously is to center the story at one point—in this case the return of Odysseus—and his past life, like Lavretsky's, is important only as groundwork for his present. Hence the narrative begins with the first step in his return—the building of the raft that finally took him to the friendly Phæacians and secured him transport home—and later, in the midst of the action, when there is a pause for explanations, these are made in a sense a part of the narrative by being put into the mouth of Odysseus himself.

The Absorption of the Prologue.

So early an example of this highly dramatic device seems surprising enough; but it is not unknown even in the folk-tales. Most of these, as we have noted, begin with an explanatory prologue, but *Jack and the Bean-stalk*, which is, in all its versions, a story constructed with remarkable skill, incorporates the major portion of its explanatory material in the body of the narrative. Jack's father, it will be remembered, had been a rich man, who, while Jack was yet a baby, had been despoiled and killed by a giant. We might expect the story to begin by telling this, as

naturally preliminary to the account of Jack's vengeance. By no means: it introduces us to Jack, a big boy, living with his mother in extreme poverty. Not a word is said about an earlier state of wealth, until just before his encounter with the giant, when his fairy godmother appears and heartens him for his task by showing him that justice and right are on his side. The point to be noticed here is that the fairy's words to him are not a simple recital of facts, for the benefit of the reader; they are truly a part of the action, for they are the means of inciting Jack to his bold attempts, and thus constitute one of the prime forces in the story. The explanation, as such, exists no longer. It has been transformed into action.

A comparison of Stevenson's *Kidnapped* with the summary of the same story which prefaces its sequel, *David Balfour*, furnishes an interesting example of the absorption of the explanatory prelude into the narrative proper. The summary begins as follows:

> "Alexander and Ebenezer Balfour, brothers of the house of Shaws, near Cramond, in the Forest of Ettrick, being in love with the same lady, and she preferring the elder brother, Alexander, it was agreed between them that Alexander should take the lady and Ebenezer, as amends for his disappointment, the estate of Shaws. Alexander and his wife removed to Essendean, where they lived obscurely—Alex-

ander in the character of village schoo.master —and where an only son was born to them, namely, David Balfour, the hero of this history. David, brought up in ignorance of the family affairs and his own claim on the estates, and losing both parents before he was eighteen, was left with no other fortune than a sealed letter from his father addressed to his uncle Ebenezer," etc.

Now turn to the tale as worked out in *Kidnapped.* Instead of beginning with the contest of the two brothers, the story does not open until David himself at the age of eighteen sets forth, his parents being dead, to seek his fortune. And it is not until some time after he has reached Shaws that he begins to guess, and thus to make a part of the story, the circumstance of his own position as lawful heir to the estate. The facts chronologically set forth in the summary just quoted appear in the narrative itself only as they become plain to David, and thus serve in the plot either as inciting his action or as disclosed by it.

In Miss Wilkins's *The Revolt of "Mother"* a long and relatively complicated series of events is successfully involved in the present action, thus effectually doing away with formal prologue. The writer might (an amateur would) have begun the story by statements more or less detailed of certain past events which have created the present situation, probably

harking back to the courtship, or at least to the early wedded life, of Adoniram and Sarah, the former's promise to build a better house so soon as he should be able to do so, the selection of a site for the house, the gradual absorption of Adoniram in the activities of money-getting, the continual building of barns and the consequent postponement of the projected house, until at length he plans to erect still another barn on the very spot where the house was to have stood. All these things must assuredly be understood by the reader before *The Revolt of "Mother"* has for him its full meaning. But Miss Wilkins does not first tell them and then proceed to tell the story. Rather she tells the story at once, implying in it all that we need to know of this earlier history of the two chief characters. The first clash of the two opposing forces occurs in the conversation with which the story opens,—a real scene, made pictorial by deft, rapid touches, until to the words we hear spoken is added the subtle significance of environment, personal appearance, bodily attitude and expression, action, manner. The whole past history of Sarah's desire and its successive defeats speaks in her poignant question, "You ain't goin' to build a barn over there where we was goin' to have a house, Father?" The little scenes following this, between Sarah Penn and her son and daughter, while primarily they trace the development of her revolt, serve secondarily to afford the reader a fuller knowledge of her past and present

life. But the completest revelation of this background of the story comes with the first crisis in the action. When Sarah Penn stands before her husband and points out to him the tiny kitchen, the stairs leading to the attic which is all he has given their children to sleep in, her own closet-like bedroom, she is lighting up by great flashes the past of their married life. But it must be remembered that this is not done baldly for the sake of informing the reader. It does inform him, but whether it did or not, the scene must still be organically essential to the story, since it is this fruitless attempt of Sarah to prevail upon Adoniram by reason and persuasion that finally justifies to herself and thus makes possible the strategic move which succeeds.

It appears, then, as was suggested at the outset, that the beginning of the written story may or may not coincide with the beginning of the plot-action. In case the situation, as almost invariably happens, demands certain explanations, they are most frequently made before the story proper is set forth. They may, however, be postponed until the tale is well begun; or they may be deftly inserted bit by bit, as the need for them arises. They may be descriptive or narrative; they may be thrown into dialogue form; but so long as they involve mere static exposition, without directly furthering the present story, they are still only disguised, not transformed. Explanation can, in fact, be done away with only in so far as it becomes

an integral part of the action. It ceases to exist as explanation only when it is swept into the full current of the story proper.

For the novice the best counsel is doubtless to dispense with all explanations, whether preliminary or postponed, that can possibly be spared. His tendency is usually to begin the story too far back, at a point long antedating the first clash of the rising forces; hence his question ought rather to be "How late can I begin?" than "How early shall I?" For purposes of his own training, at any rate, he cannot in general do better than to begin his writing with the latest scene which is capable of suggesting, directly or indirectly, those previous to it.

Having fixed the point at which the story is to begin, its further boundary may advantageously be determined before proceeding to the problems of internal organization. It is apparent that a story cannot well go on much beyond the death of the characters involved; but to this point it is not infrequently carried. The fairy-story is not complete until it has added the assurance, "And so they lived happy ever after," and many novels supply similar information, at greater length. In *The Last Days of Pompeii*, the eruption makes the conclusion easy, by disposing of all minor characters at one sweep. Such of the actors as survive are accounted for in a final chapter, sketching the course of their later lives. In *Hypatia*, the con-

The Formal "Conclusion."

cluding chapter, "Every Man to His Own Place," considers in turn all the characters not already dead, and each is consigned to "his own place"—Cyril, Wulf, Victoria, her father and brother and son, Raphael, Pambo, Arsenius, Philammon, Pelagia—so that not a person is left subject to conjecture. *Vanity Fair* is rounded off in similar fashion, and even Jane Austen, usually so free from convention of any sort, appends a chapter to *Pride and Prejudice*, in which she sketches the fortunes through life of the lesser persons in the story.

This appended chapter prolongs *Pride and Prejudice* past the structural end of the story, namely, the complete overthrow of Darcy's pride and of Elizabeth's prejudice as obstacles to their union; and is explicitly recognized by the author as a concession to popular taste. The similar prolongation of the other novels mentioned, however, is probably due rather to a lack in each case of one clearly defined and consistently maintained objective point. Thus *The Last Days of Pompeii* wavers indecisively between the love-story of Glaucus and Ione and an exposition (as suggested by its title) of the blotting out of a great city. Although the latter purpose is undoubtedly dominant, the former intrudes into the foreground so far as to baffle a satisfactory conclusion. In the case of *Hypatia*, this divided aim is yet more marked. The structural outcome of the story can scarcely be stated so as satisfactorily to cover all its action, owing

to the fact that the writer's purpose, though expressed in narrative form, was primarily not to tell a story, but to present "a picture of life in the fifth century," * with special reference to its religious aspects. Hence, though the action might be supposed to end with the death of Hypatia, since her figure is more central than any other in the plot, yet this event brings with it no sense of conclusion. Perhaps it is some consciousness of this fact that led the writer to take up in turn every one of his characters, and by rendering a last account of each, attempt to satisfy the demand for a finishing touch.

In the case of what may be called biographical novels—such as *Tom Jones*, *John Halifax*, *David Copperfield*—the tale may justifiably be prolonged until the hero's death; since the structural end is usually his "success in life," in the most comprehensive meaning of this term. But the plot of many novels, and of virtually all short stories, has an outcome of a less general nature, capable of being decisively attained well within the limits of a lifetime. Thus in *The Rise of Silas Lapham* the structural end is his "rise," that is, his conquest of himself at his one weak point, his attainment of a perfect integrity that should satisfy his own conscience. We are left in no doubt when this is achieved, nor do we need to see him on his death-bed

The Suggestive Ending.

* Kingsley: *Hypatia*, Preface.

to be convinced of the finality of its accomplishment. In *The Revolt of "Mother,"* "Mother's" success definitely ends the story, and the reader craves no details regarding the family life in the new house, the marriage of Nancy, and the upbringing of the boy Sammy. In Miss Wilkins's *Calla Lilies and Hannah* the tale ends with the clearing of Hannah's name and the rewarding of her heroic silence. Her later life is, in Mr. Kipling's phrase, "another story."

What happens after the struggle of the antagonistic forces has issued in victory for one of them is, then, no necessary part of the story itself. It may indeed be interesting for the reader to know; but if the story has been well told, he can easily imagine it for himself. Just as the right beginning of a story provides for the events preceding those it records, so the right ending implies those events which follow it. The successful story is thus literally what it has been called, in biological phrase—a cross-section of life. It is a piece cut out of experience, taken neither from the beginning nor from the end, but at some point between, and suggestive of the whole. From it, as from a selected section of a grass-blade seen under the microscope, we can predict, roughly at least, the entire structure.

A story thus suggestively planned should offer to the reader an opportunity to coöperate in its construction. He is enabled to deal with it somewhat as he deals with the stories presented by his observa-

tion of life. A crucial moment falls under his notice. He instantly sees back of this moment to the events which preceded and made it possible. He makes rapid inferences as to the outcome, if this is at all clearly foreshadowed in the present incident. There is a distinct pleasure in such divination from the actual; and an even greater pleasure frequently in the similar imaginations incited by some story whose skilfully chosen material involves a section of experience so richly suggestive that its implications both backward and forward can hardly be misunderstood. In this sense we must admit Stevenson's definition of a story as "a simplification of life." * The writer does actually simplify for us the problem set by the fragmentary stories recognized on every hand in real life. But he does not simplify too much. He does not tell us what we may know without telling. Thus the beginning and the end of his stories only mark the boundaries between the written and the unwritten sections of the narrative. The tale which is implied may stretch far at both ends beyond that part of it which is explicitly told. In fact, only to the degree in which it does so can the recorded narrative lay claim to the suggestive quality of literature.

The Written and the Unwritten Sections of the Story.

* A Humble Remonstrance.

EXERCISES.

1. Read over a volume of short stories and criticise in each case the author's choice of a point of beginning and end. If the choice seems to you judicious, explain fully why; if not, suggest and defend a different choice.

2. Recall, from your reading, a short story which begins with an explanatory prologue. Read it over carefully, and if possible recast so as to absorb the prologue into the action of the story.

3. What portions of Chapter I in *Pride and Prejudice* constitute an explanatory prologue? What necessary information does the reader gain from the dialogue between Mr. and Mrs. Bennet in this chapter? What part does this dialogue play in the action of the story?

4. Explain fully the purpose of the reporter's interview with Lapham in the first chapter of Mr. Howells's *The Rise of Silas Lapham.* Does it constitute a step in the development of the plot? Has the reporter any part in the later story?

5. Study carefully the opening scenes of *The Scarlet Letter.* Explain the office, for explanation of past circumstances or for development of the present action or for both, of (*a*) the talk of the bystanders outside the prison door as Hester goes out to her public disgrace, (*b*) the visions that come to her on the pillory, (*c*) the brief interchange of words between her husband and his neighbor in the crowd below.

6. Write a synopsis of some story you are planning. Indicate the points of beginning and end, defending your choice of them. Write an explanatory prologue, embodying the facts which the reader must know in order to understand the action, and check off those which you see some way of incorporating into the narrative itself.

7. Read any good short story until the situation and the characters have thoroughly defined themselves, and write the remainder of the narrative as you imagine it must develop, bringing it to a conclusion at the earliest possible point.

8. Criticise Stevenson's remarks concerning the endings of Mr. Barrie's *The Little Minister*, Mr. Meredith's *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, and his own unfinished *Weir of Hermiston*, Letters II, 320, 321.

9. Read *Edwin Drood*, up to the point at which Dickens left it unfinished, and infer from what you have of the story, its necessary outcome. Make a careful and explicit plan for the conclusion, writing the three or four concluding paragraphs. Explain why you end the narrative at this point.

CHAPTER V.

SCENES AND TRANSITIONS.

THE beginning and the end of the story may fairly be considered typical of its entire course. The same differences may throughout be observed between the more direct or naïve method of some writers, which intersperses narrative with necessary explanation, and the essentially dramatic method of others, which tends to merge explanation in narrative, and to involve the narrative of preceding and following events in the presentation of the present action and speech of the characters. It will, perhaps, be worth while to follow in some detail the organization of material for a single narrative in the hands of a writer highly suggestive and dramatic in method, though realistic in subject-matter. The following is the raw material of Miss Wilkins's story called *Calla Lilies and Hannah.**

The Selection of Scenes.

* In *A New England Nun*, previously mentioned in chapters II and IV. This story has been chosen not as peculiarly successful but as more complicated in structure than most of Miss Wilkins's tales, and hence better suited to the purposes of the present inquiry.

In a certain New England town lived a young girl, Hannah Redman, whose parents had died, leaving her a large old house but no money. Here she lived, supporting herself and an aged relative, Martha Wing, by going to her neighbors' houses to sew for them. George Arnold, son of the wealthiest man in the village, was in love with her, but there was no open engagement. While Hannah was sewing at Deacon Arnold's house, George quarreled with his father over a sum of money which had been left the boy by his uncle. He wished to invest it, but his father refused to give it over to him. George resolved to leave home, and coming into the room where Hannah was working, to say good-bye to her, saw lying on a table a roll of bills which his father had accidentally dropped—the exact amount they had quarreled about. Feeling that the money was his, he took it, in Hannah's presence, but without explanation. The theft was fastened upon Hannah, she was ostracized by the entire community, denied employment, dismissed from the church, and at the end of a year was reduced to the brink of starvation. George, meanwhile, had written to his father, telling what he had done, but the old man made no move to clear Hannah, and she herself kept loyal silence. Finally, nearly crazed by suffering and weak-

ness, Hannah stole a loaf of bread, rather than let old Martha starve. The same night George returned, discovered the situation, married Hannah at once, and afterwards, in church before the assembled congregation, cleared her character, and then took her away from the village forever.

There are, of course, numberless ways of handling this material. But taking it as it lies before us, the natural blocking out would be somewhat as follows:

1. Preliminary account of bequest to George by his uncle.
2. Explanation of Hannah's financial situation and of her unavowed engagement to George.
3. George's quarrel with his father.
4. George's theft of the money.
5. Discovery of the theft and suspicion of Hannah.
6. } Incidents illustrative of her social ostracism.
7. }
8. } Her failure to get or keep employment. [Several scenes.]
9. }
10. }
11. Her dismissal from church.
12. George's letter to his father.
13. His father's struggle between honor and pride, and his final withholding of George's confession.

14. Hannah's theft of bread.
15. George's return and knowledge of the situation.
16. His interview with Hannah.
17. Marriage of George and Hannah.
18. Public clearing of Hannah's character.
19. Departure of George and Hannah from the village.

This seems like a large number of scenes for the presentation of what is, after all, a tolerably simple story. Let us see what Miss Wilkins did with it.

To begin with she passed over the first five scenes, opening the narrative with the sixth. [1] In a short talk between old Martha and a neighbor the village attitude toward Hannah becomes evident, though unexplained; and in the next scene [2] Hannah returns from work, having been turned off [our scene 8], and the situation is revealed in her answers to Martha's querulous demands. Then [3] Hannah endeavors to rent part of her house to a married couple newly come to the village [our scene 9, perhaps], but they are dissuaded from taking it by a neighbor who tells them of Hannah's past record. This is the point where the situation is completely and naturally explained, and the ground of our scenes 2, 5, and 10 is covered. [4] On Sunday Hannah goes to church, and the village attitude is yet plainer. [5] The next day she seeks work, and gets the promise of it to begin in a month, but [6] returning at the time set, finds that her story has been

before her and that she will be given no employment. Finally the narrative tells very briefly how [7] she tried in vain to raise money on her house, and [8] on some old jewelry.

All these scenes have been extremely brief. The crisis comes in the next, which is longer. [9] Hannah, desperately resolved that Martha shall have something to eat, goes out to beg but, half frenzied with starvation and mental distress, steals a loaf of bread. Martha eats, but Hannah does not. [10] After Martha has gone to bed, George Arnold comes to the house. He has just learned Hannah's situation, and gradually in their interview the full extent of her sufferings is revealed to him. Eager to clear himself in her eyes, he tells her all about the money, and explains how he thought he had a right to take it. This covers our scenes 1, 3, 4, 12, 13. The last scene [11] is in church, where George and Hannah, now married, sit together, and at the end of the service George makes his statement. Then they drive away.

It will be seen that this method of handling cuts down the number of scenes from nineteen to eleven. It does this by selecting from the material certain noteworthy stages in the struggle of the forces, making these into scenes, and crowding into them the utmost possible significance, so that they shall suggest, explain, illuminate, the parts of the story which are not written out.

For the method, it must be noted, is not one of

condensation alone. It does not consist merely in running the blue pencil through half the material. There is amplification as well, but preceded by rigid selection of the parts to be amplified. It has been shown how Miss Wilkins can condense; it may be as readily shown how she can amplify. For example, in the first sentences of the story as she has written it she has to tell us that "Marthy," from her house-door, accosted "Mis' Newhall" who was passing, but the latter pretended not to hear. She uses many more words than this, however, in saying so:

The Suggestive Rendering of Scenes.

> "'Mis' Newhall!'
>
> The tall, thin figure on the other side of the street pushed vigorously past. It held its black-bonneted head back stiffly, and strained its green-and-black woolen shawl tighter across its slim shoulders.
>
> 'Mis' Newhall!'
>
> The figure stopped with a jerk. 'Oh, it's you, Marthy. Pleasant afternoon, ain't it?'"

In *A Village Lear* the entire first scene might, if condensation were the sole requirement, have been represented by some such statement as this: "His grandfather tried to buy a kiss from Willy for a stick of candy. Willy submitted to the kiss, though with great reluctance, and fled with the candy." But

such a thin and unpictorial account of the incident is discarded for this richly suggestive version:

> "'Jest wait a minute, Sary.' The old man made a sly, backward motion with his hand; his voice was a cautious whisper.
>
> Sarah Arnold stood back and waited. She was a large, fair young woman in a brown calico dress. She held a plate of tapioca pudding that she had brought for the old man's dinner, and she was impatient to give it to him and be off; but she said nothing. The old man stood in the shop door; he had in one hand a stick of red-and-white peppermint candy, and he held it out enticingly towards a little boy in a white frock. The little boy had a sweet, rosy face, and his glossy, fair hair was carefully curled. He stood out in the green yard, and there were dandelions blooming around his feet. It was May, and the air was sweet and warm; over on one side of the yard there was some linen laid out to bleach in the sun.
>
> The little boy looked at the old man and frowned, yet he seemed fascinated.
>
> The old man held out the stick of candy, and coaxed, in his soft, cracked voice. 'Jest look a-here, Willy!' said he; 'jest look a-here! See what gran'pa's got: a whole stick of

candy! He bought it down to the store on purpose for Willy, an' he can have it if he'll jest come here an' give gran'pa a kiss. Does Willy want it, hey?—Willy want it?' The old man took a step forward.

But the child drew back, and shook his head violently, while the frown deepened. 'No, no,' said he, with baby vehemence.

The old man stepped back and began again. It was as if he were enticing a bird. 'Now, Willy,' said he, 'jest look a-here! Don't Willy like candy?'

The child did not nod, but his blue, solemn eyes were riveted on the candy.

'Well,' the grandfather went on, 'here's a whole stick of candy come from the store, real nice pep'mint candy, an' Willy shall have it if he'll jest come here an' give gran'pa a kiss.'

The child reached out a desperate hand. 'Gimme!' he cried, imperatively.

'Yes, Willy shall have it jest as soon as he gives gran'pa a kiss.' The old man waved the stick of candy; his sunken mouth was curved in a sly smile. 'Jest look at it! Willy, see it! Red-an'-white candy, real sweet an' nice, with pep'mint in it. An' it's all twisted! Willy want it?'

The child began to take almost imperceptible steps forward, his eyes still fixed on the candy.

His grandfather stood motionless, while his smile deepened. Once he rolled his eyes delightedly around at Sarah. The child advanced with frequent halts.

Suddenly the old man made a spring forward. 'Now I've got ye!' he cried. He threw his arms around the boy and hugged him tight.

The child struggled. 'Lemme go!—lemme go!' he half sobbed.

'Yes, Willy shall go jest as soon as he gives gran'pa the kiss,' said the old man. 'Give gran'pa the kiss, an' then he shall have the candy an' go.'

The child put up his pretty, rosy face and pursed his lips sulkily. The grandfather bent down and gave him an ecstatic kiss.

'There! Now Willy shall have the candy, 'cause he's kissed gran'pa. He's a good boy, an' gran'pa 'll let him have the candy right off. He sha'n't wait no longer.'

The child snatched the candy and fled across the yard."

The Economy of Dramatic Presentation.

Obviously, though the dramatic story-teller economizes, he does not always condense. He aims at the utmost brevity consistent with clearness, he suppresses explicit explanation, withholds direct description when sug-

gestion can take its place, cuts down the links of narrative between one scene and the next, and drops out scenes of lesser significance, but he does not grudge paragraphs or pages where they are needed to put vividly before us in its full and exact significance the scene which he has elected to set forth. One scene alone may be retained out of many, but this, in its wealth of implication, must contain the full value of those rejected.

On the whole, however, the dramatic method makes for brevity. It is thus the characteristic method of the short story, which must condense into half a dozen pages material enough for an old-fashioned novel. By heightening the value of every scene—indeed of every sentence and word—until it is capable of standing for three or four, the dramatic story-teller secures the maximum of effect with the minimum of strokes.

Transitions between Scenes.

The scenes once chosen on the basis of their capacity for thus representing with utmost economy of means the entire story, there remains, aside from the detailed writing out, only the question of the transitions between scenes. This problem is peculiar to the writer of stories. The shift of scenes in a drama carries with it no responsibility for the writer to indicate by words forming an integral part of the play that this is a new scene, and that it bears certain relations to its predecessor, in time, in place, or in personnel. Yet this obligation,

from which stage directions free the dramatist, lies heavy upon the story-writer. He must so condition his scenes that they melt the one into the other, with no sense of abruptness in the transition, yet with such clearness of relationship to each other that there is no confusion in the reader's mind.

The Qualities of a Good Transition.

That transitions between scenes should indicate clearly the relations of the scenes to each other has always been recognized by story-writers, though the requirement that they should be as unnoticeable as possible was often neglected in the early novels. Thackeray's transitions, for instance, often call attention loudly to themselves:

> "The kind reader must please to remember —while the army is marching from Flanders, . . . that there are a number of persons living peaceably in England who have to do with the history at present in hand, and must come in for their share of the chronicle." *

Or again:

> "Our duty now takes us back for a brief space to some old Hampshire acquaintances of ours." †

Or:

> "Considerable time has elapsed since we have seen our respectable friend, old Mr.

* *Vanity Fair*, Chap. XXXIII.
† Ibid., Chap. XXXIX.

Osborne of Russell Square. He has not been the happiest of mortals since last we met him." *

Nor is this custom entirely one of the past. Mrs. Ward, after saying that Marcella went downstairs, deems it necessary to add, "But let us go downstairs also," before she passes to a treatment of the scene in the dining-room.†

In general, however, the strong tendency toward compression, by elimination of non-essentials, and toward an artistic, hence an unobtrusive, organization of materials, has discouraged the use of such conspicuous passages from scene to scene. Ordinarily, the simple mention of the change of time or place which distinguishes the new scene, is sufficient to put it in proper relations with what has preceded:

"About five o'clock the next morning, Raphael Aben-Ezra was lying in bed," etc.‡

"Elizabeth related to Jane the next day what had passed between Mr. Wickham and herself." §

"A few days after this visit, Mr. Bingley called again, and alone." ‖

* *Vanity Fair*, Chap. XLII.
† *Marcella*, Chap. II.
‡ Kingsley: *Hypatia*, Chap. VI.
§ Austen: *Pride and Prejudice*, Chap. XVII.
‖ Ibid., Chap. LV.

The Means of Transition.

In Dumas's *Three Guardsmen* transitions are most often effected by following a single character from one scene to another. Thus Chapters XV to XXI, by tracing the movements of the king, transfer the action from the king's apartments in the palace to the queen's, from the queen's apartments to the king's, and back to the queen's again, thence with Madame Bonancieux to the house of Bonancieux, with her to D'Artagnan's room in her house, with D'Artagnan to the hotel of M. de Treville, and still with him by successive stages to London and back again to Paris.

This spatial connection of scenes may be secured not alone by transferring a person from one to the other, but by despatching a letter, a telegram, or even a thought. Such a transition as this last mentioned may be illustrated by a passage from *Pride and Prejudice:*

> "Elizabeth was sitting with her mother and sisters, reflecting on what she had heard [Charlotte's engagement, previous scene], and doubting whether she was authorised to mention it, when Sir William Lucas himself appeared, sent by his daughter to announce her engagement to the family." *

Froude, in recounting the murder of Thomas Backet, meets and masters extraordinary difficulties

* Austen: *Pride and Prejudice*, Chap. XXIII.

of transition. Two parallel series of events, occurring almost simultaneously in an extremely short space of time, must be presented clearly, in proper relations to each other, yet rapidly enough to give the effect of a quick succession. The two parties, knights and clergy, were at first together in the archbishop's chamber. Then we see the knights arming at the lodge, the clergy in the chamber barring the door, the knights stopped by the door, breaking and entering the window of the anteroom, the clergy fleeing to the cathedral and sweeping the archbishop with them, the knights bursting into the cathedral. Here are at least six different scenes, shifting from place to place, from the one party to the other; each consisting of the fewest sentences possible, but by so much the more likely to give the reader a distinct jar in passing quickly between them. Yet read the narrative and see how smoothly it flows:

> "It was now nearly five; and unless there were lights the room was almost dark. Beyond the archbishop's chamber was an anteroom, beyond the anteroom the hall. The knights, passing through the hall into the quadrangle, and thence to the lodge, called their men to arms. The great gate was closed. A mounted guard was stationed outside with orders to allow no one to go out or in. The knights threw off their cloaks and buckled on their

swords. This was the work of a few minutes. From the cathedral tower the vesper bell was beginning to sound. The archbishop had seated himself to recover from the agitation of the preceding scene, when a breathless monk rushed in to say that the knights were arming. 'Who cares? Let them arm,' was all that the archbishop said. His clergy were less indifferent. If the archbishop was ready for death, they were not. The door from the hall into the court was closed and barred, and a short respite was thus secured. The intention of the knights, it may be presumed, was to seize the archbishop and carry him off to Saltwood, or to De Morville's castle at Knaresborough, or perhaps to Normandy. Coming back to execute their purpose, they found themselves stopped by the hall door. To burst it open would require time; the anteroom between the hall and the archbishop's apartments opened by an oriel window and an outside stair into a garden. Robert de Broc, who knew the house well, led the way to it in the dusk. The steps were broken, but a ladder was standing against the window, by which the knights mounted, and the crash of the falling casement told the fluttered group about the archbishop that their enemies were upon them. There was still a moment. The party

who entered by the window, instead of turning into the archbishop's room, first went into the hall to open the door and admit their comrades. From the archbishop's room a second passage, little used, opened into the northwest corner of the cloister, and from the cloister there was a way into the north transept of the cathedral. The cry was, 'To the church. To the church.' There at least there would be immediate safety.

"The archbishop had told the knights that they would find him where they had left him. He did not choose to show fear, or he was afraid, as some thought, of losing his martyrdom. He would not move. The bell had ceased. They reminded him that vespers had begun, and that he ought to be in the cathedral. Half yielding, half resisting, his friends swept him down the passage into the cloister. His cross had been forgotten in the haste. He refused to stir till it was fetched and carried before him as usual. Then only, himself incapable of fear, and rebuking the terror of the rest, he advanced deliberately to the door into the south transept. As he entered the church cries were heard from which it became plain that the knights had broken into the archbishop's room, had found the passage, and were following him. Almost

> immediately Fitzurse, Tracy, De Morville, and Le Breton were discerned, in the twilight, coming through the cloister in their armor, with drawn swords, and axes in their left hands. A company of men-at-arms was behind them. In front they were driving before them a frightened flock of monks."*

But for the suggestion of separate scenes one would hardly be conscious of them, so all but imperceptibly does one lapse into another. We accompany the knights from the archbishop's chamber to the lodge. The sound of the vesper bell suggests the cathedral and enables the returning monk to lead us from the knights back to the clergy. The barring of the door against the knights compels us to recur to them in thought. They break the window and so give news of their approach to the clergy. As we follow the flight of the clergy we hear with them the cries which indicate that the knights have broken into the archbishop's room, and looking back see them enter the cathedral. The two parties are together at the last as they were in the beginning; and the complicated series of maneuvers which has meanwhile been carried on by each is hardly recognized as such except under analysis, so intimate, so unobtrusively perfect have been the transitions.

* Froude: *Life and Times of Thomas Becket*, pp. 109–111.

EXERCISES.

1. For some projected story whose points of beginning and end have been fixed, determine the scenes essential and note both scenes and explanations which may be included in these. Subject your choice of scenes to the criticism of a fellow student in order to determine whether the number fixed upon may not be still further reduced by suggestive presentation.

2. Examine any well-written story and note the scenes which are involved by suggestion in those actually presented. Could any further reduction in the scenes be profitably made?

3. Compare carefully any novel known to you with a play based upon it, explaining the changes which dramatization required.

4. (*a*) Rewrite *She Stoops to Conquer* in the form of a short story. What changes have been made necessary? What has been lost in the rewriting? How have the transitions between scenes been effected? (*b*) How could this short story be expanded into a novel? Write the first chapter. Suggest means for complicating the action of the main plot and elaborating the subplot.

5. Dramatize any standard novel, comparing the dramatic with the narrative version and defining the limitations and the opportunities presented by each form in the case of this particular subject matter.

6. Suggest means by which some standard novel

might be reduced to the compass of a short story, first determining the crucial point of the action, and then cutting out subplots and all scenes which can be dispensed with, and involving all essential but secondary scenes in those of primary importance, retaining throughout, however, a pictorial and direct method of presentation. Will all novels subject themselves to this process of condensation? What inferences can you draw from this exercise and 4 (*b*) as to essential differences between the novel and the short story?

7. Write a concrete, suggestive version of some scene which may be very generally and hence inadequately represented by one of the following sentences: (*a*) The lawyer told Susan May that Uncle Peter had failed, after all, to remember her in his will. (*b*) Miss Newcomb refused to respond to the friendly overtures of Mrs. Deacon Skinner. (*c*) John Wheaton demanded from Banker Leffingwell the restitution of his mother's property. (*d*) Sylvia Dudley urged her class to elect for president its most unpopular member. (*e*) Simon Seckel, a half-witted village character, settles a quarrel between William Rice and Abel Wheeler, deacons in the same church. (*f*) Mrs. Sprautly, a "summer boarder" at farmer Russell's, offers a tip to Letitia Holloway, a neighbor's daughter, who is helping Mrs. Russell for the summer. (*g*) Mr. Talcott hears the demands of his striking employees and refuses to consider them.

8. Study the means by which transitions are effected between scenes in *Ivanhoe.* What two great scenes are there which involve practically all the characters? How is each set of characters assembled for and dispersed from these scenes? Is the unity of the story maintained throughout the shifting of the scenes?

9. Examine the means by which transitions are effected in *The Three Guardsmen, Treasure Island,* or any other story rapid in movement.

10. Write a story whose plot turns upon the difference in time between New York and London, or between New York and San Francisco. In passing from one scene to another, make the transitions as easy and as unnoticeable as possible.

CHAPTER VI.

CHARACTER-DRAWING.

The Necessity for Character-Drawing.

SINCE the action of the story is carried on by individual human beings, it becomes one of the writer's most insistent problems to present these human beings in their individual outlines and coloring, in their essential qualities of character. The necessity for such presentation may, as Stevenson insists, vary its emphasis with the type of story attempted, the "novel of character" drawing its *dramatis personæ* with verisimilitude, the "elementary novel of adventure" reducing them almost to puppets. Even the adventure-story, however, tends, in modern times, to individualize its characters beyond the point indicated by this distinction. Stevenson himself admits in speaking of *Treasure Island* that more character crept in than was actually needed. Jim Hawkins is assuredly more individual than the epic hero of old, or even than Robinson Crusoe; while each of the pirates, Captain Flint and John Silver, is something more than the typical representative of his species, described by Stevenson as "a beard, a pair

of wide trousers and a liberal complement of pistols." *

Not even the chronicles of adventure, in which "the brute incident" † is of supreme interest, can wholly escape the question of character-portrayal, while it rises into conspicuous importance in the realistic novel or short story. Here the action is so internal, so psychological in its nature, that the most scrupulous drawing of the individual personalities concerned is essential to a comprehension of the springs and consequences of their actions.

Direct Characterization.

The analytic reader has doubtless noted two primary means of securing fidelity to the individual lineaments of character. Sometimes a minute and elaborate portrayal is attempted, during which the action is brought to a standstill. Thus in an early chapter of Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* occurs a break in the narration to make room for a little expository essay upon Mr. Yorke: "And while he sits, leaning back in his three-cornered, carved oak chair, I will snatch my opportunity to sketch the portrait of this French-speaking Yorkshire gentleman." His person is considered, then his mind. First under the latter head come his failings,—"Mr. Yorke . . . was without the organ of veneration. . . . Secondly, he was without the organ of comparison . . . and, thirdly, he had too little of the organs of benevolence and ideality," etc. Each of these three points is de-

* *A Humble Remonstrance.*

† Stevenson: *A Gossip on Romance.*

veloped separately, and a consideration of his "good points" follows. Then his family descent is noted, his education, manners, tastes, and finally something of his earlier history.* Similarly, a few chapters later, the characters of Mrs. Yorke and of the six children of the family are explained in detail to the reader, the story's action being postponed until this exposition is complete.

So obvious a separation of the treatment of character from the conduct of the story's action is seldom noted. In fact we most frequently find the exposition of character as such reduced to the smallest compass possible, in order that the narrative's movement be not seriously delayed. Thus Jane Austen, although pausing for an instant, in the first chapter of *Pride and Prejudice*, to inform the reader that Mrs. Bennet was "a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper," while "Mr. Bennet was so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve, and caprice, that the experience of three-and-twenty years had been insufficient to make his wife understand his character," proceeds at once to carry on the story through a vividly concrete presentation of the daily walk and conversation of these persons. From this concrete presentation it is moreover probable that the reader gains his liveliest sense of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet as individual personalities. The preliminary exposi-

* Charlotte Brontë: *Shirley*, Chap. IV.

tion of their characters does, no doubt, afford some general notion of each, but the color of individuality appears only as the story progresses. Mr. and Mrs. Bennet are defined for us by their sayings and doings, their manners, their environment, their judgments of other people and other people's estimates of them, until they stand out in our consciousness as flesh-and-blood persons, each distinct from every other similar character within or without the covers of a book.

This, then, is the second method of character-drawing open to the writer,—the suggestion of internal qualities by the skilful use of such external indications as lie in the way of the story itself. It is a method logically consequent upon the writer's adoption of the observant, self-effacing attitude toward his material, as the practice of more direct exposition of character belongs essentially to the omniscient author who appears conspicuously in the telling of the story. The writer who rigorously denies himself a place in the reader's consciousness must be content with presenting his characters much as they would appear to an observer in the actual world, vouchsafing no explanations, but so selecting and presenting the external features of each personality as to determine the interpretations made by the reader. The self-assertive author, on the contrary, would rather offer to the reader his own interpretations of each person in the story, either

Indirect Characterization.

anticipating or supplementing the inferences as to character which might fairly be drawn from the data presented.

These two ways of dealing with the personages of the story, although springing from essentially different attitudes toward the material, are seldom entirely separated in practice. The more indirect method of conveying character through the external signs of it is usually prefaced or supplemented by some direct statement of the qualities suggested. Stephen Crane's *George's Mother* is one of the few examples of exclusive reliance upon the objective presentation of personality. Even a writer so little inclined as is Jane Austen to explain her characters usually introduces (as was illustrated in *Pride and Prejudice* *) the indirect characterization of her personages by a succinct exposition in somewhat abstract terms.

The Relations of Direct to Indirect Characterization.

The tendency of the more concrete and suggestive character-drawing is, however, unquestionably inimical to direct interpretation as such, for, when an author has succeeded in bringing us into intimate contact with a character, so that we can catch the individual note in his smallest action, we feel no need of an abstract summary of his qualities. In amateur work, in fact, such summaries should be continually challenged, since their use is most frequently tantamount to a confession of the writer's weakness, an attempt

* See page 112.

to supplement his imperfect presentation of the characters through their action and speech, the gratuitous statement of an inference which he should have given the reader adequate data for drawing himself.

It might perhaps be supposed that abstract characterization, as usually somewhat more succinct than the concrete suggestion of personality, would appear most conspicuously in such a condensed form of fiction as the short story. The contrary is, however, the fact, for the rigid economy necessary in this form has not only eliminated all socalled "character-scenes," but has also reduced the amount of direct characterization almost to the zero point. The action essential to the plot is compelled to carry the burden of character-portrayal, or rather of character-suggestion. But to throw the main burden of characterization upon the action itself is to shift rather than to solve the problem of method. How can certain external actions, speech, and bearing of persons in the story serve at once to develop the plot most economically and to indicate unerringly the internal characteristics of these persons? In the very rush of the story's movement, how is it possible to present as if from real life that complex of impressions which to us constitutes personality, to make not only definite actions but dress, face, expression, carriage, gesture, intonation, emphasis, infallibly yet unobtrusively significant of individual character?

An increasingly stronger conviction of the value of

this achievement doubtless underlies the growing tendency to represent scenes to the eye and the ear as well as to the mind. In reading a modern novel, not only do we know what happened, but we see it happening. What is said will not suffice the subtler artist; he must show how it is said, with what unconscious action or gesture, what all but imperceptible change of expression, or modification of tone.

The Means of Indirect Characterization.

How to render these finer discriminations, however, the inexperienced writer does not know. Too often his presentation of a particular action or conversation seems to preserve only its generic elements, neglecting all that makes it this action or this conversation as distinguished from others. "He did not answer" is a generalized report such as the amateur might make of what was undoubtedly a very individual occurrence. Compare with this colorless and unspecific rendering, which might loosely fit a thousand different cases, Miss Wilkins's version, already quoted, at the beginning of *Calla Lilies and Hannah*.* This same incident (that is, in its general outlines) appears in several stories in this volume.† Two different renderings of it are found in *The Revolt of "Mother"*:

Through Action.

"'Father.'

'What is it?'

* Page 95. † *A New England Nun and Other Stories.*

'What are them men diggin' over there in the field for?'

There was a sudden dropping and enlarging of the lower part of the old man's face, as if some heavy weight had settled therein; he shut his mouth tight, and went on harnessing the great bay mare. He hustled the collar on to her neck with a jerk.

'Father!'

The old man slapped the saddle upon the mare's back."

And later:

"A boy stood before the kitchen glass combing his hair. He combed slowly and painstakingly, arranging his brown hair in a smooth hillock over his forehead. He did not seem to pay any attention to the conversation.

'Sammy, did you know father was going to build a new barn?' asked the girl.

The boy combed assiduously.

'Sammy!'

He turned, and showed a face like his father's under his smooth crest of hair. 'Yes, I s'pose I did,' he said, reluctantly.

. . . . . .

Her mother looked sternly at the boy. 'Is he goin' to buy more cows?' said she.

The boy did not reply; he was tying his shoes.

'Sammy, I want you to tell me if he's goin' to buy more cows.'

'I s'pose he is.'"

A fourth account appears in *Christmas Jenny.**

"His wife looked back. 'What's the matter?' said she.

'Shoestring untied,' replied old Jonas, in a half-inarticulate grunt.

'Don't you want me to tie it, Jonas?'

Jonas said nothing more; he tied viciously.

They were in sight of Jenny's house when he stopped again, and sat down on the stone wall beside the path. 'Oh, Jonas, what is the matter?'

Jonas made no reply. His wife went up to him, and saw that the shoestring was loose again. 'Oh, Jonas, do let me tie it; I'd just as soon as not. Sha'n't I, Jonas?'

Jonas sat there in the midst of the snowy blackberry vines, and looked straight ahead with a stony stare.

His wife began to cry. 'Oh, Jonas,' she pleaded, 'don't you have a tantrum to-day. Sha'n't I tie it? I'll tie it real strong. Oh, Jonas!'

The old woman fluttered around the old man in his great-coat on the wall, like a distressed

* In *A New England Nun and Other Stories.*

bird around her mate. Jenny Wrayne opened her door and looked out; then she came down the path. 'What's the matter?' she asked.

'Oh, Jenny, I dunno what *to* do. He's got another—tantrum!'

'Has he fell down?'

'No; that ain't it. His shoestring's come untied three times, an' he don't like it, an' he's sot down on the wall. I dunno but he'll set there all day. Oh, dear me suz, when we'd got most to your house, an' I was jest thinkin' we'd come 'long real comfort'ble! I want to tie it for him, but he won't let me, an' I don't darse to when he sets there like that. Oh, Jonas, jest let me tie it, won't you? I'll tie it real nice an' strong, so it won't undo again.'

Jenny caught hold of her arm. 'Come right into the house,' said she, in a hearty voice. She quite turned her back upon the figure on the wall. 'Oh, Jenny, I can't go in an' leave him a-settin' there. I shouldn't wonder if he sot there all day. You don't know nothin' about it. Sometimes I have to stan' an' argue with him for hours afore he'll stir.'

'Come right in. The turkey's most done, an' we'll set right down as soon as 'tis. It's 'bout the fattest turkey I ever see. I dunno where Deacon Little could ha' got it. The

> plum-puddin's all done, an' the vegetables is 'most ready to take up. Come right in, an' we'll have dinner in less than half an hour.'
>
> After the two women had entered the house the figure on the wall cast an uneasy glance at it without turning his head. He sniffed a little."

In all of these instances the action is in a sense the same. It consists in a withholding of response, or an attempt at withholding it. But in each case the author has seized upon and preserved individual elements, so that her report leaves with us the impression of a personal act, and therefore of a person behind the act. Without expressly asserting anything regarding character, she has succeeded in implying a great deal: flurried, nervous indecision in the case of the village Pharisee; dogged, half-sullen obstinacy in the old man, and a pale reflection of this in his son; while the silence of Jonas Carey conveys all the petty, belligerent self-importance connoted by the word "tantrum."

The highly individual character of these incidents, then, yields impressions equally individual of Mrs. Newhall, Adoniram Penn, Sammy his son, and Jonas Carey, while the generalized report of the typical action, "He or she refused to answer," can give rise only to ideas as colorless and unspecific as itself, regarding the persons concerned. It may be well, however, to inquire more particularly into the

cause of the extremely individual flavor of these passages. First of all, plainly the conversation is taken down from the lips of the characters, not reported as "indirect discourse." The greater vividness of the former method is nowhere more forcibly exemplified than in the scene of final explanation between Darcy and Elizabeth, in *Pride and Prejudice*, when the conversation suddenly drops the first person and the quotation-marks. Darcy is speaking: Through Speech.

> " 'You are too generous to trifle with me. If your feelings are still what they were last April, tell me so at once. *My* affections and wishes are unchanged; but one word from you will silence me on this subject forever.'
>
> Elizabeth, feeling all the more than common awkwardness and anxiety of his situation, now forced herself to speak; and immediately, though not very fluently, gave him to understand that her sentiments had undergone so material a change since the period to which he alluded, as to make her receive with gratitude and pleasure his present assurances. The happiness which this reply produced was such as he had probably never felt before; and he expressed himself on the occasion as sensibly and as warmly as a man violently in love can be supposed to do." *

* *Pride and Prejudice*, Chap. LVIII.

It must not, however, be supposed that mere quotation-marks can of themselves stamp a conversation as the actual utterance of real individuals. No more difficult task confronts the writer of stories than that of making the talk of his characters "convincing." We must feel, as we read, not only that real people of the country and time represented could have said these things, in just this way, but that these particular persons, of just such an age, social position, previous history, relation to each other, internal characteristics, must, under the peculiar circumstances stated or implied, have said these things and no others. This we could never feel of the talk in Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley*—for example this, between Charlotte Helstone and Robert Moore:

> "'And if prayers have efficacy, yours will benefit me: you pray for me sometimes?'
>
> 'Not *sometimes*, Robert: you, and Louis, and Hortense are *always* remembered.'
>
> 'So I have often imagined: it has occurred to me, when, weary and vexed, I have myself gone to bed like a heathen, that another had asked forgiveness for my day, and safety for my night. I don't suppose such vicarial piety will avail much: but the petitions come out of a sincere breast, from innocent lips; they should be acceptable as Abel's offering, and doubtless would be, if the object deserved them.'

'Annihilate that doubt—it is groundless.'

'When a man has been brought up only to make money, and lives to make it, and for nothing else, and scarcely breathes any other air than that of mills and markets, it seems odd to utter his name in a prayer or to mix his idea with anything divine; and very strange it seems that a good, pure heart should take him in and harbor him, as if he had any claim to that sort of nest. If I could guide that benignant heart, I believe I should counsel it to exclude one who does not profess to have any higher aim in life than that of patching up his broken fortune, and wiping clean from his bourgeois scutcheon the foul stain of bankruptcy.'" *

Making all due allowance for the different usages of the times and the place in which such talk as this is supposed to take place, we read it with a deep-lying conviction that it is carried on, not by the characters, but by the author. We know, therefore, precisely what the author wishes us to infer as to the qualities of the interlocutors, but feel no intimate assurance that such they really are.

Quite otherwise is the effect upon the reader of such conversations as that often quoted from *The Rise of Silas Lapham* between Penelope and Irene:

* Chap. VII.

" Irene had come home with the shaving in her belt, unnoticed by her father, and unquestioned by her mother. But her sister saw it at once, and asked her what she was doing with it.

'Oh, nothing,' said Irene, with a joyful smile of self-betrayal, taking the shaving carefully out, and laying it among the laces and ribbons in her drawer.

'Hadn't you better put it in water, 'Rene? It'll be all wilted by morning,' said Pen.

'You mean thing!' cried the happy girl. 'It isn't a flower!'

'Oh, I thought it was a whole bouquet. Who gave it to you?'

'I sha'n't tell you,' said Irene saucily.

'Oh, well, never mind. Did you know Mr. Corey had been down here this afternoon, walking on the beach with me?'

'He wasn't—he wasn't at all! He was at the house with *me*. There! I've caught you fairly.'

'Is that so?' drawled Penelope. 'Then I never could guess who gave you that precious shaving.'

'No, you couldn't!' said Irene, flushing beautifully.

'And you may guess, and you may guess, and you may guess!' With her lovely eyes she

coaxed her sister to keep on teasing her, and Penelope continued the comedy with the patience that women have for such things.

'Well, I'm not going to try, if it's no use. But I didn't know it had got to be the fashion to give shavings instead of flowers. But there's some sense in it. They can be used for kindlings when they get old, and you can't do anything with old flowers. Perhaps he'll get to sending 'em by the barrel.'

Irene laughed for pleasure in this tormenting.

'O Pen, I want to tell you how it all happened.'

'Oh, he *did* give it to you, then? Well, I guess I don't care to hear.'

'You shall, and you've got to!' Irene ran and caught her sister, who feigned to be going out of the room, and pushed her into a chair. 'There, now!' She pulled up another chair, and hemmed her in with it.

'He came over, and sat down on the trestle alongside of me—'

'What? As close as you are to me now?'

'You wretch! I will *give* it to you! No, at a proper distance. And here was this shaving on the floor, that I'd been poking with my parasol—'

'To hide your embarrassment.'

'Pshaw! I wasn't a bit embarrassed. I was just as much at my ease! And then he asked me to let him hold the shaving down with his foot, while I went on with my poking. And I said yes he might—'

'What a bold girl! You said he might hold a shaving down for you?'

'And then—and then—' continued Irene, lifting her eyes absently, and losing herself in the beatific recollection, 'and then—Oh yes! Then I asked him if he didn't like the smell of pine shavings. And then he picked it up, and said it smelt like a flower. And then he asked if he might offer it to me—just for a joke, you know. And I took it, and stuck it in my belt. And we had such a laugh! We got into a regular gale. And O Pen, what do you suppose he meant by it?' She suddenly caught herself to her sister's breast, and hid her burning face on her shoulder.

'Well, there used to be a book about the language of flowers. But I never knew much about the language of shavings, and I can't say exactly—'

'Oh, don't—*don't*, Pen!' and here Irene gave over laughing, and began to sob in her sister's arms.

'Why, 'Rene!' cried the elder girl.

'You *know* he didn't mean anything. He

doesn't care a bit about me. He hates me! He despises me! Oh, what shall I do?'

A trouble passed over the face of the sister as she silently comforted the child in her arms; then the drolling light came back into her eyes. 'Well, 'Rene, *you* haven't got to do *anything*. That's one advantage girls have got—if it *is* an advantage. I'm not always sure.'

Irene's tears turned to laughing again. When she lifted her head it was to look into the mirror confronting them, where her beauty showed all the more brilliant for the shower that had passed over it. She seemed to gather courage from the sight.

'It must be awful to have to *do*,' she said, smiling into her own face. 'I don't see how they ever can.'

'Some of 'em can't—especially when there's such a tearing beauty around.'

'Oh, pshaw, Pen! you know that isn't so. You've got a real pretty mouth, Pen,' she added thoughtfully, surveying the feature in the glass, and then pouting her own lips for the sake of that effect oh them.

'It's a useful mouth,' Penelope admitted; 'I don't believe I could get along without it now, I've had it so long.'

'It's got such a funny expression—just the

mate of the look in your eyes; as if you were just going to say something ridiculous. He said, the very first time he saw you, that he knew you were humorous.'

'Is it possible? It must be so, if the Grand Mogul said it. Why didn't you tell me so before, and not let me keep on going round just like a common person?'

Irene laughed as if she liked to have her sister take his praises in that way rather than another.

'I've got such a stiff, prim kind of mouth,' she said, drawing it down, and then looking anxiously at it.

'I hope you didn't put on that expression when he offered you the shaving. If you did, I don't believe he'll ever give you another splinter.'

The severe mouth broke into a lovely laugh, and then pressed itself in a kiss against Penelope's cheek.

'There! Be done, you silly thing! I'm not going to have you accepting *me* before I've offered myself, *anyway*.'

She freed herself from her sister's embrace, and ran from her round the room.

Irene pursued her, in the need of hiding her face against her shoulder again. 'O Pen! O Pen!' she cried." *

* W. D. Howells: *The Rise of Silas Lapham,* Chap. IX.

This bit of talk is intensely realistic; its careless colloquialisms, its half-finished phrases, its abbreviations, have a convincing reality, while the hints as to gesture, expression, emphasis,—the author resorts even to the tabooed italics,—do more to make the two girls individual to the reader's mind than pages of direct statement would have done.

It is, then, not alone by setting down as if from the lips of characters the things they, being themselves, must in these circumstances say, that the individual quality of a conversation is secured. As we have previously noted, the reader must see the talk as well as hear it; and it is just these visual accompaniments of changing expression, unconscious act or gesture, that Mr. Howells has so perfectly reproduced in this scene. Add to these the fluctuations of emphasis, the variations of tone and quality, also recorded by him, and you have all those individual elements in the conversation which set it vividly before the reader's senses, and thus insure its strongest appeal to his deeper perceptions. We may note how relatively small a part the mere spoken word often plays in a striking report of it, by stripping all but this from two of Miss Wilkins's scenes previously quoted:*

"'Mis' Newhall!'

. . . . . .

* Pages 95 and 116.

'Mis' Newhall!'

'Oh, it's you, Marthy. Pleasant afternoon, ain't it?'"

And again:

'Father.'

'What is it?'

'What are them men diggin' over there in the field for?'

. . . . . .

"'Father!'"

Thus denuded of all visual appeal and all specific auditory quality, these bits of conversation differ as widely from the full-fleshed scenes as would a play read without even stage directions, from the same play presented upon the stage. This contrast brings into strong relief the necessity which the modern dramatic story recognizes of presenting its action to the eye as well as to the ear, that the reader may know how its characters look, dress, move, stand, and what their environment is, so far at least as that conditions in any essential degree the development of the plot.

In tracing the development of the story's structure,* the descriptive element was noted as increasingly prominent in the more complicated narratives, whose characters had begun to emerge from the typical. Even the

Through Personal Appearance.

* Chap. I., pp. 11–12.

Vicar of Wakefield required some description of the personal appearance of Olivia and Sophia, while in *The Mill on the Floss* Maggie's physiognomy must be carefully contrasted with Lucy's * and with Tom's,† and her peculiar type of beauty pictured at some length, as in the following passage.‡

> "You may see her now, as she walks down the favorite turning, and enters the Deeps by a narrow path through a group of Scotch firs—her tall figure and old lavender gown visible through an hereditary black-silk shawl of some wide-meshed net-like material; and now she is sure of being unseen, she takes off her bonnet and ties it over her arm. One would certainly suppose her to be farther on in life than her seventeenth year—perhaps because of the slow resigned sadness of the glance, from which all search and unrest seem to have departed, perhaps because her broad-chested figure has the mould of early womanhood. Youth and health have withstood well the involuntary and voluntary hardships of her lot, and the nights in which she has lain on the hard floor for a penance have left no obvious trace: the eyes are liquid, the brown cheek is

* *Mill on the Floss*, Book I., Chap. VII.
† Ibid., Book I., Chap. V.
‡ Ibid., Book V., Chap. I.

firm and rounded, the full lips are red. With her dark coloring and jet crown surmounting her tall figure, she seems to have a sort of kinship with the grand Scotch firs, at which she is looking up as if she loved them well. Yet one has a sense of uneasiness in looking at her—a sense of opposing elements, of which a fierce collision is imminent: surely there is a hushed expression, such as one often sees in older faces under borderless caps, out of keeping with the resistant youth, which one expects to flash out in a sudden, passionate glance, that will dissipate all the quietude, like a damped fire leaping out again when all seemed safe."

Maggie's personal appearance both as a child and as a woman not only has a real part in determining the events of the story, but reveals to the reader the essential qualities of her character, its promise and its tragedy, its "opposing elements" of resistance and submission, of desire and denial. Its portrayal is thus a means of character-exposition hardly less valuable than the record of Maggie's actions and speech.

In like manner the appearance of "Mother" in Miss Wilkins's story, as she stands in the barn confronting Adoniram, is suggestive of the qualities which both ensure and explain her pathetic victory.

"Then she stood waiting. She was a small

> woman, short and straight-waisted like a child in her brown cotton gown. Her forehead was mild and benevolent between the smooth curves of gray hair; there were meek downward lines about her nose and mouth; but her eyes, fixed upon the old man, looked as if the meekness had been the result of her own will, never of the will of another." *

A single element of personal appearance may sometimes be so skilfully presented as to do expository duty for an elaborate description, as in Mr. Henry James's picturing of Eugenia in *The Europeans:* "'A pretty woman?' some one had said. 'Why, her features are very bad.' 'I don't know about her features,' a discerning observer had answered; 'but she carries her head like a pretty woman.'" Similarly whole pages of direct exposition could hardly paint for us the characteristic lineaments of Henrietta Stackpole's inner nature as they are rendered by the description of her "peculiarly open, surprised-looking eye. The most striking point in her appearance was the remarkable fixedness of this organ, which rested, without impudence or defiance, but as if in conscientious exercise of a natural right, upon every object it happened to encounter." †

Small peculiarities of manner, gesture, or speech

* *The Revolt of "Mother."*

† Henry James: *The Portrait of a Lady*, Chap. X.

may often serve to individualize for the reader a fictitious character. Maggie Tulliver's habit of tossing her mane of hair impatiently out of her eyes,* Mr. Casaubon's way of blinking before he spoke,† Mrs. Waule's "low, muffled, neutral tone, as of a voice heard through cotton-wool," † bear no small part in building up our conceptions of these persons as real individuals. Even an element so external as dress may become significant: Rosamond's "drapery of transparent, faintly tinted muslin," ‡ Clara's "art of dressing to suit the season and the sky," § are expressive, as is Araminta May's "flimsy blue muslin with a good many flowers, and a deal of wide cotton lace." ‖

Through Manner, Gesture, Voice, Dress.

That the significance of these minor details of personal appearance can be overstressed, readers of Dickens need not be reminded. The oft-cited description of Pecksniff, with its reiterated and sometimes apparently forced interpretations, achieves indeed the amusement but seldom the conviction of the reader.

> "Perhaps there never was a more moral man than Mr. Pecksniff, especially in his conversation and correspondence. It was once said of him

* George Eliot: *Mill on the Floss*
† George Eliot: *Middlemarch*
‡ Ibid.
§ Meredith: *The Egoist.*
‖ M. E. Wilkins: *A Wayfaring Couple.*

by a homely admirer, that he had a Fortunatus's purse of good sentiments in his inside. In this particular he was like the girl in the fairy-tale, except that if they were not actual diamonds which fell from his lips, they were the very brightest paste, and shone prodigiously. He was a most exemplary man; fuller of virtuous precept than a copy-book. Some people likened him to a direction-post, which is always telling the way to a place, and never goes there, but these were his enemies, the shadows cast by his brightness; that was all. His very throat was moral. You saw a good deal of it. You looked over a very low fence of white cravat (whereof no man had ever beheld the tie, for he fastened it behind), and there it lay, a valley between two jutting heights of collar, serene and whiskerless before you. It seemed to say, on the part of Mr. Pecksniff, 'There is no deception, ladies and gentlemen, all is peace, a holy calm pervades me.' So did his hair, just grizzled with an iron-gray, which was all brushed off his forehead, and stood bolt upright or slightly drooped in kindred action with his heavy eyelids. So did his person, which was sleek though free from corpulency. So did his manner, which was soft and oily. In a word, even his plain black suit, and state of widower, and dangling double

eye-glass, all tended to the same purpose, and cried aloud, 'Behold the moral Pecksniff!' " *

Similarly the reduction of Peggotty to a habit of bursting off buttons, of Mrs. Fezziwig to a smile, of Rosa Dartle to a perennial question, and of Micawber, Mrs. Micawber, Captain Cuttle, Uriah Heep, Barkis, and innumerable other characters to the single phrase invariably associated with their names, represents the method of caricature rather than that of portrait-painting. Of the judicious use of such small indications of personality, however, our best fiction furnishes numberless illustrations.

Through Environment.

The value of the external as suggestive of character is recognized in the use not only of a person's appearance and dress, but of his immediate environment as well. The precious furnishings of Poynton were the embodiment of their owner's exquisite taste and sympathies,† as Araminta May's little garden, with its coarse and gaudy flowers, represented the first crude outcroppings of the beauty-loving instinct in a healthy but as yet chiefly animal nature.‡ In Stephen Crane's *George's Mother* the living-room is made to speak irresistibly to us of the tireless New England thrift, the pathetic New England energy, of the little woman who drove her-

* Dickens: *Martin Chuzzlewit*, Chap. II.
† Henry James: *The Spoils of Poynton.*
‡ Mary E. Wilkins: *A Wayfaring Couple.*

self through life within its walls. There is no set description, but as we follow the course of the narrative we find ourselves forming a clear picture of the place, with its clouds of dust and steam from the cleaning it was undergoing, its window looking out on the tenement chimneys, its sink in the corner, the table, "in its oil-cloth covering,—like a bit of bare, brown desert," the stove "that lurked in the gloom, red-eyed, like a dragon," and, on the shelf above, the three blue plates and the "little, swaggering, nickel-plated clock." *

Two further means of character-portraiture should be especially noted: the estimate of one person by other persons in the story, and the judgment of any character by himself. Both these means are employed more frequently in the novel than in the short story, but in concise form they appear even in the latter. They are apparently direct characterizations, but as uttered by a character in the story, rather than by the author, they have a peculiar force.

The Portrayal of One Character by Another.

When, in *Middlemarch*, Mr. Cadwallader says, "Brooke is a very good fellow, but pulpy; he will run into any mould, but he won't keep shape," † we gain a distinct and persistent impression of Mr. Brooke's most conspicuous quality; while Mrs. Bennet's characterization of Mr. Darcy in *Pride and*

* Chaps. II., III.

† Chap. VIII.

Prejudice is not only inimitable, but, as far as it goes, precise.

> "'But I can assure you,' she added, 'that Lizzy does not lose much by not suiting *his* fancy; for he is a most disagreeable, horrid man, not at all worth pleasing. So high and so conceited, that there was no enduring him! He walked here, and he walked there, fancying himself so very great! Not handsome enough to dance with! I wish you had been there, my dear, to have given him one of your set-downs. I quite detest the man!'"*

These estimates, largely, no doubt, from their being put into the mouths of actual persons informally talking with one another, gain a concreteness more often lacking to the well-considered judgments of the author. Thus Mrs. Bennet cannot pause with the adjectives "high" and "conceited," but must, in her own fashion, give the specific instance—"he walked here and he walked there, fancying himself so very great." Similarly in the conversation in which Cadwallader's remark occurs, there are repeated characterizations of Casaubon in terms highly objective. Here speaks Sir James: "But look at Casaubon, . . . he must be fifty, and I don't believe he could ever have been much more than the shadow of a man. Look at his legs! . . . Now, Cadwallader, has he got any heart?"

* Chap. III.

To this Cadwallader replies by a concrete fact: Casaubon took care of some poor relations whom he might have ignored. Mrs. Cadwallader's contribution to the discussion is the remark that her husband "would rather dine under the hedge than with Casaubon alone," and upon Sir James's assertion that "he has got no good red blood in his body" she goes on, "No. Somebody put a drop under a magnifying-glass, and it was all semicolons and parentheses . . . he dreams foot-notes, and they run away with all his brains. They say, when he was a little boy, he made an abstract of 'Hop o' my Thumb,' and he has been making abstracts ever since. Ugh!" Nowhere is it directly stated that Casaubon is objectionable because he is a narrow and one-sided nature, lacking in the strong human emotions, and with even his intellectual powers dissipated in petty pedantry. Yet there can be no question which is the more effective for characterization, this direct statement or the seemingly hit-or-miss phrases of the conversation cited.

The estimates of one character by another not only tend, as we have seen, to a greater concreteness in expression than do judgments formulated by the author in his own person, but they may and often do sustain a closer relation to the action of the story. Thus Mr. Cadwallader's pithy judgment of Mr. Brooke occurs during the consultation between a number of Dorothea's friends, as to the possibility of preventing her marriage with Casaubon, and represents

Mr. Cadwallader's defense of his policy of non-interference; while Mrs. Bennet's remark is a manifestation of the attitude of ill-bred contempt which she thereafter maintained toward Mr. Darcy, and which, together with other influences, so nearly destroyed the happiness of her two daughters. Moreover, while these utterances are especially effective as direct characterization, they possess also an indirect value. For they must, of course, be strictly dramatic, that is, in keeping with the speaker, not foisted upon him by a determined author who desires to have certain things said, and makes the character his mouthpiece. Hence they win a double effectiveness, serving to individualize not only the person described but the person describing. Thus the color given to their judgments by the keen-visioned tolerance of Cadwallader, the petty vanity and offensive ill-breeding of Mrs. Bennet, instantly betrays to the acute reader these essential qualities of the speaker's.

What is true of the dramatic characterization of one actor by another is also true of the characterization of an actor by himself. In *Pride and Prejudice* there is a long scene wherein Darcy analyzes his own traits as well as those of his friend Bingley. In *The Egoist* Sir Willoughby Patterne lays bare "all myself" to his fiancée. The scene from *Pride and Prejudice* ends as follows. Darcy is speaking:

Self-Portrayal.

"'But it has been the study of my life to

avoid those weaknesses which often expose a strong understanding to ridicule.'

'Such as vanity and pride.'

'Yes, vanity is a weakness indeed. But pride—where there is a real superiority of mind—pride will be always under good regulation.'

Elizabeth turned away to hide a smile.

'Your examination of Mr. Darcy is over, I presume,' said Miss Bingley; 'and pray what is the result?'

'I am perfectly convinced by it that Mr. Darcy has no defect. He owns it himself without disguise.'

'No,' said Darcy, 'I have made no such pretension. I have faults enough, but they are not, I hope, of understanding. My temper I dare not vouch for. It is, I believe, too little yielding; certainly too little for the convenience of the world. I cannot forget the follies and vices of others so soon as I ought, nor their offenses against myself. My feelings are not puffed about with every attempt to move them. My temper would perhaps be called resentful. My good opinion once lost is lost forever.'

'*That* is a failing indeed!' cried Elizabeth. 'Implacable resentment *is* a shade in a character. But you have chosen your fault well.

I really cannot *laugh* at it. You are safe from me.'

'There is, I believe, in every disposition a tendency to some particular evil, a natural defect, which not even the best education can overcome.'

'And *your* defect is a propensity to hate everybody.'

'And yours,' he replied, with a smile, 'is wilfully to misunderstand them.'" *

Of similar value is the little scene between Sir Willoughby and Clara:

"'Pardon me, my love,' he said. 'The man you see yonder violates my express injunction that he is not to come on my grounds, and here I find him on the borders of my garden!'

Sir Willoughby waved his hand to the abject figure of a man standing to intercept him. . . .

. . . . . .

'Is he married? Has he children?' said Clara.

'Nine; and a wife that cannot cook or sew or wash linen.'

'You could not give him employment?'

'After his having dismissed himself?'

'It might be overlooked.'

* Chap. XI.

'Here he was happy. He decided to go elsewhere, to be free—of course, of my yoke. He quitted my service against my warning. . . . He returns, but his place is filled; he is a ghost here, and I object to ghosts.'

'Some work might be found for him.'

'It will be the same with old Vernon, my dear. If he goes, he goes for good. It is the vital principle of my authoritp to insist on that. A dead leaf might as reasonably demand to return to the tree. Once off, off for all eternity! I am sorry, but such was your decision, my friend. I have, you see, Clara, elements in me—'

'Dreadful!'

. . . 'Elements in me, I was remarking, which will no more bear to be handled carelessly than gunpowder. At the same time there is no reason why they should not be respected, managed with some degree of regard for me and attention to consequences. Those who have not done so have repented.'

'You do not speak to others of the elements in you,' said Clara.

'I certainly do not: I have but one bride," was his handsome reply.*

It will be seen at once that though these passages

* *The Egoist*, Chap. XI.

contain characterization which is in form direct, their real value to the reader is in the character which they imply, not in that which they assert. If Miss Austen had, as author, noted Darcy's traits in the words he uses—"pride . . . under good control, . . . real superiority of mind, . . . feelings not puffed about with every attempt to move them," etc., we should have accepted the statements at their face value. But coming from Darcy himself, we listen to them with the same amused and sceptical attention that Elizabeth gave them, and we conclude, somewhat as she did, that he was really a vain, self-satisfied, though gifted young gentleman. If, again, it had been Mr. Meredith who had said of Sir Willoughby, "He had elements in him which would no more bear to be handled carelessly than gunpowder," we should have understood the words as he meant them. Uttered by Sir Willoughby they have quite another value. He says, in effect, "I am an elemental force, unalterable, beyond the realm of criticism, beneficent or terrible as my nature is bowed to or opposed." We say, "You are nothing of the sort. You are only a human being, with an exaggerated idea of your own importance. A sense of proportion or the smallest modicum of humor would make such ridiculous pretensions impossible."

Although there is no doubt that the main reliance of the modern artist for the effective presentation of personality must be upon the skilful rendering of

its outer manifestations, yet it may be objected that this method leads to bulky writing. If we wish to show that some one is vain or frivolous or ill-tempered, it may indeed be most impressively done by arranging scenes in which these traits will be exhibited, but the danger is that such scenes will impede the course of the narrative and lengthen the story unduly. This is sometimes the case: the interest in writing "character-scenes" is for some authors so great that they are in danger of being enticed away from the main line of the action, and the result may be vivid portraiture but rambling plot; for, although there cannot be a story without character, there may be character without a story.

Indirect Character-Drawing and "Character-Scenes."

This was what was wrong with Tommy's attempt at novel-writing, in Mr. Barrie's *Tommy and Grizel.* When Tommy, instead of writing at the dictation of his patron, Pym, the successful story-teller, began to compose Pym's chapters for him, the intricacies of character did indeed appear, but the direct progress of the action came to a halt, and the public protested. Tommy's case is by no means an imaginary one, for George Eliot is arraigned, and with reason, for inserting character-scenes having no organic connection with the action, while some of Mr. Howells's incidents are open to the same criticism. On the other hand, it will be remembered that the dramatic method of characterization has reached its extreme develop-

ment in that most condensed of all forms of fiction, the short story. This suggests that the remedy for bulky writing is to be found not in a substitution of direct for indirect characterization, but in an artistic use of the indirect method. It goes without saying that no scene should ever be a *cul de sac*. It should always lead from action to action. But the scenes lying strictly within the line of the plot's movement may be so presented that they shall be full of the personality of the actors. The individuality of every act is, to the clear-sighted artist, so inevitably a part of that act that there is no need to go outside the story in search of "characteristic" scenes.

For example, the scene in *Silas Lapham* between the two sisters* is not simply talk that shows character. It is a part of the action of the story, since just such teasing banter as this of Penelope's constituted a strong force helping to set Irene more firmly and unsuspectingly in her misplaced affection, and to fix both sisters in their delusion regarding the situation. The same is true of the scene in *Pride and Prejudice*.† Darcy's words are part of an evening's talk which did much to determine the attitude toward each other of the two people concerned. Elizabeth was observing Darcy and forming an opinion of him, Darcy was almost insensibly becoming interested in her. His self-satisfied pride amused but repelled her, while her whimsical but spirited opposition at

* See pp. 124–128. † See pp. 140–142.

once piqued and charmed him. In *The Egoist*, Sir Willoughby's confession*—if one may use the word of so palpable an attempt at self-laudation—has an immediate effect on Clara, abundantly suggested in her single exclamation, "Dreadful!" It is one of the series of incidents which conspire to precipitate her growing but unformulated revulsion from her lover into a cool and explicit judgment against him.

Furthermore, while every part of the action may be so treated as to become revelatory of character, it is not necessary that every part should receive this treatment. Miss Wilkins did not need to deal with every aspect of "Mis' Newhall" in such detail as in the passage quoted. She did not need to describe "Father's" every expression and gesture throughout the story of his defeat. Her few touches here and there arouse in us so strong a sense of her character-individuality that it abides with us to illuminate the more rapid record of later action.

The Relation of Action to Character.

While a separate consideration of character-drawing and plot-development may seem theoretically possible, practically it is found that a thorough study of either brings us back to the other. If we approach the story from the side of its action, that action sooner or later resolves itself into character of a more or less highly organized type; while the portrayal of character, as it becomes

* See pp. 142–143.

continually finer in execution, interweaves itself more inextricably with the thread of the narrative. In the best told stories it is most difficult to mark a definite boundary-line between plot-development and characterization. The two become, in last analysis, but different aspects of the same process; as Mr. James puts it: "What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?" *

EXERCISES.

1. Discriminate carefully the characters of Mrs. Primrose in *The Vicar of Wakefield*, Mrs. Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*, and Mrs. Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss*, noting likenesses as a basis for their manifest differences. Observe the means of character-drawing employed for each.

2. Read carefully the following scene from *Middlemarch*, define the impressions of character received from it, and locate the sources of these impressions.

> "Rosamond did not look at her husband, but presently rose and took her place before the tea-tray. She was thinking that she had never seen him so disagreeable. Lydgate turned his dark eyes on her and watched her as she delicately handled the tea-service

* *The Art of Fiction.*

with her taper fingers, and looked at the objects immediately before her with no curve in her face disturbed, and yet with an ineffable protest in her air against all people with unpleasant manners. . . . Rosamond said, in her silvery, neutral way, 'Here is your tea, Tertius,' setting it on the small table by his side, and then moved back to her place without looking at him. . . .

'Dear Rosy, lay down your work and come to sit by me,' he said, gently pushing away the table, and stretching out his arm to draw a chair near his own.

Rosamond obeyed. As she came toward him in her drapery of transparent, faintly tinted muslin, her slim yet round figure never looked more graceful; as she sat down by him and laid one hand on the elbow of his chair, at last looking at him and meeting his eyes, her delicate neck and cheek and purely-cut lips never had more of that untarnished beauty which touches us in spring-time and infancy, and all sweet freshness. . . . She put his hair lightly away from his forehead, then laid her other hand on his, and was conscious of forgiving him.

'I am obliged to tell you what will hurt you, Rosy. But there are things which husband and wife must think of together. I dare

say it has occurred to you already that I am short of money.'

Lydgate paused; but Rosamond turned her neck and looked at a vase on the mantel-piece.

'I was not able to pay for all the things we had to get before we were married, and there have been expenses since which I have been obliged to meet. . . . I took pains to keep it from you while you were not well; but now we must think together about it, and you must help me.'

'What can *I* do, Tertius?' said Rosamond, turning her eyes on him again. That little speech of four words, like so many others in all languages, is capable by varied vocal inflections of expressing all states of mind from helpless dimness to exhaustive argumentative perception, from the completest self-devoting fellowship to the most neutral aloofness. Rosamond's thin utterance threw into the words 'What can *I* do?' as much neutrality as they could hold. They fell like a mortal chill on Lydgate's roused tenderness. He did not storm in indignation—he felt too sad a sinking of the heart. And when he spoke again it was more in the tone of a man who forces himself to fulfill a task.

'It is necessary for you to know, because I have to give security for a time, and a man

must come to make an inventory of the furniture.'

Rosamond colored deeply. 'Have you not asked papa for money?' she said, as soon as she could speak.

'No.'

'Then I must ask him!' she said, releasing her hands from Lydgate's, and rising to stand at two yards' distance from him.

'No, Rosy,' said Lydgate, decisively. 'It is too late to do that . . . I insist upon it that your father shall not know, unless I choose to tell him,' added Lydgate, with a more peremptory emphasis.

This certainly was unkind. . . . The unkindness seemed unpardonable to her: she was not given to weeping, and disliked it; but now her chin and lips began to tremble, and the tears welled up. . . . He could not speak again immediately; but Rosamond did not go on sobbing: she tried to conquer her agitation and wiped away her tears, continuing to look before her at the mantel-piece.

. . . . . .

'Are we to go without spoons and forks, then?' said Rosamond, whose very lips seemed to get thinner with the thinness of her utterance. She was determined to make no further resistance or suggestions.

'Oh, no, dear!' said Lydgate. 'But look here,' he continued, drawing a paper from his pocket and opening it; 'here is Dover's account. See, I have marked a number of articles which, if we returned them, would reduce the amount by thirty pounds and more. I have not marked any of the jewelry.'

. . . . . .

'It is useless for me to look, Tertius,' said Rosamond, calmly; 'you will return what you please.' She would not turn her eyes on the paper, and Lydgate, flushing up to the roots of his hair, drew it back and let it fall on his knee. Meanwhile Rosamond went quietly out of the room, leaving Lydgate helpless and wondering. . . .

But the door opened, and Rosamond re-entered. She carried the leather box containing the amethysts, and a tiny ornamental basket which contained other boxes, and, laying them on the chair where she had been sitting, she said, with perfect propriety in her air:

'This is all the jewelry you ever gave me. You can return what you like of it, and of the plate also. You will not, of course, expect me to stay at home to-morrow. I shall go to papa's.'

To many women the look Lydgate cast at her would have been more terrible than one of

anger: it had in it a despairing acceptance of the distance she was placing between them.

'And when shall you come back again?' he said, with a bitter edge on his accent.

'Oh, in the evening. Of course I shall not mention the subject to mamma,' . . . and she went to sit down at her work-table."

3. Criticise the talk in the following passage:*

"'Now,' said the doctor, 'my part is done, and, I may say, with some vanity, well done. It remains only to get you out of this cold and poisonous city, and to give you two months of a pure air and an easy conscience. The last is your affair. To the first I think I can help you. It falls indeed rather oddly; it was but the other day the Padre came in from the country; and as he and I are old friends, although of contrary professions, he applied to me in a matter of distress among some of his parishioners. This was a family—but you are ignorant of Spain, and even the names of our grandees are hardly known to you; suffice it, then, that they were once great people, and are now fallen to the brink of destitution. Nothing now belongs to them but the residencia, and certain leagues of desert mountain, in the

* From Stevenson's *Olalla*, Chap. VII.

greater part of which not even a goat could support life. But the house is a fine old place, and stands at a great height among the hills, and most salubriously; and I had no sooner heard my friend's tale, than I remembered you. I told him I had a wounded officer, wounded in the good cause, who was now able to make a change; and I proposed that his friends should take you for a lodger. Instantly the Padre's face grew dark, as I had maliciously foreseen it would. It was out of the question, he said. Then let them starve, said I, for I have no sympathy with tatterdemalion pride.' . . .

'Doctor,' said I, 'you have been throughout my good angel, and your advice is a command. But tell me, if you please, something of the family with which I am to reside.'

'I am coming to that,' replied my friend; 'and, indeed, there is a difficulty in the way. These beggars are, as I have said, of very high descent and swollen with the most baseless vanity; they have lived for some generations in a growing isolation, drawing away, on either hand, from the rich who had now become too high for them, and from the poor, whom they still regarded as too low; and even to-day, when poverty forces them to unfasten their door to a guest, they cannot do so without a most ungracious stipulation. You

are to remain, they say, a stranger; they will give you attendance, but they refuse from the first the idea of the smallest intimacy.' " . . .

4. What suggestions of character must be drawn from the following passage? Formulate these suggestions with reference to each of the participants in the tale, and, if possible, verify by consultation of the entire narrative.*

"'I hope everybody had a pleasant evening,' said Mr. Woodhouse, in his quiet way. 'I had. Once I felt the fire rather too much; but then I moved back my chair a little, a very little, and it did not disturb me. Miss Bates was very chatty and good-humoured, as she always is, though she speaks rather too quick. However, she is very agreeable, and Mrs. Bates, too, in a different way. I like old friends; and Miss Jane Fairfax is a very pretty sort of young lady; a very pretty and very well-behaved young lady indeed. She must have found the evening agreeable, Mr. Knightley, because she had Emma.'

'True, sir; and Emma, because she had Miss Fairfax.'

Emma saw his anxiety, and wishing to appease it, at least for the present, said, and

* Jane Austen: *Emma*, Vol. I., Chap. XXI.

with a sincerity which no one could question,—

'She is a sort of elegant creature that one cannot keep one's eyes from. I am always watching her to admire, and I do pity her from my heart.'

Mr. Knightley looked as if he were more gratified than he cared to express; and before he could make any reply, Mr. Woodhouse, whose thoughts were on the Bateses, said,—

'It is a great pity that their circumstances should be so confined, a great pity indeed! and I have often wished—but it is so little one can venture to do—small, trifling presents, of anything uncommon. Now, we have killed a porker, and Emma thinks of sending them a loin or a leg; it is very small and delicate—Hartfield pork is not like any other pork, but still it is pork—and my dear Emma, unless one could be sure of their making it into steaks, nicely fried, as ours are fried, without the smallest grease, and not roast it—for no stomach can bear roast pork—I think we had better send the leg,—do not you think so, my dear?'

'My dear papa, I sent the whole hind-quarter. I knew you would wish it. There will be the leg to be salted, you know, which is so very nice, and the loin to be dressed directly, in any manner they like.'

'That's right, my dear, very right. I had not thought of it before, but that was the best way. They must not over-salt the leg; and then, if it is not over-salted, and if it is very thoroughly boiled, just as Serle boils ours, and eaten very moderately of, with a boiled turnip, and a little carrot or parsnip, I do not consider it unwholesome.'

'Emma,' said Mr. Knightley, presently, 'I have a piece of news for you. You like news,—and I heard an article in my way hither that I think will interest you.'

'News! Oh, yes, I always like news. What is it?—why do you smile so?—where did you hear it?—at Randalls?'

He had time only to say,—

'No, not at Randalls; I have not been near Randalls,'—when the door was thrown open, and Miss Bates and Miss Fairfax walked into the room. Full of thanks and full of news, Miss Bates knew not which to give quickest. Mr. Knightley soon saw that he had lost his moment, and that not another syllable of communication could rest with him.

'Oh, my dear sir, how are you this morning? My dear Miss Woodhouse, I come quite overpowered. Such a beautiful hind-quarter of pork! You are too bountiful! Have you heard the news? Mr. Elton is going to be married.'

Emma had not had time even to think of Mr. Elton, and she was so completely surprised that she could not avoid a little start and a little blush at the sound.

'There is my news: I thought it would interest you,' said Mr. Knightley, with a smile, which implied a conviction of some part of what had passed between them.

'But where could you hear it?' cried Miss Bates. 'Where could you possibly hear it, Mr. Knightley? For it is not five minutes since I received Mrs. Cole's note—no, it cannot be more than five—or at least ten—for I had got my bonnet and spencer on, just ready to come out—I was only gone down to speak to Patty again about the pork—Jane was standing in the passage—were not you, Jane?—for my mother was so afraid that we had not any salting-pan large enough. So I said I would go down and see, and Jane said, "Shall I go down instead? for I think you have a little cold and Patty has been washing the kitchen"—"Oh, my dear," said I—well, and just then came the note. A Miss Hawkins—that's all I know—a Miss Hawkins of Bath. But, Mr. Knightley, how could you possibly have heard it? for the very moment Mr. Cole told Mrs. Cole of it, she sat down and wrote to me. A Miss Hawkins—'

'I was with Mr. Cole on business an hour and a half ago. He had just read Elton's letter as I was shown in, and handed it to me directly.'

'Well! that is quite—I suppose there never was a piece of news more generally interesting. My dear sir, you really are too bountiful. My mother desires her very best compliments and regards, and a thousand thanks, and says you really quite oppress her.'

'We consider our Hartfield pork,' replied Mr. Woodhouse—'indeed it certainly is, so very superior to all other pork, that Emma and I cannot have a greater pleasure than—'

'Oh, my dear sir, as my mother says, our friends are only too good to us. If ever there were people who, without having great wealth themselves, had everything they could wish for, I am sure it is us. We may well say that "our lot is cast in a goodly heritage." Well, Mr. Knightley, and so you actually saw the letter—well—'

'It was short, merely to announce—but cheerful, exulting of course.' Here was a sly glance at Emma. 'He had been so fortunate as to—I forget the precise words—one has no business to remember them. The information was, as you state, that he was going to be

married to a Miss Hawkins. By his style, I should imagine it just settled.'

'Mr. Elton going to be married!' said Emma, as soon as she could speak. 'He will have everybody's wishes for his happiness.'

'He is very young to settle,' was Mr. Woodhouse's observation. 'He had better not be in a hurry. He seemed to be very well off as he was. We were always glad to see him at Hartfield.'

A new neighbor for us all, Miss Woodhouse!' said Miss Bates, joyfully. 'My mother is so pleased!—she says she cannot bear to have the poor old vicarage without a mistress. This is great news indeed. Jane, you have never seen Mr. Elton; no wonder that you have such a curiosity to see him.'

Jane's curiosity did not appear of that absorbing nature as wholly to occupy her.

'No, I have never seen Mr. Elton,' she replied, starting on this appeal: 'is he—is he a tall man?'

'Who shall answer that question?' cried Emma. 'My father would say, "Yes," Mr. Knightley, "No"; and Miss Bates and I, that he is just the happy medium. When you have been here a little longer, Miss Fairfax, you will understand that Mr. Elton is the

standard of perfection in Highbury, both in person and mind.'

'Very true, Miss Woodhouse, so she will. He is the very best young man;—but, my dear Jane, if you remember, I told you yesterday he was precisely the height of Mr. Perry. Miss Hawkins, — I dare say, an excellent young woman. His extreme attention to my mother—wanted her to sit in the vicarage-pew that she might hear the better, for my mother is a little deaf, you know—it is not much, but she does not hear quite quick. Jane says that Colonel Campbell is a little deaf. He fancied bathing might be good for it—the warm bath—but she says it did him no lasting benefit. Colonel Campbell, you know, is quite our angel. And Mr. Dixon seems a very charming young man, quite worthy of him. It is such a happiness when good people get together—and they always do. Now, here will be Mr. Elton and Miss Hawkins; and there are the Coles, such very good people; and the Perrys,—I suppose there never was a happier or a better couple than Mr. and Mrs. Perry. I say, sir,' turning to Mr. Woodhouse, 'I think there are few places with such society as Highbury. I always say, we are quite blessed in our neighbors. My dear sir, if there is one thing my mother

loves better than another, it is pork—a roast loin of pork—'

'As to who or what Miss Hawkins is, or how long he has been acquainted with her,' said Emma, 'nothing, I suppose, can be known. One feels that it cannot be a very long acquaintance. He has been gone only four weeks.'

Nobody had any information to give; and after a few more wonderings Emma said,—

'You are silent, Miss Fairfax,—but I hope you mean to take an interest in this news. You, who have been hearing and seeing so much of late on these subjects, who must have been so deep in the business on Miss Campbell's account,—we shall not excuse your being indifferent about Mr. Elton and Miss Hawkins.'

'When I have seen Mr. Elton,' replied Jane, 'I dare say I shall be interested; but I believe it requires that with me. And as it is some months since Miss Campbell married, the impression may be a little worn off.'

'Yes, he has been gone just four weeks, as you observe, Miss Woodhouse,' said Miss Bates, 'four weeks yesterday—a Miss Hawkins—well, I had always rather fancied it would be some young lady hereabouts; not that I ever—Mrs. Cole once whispered to

me—but I immediately said, "No, Mr. Elton is a most worthy young man; but—" In short, I do not think I am particularly quick at those sort of discoveries. I do not pretend to it. What is before me, I see. At the same time nobody could wonder if Mr. Elton should have aspired—Miss Woodhouse lets me chatter on so good-humouredly. She knows I would not offend for the world. How does Miss Smith do? She seems quite recovered now. Have you heard from Mrs. John Knightley lately? Oh, those dear little children! Jane, do you know I always fancy Mr. Dixon like Mr. John Knightley? I mean in person—tall, and with that sort of look—and not very talkative.'

'Quite wrong, my dear aunt; there is no likeness at all.'

'Very odd! but one never does form a just idea of anybody beforehand. One takes up a notion, and runs away with it. Mr. Dixon, you say, is not, strictly speaking, handsome.'

'Handsome! Oh! no—far from it—certainly plain. I told you he was plain.'

'My dear, you said that Miss Campbell would not allow him to be plain, and that you yourself—'

'Oh, as for me, my judgment is worth nothing. Where I have a regard, I always

think a person well-looking. But I gave what I believed the general opinion, when I called him plain.'

'Well, my dear Jane, I believe we must be running away. The weather does not look well, and grandmamma will be uneasy. You are too obliging, my dear Miss Woodhouse; but we really must take leave. This has been a most agreeable piece of news indeed. I shall just go round by Mrs. Cole's; but I shall not stop three minutes: and, Jane, you had better go home directly—I would not have you out in a shower! We think she is the better for Highbury already. Thank you, we do indeed. I shall not attempt calling on Mrs. Goddard, for I really do not think she cares for anything but boiled pork: when we dress the leg it will be another thing. Good-morning to you, my dear sir. Oh, Mr. Knightley is coming too. Well, that is so very!—I am sure if Jane is tired, you will be so kind as to give her your arm. Mr. Elton and Miss Hawkins! Good-morning to you.'"

5. How does the characterization of the Dodson family * contribute to the plot-development of *The Mill on the Floss?*

6. Discuss the value of the following passage as

* Book I., Chap. VI.

contributory to the reader's acquaintance with Rosamond and Mary. Locate the source of all the impressions of character conveyed by it.

> "Rosamond and Mary had been talking faster than their male friends. They did not think of sitting down, but stood at the toilet-table near the window while Rosamond took off her hat, adjusted her veil, and applied little touches of her finger-tips to her hair—hair of infantine fairness, neither flaxen nor yellow. Mary Garth seemed all the plainer standing at an angle between the two nymphs—the one in the glass and the one out of it—who looked at each other with eyes of heavenly blue, deep enough to hold the most exquisite meanings an ingenious beholder could put into them, and deep enough to hide the meanings of the owner if these should happen to be less exquisite. Only a few children in Middlemarch looked blonde by the side of Rosamond, and the slim figure displayed by her riding-habit had delicate undulations. In fact, most men in Middlemarch, except her brothers, held that Miss Vincy was the best girl in the world, and sometimes called her angel. Mary Garth, on the contrary, had the aspect of an ordinary sinner; she was brown; her curly dark hair was rough and stubborn; her stature was low; . . .
>
> . . . . . .

When she and Rosamond happened to be reflected in the glass, she said laughingly, 'What a brown patch I am by the side of you, Rosy! You are the most unbecoming companion.'

'Oh, no! No one thinks of your appearance, you are so sensible and useful, Mary. Beauty is of very little consequence in reality,' said Rosamond, turning her head toward Mary, but with eyes swerving toward the new view of her neck in the glass.

'You mean *my* beauty,' said Mary, rather sardonically.

Rosamond thought, 'Poor Mary, she takes the kindest things ill.' Aloud she said, 'What have you been doing lately?' "*

7. Note and classify the various means of character-exposition in any good short story. How are they related in each case to the movement of the narrative?

8. Describe concretely a character whose essential qualities are summed up in any one of the following formulæ:

(*a*) A Sybarite by nature, an ascetic by training.

(*b*) A young person with the characteristic virtues and vices of old age.

(*c*) A woman in a prosaic situation, whose in-

* George Eliot: *Middlemarch*, Bk. I., Ch. XII.

ordinate love of mystery and romance is counterbalanced by no sense of humor.

(*d*) A nature of limited capacity, overtrained and hence incapable of success.

(*e*) A character whose supreme passion is that of giving happiness, whose over-generosity defeats its own end.

9. Justify or disprove, according to your own opinion, the following criticism upon the scene in *Middlemarch* in which Dorothea and Celia look over their mother's jewels. Can you make any further or different criticism of this scene from the structural point of view?

> "Dorothea sharing her jewels is merely intended to give the reader necessary information about Dorothea; information that might have been quite simply conveyed by saying, whenever it was necessary, 'Now Dorothea happened to be a very ascetic person, with a childishly deliberate aversion to the vanities.'" *

10. What suggestions both of Maggie's character and of the characters of the other speakers, appear in the following conversations? What use is made of the concrete instance? What part, if any, does each conversation play in the development of the plot?

* Vernon Lee. *On Literary Construction: The Contemporary Review*, LXVIII., p. 412.

I. "'You talk o' 'cuteness, Mr. Tulliver,' she observed as she sat down, 'but I'm sure the child's half an idiot i' some things; for if I send her up stairs to fetch any thing, she forgets what she's gone for, an' perhaps 'ull sit down on the floor i' the sunshine an' plait her hair an' sing to herself like a Bedlam creatur', all the while I'm waiting for her down stairs. That niver run i' my family, thank God, no more nor a brown skin as makes her look like a mulatter. I don't like to fly i' the face of Providence, but it seems hard as I should have but one gell, an' her so comical.'

'Pooh! Nonsense!' said Mr. Tulliver; 'she's a straight, black-eyed wench as anybody need wish to see. I don't know i' what she's behind other folks's children; and she can read almost as well as the parson.'

'But her hair won't curl all I can do with it, and she's so franzy about having it put i' paper, and I've such work as never was to make her stand and have it pinched with th' irons.' " *

II. "At last Maggie, with a violent snatch, drew her hand away, and her pent-up, long-gathered irritation burst into utterance.

'Don't suppose that I think you are right,

* *The Mill on the Floss:* Book I., Chap. II.

Tom, or that I bow to your will. I despise the feelings you have shown in speaking to Philip: I detest your insulting, unmanly allusions to his deformity. You have been reproaching other people all your life—you have been always sure you yourself are right: it is because you have not a mind large enough to see that there is anything better than your own conduct and your own petty aims.'

'Certainly,' said Tom, coolly. 'I don't see that your conduct is better, or your aims either. If your conduct and Philip Wakem's conduct has been right, why are you ashamed of its being known? Answer me that. I know what I have aimed at in my conduct, and I've succeeded: pray, what good has your conduct brought to you or any one else?'

'I don't want to defend myself,' said Maggie, still with vehemence: 'I know I have been wrong—often, continually. But yet, sometimes when I have done wrong, it has been because I have feelings that you would be the better for, if you had them. If you were in fault ever—if you had done anything very wrong, I should be sorry for the pain it brought you; I should not want punishment heaped on you. But you have always enjoyed punishing me,—you have

always been hard and cruel to me: even when I was a little girl, and always loved you better than any one else in the world, you would let me go crying to bed without forgiving me. You have no pity: you have no sense of your own imperfection and your own sins. It is a sin to be hard; it is not fitting for a mortal,—for a Christian. You are nothing but a Pharisee. You thank God for nothing but your own virtues,—you think they are great enough to win you everything else. You have not even a vision of feelings by the side of which your shining virtues are mere darkness!'

'Well,' said Tom, with cold scorn, 'if your feelings are so much better than mine, let me see you show them in some other way than by conduct that's likely to disgrace us all,—than by ridiculous flights first into one extreme and then into another. Pray, how do you show your love, that you talk of, either to me or my father? By disobeying and deceiving us. I have a different way of showing my affection.'

'Because you are a man, Tom, and have power, and can do something in the world.'

'Then if you can do nothing, submit to those that can.'

'So I *will* submit to what I acknowledge

and feel to be right. I will submit even to what is unreasonable from my father, but I will not submit to it from you. You boast of your virtues as if they purchased you a right to be cruel and unmanly as you've been to-day. Don't suppose that I would give up Philip Wakem in obedience to you. The deformity you insult would make me cling to him and care for him the more.'

'Very well — that is your view of things,' said Tom, more coldly than ever; 'you need say no more to show me what a wide distance there is between us. Let us remember that in future, and be silent.' " *

11. For an original story whose plot is already sketched in your mind, write a careful description of each of the characters, minor as well as major. Construct these descriptions with a view not to using them in the story but to insuring your own precise knowledge of the *dramatis personæ*. Picture all the external features of each character, together with his immediate environment. State in the fewest possible words the essential elements of each character as you wish it to be understood by the reader, and revise your former descriptions with a view to conveying this impression most economically. Cut out all non-significant details and choose among many concrete

* *The Mill on the Floss:* Book V., Chap. V.

suggestions of the same quality, the one which seems most illuminating. Examine the scenes essential to the development of the plot, and determine which of the concrete suggestions of char cter previously formulated may be most naturall incorporated in them.

12. Write a conversation which might have taken place between any two characters in a standard novel or short story, but in a situation and upon a subject not actually involved in the narrative. Criticise the conversation written, as a means of character drawing.

13. Report as exactly as possible an actual conversation heard in a street car or other public place. Having done this several times, formulate your observations as to the character of real conversation, noting especially the features not commonly represented in talk as it appears in fiction.

14. Write a conversation between two or more characters in a projected original story, that shall merely further the development of the plot. Revise the conversation so that it shall at the same time suggest unequivocally the essential qualities of the interlocutors. Revise once more for realism in every detail.

15. Analyze and discuss Stevenson's protest against the pictorial presentation of characters in fiction:

> "I *hear* people talking, and I *feel* them acting, and that seems to me to be fiction. My two aims may be described as—

1st. War to the adjective.
2nd. Death to the optic nerve.

Admitted we live in an age of the optic nerve in literature. For how many centuries did literature get along without a sign of it?" *

16. How far does the following passage from Stevenson's *Weir of Hermiston* † substantiate the foregoing protest?

"Amongst all the rosy and all the weathered faces that surrounded her in church, she glowed like an open flower—girl and raiment, and the cairngorm that caught the daylight and returned it in a fiery flash, and the threads of bronze and gold that played in her hair. . . . He looked at her again, and yet again, and their looks crossed. The lip was lifted from her little teeth. He saw the red blood work vividly under her tawny skin. Her eye, which was great as a stag's, struck and held his gaze."

* *Letters:* II., 377. † Chap. VI.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SETTING, NAMES, AND TITLES.

Of the descriptive elements in the story, the setting, the "local color," or the environment, as it is variously called, yields in importance only to character-drawing. It appears, as we have previously noted,* far more conspicuously in later than in the earlier fiction. Instead of the vague *milieu* of the folk-tale scantily set forth and but slightly conditioning the story's action, we find in most modern tales an intimate dependence upon a particular environment which must therefore be vividly, however briefly, pictured to the reader if the narrative is to yield him its full significance.

The Relation of Setting to Action.

In view of this close relation in modern fiction between the action † and the surrounding conditions of the action, the word "environment" may perhaps be preferred to the more usual term "setting," suggesting as it does rather a factor conditioning events than merely a fixed background for them. This distinction is doubt-

* Chap. I., pp. 7–8.

† For the relation of the setting to character-drawing, see Chap. VI., pp. 136–137.

less in the mind of Mr. Henry James when he says, "I cannot imagine composition existing in a series of blocks, nor conceive, in any novel worth discussing at all, of a passage of description that is not in its intention narrative."* Zola assumes a similar principle when he defines legitimate description in a novel as "an account of the environment which determines and completes man,"† discriminating such an account from description merely for its own sake, which cannot resist trying to express nature's beauty or grandeur, even though the beauty or grandeur have neither part nor lot in the lives with which the story deals. The theory here seems entirely sound, difficulties arising only when it comes to be used as a practical test. For it is hard to draw the line between the environment which does "determine and complete" man, and the "beauty or grandeur" which does not. Doubtless Balzac, writing *Sons of the Soil*, thought his preliminary description of the Chateau of Les Aigues necessary to the story of its owners, but doubtless also many of his readers "skim" its pages, and are satisfied to glean from such chance sentences as catch the eye a general notion that the place was large, luxurious, and well-kept. Similarly, it seems possible without marked sense of loss to glance only cursorily over the descriptive pages at the beginning of *Robert Elsmere*, those introducing

* *The Art of Fiction.*

† *The Experimental Novel.* Fifth Section.

The Mill on the Floss, and the extended account of the island of Aros which occurs near the beginning of Stevenson's *The Merry Men*.

The romantic reaction of the nineteenth century, together with the modern tendency to emphasize the pictorial element in fiction, has doubtless tended to overload novels with descriptions of natural scenery; and Mr. James to the contrary notwithstanding, it is not only possible but easy to find, even in the work of good writers, passages of description not in intention narrative. For example, toward the close of *The Marble Faun* Hawthorne relates Kenyon's farewell interview with Miriam and Donatello.* The appointed rendezvous, it will be remembered, was on the Campagna, and we are told that Kenyon "came out of the city by the gate of San Sebastiano, and walked briskly along the Appian Way." We are then brought to a pause by a description of "this ancient and famous road." In another connection the account might be pertinent, but introduced at this point it finds scant justification. For after all the story is about Kenyon and his friends, not about the Appian Way, and we know very well that in his present mood the modern inns and ancient tombs impress him as little as the rush of Broadway would do. Indeed we are expressly told that he paid no heed to what he was passing until the buffalo calf

* Chap. XLVI.

with its frolicsome vagaries broke up his reverie and restored him to his normal sensitive receptivity. From this point onward the description becomes interesting, because it tells us of things which really affected his mood, and therefore made part of the story. The first part of the chapter is a "block" of description, the last part is description "in its intention narrative."

A rare and wonderfully effective instance of description for the sake of the narrative may be found again in *The Marble Faun* by turning back to the two chapters called "Altars and Incense," and "The World's Cathedral," which give an account of Hilda's visit to St. Peter's. First we are told how the cathedral had been wont to impress her; then, how in her present mood "its interior beamed upon her with all the effect of a new creation." We follow the responses of her sensitive spirit to the complex, half-æsthetic, half-religious appeals of the building. Its statues, its pictures, its mosaics, its pavements, have significance for us because they had for her, and we eagerly follow her experience as it goes forward to its culmination in the incident of the confessional—an incident which without this prelude would have seemed too bizarre to be convincing.

Here, then, is the perfect blending of the narrative and the descriptive, wherein one cannot say of any single part this is the one or that is the other. The passage is not a description of St. Peter's: it is rather

the narrative of a crisis in Hilda's life, wherein St. Peter's had its share of influence.

Similarly, the description of the heat, at the opening of Mr. Kipling's *At the End of the Passage* is a necessary part of the story:

> "Four men, theoretically entitled to 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,' sat at a table playing whist. The thermometer marked —for them—one hundred and one degrees of heat. The room was darkened till it was only just possible to distinguish the pips of the cards and the very white faces of the players. A tattered, rotten punkah of whitewashed calico was puddling the hot air and whining dolefully at each stroke. Outside lay gloom of a November day in London. There was neither sky, sun, nor horizon—nothing but a brown-purple haze of heat. It was as though the earth were dying of apoplexy.
>
> From time to time clouds of tawny dust rose from the ground without wind or warning, flung themselves tablecloth-wise among the tops of the parched trees, and came down again. Then a whirling dust-devil would scutter across the plain for a couple of miles, break, and fall outward, though there was nothing to check its flight save a long low line of piled railway-sleepers white with the dust—"

Here every word that deepens our sense of the deadening hopelessness of the heat is a stroke in the narrative, which relates the death-grapple of two forces—the heat, and the will of the man, Hummil.

The setting may obviously include static material of innumerable varieties, from natural scenery, pure and simple, to the complex political or industrial conditions of a particular locality, the kind of story to be told involving in each case its own essential environment. A novel whose hero is a politician must deal largely with politics, one whose hero is a socialist agitator cannot disregard labor conditions, whereas one dealing with a college boy or girl may conceivably proceed without the need of a single reference to elections or strikes. Strictly speaking, there is only one set of conditions in which any given story can occur; yet more strictly speaking, these conditions constitute part of the story itself. Brunetière recognizes this, when he says of the novelist, "Il faut trouver le milieu, psychologique et même géographique, où le personnage atteindra ce degré de vraisemblance qui est la vérité et la vie de l'œuvre d'art." *

We reach, then, in regard to the description of surroundings, the same conclusion to which the previous chapters have led. There should be in the story no "blocks" of any sort of writing. Every part should be "in intention narrative," and every part should bear upon the particular tale the writer has

* *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 15 Feb., 1880.

chosen to narrate. A bit of description is not admissible simply because it is pretty, any more than is a bit of dialogue simply because it is bright, or a bit of analysis because it is keen and deft. The story is not a thread upon which one strings beads. It is an organic structure, like a plant, in which every element has functional value. We cannot justly speak of the story *and* its setting, as though one could exist apart from the other. The setting is a vital, active part of the story, or it has no claim to be at all. Here we may apply, as to all other elements in the narrative, Stevenson's dictum that there should be "not one sentence that is not part and parcel of the business of the story." *

The Function of the Setting.

The setting, thus intimately related to the action, serves usually to express or in Stevenson's phrase † to "realize" it, as do Trollope's cathedral towns, and Miss Wilkins's New England villages; but it is also occasionally employed to emphasize by means of contrast the essential significance of the action. Both these functions are represented in Kipling's tale *Without Benefit of Clergy*. The serene joy of the earlier moments in the star-counting scene upon the roof is heightened by the heavily clouded sky and the menace of the delayed rains, while the fierceness of Ameera's jealous love as displayed later in the same scene stands out more

* *A Humble Remonstrance.*

† See Chap. II., p. 32.

strongly against the peaceful background sketched in the following sentences:

> "Reassured many times as to the price of those plums, Tota cuddled himself down to sleep. The two sleek, white well-bullocks in the courtyard were steadily chewing the cud of their evening meal; old Pir Khan squatted at the head of Holden's horse, his police sabre across his knees, pulling drowsily at a big water-pipe that croaked like a bullfrog in a pond. Ameera's mother sat spinning in the lower verandah, and the wooden gate was shut and barred. The music of a marriage-procession came to the roof above the gentle hum of the city, and a string of flying-foxes crossed the face of the low moon."

Further on in the same story appears a still more striking instance of the use of the setting for contrast:

> "There are not many happinesses so complete as those that are snatched under the shadow of the sword. They sat together and laughed, calling each other openly by every pet name that could move the wrath of the gods. The city below them was locked up in its own torments. Sulphur fires blazed in the streets; the conches in the Hindu temples screamed and bellowed, for the gods were

inattentive in those days. There was a service in the great Mohammedan shrine, and the call to prayer from the minarets was almost unceasing. They heard the wailing in the houses of the dead, and once the shriek of a mother who had lost a child and was calling for its return. In the gray dawn they saw the dead borne out through the city gates, each litter with its own little knot of mourners. Wherefore they kissed each other and shivered."

In the last scene, on the other hand, the surroundings fulfill their customary office of expressing the meaning or essential quality of the action, in this case the extreme desolation consequent upon Ameera's death.

"Then he thought that before he had departed he would look at the house wherein he had been master and lord. There was a break in the weather, and the rank earth steamed with vapour.

He found that the rains had torn down the mud pillars of the gateway, and the heavy wooden gate that had guarded his life hung lazily from one hinge. There was grass three inches high in the courtyard; Pir Khan's lodge was empty, and the sodden thatch sagged between the beams. A gray squirrel was in possession of the verandah, as if the house had

> been untenanted for thirty years instead of three days. Ameera's mother had removed everything except some mildewed matting. The tick-tick of the little scorpions as they hurried across the floor was the only sound in the house. Ameera's room and the other one where Tota had lived were heavy with mildew; and the narrow staircase leading to the roof was streaked and stained with rain-borne mud."

The Relation of Setting to "Atmosphere."

Upon the local color of the story seems to depend somewhat directly that intangible quality termed "tone" or "atmosphere." Such a story as *Cranford* may almost be said to consist of "atmosphere," since its action is of the slightest and its characters are all simple humdrum folk, with no psychological subtleties or dramatic crises. Less dominant, but no less unmistakable, is the tone of Jane Austen's or of Trollope's novels: and in all these cases the pervasive local color seems largely responsible for the effect produced. In Miss Wilkins's *A New England Nun*, the first sentences not only place the action in surroundings essential to it, but strike the keynote of the story as well.

> "It was late in the afternoon, and the light was waning. There was a difference in the look of the tree shadows out in the yard. Somewhere in the distance cows were lowing

> and a little bell was tinkling; now and then a farm-wagon tilted by, and the dust flew; some blue-shirted laborers with shovels over their shoulders plodded past; little swarms of flies were dancing up and down before the people's faces in the soft air. There seemed to be a gentle stir arising over everything for the mere sake of subsidence —a very premonition of rest and hush and night."

As one reads the words, the atmosphere of the story exhales from them, its beauty of quietness, its gentle aloofness from all intense activity, all harsh effort. One is instantly prepared to fall under the spell of Louisa's cloistered life in its exquisite orderings and still delights, to such degree that the threatened intrusion into it of the clumsy, vigorous, well-intentioned Joe Daggett startles the æsthetic sense like a profanation.

In stories of mystery or horror the characteristic atmosphere is frequently heightened by the skilful use of a certain environment. Much of the effectiveness of Hawthorne's *Ethan Brand* doubtless arises from the visual accompaniments of the action, the lonely lime-kiln on the mountain side, its fierce flames mingling weirdly with the moonlight, the deep shadows, the great dead trees, the fallen leaves, the rude hut; while the entire change of tone on the

following morning expresses itself in the brilliant sun, and the clear air, the white clouds ascending from hills to sky, the view of the village below nestled in the valley, and the arrival of the stage coach with its joyous bustle. In the first paragraph of *The Fall of the House of Usher* Poe sketches the house with its surroundings in such fashion as to convey at once the atmosphere of horror with which the tale is charged.

> "During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country; and at length found myself, as the shades of evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher. I know not how it was; but with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say insufferable; for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable, because poetic, sentiment, with which the mind usually receives even the sternest natural images of the desolate or terrible. I looked upon the scene before me—upon the mere house and the simple landscape features of the domain, upon the bleak walls, upon the vacant eye-like windows,

upon a few rank sedges, and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees—with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveller upon opium —the bitter lapse into every-day life, the hideous dropping of the veil. There was an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart, an unredeemed dreariness of thought, which no goading of the imagination could torture into aught of the sublime. What was it—I paused to think—what was it that so unnerved me in the contemplation of the House of Usher? It was a mystery all insoluble; nor could I grapple with the shadowy fancies that crowded upon me as I pondered. I was forced to fall back upon the unsatisfactory conclusion, that while, beyond doubt, there *are* combinations of very simple natural objects which have the power of thus affecting us, still the analysis of this power lies among considerations beyond our depth. It was possible, I reflected, that a mere different arrangement of the particulars of the scene, of the details of the picture, would be sufficient to modify, or perhaps to annihilate, its capacity for sorrowful impression; and acting upon this idea, I reined my horse to the precipitous brink of a black

> and lurid tarn that lay in unruffled lustre by the dwelling, and gazed down—but with a shudder more thrilling than before—upon the remodelled and inverted images of the gray sedge, and the ghastly tree-stems, and the vacant and eye-like windows."

Names as Directly Descriptive of Character.

The more explicit recognition in recent times of the value of localizing the story, of making the setting an integral part of the action, declares itself even in a matter apparently so minor as the naming of the characters. Here the influence of the locus is readily apparent, though in earlier times only the qualities of individual character were indicated in the names bestowed by the author. Notably was this the case in the early English drama, where the characters in the morality-plays, representing abstract ideas or qualities, bore of necessity such names as Death, Beauty, Lusty Juventus, Abominable Living, Everyman, Good-deeds, Knowledge, etc. In the allegory occur similar names, since the characters are types or personified qualities rather than real individuals. Thus we have in *The Pilgrims' Progress*, Giant Despair, Great-Heart, Christian, Mercy, Faith, Fearful, Hopeful, and others; in Spenser's *Faery Queene*, Fidelia, Speranza, Charissa, Sansfoy, Sansjoy, Sansloy, etc.

A somewhat less direct but still unmistakable conveyance of individual traits through the names be-

stowed upon characters may be noted even in modern novels. Becky Sharp was surely christened with a purpose; perhaps, too, good old Dobbin. So, doubtless, were Pecksniff, Peggotty, Jane Murdstone, Uriah Heep, Scrooge, Rosa Dartle, and the Brothers Cheeryble. Even Mr. Kipling's names, such as Mrs. Hauksbee, Young Cubbon, Lieutenant Golightly, Pluffles, Ortheris, and Aurelian M'Goggin, are infused with a suggestion of individual personality.

Such suggestion tends, however, in the development of the art of fiction to become more and more remote. The development of character from the broad types represented in the allegory into a complex individuality, has tended to render directly descriptive names inadequate; while at the same time a growing sense of the conditioning power of environment has brought into prominence the larger social influences upon individual names. Without losing any fine suggestion of personality a well-chosen name is unmistakably such as the time, the place, and the social order would have been likely to bestow in real life upon the character in question. Thus the names of Anthony Trollope's characters, appropriate enough to them as individuals, are markedly characteristic of the middle-class, semi-rural English clerical society in the early nineteenth century, which he painted with such minute fidelity. Jane Austen's names seem frequently, as witness Elizabeth Bennet, to have been

Names as Indirectly Suggestive of Character and Environment.

given in a sheer bravado of realism, as careless of individuality as is life itself, and insistent only upon strict consonance with the proprieties of the situation as a whole. There is, however, a subtle implication not only of social but of the deeper natural superiority in the name of Anne Eliot, as contrasted with that of Louisa Musgrove, while the names of Catherine Morland and Isabella Thorpe seem to suggest behind the differing antecedents and surroundings of the two girls, their diametrically opposed characters. It has frequently been noted that the names of Miss Wilkins's characters are all as distinctively of New England as is the idiom of their speech. Mr. Howells's persons also bear in their names the stamp of whatever community or social status they represent,—compare for example Lemuel Barker and Silas Lapham with Bromfield Corey and Charles Bellingham. Stevenson recognizes this larger social element in the choice of names when he praises Heywood in the following terms:

> "Purser and Clinton, names of pirates; Scarlet and Bobbington, names of highwaymen. He had the touch of names, I think. No man I ever knew had such a sense, such a tact, for English nomenclature; Rainsforth, Lacy, Audley, Forrest, Acton, Spencer, Frankford—so his names run." *

* *Letters*, I., 281.

The "touch of names" in its perfection implies, as has been indicated, not alone consideration of the individual characters of the story, but of the entire locus of these characters. And this locus ultimately resolves itself, to recall the earlier portions of this chapter, into a feature of plot-structure. Once again, then, our deeper consideration of a feature in the story which seemed more or less isolated, has served to merge it in some other element, and finally in the action itself. If the naming of persons in the story serves, however remotely or subtly, to characterize them as individuals and to fix their social, temporal, or geographical positions, it thereby resolves itself directly or indirectly into one of the active forces of the plot-structure. This is doubtless evident with regard to the suggestive names already instanced; but no more striking illustration can be adduced than Maud-Evelyn, the dead heroine of Mr. Henry James's story thus entitled. Here the force which in the end triumphs over Lavinia's happiness, Marmaduke's common-sense, Lady Emma's determined scepticism, is the illusion created by the hopelessly credulous aspiration of Maud-Evelyn's bourgeoise papa and mamma, and wholly expressed in the name given to their child. The names of characters, then, like everything else in the tale, are "in intention narrative," are "part and parcel of the business of the story."

The Relation of Names to the Story's Action.

The title of the story involves a problem universally recognized by the critics. In the reading of a new book its title influences all but the most partisan adherents of particular authors: and when the author is unknown is often the sole guide. It is true that a good title cannot save a poor story, but a poor title may seriously handicap a good one.

The Value of a Good Title.

The sources of titles are numerous. The most obvious and hence the one most frequently resorted to is the name of the hero or heroine, or both, as *Tom Jones, Jane Eyre, David Copperfield, Lorna Doone, Pamela, Emma, Henry Esmond, The Newcomes, Adam Bede, Paul and Virginia, Lord Ormont and His Aminta.* The name of hero or heroine may be varied either by the addition of some descriptive epithet or by the substitution of some more ceremonious appellation, either seriously or humorously acquired. Instances of such variation are *John Halifax, Gentleman, Peveril of the Peak, Anne of Geierstein, The Honorable Peter Stirling, Diana of the Crossways, The Three Musketeers, The Vicar of Wakefield, The Count of Monte Cristo, The Master of Ballantræ, The Lady of the Aroostook, The Queen of Sheba, William the Conqueror.* This variation merges imperceptibly into the title more definitely descriptive of hero or heroine, such as *The Man Without a Country, A New England Nun, A Village Singer, A Chance Acquaintance, The Ambitious Guest.*

The Sources of Titles.

The title may name the scene of the story, as *The Mill on the Floss, Cranford, Mansfield Park, Bleak House, The House of the Seven Gables, Kenilworth, Middlemarch, The Castle of Otranto.* Or it may suggest the time in which the events of the story take place, as *One Summer, In the Golden Days, When Knighthood was in Flower;* or both time and place, as *The Last Days of Pompeii.*

Sometimes it names one or more of the prime forces in the story, as *Pride and Prejudice, Persuasion, The Princess Aline, The Gold-Bug, The Great Stone Face.* It may indicate the goal of the story, as do *The Moonstone, The Naulahka, The Mystery of Edwin Drood, The Murders in the Rue Morgue, The Spoils of Poynton.* These titles suggest at once that the story unravels the mystery or determines the uncertainty connected with these things or people,—tells how the Naulahka was found, and who bore away the spoils of Poynton. Thus they imply the whole story, as do, more specifically, such titles as *The Incarnation of Krishna-Mulvaney, The Rise of Silas Lapham, The Damnation of Theron Ware, The Ordeal of Richard Feverel, The Revolt of "Mother," The Light that Failed.* Instead of summarizing the story, however, the title may rather describe it or state its meaning. In the former class of titles fall *A Modern Instance, The Portrait of a Lady, A Humble Romance, A Study in Scarlet;* in the latter, *Vanity Fair, Never too Late to Mend, Put Yourself in His Place, Sense and*

Sensibility, Benefits Forgot, But Yet a Woman, The Sowers, Thrown Away.

The requisites for a good title are pretty generally understood to be appropriateness and power to arouse interest, together with such brevity as may be consistent with these. If sufficiently suggestive of the story to afford some slight clue to its nature, the reader's curiosity is stimulated; and if finally accepted, after the book has been read, as specifically appropriate to it, his sense of fitness is satisfied. The clue offered by the title should, however, be neither too meager nor too generous in its revelation of the story. No title could be at once more interesting and more essentially appropriate than *The Man Without a Country*. Nor does it tell too much, the fatal defect of titles such as *Sense and Sensibility*, *Put Yourself in His Place*, and *Never too Late to Mend*. These are so explicitly appropriate that they arouse no interest. But a title suggestive of the theme or meaning of a story need not necessarily tell too much, as *Vanity Fair* bears witness.

The Qualities of a Good Title.

A good title should be so inseparable from the story that the one could never come to mind without the other. There are few which sustain this test, but they fix the standard. An ineffective or misleading title makes discord in an otherwise artistic narrative; and a successful title is the last—sometimes it seems the hardest-won—triumph of the story-teller.

EXERCISES.

1. Alter the setting of *The Vicar of Wakefield* as to time and country. How is the story otherwise modified by this alteration? How could the "atmosphere" of the altered story be described, as contrasted with that of the original?

2. What elements in *The Mill on the Floss* and *Pride and Prejudice* are due to the setting of each story? What elements are wholly independent of it?

3. In *Pride and Prejudice*, why is Darcy's place described in some detail, while the Bennet house appears to the reader only in the few meager hints dropped during Lady Catherine's visit?

4. What structural justification exists for the description of the Lapham parlor in *The Rise of Silas Lapham?*

5. How does the setting of the first love-scene in *Richard Feverel* condition the atmosphere of the scene? What office has the storm in chapter 42?

6. Analyze carefully in any good short story the use of the setting.

7. In *The Revolt of "Mother"* how is the setting contributory to the action of the story? Answer the same question with reference to several other short stories by various writers.

8. *a*. Describe, as for the opening paragraphs of a short story, the setting of the story, so as to convey precisely the "atmosphere" of the tale as a whole. Ask some competent person to read what you have

written and to describe the "atmosphere" as thus conveyed to him. On this basis determine the success or failure of your description, revising it if necessary.

b. Give reasons for your choice of this particular environment, showing precisely how and why it is essential to the action.

9. Describe the house in which the hero or heroine of your projected story lives; or some characteristic room in the house closely identified with the hero or heroine. Do this not with a view to using the description in the story but solely to aid you in visualizing the environment of your characters. In like manner describe the city or village in which your hero or heroine lives, or its most characteristic street, its natural surroundings, the conditions of social or industrial life in that locality.

10. After careful reading of several short stories or novels of a realistic type, explain the names given to the principal characters. Do these names evidence due regard to local, temporal, and social conditions as well as to individual characteristics?

11. Set down the titles of all the stories or novels you can remember and classify them as to source. Criticise each title on the basis of the two requisites named in the text. Which title seems to you the most successful? Why?

12. Write out all possible titles for some story of your own and choose one from among them on the basis of the tests named.

INDEX TO AUTHORS AND TITLES QUOTED

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