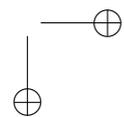
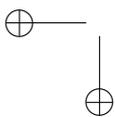
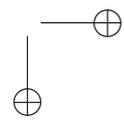
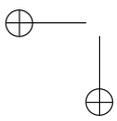
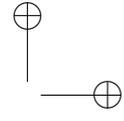
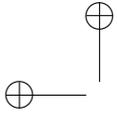
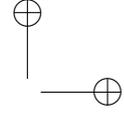
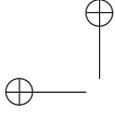


**RICHARD KANE LOOKS AT LIFE**



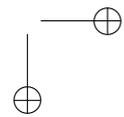
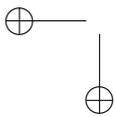


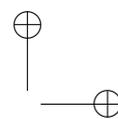
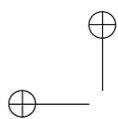


**RICHARD KANE LOOKS AT LIFE**

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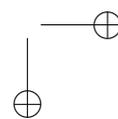
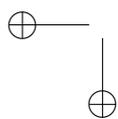
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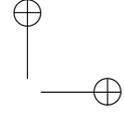
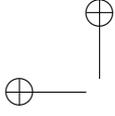




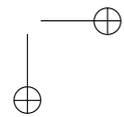
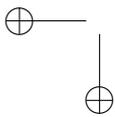
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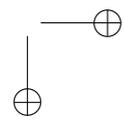
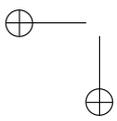
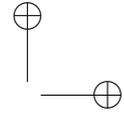
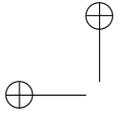
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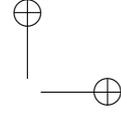
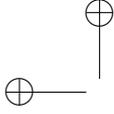




TO  
WENDELL T. AND MARY L. BUSH  
WITH AFFECTIONATE APPRECIATION



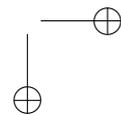
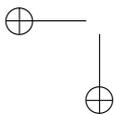


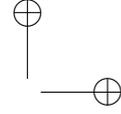
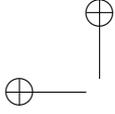


## PREFACE

The characteristic emotions and ideas of our generation may, when they are dead, be codified in books, but they are alive now in the hearts and minds of young men. If I mistake not, they are peculiarly living in that small steady stream of undergraduates who, almost forgotten in the noise made by their more hectic classmates, have come to move with grace and pleasure through the regions of the mind. I have selected one of them, Richard Kane, as a type of that sensitive American youth which is trying to find for itself an order out of contemporary chaos, and an inner peace for its own troubled spirit. I have met Richard Kanes all over – dozens of them on the campus where I teach, many of them only recently away from a campus, on their way to or from Europe, at cafés in Paris or among the ruins of Girgenti, lonely in small towns in the South or West, or at desks in publishing houses in New York. I have come to recognize the type almost infallibly. It seems to me numerous and important.

I thought it would be interesting and possibly illuminating to take one of these youths with candor and simplicity, through the characteristic spiritual adventures which a sensitive son of the middle class is likely to have in college, and, partly because of college,



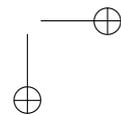
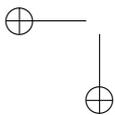


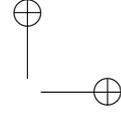
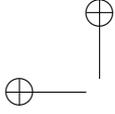
afterward. In so doing, I thought I might incidentally be presenting a picture of the strivings and possible salvation of that part of the younger generation whose future is, perhaps, more important than that of its more advertised brothers. These contemporary young men, because they are at once honest and imaginative, may contribute not a little in the next quarter of a century to the humanization and enrichment of American life. Their presence, in increasing numbers, is itself a contribution.

I have tried to trace the signal events in the history of Richard's spirit, as they revealed themselves to his slightly older teacher and friend. As a friend, I may have been too gentle with him, and as his teacher have had too external an understanding. That is for the reader, who possibly knows Richard better than I do, to judge.

I. E.

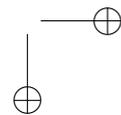
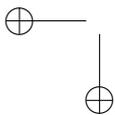
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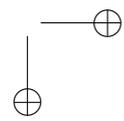
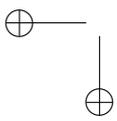
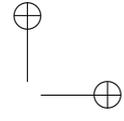
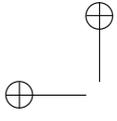


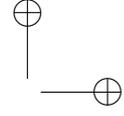
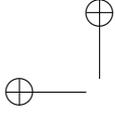


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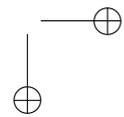
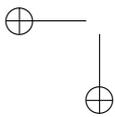
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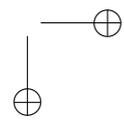
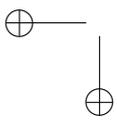
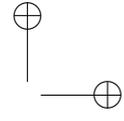
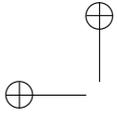


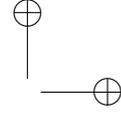
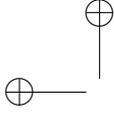




**RICHARD KANE LOOKS AT LIFE**



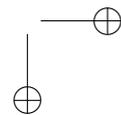
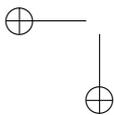


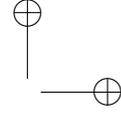
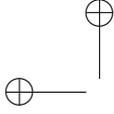


### **RICHARD KANE GOES TO COLLEGE**

In the college where I happen to be teaching, there drift into my office between April and June of each year a dozen or more young men who come, in varying degrees of depression and confusion, to ask advice about a career. The only things they are clear about are the things they do not wish to do. In most instances these are precisely the things that their families had wished them to do when they came to college. They are the sons of middle-class parents who look upon a college education, which they have probably not had, as a vestibule to one of the genteel professions. These youths come expecting to be, and expected to be, pillars of society. They end by not wishing to be pillars of society at all. What do they want and what has happened to them in the interval between their college entrance examinations and their college diploma?

I have watched Richard Kane through the transformation and through the sequel as well. My first acquaintance with him had about it something of the restraint that inevitably surrounds the teacher-student



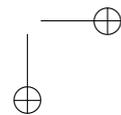
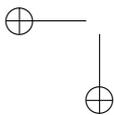


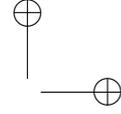
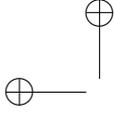
RICHARD KANE

relation. I remember Richard first as a freshman. I had him in an introductory course in philosophy. He was then a round-faced stripling with the imprint of the preparatory school still upon him. I recall even how he would always automatically start to rise when called upon to answer a question. He was blond and well-groomed, had pleasant, quiet manners, and a well-modulated voice. I knew the type: the less objectionable fraternity man. He was clearly one of the sort that makes college teaching, with all its routine and limitations, one of the world's most amiable professions. He was that essence of warm-hearted intelligence that renders any attractive college boy so much more interesting than he is likely to be five years after his graduation.

In the midst of lecturing I would catch myself watching his singularly agreeable smile spread, a note of pleased surprise, across his face. I would find myself guessing as he walked out after class whether he was going into the school of law or the school of business. From the beginning I do not think I had any sentimental illusions about him. 'Such a nice boy,' I remarked to an elderly colleague as Richard passed us in the corridor, 'although hardly dazzling as a philosopher.' 'A nice boy these days,' he replied, 'is something to be grateful for.'

Richard made it a habit, beginning with his sophomore year, to drop in to see me occasionally. With a frequent ripple of a smile crossing his features, he would stay for a few minutes, ostensibly to ask ques-

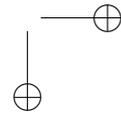
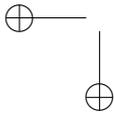


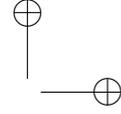
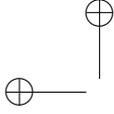


### GOES TO COLLEGE

tions about a point that had been left unsettled in class, or to get a bibliographical reference that he might perfectly well have found for himself in the Library. Soon he dropped the pretexts and came to talk without concealment about his soul. He would have hated the word, and, in any case, whatever I learned about that spiritual possession of his was largely inferential. I had learned through considerable experience with undergraduates to find most meat in their confessions by noting what they omitted from their recitals.

One comes to think of one's friends in a characteristic attitude or moment, and the image that I have of Richard is not my initial one of a round-faced freshman, still verbally awkward and adolescent. Three years of college are sometimes a miracle of transformation, and the picture of Richard that has become a favorite stereotype with me is the one he made in the frame of my office one April afternoon in his senior year. He had come in to talk to me about what he should do for a living, and incidentally to pour out his heart on the subject of college education. He had changed from the embarrassed yearling to the self-possessed adult, though he was still only twenty. He had learned to talk without embarrassment and at once with casualness and distinction. There had been nothing sufficiently hard about his life yet to rob him of an essential sweetness; one was impressed most by the gentle eyes in his firmly modeled face. And I remember still how much struck I was by the laughing lightness with which he





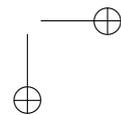
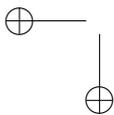
RICHARD KANE

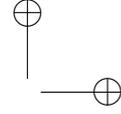
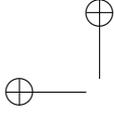
could manage to talk about themes which were not for him laughing matters.

Between his freshman and his senior years, in those little afternoon talks we had had, in an occasional walk through the Park together, and at occasional symphony concerts – I had had the pleasure of introducing him to orchestral music – I had learned a good deal about Richard. I had found out as much, at least, as any professor, however human he tries to be, can gather from any student, however truthful the latter imagines himself.

Richard Kane had come to college from the bosom of a family living within commuting distance of New York. His father was a cotton merchant of adequate income and success, and there was nothing of distinction in his life, his interests, his ancestry, or his career. Commutation absorbed him more than Titians, and aside from a weekly journal of current events and a novel which he borrowed from the bookclub and did not read, he read nothing. Mrs. Kane's life was bounded by bridge in the winter and plans for the summer. Mr. Kane's horizons had latterly extended to golf.

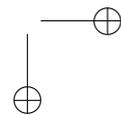
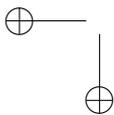
Richard was sent to college in due course to fill in, as did every one who could get through the college entrance examinations, the four years between high school and a career. Every one, including Richard, supposed he was going to be a lawyer. Even if he did not actually practice law, it was a good thing to know in business.

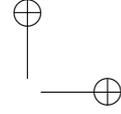
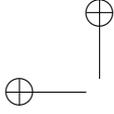




#### GOES TO COLLEGE

At college something unaccountable happened to Richard. It was something that I knew, in the face of all the caustic remarks made about undergraduates, happens to many. His education began to take. He came to love poetry. By some simple old-fashioned music an English professor communicated the secret to him, and by the end of his sophomore year he was reading Chaucer for pleasure. He could not have explained just what made poetry suddenly alive to him. At high school it had been so many rhetorical lines printed affectedly halfway across the page. Perhaps it was a hypnosis in the professor's voice: certainly that particular pedagogue read verse so that it was at once a picture and a passionate music. Language with him became a wonderful mystic vehicle of communion, loaded with shaded meanings and overtones Richard had never before known were possible to words. It may have been the gift of having had a rare teacher; certainly even the football players listened to this man entranced as he made them gaze, so far as was possible to young American athletes, with the eyes of English poets upon the world. Whatever the cause, from his sophomore year on Richard found himself discovering in Wordsworth and Keats and Shelley and Spenser a new dimension to his experience, almost a new planet. More thrilling even than the finding of the poets themselves was the discovery that it was possible to be a poet in essence, and look upon and meet experience as a poet might meet it. So that Richard, to whom it had only once occurred to write



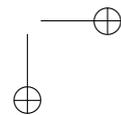
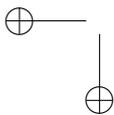


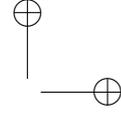
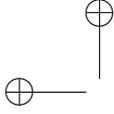
RICHARD KANE

poetry, found himself filled with the urgency to turn into verse sensations of sunset along the river, or that turbid welter of emotion produced in him the first time he heard the Pathétique.

A little later a course in fine art, even through the pale incitement of black-and-white reproductions and the killing refrigeration of a card catalogue lecture, gave him a pair of wide and eager eyes to look out upon the shapes and colors of the world. In his junior year he came in contact with philosophy. A lot of it was mere lingo and a lot more mere mystery, but these vast and picturesque guesses as to the nature of things began to stir his adolescent heart. He was moved by them in a way not unlike that with which he was electrified by those incomprehensible moving masses of sound that at concerts at Carnegie Hall were to him real though vague rhapsodies. The language of philosophy was certainly far from human. But it did in a roundabout sort of way appear to be concerned with just those ultimate human values about which he would find himself talking to his roommate in what the college daily in an annual editorial called the 'midnight hour.'

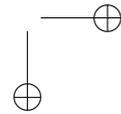
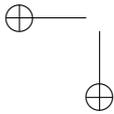
Richard ran into others at college to whom these things spoke and mattered. College had become for him these last years, all the comic weeklies to the contrary notwithstanding, a place of intellectual wonder and refreshment and delight. There was a good deal of it, to be sure, for which he was developing unmistakable and unconcealed contempt. There was the foolishness

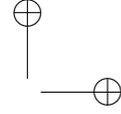
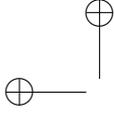




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of the fraternities, for one thing. Richard, because of his prepossessing face and well-pressed clothes, had been rushed into one as a freshman. For a little while he had swallowed the adolescent delusion that a trio of Greek letters could cement a miscellaneous group of American youths into a mystic sodality of sympathy and interest. All the members of his chapter did have something in common: no one of them was working his way through college. They all came from comfortable homes in which there were pianos, phonographs, bridge parties, automobiles. They all had come to college as to a cross between a finishing and a pre-professional school. They were decent, amiable-mannered boys in whom even questionable morals seldom interfered with good taste. They talked about books and ideas on those few occasions when faculty members came to dinner. Richard soon came to realize what the talk the other evenings amounted to. He tired of the weekly meetings devoted to house rules and house expenses and interfraternity agreements and plans for athletic rallies. There was nothing but weariness in luncheon conversations devoted to campus politics, to speculation as to how many members of the house would make a team or a publication; one sickened of long yawning evening sessions of smut or elephantine humor. On the whole, his fraternity group were particularly decent boys; gin and sex and the hectic folderol of college life played a smaller part with them than with most. But they were dull and meaningless at best. By the end of his sophomore year Richard had not been near his

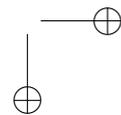
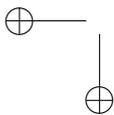


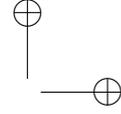
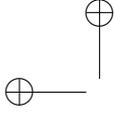


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fraternity house for six months. One Monday evening he was solemnly brought up on charges of disloyalty. He attended the meeting, but could not help laughing outright at the absurd solemnity of the proceedings. He was dropped ignominiously from the chapter roll.

For the 'activities,' too, Richard had developed an attitude that was a cross between a shudder and a shrug. It was natural enough, since he had been on the high-school paper, that he should gravitate the first month of his freshman year to the college daily. For a month it had seemed to him vastly important whether or not he made the Associate News Board. It was significant, and it seemed of cosmic urgency, this clatter of typewriters pounding out the details of basketball and football and track, and the rumor among the freshman cubs of events in high campus politics. He discovered soon enough and well enough what campus activities amounted to. If they constituted, as the college leaders assured him, a replica of the big outside world, it was one he would well wish to avoid. He could already see Filbert, the editor-in-chief of the daily, making his way in the realm of after-college by precisely those suave methods of cordiality and compromise that had made him within two years so outstanding a campus figure. He observed how little it was the activities themselves, and how much it was their publicity value, that interested these embryonic leaders of social and political affairs. It was a replica of a larger adult order, that was clear enough. It was filled with the same snobbishness and cliqueness in which

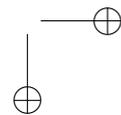
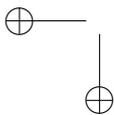


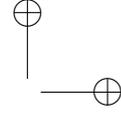
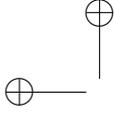


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these politically gifted youths were imitating their elders. It was ruled by the same small motives. It was a fine training for that sort of thing if that was the sort of thing you wanted training for. Richard did not. Long before he knew what Kant meant by the *ding-an-sich*, he knew what he himself meant by it. He made and continued to make a sharp distinction between those who were interested in things-in-themselves and those who were interested merely in the social appearances and political incidences of things. For three years he continued, although not with a full heart, to follow externally the accredited routine of college life. He stayed on the paper, though it bored him, and he came to be taken as the incomprehensible gentle cynic of the staff. He went to the fraternity dances once in a while, and wondered why. He went to the big football games, and from force of habit and animal contagion waved flags and burst into cheers with the herd. Increasingly the feeling overwhelmed him that it was meaningless, and that the sooner he broke with it the better.

It would not have depressed him so much if it were only the routine gayeties and 'life' of the college that came to be for him without significance or urgency or beauty. He almost sympathized with those of his classmates who fled to smut and gin and campus politics from the worse boredom of courses. Here and there in each of his four years at college he had had one or two courses, come in contact with one or two men, who had made him a citizen in a whole new world of thought and imagination: The English professor (for

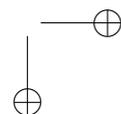
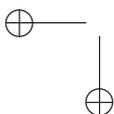


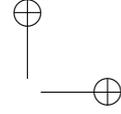
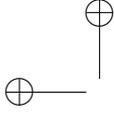


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Richard there was only one), a biologist whose lucidity and precision gave Richard in a course in evolution the first feeling he ever had for what scientific method meant, a scholar in his course in Middle English who managed to throw a golden dust of romance over the history of words. These men in their courses, and occasionally by a word dropped in their offices, had already emancipated Richard from Babbittism. What was even better, he had gotten beyond emancipation. He had become domesticated in the society of beautiful and stimulating images and ideas.

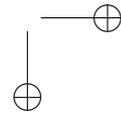
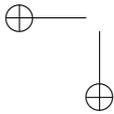
Not but that there was a great deal of what passed for instruction that left Richard something worse than cold. By the end of his junior year he thought he should not be able to endure another week a lecturer whose droning, depressed voice informed his young hearers that lecturing was simply his business, and that he wished the real work of scholarship did not have to be interrupted by this hack tutoring of boys in intellectual swaddling clothes. One of his teachers had told him wearily he was sick of 'pushing the perambulator.' He knew, too, that the lecture system, inherited from the time when books were rare manuscripts, had become an anachronism with the omnipresence of the printed word. Not infrequently he would cut a class and put in an hour at the Library where a short communion with a book would spare him the long, dull inanities of a lecturer or the inept comments of classmates forced to talk in a discussion course.

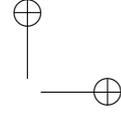
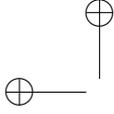




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The monotone of the bored scholar was tiresome, but positively irritating to Richard were the calculated brilliancies that the smart lecturers would aim with sure fire at their undergraduate audiences. The snappy line, the scholastic *bon mot*, the pedantic *jeu d'esprit*, were all fearfully wearing in a classroom. So also were the sly innuendoes at sex or the revolutionary cynicism that some of the lecturers permitted themselves. Yet it was from lectures glimmering with some such light, however gaudy, rather than from the droning recital of facts or the routine precision of analysis, that Richard got whatever stimulation came from his courses. There were overtones in the lectures of some of his professors that were unmistakable. It was to be expected that men of academic leanings should sniff a little at the cults of modernity, materialism, standardization, and mediocrity that had become the current coin of contemporary life. One of Richard's teachers was fond of reading Pericles' Funeral Oration to the Athenians and contrasting it with Babbitt's speech to the Rotarians. Richard got the point. And merely coming in contact daily with a few men who appeared to move absorbed among irrelevant and eternal things made Richard suspect a little the transient glories which his bourgeois background had impelled him to hunt for in the world. Richard had heard it remarked that philosophy was good because it was good for nothing. He thought he saw what that meant. It was a point he would have to reckon with in one form or another many times before and after getting his degree.

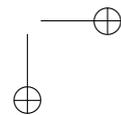
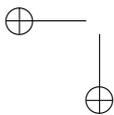


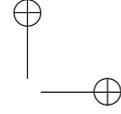
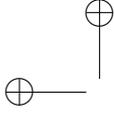


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There was a little clique Richard ran into who emphasized for him the distinction between the things that were worth while because they were useful and the things that were justified because they were worth while. To this group books and ideas really seemed to matter, and to these goodness, beauty, and truth seemed to have become in no small measure the daily bread of life. They moved passionately and with a singular constancy among those realms in which Richard had only lately learned to be at home.

They were the first with whom Richard had ever been thrown in contact to whom ideas and the arts were natural and intense adventures. Much as he admired them, he felt outside the group both in his lack of passion and information, and in his discovery of how much the standards of bourgeois suburbia had come to play in his life. It took him a little while to overcome a feeling of discomfort because Samuel Fitch never combed his hair or had his clothes pressed. He could never quite get used to the odd hours and sleepless nights of Albert Mantz, that amazingly informed dark-haired nineteen-year-old. Everything that was counted respectable among the accredited smooth campus group seemed to matter not at all to these differentists. Several of these boys were very poor and were working their way through college by all sorts of unsavory odd jobs from carrying dishes in a restaurant to doing night-shift in a slaughter-house. None of them came from that little island of comfortable



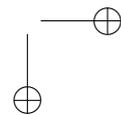
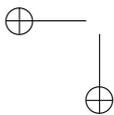


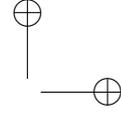
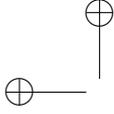
#### GOES TO COLLEGE

respectability in which Richard's life and family had been set.

Socially in most respects he could not help having for them a mingled feeling of superiority and pity. In every other respect he felt infinitely their inferior, especially in the way of passion and information. He would be present, silent, while this strange intense band would discuss modern art. He could not, if he had wanted to, have discussed Manet, Dégas, and Cézanne, since, until meeting these new friends, he had never heard of them. He could listen with open-eyed fascination to Bruntwig talk till four in the morning about early Flemish painting or Hindu philosophy, or whatever odd field he had with quite ingenuous fever been exploring the last weeks. Richard could have imagined himself getting interested in any of these matters, but the way in which they had become living and exclusive absorptions for these classmates of his implied a devotion and a lyric intensity that were beyond his reach. Religion was an interesting enough subject, but he could only look on in interested and puzzled amazement at the lacerations of spirit that the quarrels between faith and reason seemed to provoke in that cynical young Jew, Harold Rosenbaum.

To this group campus activities were nonexistent, save for the little literary magazine which they published almost unnoticed. As for dances at fraternity houses or functions at the grand hotels, those familiar doings seemed to occur on a planet different from that on which these young men lived. They enjoyed



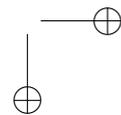
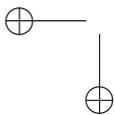


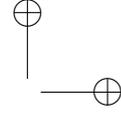
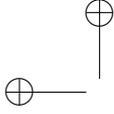
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themselves well enough, and not a little of the joy was Rabelaisian, but their very Rabelaisianism seemed to ring more authentic than those routine and formal dissipations which occupied the time of *l'homme moyen sensuel* of the college.

Nor, Richard found, did these young eccentrics take their courses too seriously. Kit Flandran, the most agile-minded of the group, and the one whose urbane manners made him most akin to the people Richard had previously been close to in college, 'cracked' an 'A' in every course. But if he had been rating his courses, he would doubtless have given none of them higher than a 'C.' So far as Richard could judge, college existed for him and his cronies chiefly as a place where they could companionably burn incense to their common gods.

It was hard, as a matter of fact, for Richard to make out just what their common gods were, or, indeed, if they had any. If one were to call them emancipated, one would have had to add that they had been emancipated from their cradles. Poverty had early taken the sheen off any illusions that eighteen years of comfortable life had left Richard's better-dressed and soft-mannered friends. Their sense of economic injustice was learned, not from books, but from their embittered hand-to-mouth existence. They could not very well consider what to do for a career since they had facing them the more pressing problem of how to get through the next year at college. They knew more about the underside of human existence at eighteen than some of

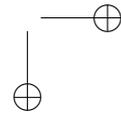
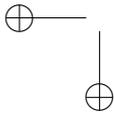


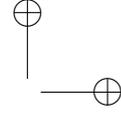
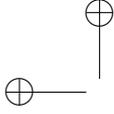


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Richard's fraternity brothers would know at sixty. If they doubted the righteous order of the universe, they had good personal reasons for their suspicions.

Yet, Richard saw, they had their gods. If they could have been brought to acknowledge them, and if they could have been made to use the words, they would have called them the 'things of the spirit.' They read the liberal weeklies, and taught Richard, who had been reading them literally, to read them in a new spirit, primarily for their revelations of current stupidity, not for their Utopias. Utopias had become for them, as Kit Flandran once explained it, simply additional chapters in the history of optimistic folklore. Their keen young eyes were centered with unreserved admiration only on what struck them as persistently, irretrievably beautiful, as sharp-edged with truth or irrelevantly eternal. They had the more love for such idols the more bitterly they condemned the world in which some of them had been involved up to their necks since the age of ten. They taught Richard what they had all been through, the growing-pains of sophistication, and from some of his favorite teachers Richard began to make certain clear distinctions between the worlds in which he was living, and that to which he must ultimately learn to make some adjustment. On the one hand was the realm of practical economic necessity and social ambition. It was in the hope of his making a secure rung for himself on that ladder that his parents had sent him to college. On the other hand was the realm of clear light and emancipation to which he had been

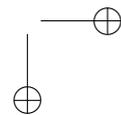
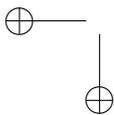


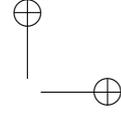
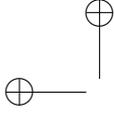


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introduced since he was a freshman. And now, on a golden day in April, much less smiling than usual, and with a look of young perplexity in his eyes, he came into my office for advice about a career.

It would have been easy to advise Richard if he had been a genius. He was not. He knew that he was not. He was simply one of a constant group who come to college and become genuinely attached to what its defamers call the 'higher life.' He was – he used the phrase himself – living beyond his intellectual income. He was a dilettante, an amateur, what he ruefully called himself, a 'nearly.' He knew good prose when he saw it. Memorable bits of it haunted him: I knew that one could not walk half an hour with him but that he would be certain to break into delighted quotation. But he had neither the flair nor the facility of the writer. He loved poetry. Ever since that magical course in English literature, poetry had sent, as he put it, 'shivers up his spine.' But I had to laugh outright at the one attempt at a sonnet he had shown me. He 'got' philosophy. He would regularly make a 'B,' even though he did write as a freshman that Platonic love was a tepid friendship between a young man and a young woman who were taking philosophy courses together. But he was neither technically accurate nor spiritually profound. He could never for the life of him state accurately Anselm's argument for the existence of God, and, beyond a certain point, he found Santayana a seagull philosopher whose swoopings were pretty to watch, but without any assignable meaning. He was



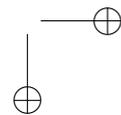
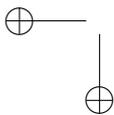


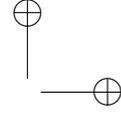
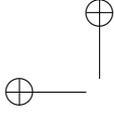
#### GOES TO COLLEGE

as much stirred by the craftsmanship and erudition of Frazer's 'Golden Bough' as by fine play in tennis. But he had neither the patience nor the exactness of the scholar.

There were two or three professions that he had thought of, and thought better of afterward. The first of these, though he was clearly no teacher, was teaching. The reasons for his consideration of that trade were simple and touching. Among the college teachers he had seen and known, he thought he detected something more closely approaching living the life of the spirit than was possible in any other calling in America. After all, here were men actually paid to pursue the study of subjects they loved and to discuss these subjects with not unreceptive young men. There were the long vacations (a curious reason, Richard reflected, for taking up a line of work), and the shelter from the pressure of competition in a brutal economic order. But he knew, too, that the pay was low and the routine dull. It would be fun to talk to boys about Keats once, but by the twentieth time would not even Keats become nauseous?

Ever since high school the thought of writing had entered his head. But he had seen too many of his older friends at college who had now been graduated and lapsed into singing the praises of soap or soup or feature films. It would be better to go into wholesale rope. He had even thought of the ministry. Religion, even in its current pale attenuation, did appear to stand for the life of the spirit, and foursquare against the things



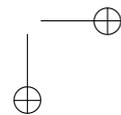
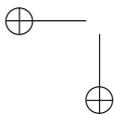


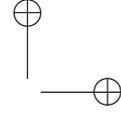
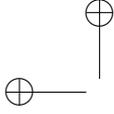
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of this world that he had come to detest. Evolution and Anatole France had made theology impossible; he had only the mildest touch of mysticism; and the ministry had in any case been made impossible by all the ministers he had ever known.

The simple fact of the matter was – it was distressing to have so private a phenomenon so publicly exhibited in my office – Richard was trying to save his soul. Facing him was the world in which, had he not been sickened by it in advance, I was sure he would do very well. His obvious clarity and grace and honesty had as much cash value as any course in salesmanship. Except for this Quixotic fact that Richard had taken his education seriously, I was sure that twenty-five years from now his own son would be drifting in, the son of a more successful father, for advice as to what he should do in a too imminent June.

But Richard had taken his education seriously and it was clear to him, among other things, that he could not, even if he wanted to, repeat his father's career on a grander scale. During his Christmas and Easter vacations at home he found himself bored, terribly, more than, in his desire to be affectionate, he cared or dared to admit, even to himself. He found there, and likewise at the resorts to which he and his family went for the summer, a blank and somewhat contemptuous uncomprehendingness of the things he had come to care about most. He was a little tired of trying to explain to his father just what philosophy was, and why any one should take a course in entomology. He



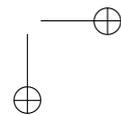
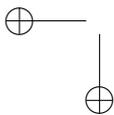


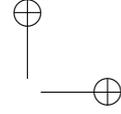
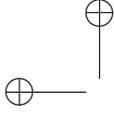
#### GOES TO COLLEGE

was wearied by the constant gibes at highbrows. There was almost terror in discovering that he was an alien in his dull and kindly home.

In his second year of college Richard worked during the summer in a law office and by the end of that apprenticeship he knew that he did not want to be a lawyer. Insurance and the bond business appealed to him even less. He had read 'Babbitt' and 'Main Street.' He did not want to be the one or live on the other.

I had watched Richard's analogues before in their first five years out of college. I knew his dilemma and I knew there was a chance of his getting over it. Five years hence Richard might be in the bond business, buying commutation tickets to Westwood, Long Island, and patting his first-born proudly on the head. That was a real and a comforting possibility. A home is for many a man a hiding-place for a heartache. I knew, however, that there was an ominous chance of his not getting over it. He might persist in going into some suburb of scholarship or art. He might teach in a preparatory school or become press agent for a balloon tire. I had seen a great number of young men who had tried in this strange way to flee the world. Or the pressure of family expectation, or the expectation of a family of his own, would send him into business of some sort. If he liked merely the labels and perfumes of spiritual things the eagerness would die and there would be no crucifixion of the spirit. He would subscribe to a symphony orchestra and to

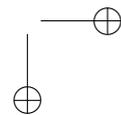
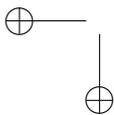


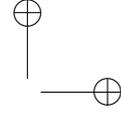
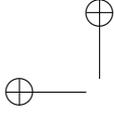


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the highbrow magazines. Or – and I knew it was no far-fetched possibility – he might experience real unhappiness. He would be living in two worlds, one dead, and the other powerless to be born. He would drift from one job to another. He would come back on haunting wistful visits to the campus. He would be a failure, practically and spiritually, and an omen for the enemies of higher education of what damage a college training could do. I knew the lightless roads and blind alleys he might drift into. But I could point out for him no clear avenue leading through charming vistas to a shining goal.

Richard had meanwhile been trying to find a way out for himself. He knew well enough that he would not be endowed simply because he loved to read Wordsworth, listen to Beethoven or look upon Rembrandt. Although he was half-consciously beginning to think of himself as an intellectual aristocrat, it was clear that he could not by virtue of that Olympian pretension enter into a leisure class. He did not even want to. Even as early as college he had been watching too many loafing exquisites lounge into decay. His urbane manners had admitted him to the company of gilded youths with more money to spend than he had. Edward Lawrence, always so immaculate in dress and so debonair in attitude, refused to fret about the problems of the world; he, having health and a capacity for robust enjoyments and a large income, had no problems of his own. Richard was continually struck by the



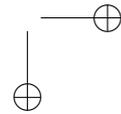
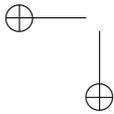


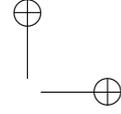
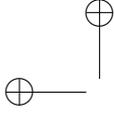
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thought of how bored this lazy young lordling would be before he was thirty.

The dilettante richlings certainly did not represent the drift and burden of collegiate opinion. Nor, Richard discovered, did the ardent young emancipates with whom he had of late been associating. There were Babbitts in the academic cloister and worldlings at eighteen. Richard had friends in the law school and the school of business who set down him and his newfound friends as wistful yearners, silly ninnies chasing wraiths. Von Bozen, now deep in courses in sales organization and office management, wanted, first and only, training for the capable performance of a good job. For him and for his type – there were hundreds of him at college – the liberal arts curriculum was simply a hurdle which must be crossed before one could reach the goal of the professional school. They resented the tosh of fancy prerequisites, and wondered why a man who was going to be a banker or bond salesman or lawyer should have to corrupt his fancy with the preoccupations of philosophy and English literature. What was college for if it did not help to turn you from a jobhunter into a jobholder? Ideas could wait; bread and butter could not. ‘At fifty,’ said von Bozen, ‘when I’ve made my pile, I’ll go in for culture. I’ll be able to afford it then.’

It was clear to Richard that these youths – and their teachers – were betraying the whole idea of liberal education. He would discover, in the catalogue of a Middle-Western university, a professorship of hog-raising, and shout with satiric glee. No one could have



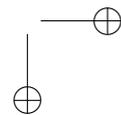
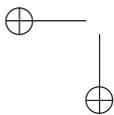


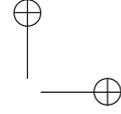
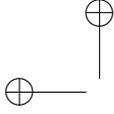
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converted him to accepting the presence of a school of business under the egis of a university devoted to the cultivation of the arts and sciences. It was delightful in his senior year to be taking a course in Middle English for which he had apparently no earthly use.

But if Richard had an increasing contempt for the hard-shelled utilitarians with whom the college was filled, he had little less for the irrelevant aesthetes. He laughed to watch them act as if they were idle young aristocrats, living in a Platonized and Arcadian Oxford, forever free from the demands of space and time and making money. One must be suspicious of these idealisms, living always in the air. One must beware of dividing the world into the pedestrian and the poetic, the utilitarian and the beautiful. These professors and *literati* might continue *ad nauseam* to exhibit the noblest corners of their souls. Practical life, even the major part of the life of the college, remained sordid, thin and mechanical. Intellectual life continued isolated and exotic. What gives body to a man's ideals – this much at least he had gotten from contemporary philosophy – is their relevance to a man's daily life. Only what ennobles and enriches actual living is in a vital and continuous sense ideal.

It was irritating to hear the intellectuals on the campus scoff so complacently at the vulgar world. It was becoming the accepted attitude among all who made any pretense to intelligence on the campus. Richard heard it over and over, urbanely from Kit Flandran, bitterly and grubbily from Harold Rosenbaum. For





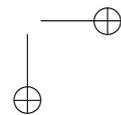
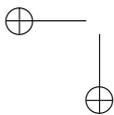
#### GOES TO COLLEGE

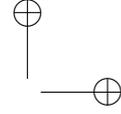
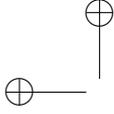
himself Plato still seemed wiser on the subject. He recalled how Socrates, after outlining the education of the philosophers in the 'Republic,' reminds his hearers of their obligation to the State. The latter had given them their education, and they were willy-nilly indebted for it. It was all very well for the new æsthetic saints to flee to their towers of ivory. But they fled – Richard had picked up the phrase from a book of John Dewey's – only to let the burly sinners rule the world.

These little emancipates, with their love of fine things and their desire to live in an ennobled civilization, might do much to bring it about. If they and all the allies of intelligence and beauty did not, then the age of brass or darkness would really be upon us. Even the golden moments toward which they fled at present might be made impossible by the universal flood of mechanism and selfishness that the more somber prophets were, not without reason, predicting.

Was it not possible to have in our age an idealism without foolishness and a practicality that was not all short-sightedness and vulgarity?

Once in a while Richard had met business men who were not Philistines, and idealists with a sense of responsibility and practical fact. Take Uncle Henry, for example. He was a competent and successful lawyer and you could tell by looking at him that he was efficient in the ways of the world. But he obviously maintained a live and continuous interest in the things for which Richard had come to care. It was fun to visit him in his fine library, or to go with him to hear music,





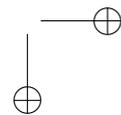
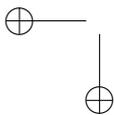
RICHARD KANE

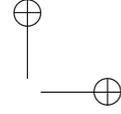
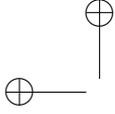
or to talk to him about Plato. In listening to him, Richard felt a mellowed comprehension of the ways of men not to be found commonly among his bookish teachers, and when he talked about public affairs they seemed set in a deeper and more spiritual perspective than Richard had commonly heard in conversations devoted to politics.

Richard knew, on the other hand, an executive at the university, a man of clear and obvious idealism; his mere executive talents would have been worth three times his academic salary. He was devoted in no half-hearted sense to education in the nobler acceptation of the term. Yet he had what academic people nearly always lacked, the sobering sense and efficient clarity that come from handling men and dealing practically with affairs.

Perhaps, it occurred to Richard, one could respect books without being merely bookish, love loveliness so much that one would want to realize it in something more public and permanent than dreams. Could not one be as devoted as ever to beauty and goodness and truth and yet – or therefore – try to shape the realm of practice and affairs a little more nearly after those ideal images?

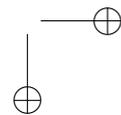
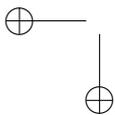
Richard turned these matters over and over in his mind, but came no nearer a solution. These spring days he found himself walking along the river discussing his future – and theirs – with like-minded friends. It was sickening to realize that nearly all those with whom education had taken were in the same boat. The

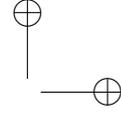
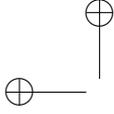




#### GOES TO COLLEGE

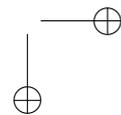
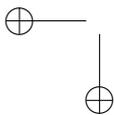
routine ruts were there to follow and none of them seemed worth following. His maiden aunt was right. College had unsettled him. If he had gone into an office when he was sixteen, these confusions would never have arisen. All that college had done for him, he reflected bitterly, was to unprepare him for life. He knew, when he came into my office, and when he left it, that neither I nor any one else could help him. But at twenty one must surely not give up, one must not make the ultimate compromise, without a struggle.

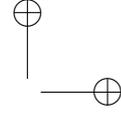
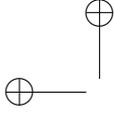




## HE GOES TO EUROPE

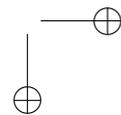
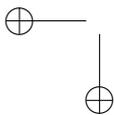
When Richard Kane arrived within two months of commencement, it was clear to nobody, least of all to himself, what he would do for a living. It was equally clear to Richard how and where, for the moment, he wished to live. It was wretched, this trying to decide on a career; it was even worse worrying about finding a job. And a job was, at least for the present, what Richard least longed for. It would close him in physically from nine to five and spiritually from dawn to dawn, just as he was beginning to find out for himself the wide and various ways of the world. It seemed a pity that just as his education was beginning to take, it was over. Perhaps – the glamorous thought passed through his mind – a year in Europe would give him a chance to find his bearings. Just what he was to do with that year he did not know. But he looked upon Europe, as do thousands of educated young Americans, as a graduate course in which, by a happy union of a steamer ticket, a chair on the boulevard, and a letter of credit, you came into your cultural inheritance and found your soul.

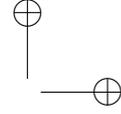
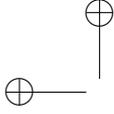




## GOES TO EUROPE

There were many reasons why Richard looked upon Europe as a salvation and a paradise. If college had done anything for him, it had given him a paradoxical sense of being at home in a continent that was to him so far a fable. Though the nearest he had got to contact with the Old World was a piquant week-end in Quebec, he felt that as a wanderer in England and on the Continent he would be not so much on a voyage of discovery as on one of recognition. His education, at least those features of it that had incited him most, had been a hearsay Odyssey in a trans-Atlantic heaven. It had given him a nostalgia for lands where he had never been and things that he had never known. It was far from being true that he felt any kinship or any special drawing toward contemporary Europe. That unhappy piece of earth seemed to him largely a mess of war ruins always imminently crackling into a new war flame. It was not the snarl of reparations or the hopes of British labor that he thought about. Europe rose in his imagination as a vivid and congenial museum of those beautiful things and thoughts and arts of life that had trickled through to him in the courses and conferences, the desultory reading and conversation that had constituted his four years at college. He had an absurd and gleeful sense that the hotels in England, even the railway hotels, must still, in some persistent, delightful way, be like those lively and lusty inns where Tom Jones changed his horses and his loves. He felt certain that he would feel more at home in them than he had ever felt in those standard resorts where, in

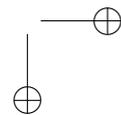
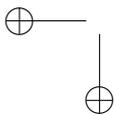


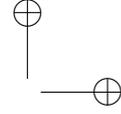
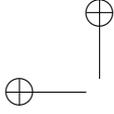


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his own country, he had spent many alien summers. France hardly called up devastated regions or recovered provinces. The tingling anticipation that he got from the word came largely from the thought of ordering coffee and rolls in syllables of that same elegant language in which Racine thundered and Molière laughed, or of going after dinner to the Comédie Française to hear those immortal utterances in living speech that was all clarity and loveliness and light. Somewhere – was it in Henry Adams? – he had read about learning to love Beethoven by accident in a German beer-garden. And often in the stuffy standardization of a Sunday afternoon audience in Carnegie Hall, he had thought how much finer the Seventh Symphony would sound in a Café Unter den Linden, how one might really get the essence of Beethoven if it were sounded in something like its own soil and origin.

Most of all, Europe had become for him a longed-for panorama of fulfillments for the eye. He could visualize almost the exact corner where, in the Uffizi Gallery at Florence, Andrea del Sarto's 'Madonna delle Arpe' stood. He felt himself trudging the crooked streets of old Hildesheim with the exhilaration of a man finding himself suddenly in a stained-glass Gothic century not his own. He fancied himself burying his nose, as he somehow imagined Anatole France spending his life, among the book-shelves on the quais along the Seine. He knew just how the shadows would loom large and long across the Gardens of the Luxembourg, and was touched, even in this anticipatory dream, to all the

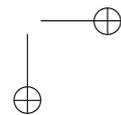
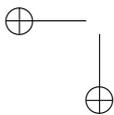


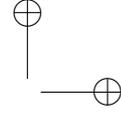
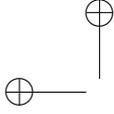


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twilight emotions by the tender reflection of the setting sun on the river seen from the Pont des Arts.

In that childishly crowded year he romanced for himself, something like a year at Oxford, sandwiched in miraculously between winter in Italy and Paris in spring, played a part. It did not make much difference what he studied or if he studied anything. Oxford had become for him, as it has for almost every imaginative undergraduate, the type and symbol of the academy at its best, the distillation of the sweet and leisurely pursuit of wisdom. Much of his affection for Oxford came from books, many of them sentimental ones like the 'dreaming spires' recorded by Compton Mackenzie. But once at his own college he had listened to a group of debaters sent over by that ancient university. He remembered one of them particularly. He was a singularly blond and gracious young man who had substituted for the terrible forefinger and statistical thunder of American debating the casual and persuasive flow of a beautiful voice and gentlemanly conversation. The young man had been serious without being solemn; his wit had not all been brittle fireworks; his classical allusions did not all seem like recent labored excavations out of Gayley's 'Classic Myths.' Surely it would be an education simply to live in the neighborhood of young men who could talk like that. It would be a final enrichment, too, of one's imagination to walk on the High Street below the beautiful tower of Magdalen, of which some luckier friend had sent him a picture postcard. Friendship of

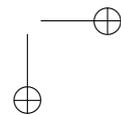
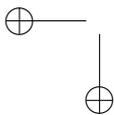


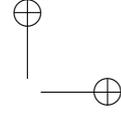
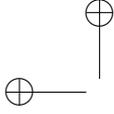


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the mood and mind had always seemed to him the fairest fruit and type of human relationship, and that might be most felicitously realized in a lazy punt along the Isis with one of those soft-spoken, clear-headed, athletic angels that he somehow imagined all Oxford men to be. Surely half of his year must be spent at Oxford; or, anyway, in England.

For whatever Richard may have imagined of picturesqueness and glamor on the Continent, England drew him as to the source and wellspring of his imaginative being. It may have been because, despite the loud insistence by current literary patrioteers on our literary independence of England, he found himself most nourished and at home in English literature. He felt that what there was of soul and substance in our own literature was the voice, though freshly modulated, of the English tradition. He thought, too, that he detected in the English journals that came under his eye a more sturdy and pellucid use of English speech, even among the hacks of journalism, than he could find among the leaders of our own. And, after the miscellaneous shoddiness and jargons of speech that he had heard in the Eastern city in which his four college years had been spent, it would be beautiful to hear the language spoken in its essence and its purity. England had become for him, though it vastly amused the Englishman to whom he tried to explain it, a vision of what America might be if its soul, so to speak, could be rendered less miscellaneous.

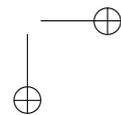
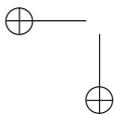


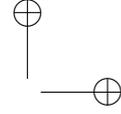
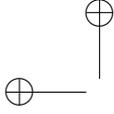


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There were more practical and personal reasons why Richard desired a year in Europe. One of the things he had picked up – was it from Plato or Kropotkin? – was that a man would find himself only in himself and by himself. A family, an institution, a group of friends, clouded a man, distracted his perceptions, blinded him to the clarity of his own being. He had, it is true, been physically much away from home during his college years, and psychologically he had come many miles away from his family. But he saw clearly in every discussion about his future, in every expression of his more recently acquired emotions, how puzzled and how worried were his tolerant parents. In his discomfort at not being able any longer to talk freely at home about the things among which he was most at home, he recognized that the psychological pressure of his family was still upon him. And not of his family only, but of his friends. Richard knew what that first year out of college would be like, largely a matter of constant and uneasy comparison of his own progress with the way in which his friends were getting on. It made him nervous to see how much of the time at his fraternity was spent in comparing the successes that recent graduates had made. This one had just got a big job at four thousand a year in his first year out of college. So-and-So was getting out his first novel, and another, a little older, was opening a law office of his own.

Though marriage seemed to him too absurdly middle-aged an institution for him to be trapped by yet, who



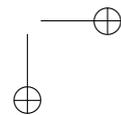
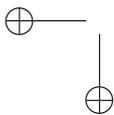


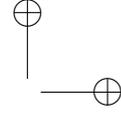
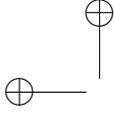
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knows? Moonlight and the institution of marriage were two quite different things, but the first sometimes led to the second, and the second involved a settling-down to work and obligation from which for the present he recoiled with a shudder.

If he could put three thousand miles between himself and all that, be for a while where nobody knew him and nobody expected anything of him, he might for one more year at least be a free spirit feeding itself on a rich and choice world. Not to have had one such experience – he found himself haunted by that old phrase of Pater’s – ‘was in this short day of frost and sun to have slept before evening.’ Surely he was entitled to one year of genuine emancipation, with an eye not to the opinions of his friends and his family, but solely and eagerly on the beautiful and freshening old things his provincial eyes would find on European soil and among European strangers.

Finally, Richard did feel in some vague, boyish way that it was the duty and the special obligation of an educated American to contribute to and help realize an American culture. He owed it to himself, therefore, and to the society in which he was destined to live, to get a perspective on what the aloof intellectuals who edited the *nouveaux* periodicals called the ‘American scene.’ He remembered how suddenly provincial and restricted the life and absorptions of the East had seemed from a civilization no more distant or different or mellow than that of North Carolina. Surely, to understand the America he was going to live in, he must survey it



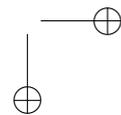
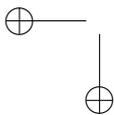


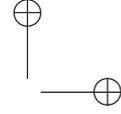
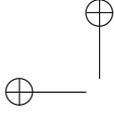
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from the solid vantage-ground of another and different portion of the planet.

It was none of these reasons, much more tangled and adolescent than can possibly be the words which tell them, that made it possible for Richard to go to Europe. A bachelor uncle, who liked Richard chiefly because he seemed so ill at ease in a family, gave him, to his ecstatic surprise, as a graduation gift, a letter of credit to finance a year in Europe. Richard's parents did not like it very well. Europe, added to college, might turn their son into a vagabond for life. But he would only be young once. He had only one life to live, and, with his present high-flown notions, he would be able neither to find nor to keep a job. Within two weeks after graduation, much to the envy of all his literate undergraduate friends, Richard set sail for Europe.

It was hard for a young man who had read much about grand tours and much about the way famous places had affected famous men not to confuse his own feelings with those that he had read about or hoped to have. Goethe in Italy, Henry James or Henry Adams in England, even Benjamin Franklin in France – all these crowded into Richard's head as he sat drowsing in a deck-chair between the reminiscent widow of a well-known author on the one side, and the bibulous Scotch-Irish freight agent of a Western railroad on the other. He certainly knew a lot of people bound for Europe that he did not want to be like. Certainly not the



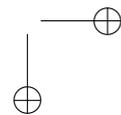
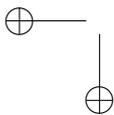


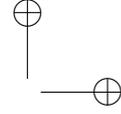
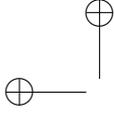
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typical tourist. He smiled in pleased and contemptuous satisfaction as he surveyed the depressing group of school-teachers who had the whole map of Europe to trample over in six weeks. He stretched in a luxuriant yawn as he realized that he had sixty. He was not going to be a slave to Baedeker either. In Italy he would be guided by Symonds and Burckhardt, by Berenson, and – he prided himself on this bit of intellectual asceticism – by Crowe and Cavalcaselle’s heavy-handed, detailed, and unsentimental history of Italian painting. He had nearly perished with shame when his maiden aunt had presented him with that rosemary manual entitled, ‘The Sweetest Walks in Rome.’

In his trunk was Henry Adams’s ‘Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres,’ and a learned volume on Gothic vaulting in which the intricate diagrams were too much for his unmathematical mind. He had heard long ago from a Greek professor that you got out of Europe what you took to it. Besides a college education, he reflected, he had in his trunk more than thirty first-rate volumes on the art and history of western Europe.

He was not – on this point he was quite clear – going to be an American, either. Much to the amusement of the French steward on the boat, he spoke his meticulous and quite American French from the first time he rang the bell until he could not find the word for ‘clothes-hanger.’ He was going to live at inns where Americans never went, keep away from the Café de la Paix, the Folies Bergères, and all those spots in Paris that had become exclusive American amusement



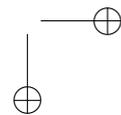
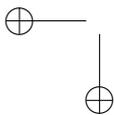


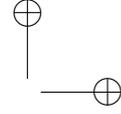
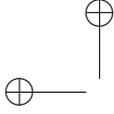
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parks. He would not splurge, either. He smiled as he reflected that his bachelor uncle had seen to that.

Richard whiled away an even more stimulating summer than he had expected in Paris and in France. The stimulation, on the whole, came from unexpected, almost unimportant things. Possibly the thing in Paris that more than anything else gave him the sense of having acquired the quality of a new civilization was a little *café chantant* in an obscure street. He learned there what came to seem to him more and more a unique and enviable quality of the French spirit – a lightness tinged with wisdom, a gaiety that had a touch of steel and of mind. He compared the sparkle of language and the implicit appeal to ideas with those vaudeville shows in America in which the newest intellectuals had told him he might catch the heartbeat and timbre of his nation. Undoubtedly, all his impressions of France at this stage were heightened by the music and piquancy of a strange and exquisite language. Richard had always been sensitive to the cadences of speech, and there had been one English girl he had known who had by sheer enunciation made nonsense seem beautiful. Here in France there was a linguistic joy in buying a newspaper or getting a suit pressed; here life seemed to have turned into daily literature, and each day to be the living page of a meandering French novel.

For the first time in his life, too, Richard seemed to have discovered the use of his eyes. How amusing, he thought, that evolutionists should insist that the

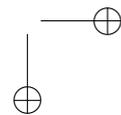
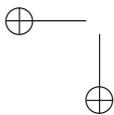


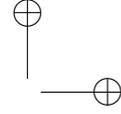
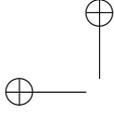


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eye had been developed in the animal for practical purposes, as a calculating organ of guidance through the things of this world that one was not near enough to touch. Thus, perhaps, had the eye of the American animal developed. And perhaps it was fortunate that in the squalor and standardization of American cities, most people used their eyes to get about with, not to see. Here in Paris and in France he was so busy actually seeing that it was a miracle that he got about at all. The funny little boxlike taxis were things not to dodge, but to look at. He had hitherto not known that merely sitting down and looking could be so continuous and exciting a sensation as he found it to be one evening at twilight in front of a café facing the old church of Saint-Germain-des-Près – the colors of the women's dresses as they passed, the hues and tints of the drinks on the white metal tables, the red gleam above the Métro steps, the big mustaches and the little men, and, above it all, the squat old tower of Saint-Germain-des-Près. It was a sensation he was to have time and again in Europe, this filling of the eye with exciting shapes and colors. Here merely to be was to be all alive and to see was to have a vision.

It sometimes took twenty minutes to walk from the Boulevard Saint-Germain to the banks of the Seine; at his usual American pace it would have taken five. But old prints, old books, the miscellany of old brass and old lace, the *pâtisserie* and bonbons in the bakers' windows, made that little journey down the rue des Saints Pères a crowded experience, not a mere

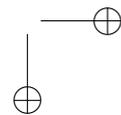
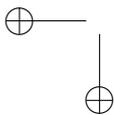


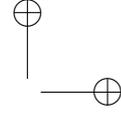
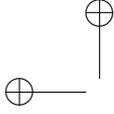


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walk from one experience to another. Undoubtedly, as Richard came to realize later, he could have used his eyes with interest in America. Certainly, the loveliest girls to look upon in Paris were precisely those Americans whom he had decided to avoid. But the fact remains that he had to go to France to find out that eyes had other uses than those found for them by evolutionists. They were not simply instruments of adaptation, but constant organs of delight. This came home to Richard in many ways and on many levels. There were climaxes and festal days for the eye as well as the little excitements of each passing moment. The apotheosis came – and this was not because he had been told by Henry Adams to expect it there – at Chartres. You got out of Europe what you brought to it. Perhaps. But you could leave your history and imagination behind and carry only a pair of eyes to be caught up by the piercing magic of that lingering blue in the west window and be hushed to tranquillity by those long brown aisles.

Richard became increasingly aware, as he wandered over Europe, that though much of the thrill came from the retina, much of it came from the imaginative associations these visual realities recalled. This, indeed, came to seem to him the chief difference between actually seeing Europe and merely hearing about it, and – by the same token – the advantage it was to live in Europe and be a European rather than an American. Here the past was not something heard about, but something seen and touched and lived in.

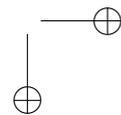
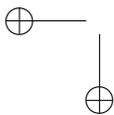


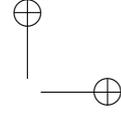
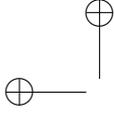


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'The Christian epic,' as Santayana had wisely called it, was something noble to hear about. It was, moreover, credible, even in a book read in America, that it should have controlled the lives of thousands of men for hundreds of years. But here that epic was written in stone, carved painstakingly into the portals of the sculptures, colored vividly into the glass of the windows at Chartres. It was the enduring monument of actual hands built to enshrine an actual religion and an actual love. Here Christianity had ceased to be an abstraction; it had become visibly eternal and eternally interesting. All through Europe Richard felt himself treading stones that had stories.

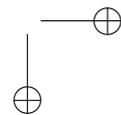
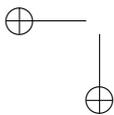
That was, he reflected, what life in Europe meant most. It meant living among precious things embedded in a precious past, and living tintured with the habits of that past. Was it too absurd to connect the long leisure of the luncheon hour in France with a sense that the French had, that all Europeans seemed to have, that there was nothing much to hurry about in a civilization that had taken so long to build? He was to hear somebody later in the long leisure of an English tea say that the trouble with conversation at Oxford was that everything that had been said had been said thousands of times before, and would be thousands of times again. It made hurry, energy, excitement seem just a little bit *gauche* and shrill. Perhaps one had to come to Europe to realize that the most that an educated person of our day could do, in an age of petty creation, was to drink in and absorb all those

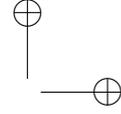
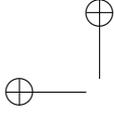




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magnificent creations of an elder and greater day. It eased the importunity of ambition. A job, a career, a personal hope – these seemed very trivial, indeed, as one looked over Florence, for example, from the Piazza Michelangelo. Here spread before one in a dazzling concentration of towers, palaces, and domes, was crowded into a space no larger than that lying between the Grand Central and Pennsylvania stations, one of the visible imaginative climaxes in the history of the world. For weeks Richard lived in the overwhelming absorption of that little space which was so large a cosmos of beauty. Richard realized why a young Dutch painter with whom he had become friendly had, after four weeks, fled from Florence, to a little bare, seacoast town where there was no achieved grandeur to crush the spirit of creation. Florence was filled with sunset souls who had come when the urge of action was over, to bask in the late and leisurely contemplation of traditional loveliness. In the midst of all this, everything except quickened appreciations seemed irrelevant. It was enough to be a clear light absorbing these ancient irrefragable splendors. It was not only the painter's brush, but the writer's pen and the tools of the man of action that would here fall listlessly from the hand. If one were tempted here to do anything, it would be with a proper sense of humility. There came back to Richard, with a tingling sense of realization, the meaning of a poem a Japanese fellow traveler had translated to him from his native tongue: 'In this edifice of civilization which has taken



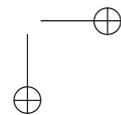
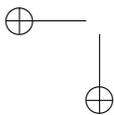


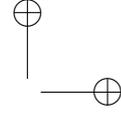
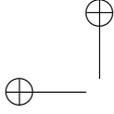
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so many hundred years to build, I drive one golden nail.' But here one hardly cared to give a blow of the hammer; nor did a golden nail seem necessary to add to a flawless edifice. And how could one be sure that the nail one drove was truly golden, or that one drove it home?

Cut off for the moment from all sense of obligation, Richard developed more and more, at every lovely scene he visited, the sense that in a civilization going fast to ruin, the only plausible business for a man was to play the connoisseur's part, in the approaching darkness to loiter as long as possible among these ruins that a universal darkness might soon altogether destroy. There lingered with him long what seemed a quaint image of the present stage of the world. The squalor, poverty, and desolation surrounding those lonely, lovely temples at Pæstum simply accented their beauty gleaming against the blue of the Mediterranean Sea – the beauty of the Old World sunk in and surrounded the madness and decay of the present. He, for one, would live and love the ruins, so much more beautiful surely than that contemporary ruination by which they were being engulfed. A villa above Florence forever! That would be a congenial paradise. And at this point it struck him poignantly that half his year in Europe was over.

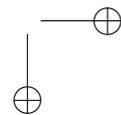
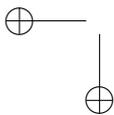
There was for Richard one further exciting contrast between the Continent and his own experience and his own country. It seemed to him sometimes as he passed from town to town, that within an hour's journey he

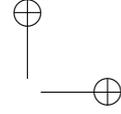
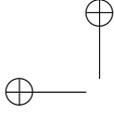




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passed from civilization to civilization. So far at least – it was difficult to tell how long before the standardization of mechanism and modernism and industry would kill it – Europe was a panorama of uniquenesses in things, in the daily detail of life, of food, of greeting, of architecture, and of speech. Ten hours from Paris to Bruges, with its sleepy Flemish charm – it seemed in some ways like a journey through five hundred years. And four hours away from Girgenti, with its Greek temples among the olive hills, lay Palermo, with its Norman pillars and Saracen mosaics. In Munich a cleanly fastidious burgher life was touched with imagination that not even the war had been able to kill. Nuremberg, two hours away, was as matchlessly medieval as ever. Every place, every town, in Europe seemed to have its own habit and its own signature. Perhaps it was only a difference in accent or a difference in wine. But it was a difference, and usually one with distinction. Richard thought back to those depressingly stereotyped towns in which, on the theory that one should see America first, he had paused last summer on his way to California. He was well aware that these variations of places and customs in Europe were largely a matter of history, and were fast being obliterated. The modern world, of which America was the purest exemplar, was fast putting its deadening imprint on ancient Europe, and giving it that universal stamp of up-to-date mediocrity which America, being most purely modern, more obviously displayed. There were signs of Americanization all over the Continent,



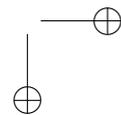
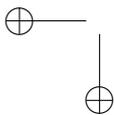


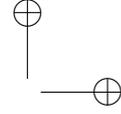
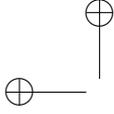
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in the advertising, in the general speeding-up, in the ubiquitous three-year-old jazz that he heard in every café. But the essence of the changing order was most clearly brought home to him one market-day when he happened to be in Verona. There the venders, their noise and barter framed by the neo-classic serenity of Renaissance palaces, were busy, as they had been for centuries. But they were selling now, not individual things made with the care of the artist by the hand of the craftsman, but cheap, shoddy, standard things turned out by routine thousands in factories at Milan and Birmingham and Sheffield. The Industrial Revolution, which was the heartbeat of America, was fast becoming the vital cadence of old Europe, too.

That day in the market-place at Verona discovered to Richard the fact that he was not in love with Europe at all as a living civilization and a going concern. He was in love with that past in it which still lingered, with the mausoleums of its once living arts, with the anachronisms of habit that were its once characteristic modes of life, with its history, not with itself. He loved Europe with the spirit of a holiday wanderer moving blithely among magical ruins. Would he really care to live here always? Could one be happy in a museum, even in one as large as a continent? Richard suddenly decided that he had better get some sense of contemporary Europe.

The fact is that this latter-day Odysseus had been living these many months in something like an historical trance. It was when on a hurried impulse he took

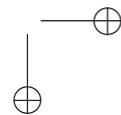
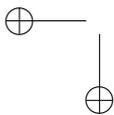


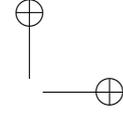
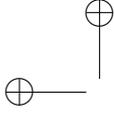


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the International Express from Rome back to Paris for a few months' study in the Sorbonne that he began to live for the first time in contemporary Europe. He had been all through his stay in Italy too much concerned with what had happened and what was visible of Italy in the fifteenth century to be much concerned with what was occurring in the Italy of the present. He had, indeed, the barest sense that there was a contemporary Italy. It meant for him mostly Fascisti riots, which he read about in the Italian papers chiefly for the sake of practicing his Italian. Occasionally these disorders had made it impossible to get into a museum or lodgings in a hotel. Of contemporary life and letters he was hardly aware. There was, to be sure, a ghastly ultra-modernistic exhibit in Venice which by some sacrilege of bad taste they had put right in the midst of the immortal things in the Accademia delle Belle Arte. There was a lot of foolish modern gilt all over Saint Peter's, and beggars and the horrible Victor Emmanuel Monument on the Capitoline Hill.

Two months in Paris and the idyllic summer term at Oxford made him feel at last that he was in contemporary Europe. And it made a change not only in what Europe meant for him, but in the eyes through which he looked at Europeans. As a cosmopolitan wanderer through the visible monuments of a dead civilization and the lingering habits of a feebly living past, he had had small sense of being an American or a contemporary. He had been, as far as that could be given to any one, a free spirit surveying with eagerness

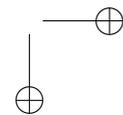
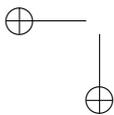


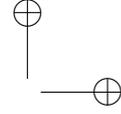
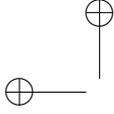


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whatever of mellow beauty and wonder came into his view. It was different when he began to think about and come in contact with contemporary Europe. For the first time in his life he felt intensely American. Not because, like the fat Iowan he had met, he wished he were back in God's country, where they had real breakfasts and tiled bathrooms. He felt American in the same way in which Jews sometimes discover their identity, by discovering that he was an outsider. When his interest in Europe had been that of the pictures it provided, in museums or out, its living people had been merely figures in the landscape. Or, at most, they had been charmingly foreign in their speech, quaintly different in the ideas which they often volubly told you about in trains or in cafés. Without knowing it, he had almost got the impression that the only real people in Europe were porters and waiters, and that every one else was scenery. Now that, settled down in Paris, he was interested in them, he discovered that from their point of view he was merely an American traveler and a passer-by.

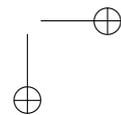
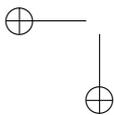
Europe had always seemed to him the one environment where a cultivated mind might feel at home, the corner of earth where one might lead the life of the spirit without feeling like a self-conscious exotic. But when he began to deal with Europeans on intellectual grounds, he felt most self-consciously American. There were qualities of his mind, he found, that were distinctly cis-Atlantic. And very soon, and for many reasons, his mind and heart drifted back to America.

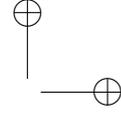
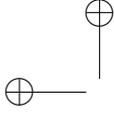




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It was chiefly during his two months at Paris that he detected the inexpugnable Americanism of his point of view, the New World tempo of his mind. In Paris he ran into that group of intellectuals foregathered nightly at the Café de la Rotonde. For all their pretentious Gallicisms and Bohemianisms, they remained simply a group of ill-at-ease American *intelli-gentlemen* transplanted into a gossiping American coterie at Paris. Except for the stuff they drank and the names of the streets on which they lived, they might be in fact, as they were in essence, back where they hailed from, Ohio, or, at a later stage, Greenwich Village. He could not and would not fool himself as they did. The accent of his mind, like the accent of his French, would always be American. He liked to believe the liberal creed of nations being all alike, but he knew that not in a thousand years at Paris would he think in the manner of the charming Frenchmen he met, or find a genuine resonance in their debonair speech and spirit. The more he stayed in Paris, and the more he sensed the quality of intellectual society there, the less he felt at home spiritually. There was, of course, much he admired about the French mind and manner. He loved and envied its urbanity, its glamour, its casual use of erudition, its well-informed humanity. He liked at the Sorbonne the absence of all that noisy expense of spirit that in America went by the name of college life. He liked the nonchalant wholeheartedness of the interest in sex. There was notable here a gayety, a paganism, an absence of repression or of furtive ob-

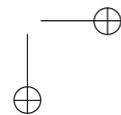
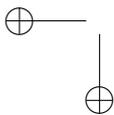


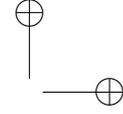
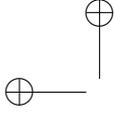


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scene expression both of which had made sex for him at home so uncomfortable and perplexing a problem. There could be here no neurasthenic preoccupation with psycho-analysis where sex was so simple, direct, and jovial a matter. But, though he hated to admit it, he knew that with his Sunday-School and suburban background, sex could never be for him the gay and casual trill, the grace-note flutter in experience it was for his Latin contemporaries. 'Love' and 'l'amour,' so frequently translated for each other, were radically diverse in their connotations. And he knew that in their unemigrated hearts, the emancipated *cognoscenti* at the Café de la Rotonde felt much the same way. Perhaps there was, after all, an Anglo-Saxon mind by which he was indelibly stamped. Certainly seductive as Paris was, it would be for the mind bred in an essentially Anglo-Saxon tradition always something of an exotic, as it was for many, an erotic holiday. He could no more catch and make native to himself the spirit of France than he could imagine himself sitting for long hours all his life sipping *apéritifs* in a chair on the boulevard. It was fine to have had this touch of Gallic salt, but it was Gallic and it was salt, and it could never be for an American the daily bread of life.

Certainly, Richard thought, as he crossed the Channel one clear day late in April, one ought to feel more at home in England. He had a sense of coming back to the habitation from which his spirit had originally sprung. It was not so much English blood as English culture that spoke in him. He had always been singu-





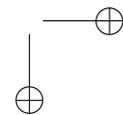
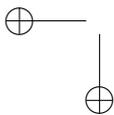
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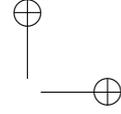
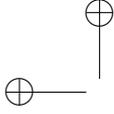
larly moved by those poignant notes, fine as a flute and clear as a bugle, in which English poets had sung their love of that strong and gentle island. All the way to Canterbury, where he thought it fitting to pause before going to London, he lived in a continuum of delight. Here were the expected greenness of the meadows, the homelike sturdy houses, the trim hedges, all accompanied by a half-articulated *obbligato* of all he had heard and read about England. Especially there sang itself to the rhythm of the wheels those lines from ‘Richard II’:

*‘This royal throne of kings, this scepter’d isle,  
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,  
This other Eden, demi-Paradise,  
This fortress built by Nature for herself  
Against infection and the hand of war,  
This happy breed of men, this little world,  
This precious stone set in the silver sea,*

*This blessed plot, this earth – this realm, this England.’*

To think of actually being here, and in April, too. Scenically, England at once proved an uncanny vivification of what so many English novels had taught him to expect. And the rhythms of English speech were what he had always loved. The summer term at Oxford was truly an Arcadian May and June. Through an American friend he managed to meet an extraordinary number of interesting undergraduates. It appeared to him that nowhere in the world could there be finer conversation. Once at Baliol College he sat till three

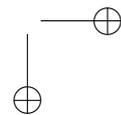
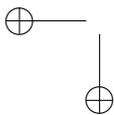


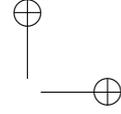
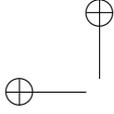


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in the morning touching most themes in the solar system with a group of young men who between them seemed to know everything. The conversation was what in America would have been known as ‘high-brow.’ He tried to imagine an equivalent session at his own fraternity house. If there could conceivably have been such a talk there, ranging over international relations, Russian literature, the future of civilization, with quaint digressions on the habits of cats, dogs, and worms, it would have been unwieldy, weighty, and dull. Where did these young men learn to talk with such grace and rightness and brightness on such important themes, or to take such important ideas with such lack of stodginess and solemnity?

But the charm of after-dinner conversation, of tea, of tennis, of punting on the Isis, did not blind him to his increasing conviction that he must and wanted to live in America. He had thought it would take him a thousand years to become something like a Frenchman. Not in a millennium would he be transformed into an Englishman and an Oxonian. It was not simply that some of his most charming Oxford acquaintances revealed to him the ineradicable condescension and insularity of the British mind. He was not more than mildly irritated at the young man, described to him as the most brilliant in Baliol, who upon meeting him assured him he was always glad to meet Americans; he made a hobby of America. But it was clear that the apparent spontaneity and ease of life here was the tutored expression of a tight and traditional life. One could



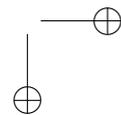
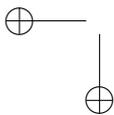


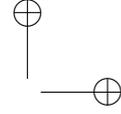
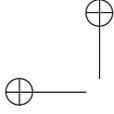
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not really or readily break into that charmed circle. The English Church, the English public school, and an English family were indispensable avenues toward it.

Richard became quite clear, too, that Oxford was an urbane and anachronistic oasis in a civilization now almost completely industrialized, and in many ways more tangled and burdened than our own. We at least had not been so heavily hurt and handicapped by the war. It was patent, too, that the life of the spirit was threatened no less than with us by the driving forces of mechanism, industry, and imperialism. Sweetness and light was, perhaps, the latest and last lost cause for which Oxford, champion of so many lost causes, was fighting.

It might be true that for a greater proportion of people in England, as for the wine merchant who entertained him at a week-end in London, ideas and beauty were as much a part of life as golf was a part of a week-end in Westchester. There were among the middle classes, certainly, simpler tastes and a more pervasive and steady devotion to civilized interests than were common in our own country. But no drummers in Pullman smokers could equal for soddenness and beefiness the commercial travelers whom he ran into when early that summer he made a trip through the cathedral towns. No Pittsburgh could be dingier or more infernal than Manchester. The slums of London lacked, in their heavy hopelessness, the *flair* and gusto that in some lively way retrieved the immigrant portions of New York. The soapy fiction that gushed forth





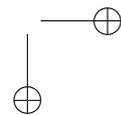
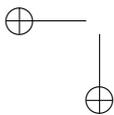
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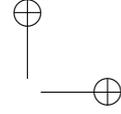
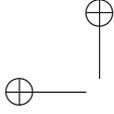
in our popular magazines could hardly be slushier or cheaper than the things that were evidently gobbled up by thousands off the railway stalls here.

But something more important than all this caught Richard's attention. All over England he heard a constant undertone and rumble of despair that made his heart leap a little at the thought of being once more home. These very young men whose gayety and insight and charm had so hypnotized him at Oxford had been toned into depression when they began to speak of the future of the educated man in England and of the future of England itself.

In Britain, as among similar groups he had met in Germany, men spoke with the air of those who were living in the twilight of the gods. He had, before coming to Europe, resented as much as any one the general optimistic twaddle that boomed in the success magazines, in commencement speeches, and at Rotary clubs. But certainly it would be fine to live once again in a land with a spring in its step, and a hope, albeit adolescent, in its heart.

Whether Europe was through or not, many of those he met acted and talked as if it were. The conversation in many a peaceful garden through many a long English twilight seemed preoccupied with speculation as to how long it would be before Europe was involved in another war. It was all very well for Europeans to sneer at America as materially the richest country in the world and spiritually the Carthage among nations. That might well be. But, Richard recalled, the finest

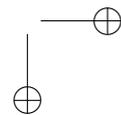
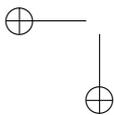


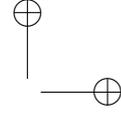
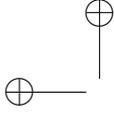


## GOES TO EUROPE

flowerings of the human spirit had in nearly every historical instance come from civilizations economically on the crest of the wave. The luxuriant paintings of Paul Veronese had been painted for and paid for by the mercantile munificence and pride of Venice in its great maritime days. Florence had been the visible expression of the power of the Medicis; the great days of Dutch art were the great days of Dutch marine power; Athens had been one of the wealthiest states of Greece. America was young yet, and thus naturally absorbed in pioneering. Give it five hundred years. Of course he would not be alive then, but it was inspiring to be in at the beginning of a great enterprise. Certainly Europe had much to offer the young American, and he felt he had absorbed as much as he could in a single year. His mind had been filled with splendid images. He knew well how he should long for them again. It had been given to him in a way not open to many of his generation to see and become a citizen of the world. But one could not, especially when young, be content to be a stranger, a connoisseur, and a traveler. One could not, when old, be happy as an expatriated dilettante in a country not one's own. Richard felt he must do something, 'drive one golden nail.' And one could do something only in a realm where everything did not yet seem done. He would have recurring homesickness for Europe, but his hopes, like his roots, must be in his own world.

It was with a sense of curious exaltation and vague expectancy that Richard set sail from Southampton

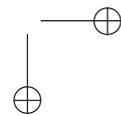
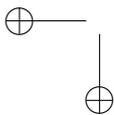


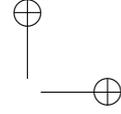
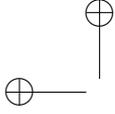


RICHARD KANE

early in August. He was hardly dampened even by the thought that he, like most young men after a *Wanderjahr*, had not the least notion of what his future would be. He was not worried, but he knew his parents were. That was typical of America: not what had you seen in the past, but what did you see for the future?

All the way over the jazz orchestra had been playing a tune that was evidently very current in America. The night before coming into New York Harbor he asked a fellow passenger what it was. He smiled at the felicitous irony. The song was entitled, 'What'll I do?' Europe had not answered the question for him.

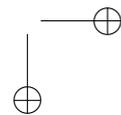
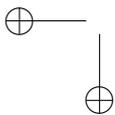


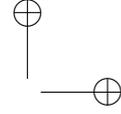
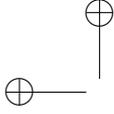


### HE SETTLES DOWN

Naturally, I did not see Richard Kane so much or so regularly after he left college. My picture of him these last few years is what I think the philosophers call a 'construct.' It is pieced together out of sporadic letters, telephone conversations, and, since his return from Europe, sudden interruptive visits he makes into the quiet of my home. While he was in Europe, I came to look forward to the postmarks from all parts of the Continent, the curiosity-provoking insignia on the long typewritten letters Richard loves to write. They are always typewritten. Part of Richard's equipment, become almost as indispensable to the wandering young intellectual as a safety-razor, is his portable machine. And for more than a year, with something like regularity, he kept on clicking out in romantic exuberance all the sense of wonder and beauty that Europe stirs in the psyche of an adolescent and intellectually alive American.

When Richard returned from abroad, the letters ceased, and I heard about his life chiefly in those irregular visits he paid to me from time to time. Oc-





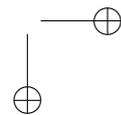
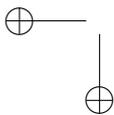
RICHARD KANE

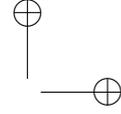
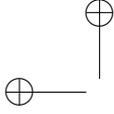
asionally at what appeared to him a capital juncture in his career, he would not wait to visit, but would telephone. There were two different occasions when he found or felt it necessary to do this. One was the climax of a love affair and the other a crisis in the matter of a job. His always fine, resonant voice announced, in the second instance, with something unmistakably like glee or relief, that he had been fired.

I came to know Richard best when he would drop into my study in the evening, and in the caressing shadows of shaded lamps would tell me what was happening to him and what was perturbing his uneasy young spirit. In succeeding visits his reticences began to disappear. I think he felt he could talk particularly freely because, as he now constantly assures me, a college professor is so completely out of the world.

A good deal about Richard in his first two years out of college I found out from his younger friends. Still on the campus, they were tremendously interested in him, not simply for himself, but because he seemed to so many of them a test case for their own fortunes. He represented for them the problems they were going to face when they left college, and they were 'rooting,' as one of them put it, 'from the side-lines, to see what he was going to do with the ball on the gridiron of the world.'

When Richard came back from Europe, he was in much the same situation as when he left, so far as adjustment to life was concerned. He was, if anything, rather worse off. Europe had accentuated for him his

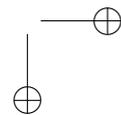
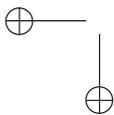


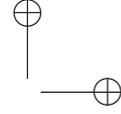
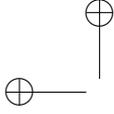


#### SETTLES DOWN

love of that world of beauty and ideas in which he had at college felt himself being absorbed. The America which he had come back to with such eagerness and hope seemed more brutal, hurried, and mechanical than ever when he returned. After the first glamour of being back among his friends was over, Richard had a long stage of idleness and the blues.

It was a 'damp, drizzly November in his soul' through that long autumn back from Europe when he pounded the pavements of New York, and flitted, a wan, hopeless spirit, from office to office in quest of a job. After a long discussion at home, much to the disappointment of his father, he persisted in his refusal to go to law school. That decision was a final overt mark on an estrangement that had long been growing between himself and his family. If the parents of Richard seemed to him ancient and primitive people, these primitives came to regard their offspring as a willful and persistent erratic. Mr. Kane had certainly thought that, after sowing all these intellectual wild oats – in his heart he thought it might have been better if the boy had sowed the usual kind – Richard could be depended on to do the sensible thing. Richard came home night after night jobless, and Mr. Kane was sure it was because he was too fastidious in the matter of a job. Mrs. Kane at the bridge club answered with that curttness that comes from despair, questions as to what her son was doing. In the fixed *mores* of that New Jersey suburb, the Kanes were entertaining, in



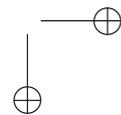
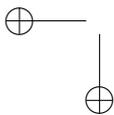


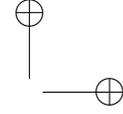
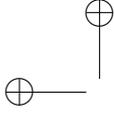
RICHARD KANE

the person of their own son, a ne'er-do-well in their own home.

Richard found a job eventually in a furniture warehouse. He was never very clear about what he did there. Whenever I asked him about it, he was vague and deprecating, both about his work and his prospects as a business man. It was bad enough to have to waste eight hours a day without wasting more time talking about it. It was like being a prisoner, he said. And his whole temper of mind that winter reflected that sentiment. When I saw him, I felt as if I were talking to a convict out for a few hours on parole. In the soothing atmosphere of books and conversation he would thaw. A mention of Europe, of some books or poetry that he loved, of some familiar reminiscent happening at the university, would touch him off to something of his old glow. He would become again the suddenly awakened spirit who used to appear at my office, flushed with a new idea about Homer, or eager still with the after-gleam of a picture seen at a gallery, music at the home of a friend, or the discovery of a minor eighteenth-century poet whom he vaguely supposed nobody before him had read.

In so far as I could gather, what worried Richard principally about his job, what has worried him in all the jobs he has held since, is the meaninglessness, from the point of view of the things that mean anything to him, of the men among whom he works and the things that they daily do. Richard had long had a collegiately acquired contempt for business. But he still retained

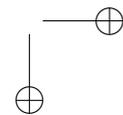
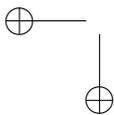


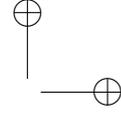
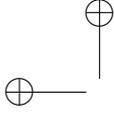


#### SETTLES DOWN

in the deeper levels of his being that awe of commerce that never quite loses its hold on the imagination of an American who has spent his childhood in the household of a business man. Business had, ever since he could lisp in syllables, been contrasted for him with pleasure and frivolity. He remembered how as a child he had been taken once to his father's office. He had moved, hushed and breathless, in that temple of affairs. He had read into the ritual there a symbolism as profound as any ultra-High-Church ritualist reads into the high mass. Once as a sophomore, he had called up his father, and had been told that Mr. Kane was 'in conference.' He had an invincible sense that his father was doing the very core of God's work, if he was not indeed in the very presence of God. Once, much earlier, he had been playing with his toys in the presence of adults. He had heard the pastor's wife speak with profound emphasis of somebody who, with all his faults, was certainly a good business man.

Even in his sophistication there had lingered with him a sense that business ability was a synonym for a higher kind of virtue. The usual Christian virtues were all right in their weak effeminate ways. But, like many Americans, especially those who had never seen the inside of an office, the really central virtues of the world appeared to him to be those practiced in the magnificent doings of the good business man. He had once read a big book on 'Types of Ethical Theory.' He had marveled that the virtues really admired by the society of which his family was a part had not even



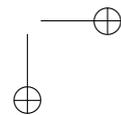
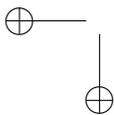


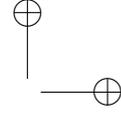
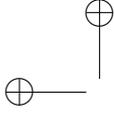
RICHARD KANE

been mentioned in it. It had not occurred to him that the book had been written by an Englishman living at Oxford.

And now Richard found himself moving daily from nine to five among the practitioners of this magnificent morality. It seemed to consist, so far as he could observe, in a round of continuous interruptions and triviality, and what came to seem to him the merely politer forms of piracy and buccaneering. These men talked all day long of lot numbers and consignments, spring dating, f.o.b., and thirty days off, when they were not taking time out for less reputable and dignified conversations. They not only acted as if these things were real, but as if nothing else were. He knew that they must have families and friends. He had even heard the head of the firm call up his wife one day, ask how the children were, and make arrangements to meet at the opera. But for the most part it seemed a life led by phantoms moving among trivial nightmares. As for the things that were real to him, they were hardly even shadows to these men. They were – how quaint the language of Plato seemed, bubbling up in the noise of a furniture warehouse! – in the realm of nonbeing.

Richard was, perhaps, most distressed to find himself spending so many hours a day for the first time in close contact with people with whom all his relations were purely instrumental. There were men in his office, he told me once in pained surprise, who had been working together for ten years, who seemed to



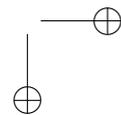
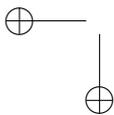


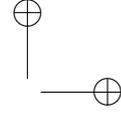
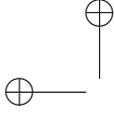
#### SETTLES DOWN

know nothing and to care nothing about one another's lives, save those common portions of it spent in the office together. He wondered if there were any outlying areas or interests in these lives at all. Toward him his fellow employees displayed a mixture of superstition and contempt when they discovered he was a college man. The superstition disappeared and the contempt increased when they discovered he had no 'inside dope' on the current football situation. After one or two unhappy references to commonplaces of the world he had moved in, he found it wiser to conceal any obnoxious evidences of a college education.

Unlike the business man whom Richard criticized for making business the whole of life, Richard could not throw off the office after the day was over. It haunted him, in a phrase he coined for himself, as a nightmare. He had resolutely planned to keep up his reading, his music, and his more stimulating friends. By a kind of willful desperation, he did nothing. The only book he read all winter was 'Studies in Pessimism' by Schopenhauer, whom he suddenly found to have said the last word in philosophy. Richard had got a bad case of sick soul.

I do not know whether Richard's employer had read William James or if he knew what a sick soul was. He knew, in any case, that there was something wrong with that college boy in his office. One afternoon, about two o'clock, Richard called up to tell me he was coming up to see me.





RICHARD KANE

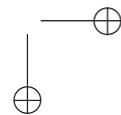
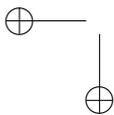
‘Banker’s hours,’ I suggested; ‘you’re getting on.’ It was then that Richard explained to me.

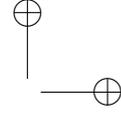
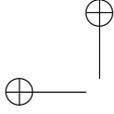
‘I’m fired; I’ve never been so happy in my life.’

An hour later, as radiant as a beatitude, he breezed in.

‘The boss called me in and gently, but firmly, informed me that I belonged somewhere in the higher life.’ This last was said with a sweeping gesture toward the crowded bookshelves which Richard envies me. ‘What am I going to do? I don’t know, nor care much. But I’m through with the furniture business, anyway. It seems a shame that I’ll never be able to use all the information I collected – except maybe in a novel built around the life of an interior decorator. Maybe I’ll go hobbing. I always liked hitch-hiking at college. My own favorite notion is to get fixed up as a clerk in a tourist office in Florence. That would be one way of staying there forever. Or of opening up a chain of soda fountains on the Continent for thirsty and lonely Americans. It would complete the Americanization of the Continent, and make me a fortune. Well, the furniture epoch is ended. That’s that. No, thanks, I won’t sit down. I’ve come to hate the sight of a chair. We, I mean they, used to sell a lot of Windsors like the one you’re sitting in. Lord! read me something, say, about “the high-minded man.” It’ll be a change from the birds I’ve been seeing lately.’

Richard did not go vagabonding. He went into his father’s business, a more respectable form, as he put it, of the same occupation. It occurred to father and





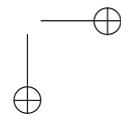
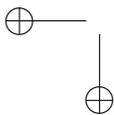
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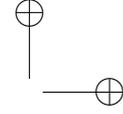
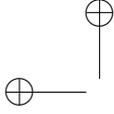
son at the same time that Richard might do well on the road. He had a winning manner. If he could only simulate an interest in cotton goods, he might make a corking salesman. So Richard, after a month, set out into the provinces, small places to begin with.

He would send me postal cards from Ballston, Virginia, or Pottstown, Pennsylvania, or similar aspiring metropolises. On them he would write sardonic merriments: 'I wonder how the town of Altoona fits into the argument from design.' 'Dio mio! Verona and Harrisburg on the same planet!' He would take an hysterical and despairing delight in the unutterable sameness and stupidity of the towns he passed through, a savage joy in describing the food in the small-town hotels or the conversation in their lobbies.

But Richard's father was not wrong. Richard turned out to be a good salesman. I think he must have succeeded in selling many a bill of goods by that same somehow convincing smile which made me once give him a 'B' instead of the 'C,' which he really deserved.

I saw him only very infrequently during his traveling salesman period on his brief and crowded stays in town. He would burst in with something of the salesman manner I doubt whether he knew he had acquired. I gasped once to see him, of old so timid and reticent, fairly browbeat a head waiter in a splendid hotel where he magnificently took me to dinner. He was getting his first taste of having money – and a good deal of it – at his own disposal. There was beginning to be a little too much smartness in his ties and handkerchiefs,



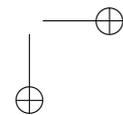
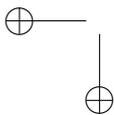


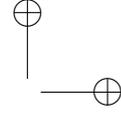
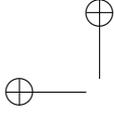
RICHARD KANE

a little bad taste in the spectacular way he would talk about and spend his earnings. He would speak with a strange new condescension of the provinciality of the campus, and intimate pityingly that it would do me good to come out among men and know life.

I had seen the thing happen before. Richard was becoming dangerously like the young chap, two years out of college, whom I had met one night at the theater. ‘Still teaching the little boys up at college?’ this still rosy infant had boomed at me from the depths of a raccoon coat. ‘I am now an executive with the Seaboard Oil Company.’ Richard, too, was being transformed by the gleam and touch of gold. ‘*Corruptio optimi pessima*,’ I thought; ‘the only safe attachments are to eternal things.’ And in the absorptions of teaching Plato to Richard’s successors I hardly realized that for over a year I had lost track of Richard Kane.

One day a year or so later I found in my mail two tickets from a large musical bureau, ‘with the compliments of Richard Kane.’ I had heard somewhere that Richard had tired of salesmanship or that his prosperity had collapsed, and that he had drifted into musical publicity. Not long after, gossip reached me that he was doing advertising work for a publishing house. Eventually, two years later, Richard drifted in. I laid aside the quiz papers that I had been reading, and, in my pleasure at seeing him again, neglected to resent the fact that he had not thought it worth while to look me up in two years.



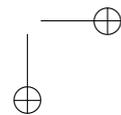
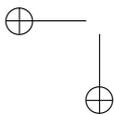


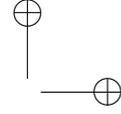
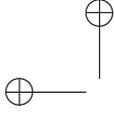
#### SETTLES DOWN

'I've been finding myself these last two years,' he began, 'and I didn't want to mess up your library with the rag-bag of my spiritual troubles. I'm fairly well straightened out now. I don't know that I've found myself or that there is anything to find. But I feel infinitely old. Don't laugh; I'm twenty-three. I think I know what I want out of life. It's been a terrible time finding it.'

'If you don't mind, I'll tell you about it. You used to talk to me, you know, fifty minutes at a time. And I'll be easier to understand.'

'I wonder if it ever occurs to you in your pleasant seclusion here how tangled up are the lives of the young people in this town, people like myself. Life for you is marked by the return of the academic seasons, incoming freshmen, midyear examinations, the eternal cycle of young men coming to and escaping from absorption in the good, the true, and the beautiful. The only change I can observe in your life is the addition of a number of books. How on earth do you manage to read them all? In me you see a sample of the confusions and corruptions of a sinner lost in the purlieu of the world. But I mustn't talk like the book-jackets I've been writing lately. The most important fact about me that you'll like to know is that I'm engaged. If I didn't have Aldous Huxley in the back of my mind, I'd tell you how sweet, lovely, and incomparable she is. She is. But I won't have my old teacher and a confirmed bachelor laugh at me.'

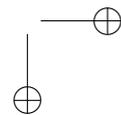
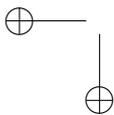


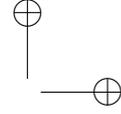
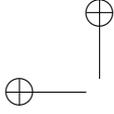


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Richard talked till two in the morning. He did not tell me everything, I suppose. There are certain things that he still feels would shock me or that it would not be good for me to know. More and more he has got to identify mine with the monastic life. He rather likes to keep me in that round-eyed and innocent world in which he thinks we academics live.

His story is the tale of a two-year attempt to find some equilibrium of spirit in a strangely divisive and reeling environment. As he talked that evening, I scarcely recognized the young Richard I had known at college or the sentimental wanderer in Europe. Not but that he looked as young as ever. He had the persistent youthfulness of the fair-complexioned which gave him what he would probably retain for ten years – the air of a perennial undergraduate. Physically, he had not changed much since he was a sophomore. He had the same athletic slenderness, the same clear eyes, and his lips still framed his white teeth in his old infectious smile. The salesmanship manner had left him, and the breeze of the advertising man had not yet become with him a twenty-four-hour habit. But there was, even at twenty-three, a note of surprised and mellow disillusion in his voice, and his remarks hummed a sobered acceptance of the limitations of the world. I had the feeling that there ought to be a kind of ceremony five years after a man has left college, a second and final commencement, when, after a period of miscellaneous experience, a man is graduated into something like stability of spirit.





#### SETTLES DOWN

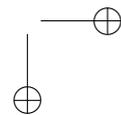
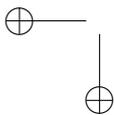
There came a moment, so Richard explained to me, when salesmanship suddenly seemed idiotic and unbearable, especially selling things you cared nothing about. Just as his father was beginning to boast to his friends that Richard was becoming an indispensable asset of his business, Richard came back to town and resigned. He tried very hard and very gently to explain to his father that it simply would n't do.

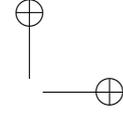
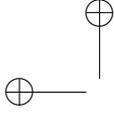
'I felt like quoting,' he said, 'that passage in the "Republic," where Plato talks about the degeneration of the soul. There just are certain things you can't do without doing something to your own self. I can imagine what you thought I was getting to be like that evening two years ago when I took you out to dinner. Well, I was getting to be like that.

'When I suddenly looked at the picture of myself in men ten years my senior that I met on the train, I knew I must quit. It's all right for you here to talk about keeping a loyalty to fine things and all that. But you can't be loud, false, and buccaneering all day long and retreat to the eternities at night. Not as a traveling salesman, anyway.

'Well, my father said I was silly. He offered me a share in the business, told me I was throwing away a golden opportunity. When I remained unconvinced, he just got sulky and angry. He has remained so.'

Richard drifted into musical publicity via the desire to do something connected with writing. He had vainly hounded the newspaper offices and the trade journals, and an older college friend had finally helped him to

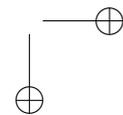
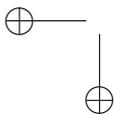


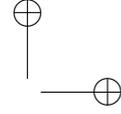
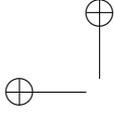


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find a publicity job. It was not much better. But the people he worked with were a cut above those he had met in business before, the work was not taxing, and it gave him a chance to live in New York. After a year's traveling about the country, New York seemed to him the only conceivable place to live in America; it was at least a bearable outpost of Europe. The next year for Richard may be set down chiefly as social education. His job became quite incidental, and Richard's life was lived mostly from five o'clock till the next morning. He had moved to New York and taken a little apartment in one of the side streets in Greenwich Village. It gave him the thing he had missed ever since coming back to America to join his family, a sense of being a personality and living a life that was in external fact, as it had long been in essence, his own.

Richard took an immense joy in having his own *ménage*. The street on which he lived was noisy, and the converted brownstone house in which he had part of the top floor was not very clean. But there was his curiously miscellaneous collection of books, a number of cheap editions of the poets collected at college, a raft of battered yellow-covered books he had brought home from France, a loud blue Symonds's 'Renaissance in Italy,' and textbooks lingering over from undergraduate days. There were some lovely reproductions of details from the Sistine Chapel, and a Veronese etching he had picked up almost for nothing on the rue du Bac.

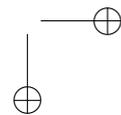
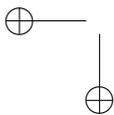


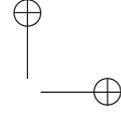
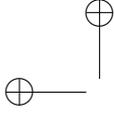


#### SETTLES DOWN

There was revived in him the almost forgotten sophomore ambition to encompass in his reading the whole history and ambit of creation. He would come home of an evening and begin to plough through the long eighteenth-century novels he had long been planning to read. He found in one of the little second-hand book-shops on Fifty-Ninth Street, which had become his Saturday afternoon hunting-grounds, a tattered copy of Karl Pearson's 'Grammar of Science.' It fired him with a desire to find his way ultimately into every nook and corner of that science which at college had simply been a dull and difficult requirement toward a liberal-arts degree. Often on coming in from dinner or from a party with his friends, he would settle down, with a fine sense of intellectual industry, to reading until one or two in the morning. Not less often his 'quiet evening with his books' would be interrupted; some one would bounce in to drag him off to a festivity or to the theater, and the pursuit of the complete wisdom would be postponed for a night.

Richard tried to come to some adjustment in his own mind between the part people and books were to play in it. The printed page, especially after two years of miscellaneous experience with people, seemed to him to have a clarity and finality, a quietude altogether lacking in the restless and fragmentary conversation that one ordinarily listened to. But he knew, too, how flat and futile books could be. There were times at the end of a long distracting day at the office when the mere look of print was fatal. After a few weeks of

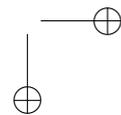
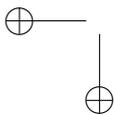


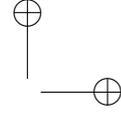
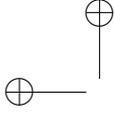


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high academic resolution, he realized how much of his time in the evening had been spent walking up and down his living-room waiting for somebody to call up. For a time the ideal of intellectual hermitage lingered, and he persuaded himself, a favorite sentimentalism of the young intellectual, that everything but music, books, and the arts was deadening, that it was more important to hear, read, and see these things than to sit around talking, even about them. But he found ideas were dead reeds unless blown by a living breath.

Richard 'went in' suddenly and strenuously for people. For the first time in his life he began to meet large numbers socially, and the excitement of it went to his head. At college he had not made that indiscriminate number of friends which are the breath of life to the campus politician. There was something about him so ostensibly young and kindly that nearly everybody within a few days' acquaintance with him had called him 'Dick.' It had been a continual source of irritation to one who above all things had hated promiscuity. In the last two years in business he had learned to meet men without flinching, but his meetings had been much too casual and external to be labeled friendships. Now he was coming in contact with a large number of persons, all of whom seemed to him, in his own words, 'alive from the neck up.' For the next few months nothing but people mattered. The living voice, the actual gesture, the play of a smile, how much more alive ideas became refracted through these personal media! How much more vivid the arts became in the

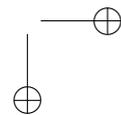
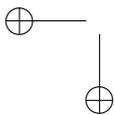


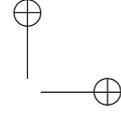
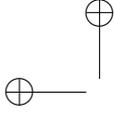


#### SETTLES DOWN

presence, the absorptions, even the gossip of artists! Richard plunged into that whirl of animated conversation which occupies the time of that wide group of young people in New York who are eager enough to talk about many things that few of them have the courage, the ability, or the energy to settle down to do. He fell in with a group who were always having parties at one another's houses. It took him some time to realize that he hardly got to know any of them well, that he was touching the surfaces of many lives that were at best surfaces. Meanwhile these façades were interesting.

There was, for example, Frank Dean, a young novelist. Richard was still pleasantly awed by people who got things into print. At this man's home there would be a medley of semi-literary and semi-artistic souls. They included men and women who managed to exist by odds and ends of book-reviewing and hack-writing, and who were always referring to a *magnum opus* on the way to print or paper. There were artists who talked all night of high nouveau art, and whose days were filled with commercial illustration. There were musicians some of whom managed to arrive at an early season recital on Tuesday afternoons to half-empty houses (and those 'papered') in Æolian Hall. There were dramatists in some vague way on the limbo of the Little Theater Movement. There was an advertising man working out a system of radical metaphysics on the side. There was a good deal of bad gin drunk, and an astonishing number of bad puns were made.

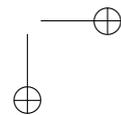
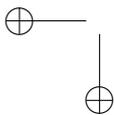


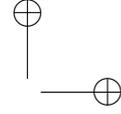
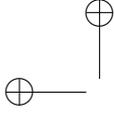


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But the references to Mousourgsky, Marcel Proust, the Group of Six, and Matisse made Richard feel he was moving in the very hum and center of pioneer intellectual interests. And the febrile plunges these people made, via the newest psychology, into the dank places of the soul, made Richard feel both advanced and uneasy.

If he noticed that these young people never touched anything very deeply or knew anything very accurately, they at least were alive. If they seemed to believe that the world and the imagination had begun about nineteen hundred and ten, they at least were passionately and obviously interested in art and letters. Even with his scanty knowledge, Richard could have corrected half their generalizations about history and science. The young novelist was always 'getting off' shining original ideas that threw the room into the tepid excitement these sophisticates wanly permitted themselves. Richard could have told them how frayed and shoddy many of these ideas had become by the time of the break-up of the Greek world. He refrained from doing this, knowing how bad a reputation scholarship had among these bright and hasty minds. He did permit himself one sally. One advanced, middle-aged maiden had scolded him for not having read D. H. Lawrence's latest novel, which had been out about six months. 'Have you read Dante?' he asked. 'Been out about six hundred years.' He came to be known in the group with ironic contempt, as he reported to me, as the 'Professor.' He admired the casual way these people



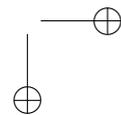
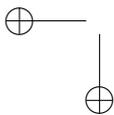


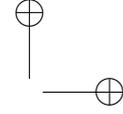
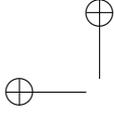
#### SETTLES DOWN

stayed up all night. He never quite learned the trick. His next day would always be a mild wreck. He came to like the frankness and the bobbed-hair, then still a novelty, of the girls. He was impressed by the fact that most of these girls were earning their own living and leading decidedly their own lives.

It was really at this stage that Richard first began to see, indeed, much of girls. He had not at college. Along with most of the sophisticated youth of his generation, he had all sorts of advanced theories and information about sex. There was for him nothing sinister about the more esoteric works of Havelock Ellis, and he could talk about masochism as unconcernedly as about evolution. He had rarely discussed ideas about sex or ideas about anything with girls. Indeed, it was a curious backwash of conservatism in his emancipation that he had gone almost all through college believing that female society and the society of intelligence could not be found together.

There had been one long episode at college with what he called 'a pretty little moron,' whom he could not keep away from for 'reasons purely biological.' At one point, indeed, I thought he was going to marry her. I met them together once. She was alarmingly pretty and depressingly stupid, save in her handling of Richard Kane. Luckily for him, she eloped with a fine young wall-paper manufacturer who owned a motor car. While at college, he continued to see occasionally, from force of habit, the daughter of a neighbor who in his fourth year at high school had been his first

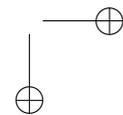
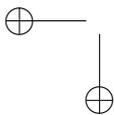


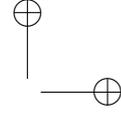
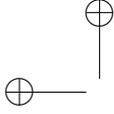


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love. 'She still loves me,' Richard had told me while he was yet in college; 'she went to a finishing school, but she wasn't finished. She has brains, she's a sweet thing and she plays the piano divinely.' But he could never dissociate her from her suburban setting, and the remote idea of marrying her was inextricably bound up in his mind with the whole nightmare of settling down into the suburban world. Never!

There had been one experience in Italy; Richard was never very clear about that. He referred grandly to Jean-Christophe's first and cyclonic *amour*. He spoke of having discovered how terrible and engrossing sex could be, and how, with all its urgency and hypnosis, it could remain as a separate strand, casually or tragically dissociated from the rest of a man's life. There was another episode, almost completely physical. It had occurred during his travels in the provinces. Richard hesitated a little about telling me of it. When he did, he did it with a bravado that could not quite hide a persistent shame he had about it. He explained to me with absurd gentleness, as if he were giving me for the first time a glimpse of some unpleasant truths that I had not known, that what had happened to him once, happens often to many young men. 'Curiously,' said Richard, 'it's left less of an impression on my life than dozens of less lurid things that have happened to me.' He referred hesitatingly to Havelock Ellis. (Sometimes Richard talks to me as though he thought I were a baby, a puritan, or a fool.) Then he had a rather sultry stage, when, after reading the French decadents, he

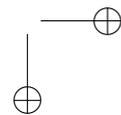
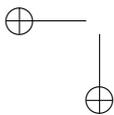


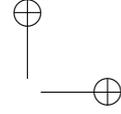
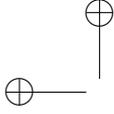


#### SETTLES DOWN

unloaded a deal of torrid stuff about the religion of love, the god of Eros, and the implacable Aphrodite. I do not think he ever took it very seriously.

Out of the miscellany of girls Richard had been seeing that first winter in New York, he began to frame a picture of the sort of girl he wanted, if ever, to marry. It was, attractive though they were, none of those he met. There was about them a freedom and high-spiritedness that made them corking companions, unusually gracious and electric friends. The girl he would like to marry would have to have some of their qualities, their absence of traditional buncombe, dry-rot, and silliness, their competence, their unsticky charm. But he did not delude himself. He did not want to marry any one too wrapped up in and troubled by his own problems. He dreamed of some one who would sympathize with his interests, but not take them with devastating earnestness. What he wished was a harbor from the storm and stress into which the imaginative life had led him. I thought, and I think he sometimes guessed, that the girl with whom he had been in love in high school might do very well, if he could take her education in hand, and be a Prince Sophisticate to rescue her from the Castle of Respectability. All these competent girls frightened him perceptibly. And the old-fashioned 'happy family' he had ceased to believe in, the women's magazine idyl of the young couple wandering hand in hand down the rose-and-brier-strewn path of life, were, like his respect for business, something he had not quite outgrown.

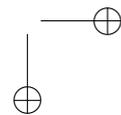
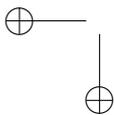


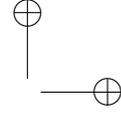
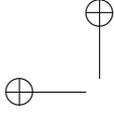


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Meanwhile, whenever the idea of marriage obtruded itself – and it did often – Richard saw all sorts of reasons against it. Richard knew from observation how painfully absurd was the ideal of a perfect resonance, an answering chord, a duet of common interests synchronized and vivified by a common love. He had noted too much respectable and resigned infelicity among his suburban neighbors and, among his newer acquaintances, too much outspoken and rebellious infelicity, to be fooled by that sweet Victorian delusion. He was out of college only four years. Yet an astonishing number of his classmates were divorced already, on the verge of being, or desiring or deserving to be. Worse still, he had visited one or two young couples who had married in the green spring of an adolescent rapture. In less than a year they both greeted a third person as the tonic interruption to a mutual middle-aged boredom.

The integrity of the spirit! More and more this came to seem to Richard to be the central object of life. In marriage one's integrity and one's intimacies would be constantly invaded by another whose body and presence, whose eyes and gestures for a brief period only, would pervade your consciousness like a song, turn routine hours into stinging torment of beauty, and unimaginably flush and color your world. One would have to live a lifetime in the choking ashes of a brief-remembered fire. Nature obviously had her own good reasons for these urgent and seductive mirages by which she trapped young people into boredom, responsibility, and unhappiness. A civilized intelligence





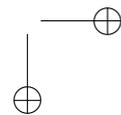
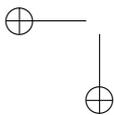
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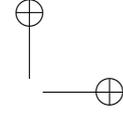
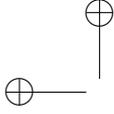
could see through the beautiful deceit, and circumvent this racially necessary delusion. As for children, Richard was at the stage when they hardly seemed worth the noise, bother, and engulfing domesticity that they involved.

There was, anyway, Richard thought, a good deal of overheated nonsense talk about sex. Sex could be a momentary controlling fury, a recurrent engrossing madness. But it was possible, surely, to avoid the stupidity of committing one's self to lifelong embarrassment and tragedy in surrender to it. Richard joined that group of reflective young resolute who are Never Going to Get Married.

It was a resolution that was being insidiously attacked. Richard came to think that between the ages of twenty and thirty it was the contagion of fashion, combined with the accident of propinquity, that drove otherwise intelligent young men into marriage. One by one Richard was being left friendless; and that, for him, was tragedy or paralysis.

To all practical purposes the life he had led in college and for a year or so after his return had been monastic. Girls at college had been much talked of and occasionally seen by the young fellows in his small clique, but they were mostly on the fringes of the society in which he moved. At nineteen he had pictured with glee the society of a group of masculine minds, unperturbed by feminine hysteria or greasy domesticity, in which one could lead the free-and-easy life of bachelor friendships. Now hardly a month passed but some rumor of an en-



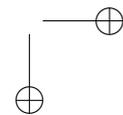
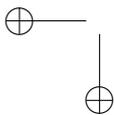


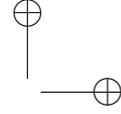
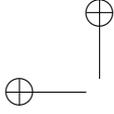
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gement or an announcement of the birth of a child reached him. Marriage and domesticity ended, as he well knew, that intimate and elastic friendship which he had for a while believed to be a superior substitute for the compulsory companionship of marriage.

There would be no more calling up a friend on an impulse and taking him away for a weekend. With one or another of a small group of friends, Richard loved to break away from the city for a Saturday afternoon and Sunday in the country. He remembered many a crisp walk among the bursting colors of autumn through the Connecticut hills. There you could discuss in the warmth of a close and trusting friendliness all the secrets of your heart from the tricks of writing advertising heads, to God. It was fine to know how near you could feel to a friend without feeling bound to him. There had been three or four young men with whom Richard had felt like that. It was a reincarnation of that beautiful friendship of the spirit mirrored so magically in the eloquent pages of Plato's 'Phædrus,' and praised with unwonted intensity by the usually passionless Aristotle.

Now he found himself a very fifth wheel on the wagon when he came to visit his young married friends. He felt himself tolerated by the wife out of charity for a husband's old friend. He found himself gradually on the outside of a few lives at whose center he once imagined himself to have been. And friendship, so warm and close at best, so eternally promising and promisingly eternal in its beginnings, how precarious



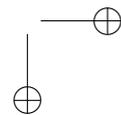
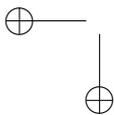


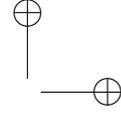
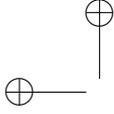
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and slipping and superficial a thing it was! Ferdinand Dunn without whom at college life would have seemed impossible, had for three years been in California. They occasionally exchanged thin, forced, and perfunctory letters. Edward, who had seemed so indispensable a note in the choir of his life, had so completely altered his tone that to meet him was to make an ache of reminiscence. He was a man turned into a man-about-town; at twenty-five he was hard and middle-aged.

There was clearly another side to this business of the integrity of the spirit. It was all very well to talk about the noisy loneliness of being constantly in a crowd, but often on a dull Sunday afternoon in November Richard would realize the intenser loneliness of being literally and physically alone. Richard knew how the barometer of his well-being varied with a word of encouragement, a slight token of mellowed intimacy, of frank praise, or of that fine frank damnation that comes with such delightful heat from the lips of a close friend. He had heard of marriages like that. Perhaps, if he were lucky, he might find it. How right Bacon was, he thought, in his increasing solitude: 'Faces are but a gallery of pictures, and talk but a tinkling cymbal where there is no love.'

Integrity of the spirit! Keeping your own soul! Richard pondered much what that might ultimately mean and what it involved in the conduct of his daily life. Once away in the country for a week-end at a quiet farm where he was the only guest, it occurred to him



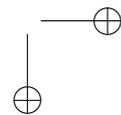
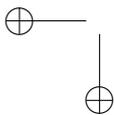


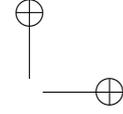
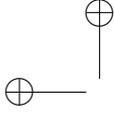
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that that collectedness might never be attained in the city at all. The very miscellaneous vividness and stimulation of it might be the instrument of death through distraction, an elegant dissipation, a refined going to pieces. It was a Sunday in spring, and walking by himself on a road whose badness for automobiles made it a meandering heaven for pedestrians, he reviewed the way his last few months had been spent.

He had fallen a victim to the more beautiful temptations of a large city – temptations, in the long run, as killing as those of the more obvious and sordid sort. He had felt that one must not live in New York without making the most of the opportunities it offered for an education in the contemporary arts. The ticket-taker at Carnegie Hall was by this time treating him as a friendly and inevitable phenomenon. He felt obliged to go to every noised-about art exhibition, and not to miss, for his very salvation, any of the plays put on the list of ‘must’ by the intellectual weeklies. And the weeklies themselves, and the novels that every one talked about. What a clutter of rag-bag stimulations he had allowed himself to get into! Where did it all lead, and what residuum did it leave at the core of your life? Vanity! vanity! These louts among their tobacco barns were more clear and collected than he.

He winced at the pathetic attempts at continuity he had tried to introduce into that confusion. He had tried to attend a course of lectures in one of the late afternoon and evening intellectual centers springing up for Richard and his kind all over the city. The history of



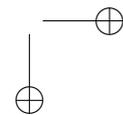
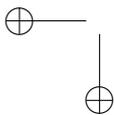


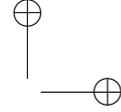
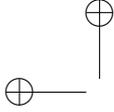
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the Occidental mind was one grand and comprehensive course for which he had registered. But he found the voice of the lecturer, famous for the brilliance of his ironies and his novel treatment of old ideas, beat ineffectually upon his ears. He found himself bored to pain by the five-o'clock tea comments of the gushy things, both male and female, who attended them. He found he had lost that admiring docility which had once made good lectures at college vivid voyages into new worlds.

The beat and persistence of the city and all its ways began to tear unmercifully into his nerves. There were times when it became a hurried and harrying nightmare. He must escape into simplicities again. He began to enjoy the very dullness of his occasional visits to his family in the suburbs. He began to see Helen, their neighbor's daughter again. How simply and serenely she moved out of all the maddening currents of the world! After all, were not all these winds of doctrine mere waverings and gusts of words? They touched lightly or not at all the full-blooded realities in which people, undebauched by ideas, lived. He must turn again from words to things.

It was among actualities that Helen lived, human and physical things. On walks into the country she would not babble of complexes and inhibitions, of Imagism and Introverts. Her conversation was touched off by actual flowers, birds, shapes, and colors. Her eyes were not turned always vaguely on inward confusions, but specifically on outer things. He had walked with





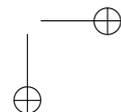
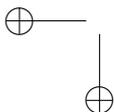
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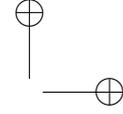
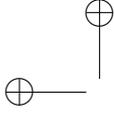
people in the country who would stride oblivious of the flaming magic of a sunset, vociferous with the irrelevant fevers which they had brought from the city. Helen was naturalizing him again in the peace of the actual world.

When Helen talked about people, she talked about them, not about the smoke screen of theories they were always wrapping about themselves. She talked about the uniquenesses and gestures and whimsies that were theirs, not the universal fashionable gossip they might be at the moment airing. She was not articulate about music, but she played Brahms with distinction. She had no theories about art, but the theorists might have learned something from her dress, her postures, and the way she did her hair. Richard began to go home regularly for week-ends. A month before his visit to me he became engaged to Helen.

I have since visited Richard in their cozy little apartment in the Eighties. Helen is a slim little girl whose shyness cannot hide her resilient common sense. She looks like a rather fragile and exquisite porcelain; there is in her lips and carriage a firmness that belies that fragility.

They are, I know, very happy, Richard a little nervously and apologetically so. Helen loves, I think, the simple essential Richard she had known in high school, and is trying to revive that clear essence and keep it shining and steady amid these late and surface fevers of his life.



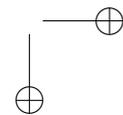
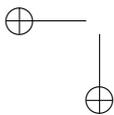


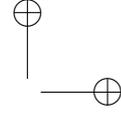
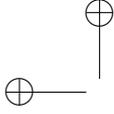
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In Richard's house the intellectual weeklies are still on the table. He still buys books, though less rashly and extravagantly than of old. Richard rushes around to a great many fewer concerts; he does not think it necessary that he and Helen go to every visiting English lecturer or to every party given by their friends. He has much less time for introspection; a good deal of time that used to go to that now goes to a happy contemplation of Helen. He has two people to think about now instead of one. He is beginning to feel like a citizen; he talks about the obligations of a family man, and says for the first time in years he feels like a responsible member of society. He has settled down to do a little writing; Helen says it will get some of the fevers out of his system. He is saving up for a shack in the country. He tells me a bachelor must inevitably have an absurd notion of life.

Richard has, as things go, settled down. *Wanderlust* has, for the moment, left him; he likes his home; he apologizes for his interest in his job. But intellectually he has many *Wanderjahre* ahead of him. Helen follows him as far as she can on these spiritual excursions; farther, too, than he supposes. But her common sense always brings him home.

The wanderings take place in quiet evenings when they are alone reading, on walks in the hills, or more spectacularly on Sunday evenings in their own home. They keep open house Sunday evenings. A number of Richard's miscellaneous intellectual friends drop in. Over the sandwiches, salad, and coffee there is much



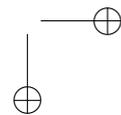
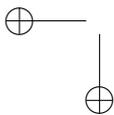


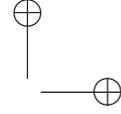
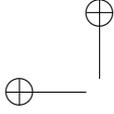
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high and much confused gospel. There is a newspaper reporter who is an amateur authority on immortality; there are advertising agents who know all about primitive mentality and God. There is a psychoanalyst with a side interest in Greek vases. There is a retired banker with a passionate and persistent propaganda for mysticism and revolution. Helen moves, pleasantly gracious, a little puzzled and a little amused, through all this. Once when the talk grew very tall and very thin, she sat down at the piano and began some Chopin. She played better than any one had talked. They had the good sense to keep still. Sometimes she will tumble with a simple question a whole hectic edifice of words, as when, after fifteen minutes of lingo by the psychoanalyst, one night she asked him if he could say in a word or two what he meant. He could not.

I dropped in late one Sunday evening. I had been working on a book on moral theory. I was interested on coming into the smoke and babble to hear a word about the new morality. Richard was standing by the piano asking some rhetorical question.

'Let the Professor settle it,' some one suggested. I didn't. But I listened and made mental notes. I want to write an opus some day on the moral ideas of the younger generation. That evening at Richard Kane's was a revealing chapter.

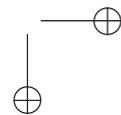
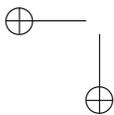


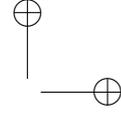
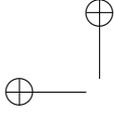


### HE CONSIDERS MORALS

I suppose I should have been surprised to find Richard and his friends on a Sunday evening engaged in a rather more than tepid discussion of morals. I know Richard pretty well by this time, and if there is any word that has depressing associations for him, it is the epithet 'moral.' I tried my best once, while he was an undergraduate, to make him take my course in ethics. I told him, among other things, that it would do him good and that it would help him to do others good. I could not have used less effective propaganda.

Richard has known people with a passion for ethics. A high-school chum of his who had won the character medal at commencement had become the leader of an evening group connected with the Moral Improvement Society. To this good young man all questions were moral questions, and the world was all intensity and unction. He was forever attending conferences of young people held with a view to bettering the world. Nobody ever joked in his presence, or only within very proper limits. This youth made a point of being kind to human beings, as some human beings make a point





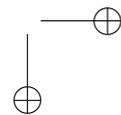
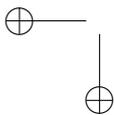
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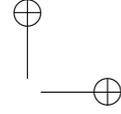
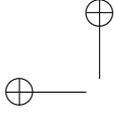
of being kind to animals. After ten minutes with this practicing saint, Richard used to think of himself as an abandoned rake, and decide henceforth to seek his society chiefly among his own low kind. How few people combined a passion for moral improvement with a cheery or charming personality! Richard had long since made for himself an eternal distinction between the good people and the gay.

I have my own good reasons for suspecting that, in his private mind, much like Molière's 'Le bourgeois gentilhomme,' Richard had been talking and thinking morals much of his life without knowing it.

At thirteen, the age of vanishing innocence, he had first felt the distinction, fixed very deeply for him even into later years, between the naughty and the nice world. That sinister and beckoning realm, talked about in undertones by the boys of his neighborhood and discussed later with a curious and disconcerting sense of solemnity by his instructor in hygiene, had first distinctively marked for him the terrains of good and evil. It had taken him a long time to get over the ineluctable feeling that a cigarette was the smoking symbol of evil. All through his adolescence he had associated cigarette-smokers with those children of wrath he had seen in the persons of hoarse, smirking, and sallow-faced young toughs gathered near street-corner saloons.

In grammar school he had copied many times, in a childish hand he never outgrew, the maxim, 'Honesty is the best policy.' It was not until a classmate had passed



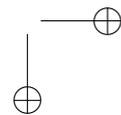
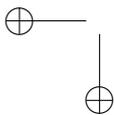


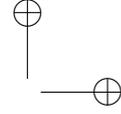
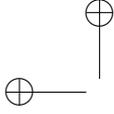
#### CONSIDERS MORALS

a trigonometry examination by pursuing a different line that the matter came into question for him. There had been at college those long talk sessions at the fraternity house when, along with God and religion, sex had been much discussed. In how many ways, with what adolescent dialectic, these perplexed youngsters had tried to bridge the chasm between the good and the seductive!

There was one period when, after a course in labor problems, the rightness and justice of things in the present social order had come to be for him a personal and stinging question. For a very little while he had burned with a quiet fire to set the world aright, and had stormed against the complacencies of his classmates and his suburban home. He had eloquently converted four of his friends from indulging in strike-breaking as a lark.

I think Richard, left to himself, might have been a very eager little moralist. But it was not in the *mores* of his advanced group to be moralistic. Many of these young people had been a good part of the way through hell during the war, and they were in no mood now for pretty or noble moral maxims. They were all being fed on the bitter realism of after-the-war novels and plays, and those who were themselves writers were busy getting the native poison of the war out of their systems. If they had any morale, it was that of ironic detachment; if they had any worship, it was that of freedom, or of such beauty as they could find or create in a hopelessly disordered world.



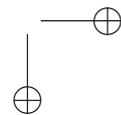
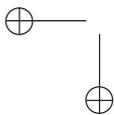


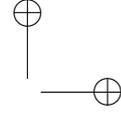
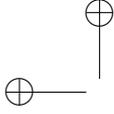
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A memory of some of this passed through my mind as I put my overcoat and hat down in the hallway outside Richard's living-room that Sunday evening. I heard something about morals; it was Richard's voice. 'Ah,' I thought, 'Richard on moral improvement; a new rôle.'

I had made it a habit to drop in on Richard Sunday evenings, and I was prepared for any subject. There was sure to be Helen's delightful and simple welcome; her excellent salad, sandwiches, and coffee. The conversation was always provocative, if not brilliant, and it moved, if somewhat muddily, in the realm of ideas; it was, if not always profound, always spirited; and sincere, if not lucid.

I had developed the habit of sitting in a corner and saying as little as possible. That was not hard, as in Richard's circle a professor was supposed to be better seen than heard. Richard's guests always acted toward me with that condescending graciousness which the young always adopt toward those they regard as definitely on the shelf. The subjects ranged widely, but one always came away from Richard's with a sense that the conversation touched one main theme. These young people were almost academic in the way they would do a subject once they opened it. It was only two weeks before that they had gone at it rather furiously on the question of the futility of thought, on which I was appealed to as an expert. With my usual rustic habits, I left about eleven, but I heard from Richard





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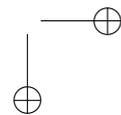
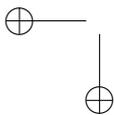
the next day that the conversation had flourished till one, with the affirmative winning.

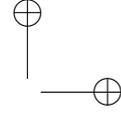
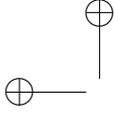
Richard and his wife have a pretty home, with a big living-room, at the top of a converted brownstone house. There is Helen's small grand piano magnificently in a corner of the room as one enters. There are some splendid Dutch etchings that Richard's family, with, on his part, unexpected good taste, had given him. Most striking of all, however, is a fairly thrilling portrait of a soul that a mystic painter friend of Richard's had done for him. It is a picture of two shadowy athletic figures, half locked in an embrace, half grappling with each other, the faces in a terrible red agony. It is, Richard explained to me, the portrait of a divided soul. Helen said it did not belong in a home, but in a psychopathic clinic. Richard answered briefly that it was his coat of arms.

On this particular Sunday evening, as I entered, Richard was standing by the piano.

'Who is there over sixteen,' he was asking, 'who doesn't know that morals are simply current conventions? A sophisticated man is beyond these provincial distinctions of good and evil, isn't he? Isn't he, Professor?' he shouted gayly, waving his hand toward me.

Richard was in high fettle. When there is a crowd around, he can easily fall into the discursive mood. Very often during these Sunday evenings he will keep quiet, unostentatiously pushing the conversation ahead now and then, or listening with his fine, fair head bent



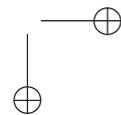
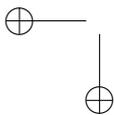


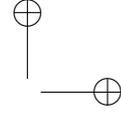
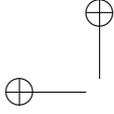
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a little forward, as if he were getting at the moment the final granting of a dear wish that he had long cherished. When the subject touches his imagination, he will argue a speculative point as if his life depended on it, or his job. He will pace up and down, lose his gracious host-like manner, clap his hands to emphasize a point, and beat down interruptions. To-night he had an unusually stimulating group.

Standing by the low bookshelves that ran along the wall was a gray-haired man of fifty whom I had several times met at Richard's house. His face was strong, and his eyes were genial. He was a retired banker who had written a satirical novel about business, who was getting a picturesque worldly experience out of his system on to paper, and who had a childlike gusto for almost any subject within human comprehension. By thirty years in business the edge of his intellectual appetite seemed only to have been quickened. At the present moment his two favorite themes were mysticism and revolution. His name was William Weldon, but he was known as 'the Major,' principally because he had once gone to a military academy.

Sitting near Helen, by the piano, was James Morrison, a young man who was assistant book editor on one of the big papers. This round-faced youth had a notorious collection of the more learnedly erotic literature; he had developed, besides, a passionate devotion to negro sculpture, and to a study of all the myths and traditions that had ever been current concerning immortality. He was a likable youngster, and led, for

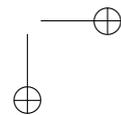
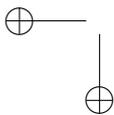


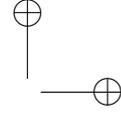
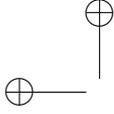


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so learned a being, a simple enough life. He went almost nowhere except to Richard Kane's, and it was a joke among his friends that he never stayed up later than eleven. There was one professional psychoanalyst there, Bronson, a swarthy, baldheaded gentleman, with a slight lisp. It was difficult ever to get him to talk about his specialty. His one central passion in life was Greek vases, and I have never seen a face light with more ingenuous glee than did his when he spoke of the white figure vases of the classic period. On a steamer coming home from Europe, Richard had been dragged by him into his cabin to see the marvelous new reproductions he had got of the vases in the Kunst-Historisches Museum at Vienna.

My eye wandered over the others. There was Tommy Keenan, of Richard's own class at college; he had been a football player. I don't know what brought Tommy and Richard together except that they had taken a course in Dante together. And Tommy was as gentle a heart as ever graced a football team. There was about him something of the *cuore gentile* made so much of by that Dante whose poem Tommy used to carry around in a pocket edition. Richard liked Tommy, I think, for a certain wistful piety he had; there were few people from whom he had got so vivid a sense of the reality of religion as an experience. To go to high mass with Tommy was thrilling, and Tommy's face was part of the thrill. There was about him, too, an engaging Irish intonation that Richard, always sensitive to voices, especially loved. What they talked about I could never





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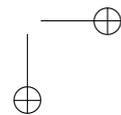
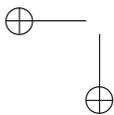
guess, and I wondered what on earth Tommy could be doing in this atmosphere of high intellectual gospel. Tommy's brows would pucker at what he called the 'fifty-cent words,' and occasionally his bewildered eyes would meet Helen's and be comforted by her amused look. Once, when it was altogether beyond him, he asked Helen, for the saving of his soul, to play.

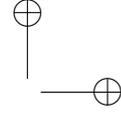
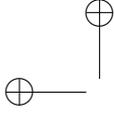
There was, as usual, Edward Fervint, a Dionysiac young Californian, connected in some way with the Little Theater Movement, who spoke of the future of the drama as another Californian might talk of his climate. There was Grace Spellman, a fragile, middle-aged lady, with gray in her hair, and something like injured and anxious tenderness in her eyes. She had a sweet, youthful passion for oppressed races and all hurt minorities, and she was very beautiful to listen to in her soft, cool voice.

The inventory of my eye ceased, and I found myself listening to Richard.

'Morals,' Richard was saying with unwonted heat, 'are wickedness. With all the talk and smoke, the ends of life are very simple, and every one knows what they are. We've been debauched by the moralists, I tell you. Simple human happiness, the natural pleasures of the natural man; the rest is rubbish.'

'The boy's going good,' Tommy whispered to Helen in awed admiration. Richard has a mysterious gift in Tommy's eyes for 'philosophy and all that sort of stuff.'





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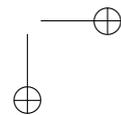
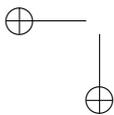
‘Simple human happiness, Richard?’ It was Grace Spellman of the soft, cool voice. ‘And perhaps you could tell us what that is. It will be nice of you, my child, to tell us what it seems to me a number of people have been vainly trying to tell us for the last five thousand years.’

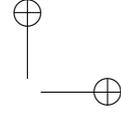
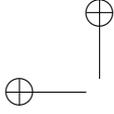
‘Of course I can, Grace. Happiness is simply the living out of the possibilities in each of us. Morals have been chiefly engaged in suppressing them. For thousands of years now moralists have been cutting out part of our possible happiness by laying down injunctions about what not to do. The “thou shalt nots” have ruled the world. It’s about time the “ayes” had a chance. All I’m saying is that if they’d let us alone, to live out our lives each in his own way, we’d work out our happiness quickly enough.’

‘I’ll say we would,’ Tommy whispered to no one in particular.

‘I’ve been trying,’ Richard continued, ‘to do that ever since I got into long trousers. It’s taken me a while to slough off all the repressions, compulsions, inhibitions, and what not on which I’ve been brought up. It takes you twenty-five years to clear the path to happiness, and then you’re free to find it, right on the doorstep of your own soul.’

‘My dear boy’ – it was Mrs. Spellman again – ‘is it as simple as that? If you and Helen were living in your own private circle in paradise, you’d not have to worry much about moral questions. And you probably would, too. You would always be wanting some quiet





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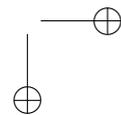
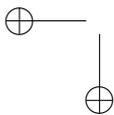
corner in your circle where you could meditate in peace. And there would be times you would wish that Helen *would* stop playing the piano, however beautifully she played it.'

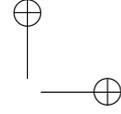
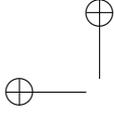
Richard winced. He had found that there were certain drawbacks to having a wife who was a musician. 'No, Richard,' said Mrs. Spellman, 'just at the present moment you are fairly happy, and if you could stay so always, and every one else could, you'd probably never fret much about morals again. But the problems remain whether you blink them or not.'

'Oh, don't mistake me!' Richard interrupted. 'I'm simply off the old moral principles sort of thing, and the traditional, solemn gabble about it. I guess I'm a little drunk with the freedom of our generation. We've got rid of the old foolish pieties and prohibitions, and we've cleared the ground for some sensible code of life, some programme by which we can decently, and more or less beautifully, live.'

'Decently and beautifully live!' mused Weldon the retired banker. 'Decently and beautifully live! Not badly put, young man; maybe you can lay out the programme for us, stage setting and all.'

'Well, I think I could, if you'd give me a little time. I'd begin with sex first. It seems to me we're just about ready to do something with all our emancipation and frankness on that subject besides sneer at the Victorians and parade all our knowledge of the peculiarities of sexual behavior among psychopathic cases in Viennese clinics.'



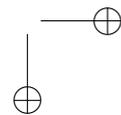
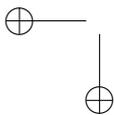


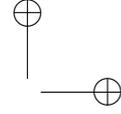
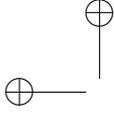
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For the last six months Richard had been 'off' psychoanalysis. He had heard so much about complexes and inhibitions, transferences and neuroses, that he had almost thought never to hear sex spoken of directly and intelligibly again.

Bronson, the psycho-analyst, broke in in his quiet, slightly weary voice. He spoke in the tone of one who for the hundredth time was explaining what ought, to any normal intelligence, to be absurdly clear.

'Dick, you still talk as if the new psychology of sex were something that belonged in a clinic or a hospital. It is merely a description of the behavior of perfectly ordinary human beings. For the first time in history we are ceasing to think of human personality in gross. We are actually tracing some of the specific conflicts and torments. We are finding specific ways of making some order out of the chaos that lies below the level of consciousness in the soul of each of us. We are progressing as far beyond the older psychology as a geologist is beyond a childish description of a rock formation. If we're ever going to have straight thinking about human behavior, we've got to probe below that polite and official personality which each of us parades to the world. Because we've pierced below that surface, stinging our prides and vanities and hypocrisies a little in the process and turning up a little mud at the bottom, you want to throw us out altogether. But if we are showing the devils in the depths of each of us, we are showing how we may get rid of those devils, too. Twenty years from now you may

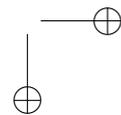
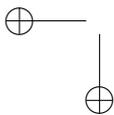


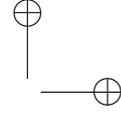
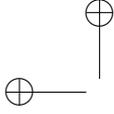


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realize that we have been doing for the soul of man what Copernicus did for the solar system – describing its true movements and authentic relations for the first time. Of course we’ve been working on clinical cases where the facts are writ large; but out of these sad, cancered cases of the soul we may be able to do a lot for you apparently normal people yet.’

‘Good here,’ Richard said. ‘All I am suggesting is that we’ve got to do more than accept the new facts about sex and the subconscious. We’ve got to find out what our ideals and hopes are about the most intimate of all personal relations, and start making some decent programme for ourselves. So far so good. I string along with all the emancipates on all that. But nobody has found a programme yet. Lord! sometimes I feel as if my maiden aunt, with her tight, little Victorian chart of things, had at least a clearer map to go by than we have. We have nothing – nothing but disillusion. We make a sport of it, but I think we’ll have to go on from there, and I’ve been trying to find people to tell us where we go from here. It feels so unsafe, so anchorless, so meaningless! Ever since I got out of college, I have felt as if I’ve been adrift. There’s no one to show us a way home. I sometimes wish I’d been born fifty years ago. Our grandfathers may have been wrong, but they didn’t flutter about in the dark; we do. It makes me uneasy, the way I felt once when I was a child, and saw my mother cry for the first time. So adults, too, had times when they apparently didn’t know what to do! When I was in college, I thought the





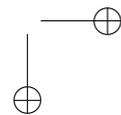
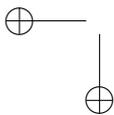
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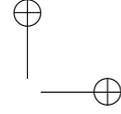
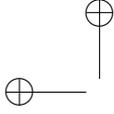
professors knew what to do. But they don't know any better than we do. I know they don't; the professor here has admitted it.'

The Major was chuckling to himself.

'Well, well, well,' he said in his hearty voice, 'well, well, well, doesn't know what to do! My boy, you're an old man before your time; you've lost your sense of adventure. Lost your sense of adventure, you have. That's what makes your generation, and mine, if I may still be allowed in it, so delightful. Nobody knows where he's going; it's all exciting and helter-skelter, like tobogganing, or those crazy things they have at Coney where you get bounced from side to side and don't know where you are going to bring up. You're too serious, Dick; you've got to be old like me, Dick, in order to take these things with a proper sense of perspective, which means a sense of humor. I know what's wrong with you; you still have the impression that the world ought to be reasonable and intelligent. You're wrong, my boy. Intelligence is an occasional oasis in the world; it doesn't irrigate all of it. Learn to take it all as a grand phantasmagoria, can't you? A vaudeville show, a farce, a Mardi Gras. Be satisfied with whatever quaintness or gleam or merriment you find there. Too solemn, young fellow, too solemn.'

'Well, you may take it all as a huge and delightful comedy, Major,' protested Richard, 'but we young fellows can't quite. After all, it's our world, and we've got to live in it for half a century yet, maybe, and it gets a little sickening having to live in a world without





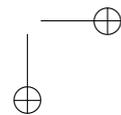
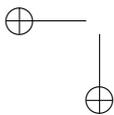
RICHARD KANE

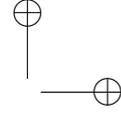
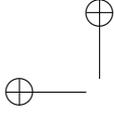
any meaning or stability or sense to it. We're off the old ideas, and we haven't got any new ones.

'Take sex. We're all very smart about the biology of sex, and I've heard every one of my acquaintance quote Aldous Huxley's lines about it: "And so we sit in blissful calm quietly sweating palm to palm." But, confound it! that doesn't explain the whole business – this irony and realism and information and biology. I want something that will make a place for the rapture and exaltation and heights of life, as well as for the mud and slime at its bottom. I'm a little sick of this intellectual superman business.'

'Dickie, boy, you're a sentimentalist,' broke in Morrison, the book reviewer. 'You've had your taste of young truth, and insight, and a good frank free look at life, and you can't quite stand the gaff. You're looking for some sentimental shelter. Soon you'll be reading the "Idylls of the King" and Samuel Smiles's "Maxims," dress up like Sir Galahad, and be memorizing the Ten Commandments for future reference.'

'Not by a long shot, James,' answered Richard, 'but you ironists take almost as much joy out of life as the puritans do. The puritans told me sex was bad because it was fleshly. You tell me love is absurd because it is sex. One robs you of sex, which is the poetry of life; the other robs you of love, the poetry of sex. I don't see that there's much to choose between them. I'm perfectly frank to say I am hungering for some of the old certainties – for some rock or anchorage. And it's difficult to know where to look for it. I want to

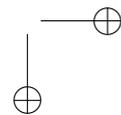
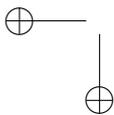


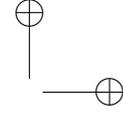
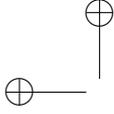


#### CONSIDERS MORALS

read about God, and they tell me about the theory of luck among the early Fijis. I want a way of life, and they tell me about ostracism among the Cratalophoboi. It almost drives one to join the Moral Improvement Society.'

'That's your damned intellectualism, Dick. You've been debauched by books and lectures and things. You move too exclusively among intellectuals.' It was Edward Fervint, the Californian. 'You want life to be patterned, to have a meaning, to be as logical as a syllogism, or as systematic as a table of logarithms. Life is more beautiful than theory, and more important; and vitality interests me more than reason. The beauty, glory, and wonder of it, the rush of its very chaos, the pressure of its confusions. This interests me more than any golden anemia you might get out of a serene and ordered way of life. Apollo and Dionysus were both myths, but I think Apollo was the more absurd myth of the two. I am weary of all this dull apathy of intellectualism. Give me fifty minutes of rapture rather than a cycle of intelligent control. A way of life is usually a way of death. If the great geniuses had followed your search, old fellow, they never would have created a living line. The wine of life seems to have gone out of your veins since prohibition. Down with Apollo and up with Dionysus! Your ideal of life is a faded calm, a peace with all the juice of life crushed out of it. You want all your doubts settled, your turbulence set at rest, your life frozen into a death. Well, here's to you, if what you want is to live in a mausoleum.'



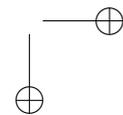
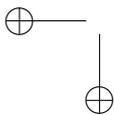


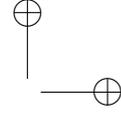
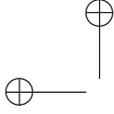
RICHARD KANE

I string along with the Major here. I'm content to have a little confusion in life as long as it's life; there never yet was wine without fermentation. When yet this life programme of yours is started, it will be the programme of a funeral. Everything will be fixed and ordered for eternity the way it is in a tomb. It will be as beautiful as a Greek marble and as dead. It will be an eternal pose, not a life. Give me a drink.'

'That's old stuff, that doctrine of rapture, Edward,' Dick retorted. 'And if one could make of life a string of pearls of rapture, I should be content to abandon my search for some ultimate way or pattern of life. But these moments of rapture you get in the theater, for example, are, as you constantly insist in your articles in the "Dramatic Arts Monthly," a matter of the most refined and disciplined art. It seems to me that life is no easier an art than the theater, and I should think, we might find it no less interesting. I don't see why ultimately we should not dream of making life as beautiful in its entirety as it is at moments in love, friendship, in art, in the theater. Why not? But if rapture means going off the handle as much as possible, I don't see how life can be anything more than a mess and a morning after. A bacchanal may be the climax of experience, but it is hardly a technic for civilization.'

'If you had made less obeisance to the fine arts and philosophy and all that sort of thing, my boy,' the Major boomed, 'and paid a little pedestrian attention to the forces that are really moving the world, you'd



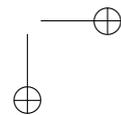
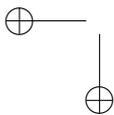


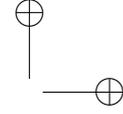
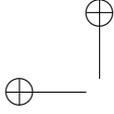
#### CONSIDERS MORALS

not talk so glibly about laying down a programme for civilization.

‘All this talk has as much to do with the things that determine our ways of life “as the whistle of a locomotive has to do with the movement of the train.” Our moral standards are changing because our economic conditions are changing. We’ve changed our ideas about sex because the conditions of women have changed. You can’t be quite as brutal or as sentimental about women once they become part of the daily office routine; nor can women be as silly or as sentimental about themselves. We’ve changed our ideas of government because industry and education have changed. Don’t fret too much about changing the world. *Ça change toujours*, and fifty years later the ideas catch up with it.

‘But I’ll tell you why you’re crying, son. You’ve got, if the psycho-analysts will pardon me for adding another term to their already overloaded vocabulary, a mother complex, spiritually. You are in the open spaces of a free mind, and the silence, or perhaps, I might say, the emptiness of it frightens you. There’s nothing you can cling to in the clamor; there’s nothing that guarantees your future. You look into the chasms of nature and your own soul, and you shudder. Why should you? Suppose love is lust at its basis; I wonder why that should discourage you. Suppose God is simply a pathetic human attempt to imagine a perfection that never was on land or sea. They are, neither of them, less interesting or less beautiful for that reason.

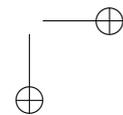
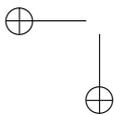


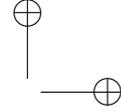
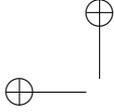


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‘But the real trouble is deeper than that. You’ve accepted this whole materialistic universe as final. You’ve swallowed whole the noisy little dogmatisms of the current age. You accept all the new authorities. You might do better if you went back to Thomas Aquinas and the medieval mystics. You read all these fashionable little biologists and physicists and ironists. You know water is H<sub>2</sub>O and therefore don’t want to drink. How disgusting to find out the ingredients of what you thought was sparkling and refreshing and clear! But, Lord! man, the miracle and beauty of it are no less. When you know the formulas, you know no more about the life and vitality that is at the basis of it all than you did before. You are much more learned and much less wise. Our young Dionysian here is right. Vitality is the source and the end of being. You never know that vitality except by a mystic intuition, and you never will. Unless you are a mystic at heart, with your ear to the ground of being, your finger on the pulse-beat of reality, you never will know anything or touch anything real or true.’

Helen was watching the faces of her guests as the genial banker-author launched into this unexpected rhetoric and unction. I did, too. I was interested particularly in watching Tommy. He seemed a little bored with Richard’s search for a way of wisdom. Through the Californian’s dithyrambs he sat uncomprehending. As the Major talked, he leaned forward, strangely interested.



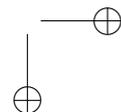
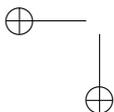


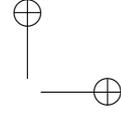
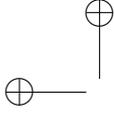
#### CONSIDERS MORALS

‘Well, All-American halfback, or whatever it is, how does that strike you?’ the banker asked suddenly.

Tommy did not answer for a moment. His hand tossed back his wavy hair, and then, quietly, he began:

‘The Major here’s the only bird who’s got down to the essence of the matter. I don’t know much about all this, but I do know what’s wrong with all of you. There isn’t any faith in you, and you can’t live without it. You just can’t. I know what’s the matter with Richard. I know what the matter is with all of you. You go along having a good time, and you think you’re very free and up-to-date, and all of that. But then you get a sickening empty feeling. And you don’t know where to go or what to do or what counts. Well, I can’t give you any good reasons for what I believe. Wasn’t it Tertullian or some professor who said, “I believe because it is absurd”? All you wise birds know so many good reasons for not believing in God, except the best of all reasons for believing in Him, that God is salvation. I’ve heard you all tell me that I’m hypnotized by the sound of the Latin phrases, the music and the incense, and that religion saves me from thinking. You all think maybe religion is good for me because I’m a kid and it’s comforting to an uneasy youngster to believe in a heavenly Father. Well, we’re all kids, I think, lost in the world. And my belief saves me from a lot of the torments you’re always getting into, all of you. No matter how mixed up life becomes, or how foolish – and I know all about that as well as you – I have a refuge and a faith. And it does

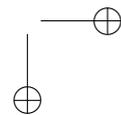
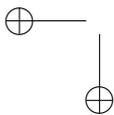


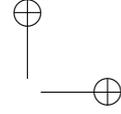
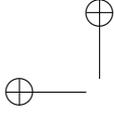


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something to you. It steadies your keel, prevents the boat from rocking. It used to help me over the tragedy of a defeat in a big game during the football season. It helped me over real tragedy since my father died; it makes me happier, too, when I am happy. I've got something you all wish you had, a faith by which you could live. I can listen to you all here, and know that I have a certain way to peace. I'd throw all these new psycho-analytical books out of the window for a couple of pages of Thomas à Kempis. He's the voice of an elder brother. He's very comforting; you ought to read him some time. I listen to you all here, and you sound like a lot of little children using a lot of big words that hide you from a simple way to salvation. You'll come back to God some day or you'll go completely to the Devil.'

Tommy was a little surprised at the long speech he had made, and so was every one else. Helen strayed over to the piano and began to play. The room settled down into that listening silence that pervades a group of people intent upon beautiful playing. Helen began, I think, the sixth waltz of Brahms, which no amount of playing can quite hackney, and which seems to say, with exquisite tact, so much of the inexpressible quiet longing of the human heart for peace. Tommy retired into a corner a little frightened at having talked so much. Helen played more, Brahms and Chopin, and a melancholy, subdued, little theme from some new Northern composer. And there was no more about morals that night.





#### CONSIDERS MORALS

‘Well,’ Richard said to me, as I left, ‘we didn’t get very far, did we? But some day I’m going to talk to you about all this. Maybe Tommy has the right dope, after all.’

Some weeks later I got a letter from Richard who was en route to Europe on a hurried trip to London for his firm.

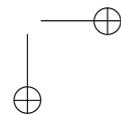
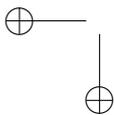
MID-OCEAN, *April fifth*

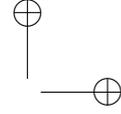
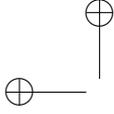
CARO MAESTRO:

One of the really great things about an ocean trip is that it gives you so complete a sense of being detached from your world. Of course there are the wireless bulletins about prize-fights and stock reports, and there are other passengers. But I have been spending my time in a delicious speculative sort of coma.

Lounging out here in a deck-chair all day, as we pound through these endless spaces of sea and sky, I have had a chance for the first time in ten years to think in something like peace. I almost believe that most of the confusion in contemporary thought is due to the fact that it’s been done in large cities near steam rivets and the interruptions of a telephone. Surely the great calm conclusions about life must have been arrived at in clear expanses like these. Or is it only a sentimental illusion that high thoughts flourish on mountain-tops and on the wide salt spaces of the sea?

I’ve been pondering that morals discussion we had at my house. I wonder if it’s always been that way with the race, and whether we will ever get over these nightmares of conflict and torment and indecision. Remember all the points of view we had that evening? Fervint with his Dionysian rhapsodies; the Major asking us to take the whole thing as a farce or to trust to the *élan vital*





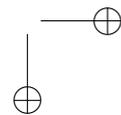
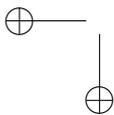
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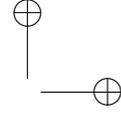
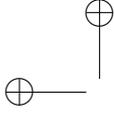
of economic and social forces to work out their own salvation. Dear old Tommy! with his eight-year-old mystic faith. Then there was Bronson, with his new probing scalpel of science, seeking to remove the cancers and clear the complexions of our lives.

We're all driving at the same thing, I believe, and after three calm days at sea, this is what it appears to me to be like. Don't read it if you don't want to. But it might do as notes for a lecture in that moral theory course of yours. Or do you still use the same old yellow notes?

It looks to me as if they are all agreed on one point. The problem is how to make of life a rich and continuously vital experience. Take sex, for example. There's dogma and repression on the one hand, and rebellion and obscenity on the other. Meanwhile sex remains the electric source of all the major poetry and beauty and sublimity possible to life. Isn't it clear that a morality of sex that was in any sense moral would be an art by which we turned all promiscuous animal fire into the most complete and personal and intimate of glories? That seems to me far more important than distinctions between virtue and vice, or freedom and bondage inside marriage or out. I think we've had enough of revolt and propaganda; we've been exorcising devils too long. Isn't it time that we tried to make morality an art toward the good, instead of an extermination of evil?

I used to think in my first fine careless rapture of rebellion that happiness lay in those of Dionysus's frenzies that Fervint talks about. But I doubt whether Dionysus had a better time than Apollo. The most intense and the most complete life! A sensitive equilibrium! I suspect that that is what my generation is looking for. 'Golden anemia,' Fervint calls it. But the intensity



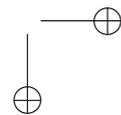
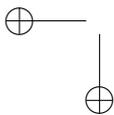


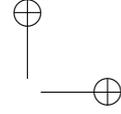
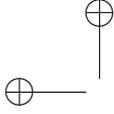
#### CONSIDERS MORALS

and concentration of the athlete or the clear splendor of César Franck are hardly anemia, are they?

We all thought we'd be happy if we were freed from the old shibboleths that mastered us. Felicity lay in freedom. We've had a glorious time laying the ghosts of old superstitions, of prejudices, meannesses and cruelties and lies. God, the table of the laws, divine right of kings and governments, the academic in the arts, the authoritative in education. But, as somebody in our little group said the other day, we've found a great emptiness in the cosmos denuded of God and a great futility in the words that used to pass as ideals. All the smart little cynics have to keep on being smart, or their hearts would break. They can't stand the looks of the world they see with their sharp, little candid eyes. They look for the glories of love, and they find the naked absurdities of lust. They flush with the creative movement of life, and they are brought bang-up against the wormy disintegration of death. They see the spirit of man as a feeble and meaningless flicker in a universal irony of dust and extinction. The first course I took in philosophy was in contemporary thought, and its net effect was to give me a bad case of the blues.

I envy Tommy sometimes his naive little faith. It makes him at home in an immense stable world, full of the glamour of old traditional loveliness and the peace of a certain God. He has talked to me once of going into a monastery. I shouldn't be surprised if he did. I do not think he would be unhappy there. But I rather think there's something wrong with a craving for peace. It's pictured as a desire for serenity; it's usually a thirst for torpor. I do not think I envy Tommy his peace, but his confidence. We have lost faith in everything, even in life itself. But not completely. To live at all is an act of faith; it is an instinctive and passionate allegiance to





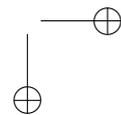
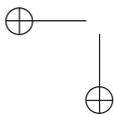
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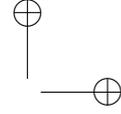
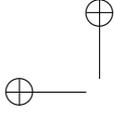
the vitality that will not die and will not face its own extinction. None of the disillusionists can quench the fact of life or their faith in it; all their barbed shafts are expressions of it. That much there is to bank on.

But what has fretted us of our generation is that there is no longer any pattern of living we accept, that we can acquiesce in. We find no pattern and no purpose, and we therefore call it all futile or chaos. Well, life is here to make what patterns of we will. With a little good-will and intelligence, those patterns may be made very beautiful indeed. And if our lives are not eternal, these patterns may be eternal beacons for other lives to follow.

Whenever we find a good in life, I've noticed, we cease to ask reasons for living. Love is one of those goods. It is rare, I suppose, in its perfection, as beauty or genius. We've messed it up a lot, too, with our nasty little pruderies and repressions, and our loud, hoarse, young rebellions. But there is no reason why we cannot invent a way of success for it, and make of it a success. Mangled as it is at present, it is one of the most unalloyed of all felicities. It might be made a complete happiness. I don't know, for sure, but it is, perhaps, the only happiness there is possible to the race.

Then there are the senses. We starve them or we surfeit them. They've always given us the choice between being an aesthete or an ascetic. You'd think one really *had* to be a saint or a sybarite. But it seems so clear that we might make of our senses the avenues to an ambiently lovely world. I wonder will beauty ever become naturalized in America? At present it is treated as a holy sacrament by highbrows in concert halls and museums. Or it is regarded as a disreputable exotic. To a lot of people, the only place for art is in a gallery, and for artists in Bohemia. It never seems to occur to any one





#### CONSIDERS MORALS

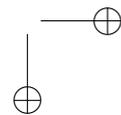
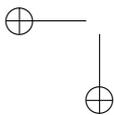
that in a world made pervasively beautiful, and in a life made an art, people might cease to be so anguished for the true and for the good.

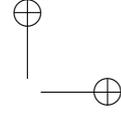
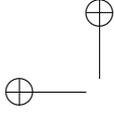
For a little while during my year in Europe I felt that in a thoroughly disordered society the only plausible business for a man was to bask in the perfections of the fine arts. In a sonata by Mozart every sound has a place and a meaning; in a Greek marble there is nothing confused or raucous or awry. How different from experience, where there are whole days in life without meaning, and how many lives without meaning in the world!

I've come to realize, though, that a man is a man first, and only incidentally an aesthete, and I don't quite see how we can pass the buck of making some kind of beauty and order out of our ramshackle, old civilization. It isn't so easy any more to pass the buck to God. Even those who believe in Him most literally have had to concede that He is only doing the best He can in the circumstances. I suppose the nearest thing I have to Tommy's faith is faith in life itself, and in the human intelligence which can make something of it.

That faith, like any other, demands a few loyalties and a few sacrifices. I presume that that's what irks a great many of my generation. We're afraid of that word 'sacrifice.' We've seen so many offerings to false gods, mammon and imperialism and righteousness, and all the savage and cruel codes that have sucked the blood of unquestioning young idealists. We've seen lives wrecked and snuffed out on altars of respectability, of religion, of patriotism. We are a little suspicious of anything that comes to us demanding sacrifice or discipline.

We're just beginning to discover that every art and every achievement is a god in our own minds. If that god is ever to become incarnate in the flesh and blood of our days, there are certain sufferings and austerities





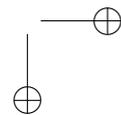
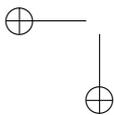
RICHARD KANE

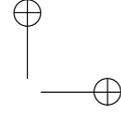
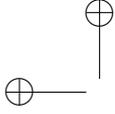
and sacrifices we'll have to make for it. I found that out when I first tried to make a team. I find it every time I try to write a sonnet or watch Helen struggle with the hard beauties of César Franck.

If we came to look upon life itself as the raw materials of beauty, I think morals would come to seem one of the most fascinating of all the arts. Its canvas would dwarf that of any painter. The harmonies one might create of it would make the chords of the usual musician seem tinkling in comparison. Through our faith in life and in our own creative imagination, we may bring into our industry, our education, and our society, a decency, vitality, and freedom. If we do, we shall have created a more serious and engrossing loveliness than those fripperies called beauty by the refugee from the world who dwells in the Ivory Tower.

I think this desire for a life no less radiant and complete than that found at moments in the fine arts, accounts for a good deal of the rebellion and cynicism of me and my contemporaries. We have been embittered by the thought of how beautiful life could be if we only ceased to be stupid. We know that no achievement is possible even in the minor arts without sincerity, directness, and freedom. We know that these things are still more indispensable conditions in the major art of life. But we've probably been protesting too much. It's about time we set about the business of creation itself. We will never do it if we stay in our cramped little hates and spleen. It is a work that will require love to begin. It will mean discipline in the doing. And its goal and its fulfillment will be joy.

It may be that this bracing sea air has gone to my head, but wasn't it Faith and Hope and Love of old that were supposed to bring us to the City of God? Perhaps Faith and Hope and Love will build the City of God



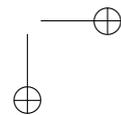
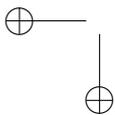


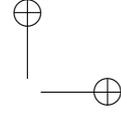
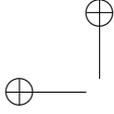
CONSIDERS MORALS

among us. Along with Works. And the works will keep us too busy for mere irony or rebellion or despair. That seems to me religion enough, and enough religion, for my generation.

Il suo devotissimo

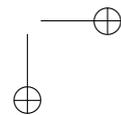
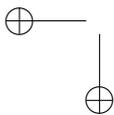
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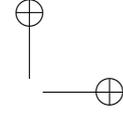
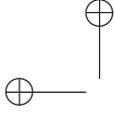




### HE READS THE NEWS

Often when Richard drops in to see me, he gives me the impression of bringing in with him a vivifying breath of the great world. It is part of Richard's business in his publishing house to keep alertly browsing through the flood of papers and magazines that pour into his office from points on both sides of the Atlantic. Richard modestly disclaims omniscience, but there seems to be nothing current in the contemporary world of events of which Richard is unaware. He knows the personal history of suddenly famous Nobel prizewinners; he knows when the musical festival will take place in Salzburg, and what the programme will be. If there is a sale of a folio edition of Shakespeare in London or a report of the first stone sculptures in Abyssinia, Richard has heard of them. Often before I have got round to the scientific journals, Richard will call my attention to the account of an experiment that refutes Einstein, a startling discovery among rats in Canada that proves that acquired characteristics can be transmitted. He will glibly tell me what is the condition of prohibition enforcement in Alabama and the new liquor regula-



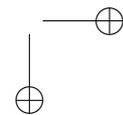
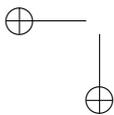


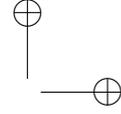
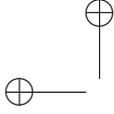
#### READS THE NEWS

tions in Quebec. Of things like the Dawes Plan or the plebiscite in the Tyrol or the adjustment of powers controlling northern China, of all of which I have only the faintest notions, Richard can give me on demand, and often without it, precise and detailed accounts. He makes me feel as if I have been moving in a singularly quiet and restricted corner of the world.

Even if Richard's business did not keep him so closely in touch with current papers and periodicals, I think he would still be singularly sensitive to the 'new.' He has the American *flair* for contemporaneity; even four years of college and a year abroad have not robbed him of the sense that the newest and latest are somehow the beautiful and the best. Nor has he permanently learned that eternal things are dateless and do not lend themselves to the facility of headline shouting. He likes to ride on the forefront of things, to be always alive at the bright, recent, and public frontiers of events.

The history of Richard's mind might, indeed, be traced through the sections and pages of the newspapers that have successively absorbed his attention. There were those early days at home when out of the heavy bundle of dead forest called the Sunday papers the lurid colors of the comic section were for him the only essential fiber. From ten to fifteen it was primarily the sporting section. It seems incredible to Richard now, and to me, that his life should have revolved even as a child about the fortunes of the Giants, and that the batting averages of the star players of each major

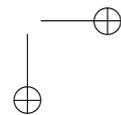
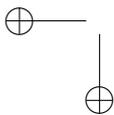


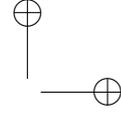
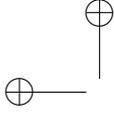


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league team, the trades and wavers between the teams, were for him so long the only real news in the paper. It is true that at school he did read with a certain mild interest the tabloid news sheet for school-children, 'Current Events,' but the reports of what the President did always seemed to him less tangible and actual than the dramatic exploits of Christy Matthewson.

During his high-school days his interest veered to the murders and to the humorous columns. It is a weakness which he has not to this day outgrown. The murders, he told me once, give him the vicarious sense of being a bloody, lustful, and ingenious scoundrel. The humorous columns remind him not to be too solemn about an existence that is ultimately ridiculous. The latter are also responsible for his tendency to turn every simple answer into an epigram and conversation into 'good lines.' That tendency was most noticeable in the period when he filled in for a while on the humorous column of the college paper. It disappeared in his grave junior year. It was then, when the problems of the world were settling heavily upon him, that he would wait for the daily editorials of the liberal evening paper to which he had sworn allegiance. And on occasion he still lapses into the 'significant,' 'profound,' and 'auspicious' *clichés* of those who are engaged in ameliorating the dreadful conditions of things. There was a time, indeed, when he had deserted the newspapers altogether for the journals of opinion, the intellectual weeklies and the scholarly quarterlies. He came to the conclusion that the scattered fragments

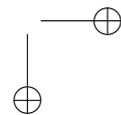
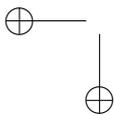


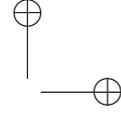
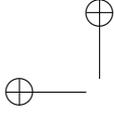


READS THE NEWS

of headlines, the screaming journalizings of current themes in the Sunday supplements, were hardly food for a civilized mind. The clatter of events mattered less than the thunder of opinions. He never made up his mind on politics until his liberal weekly reached him in the mail. During his European year events on the American scene had seemed to him as tiny as the actors on the stage of the Metropolitan seen through the wrong end of the opera-glasses from the top gallery. And European newspapers he had seen chiefly for the language, and not much at that.

Now that he was moving so much among publicists of various sorts, you could depend upon finding at Richard's house a certain number of people preoccupied with newspapers, and a certain percentage of the conversation revolving around discussion of contemporary themes. I was always meeting at Richard's home, for one thing, a number of people who gave one a sense of very special access to what was going on behind the scenes of any given event. There was the assistant musical critic of one of the papers who always had amusing bits of gossip about the salaries, scandals, and quarrels of opera-singers and concert-givers. He knew always just what society matron was responsible for the advancement of just which handsome young conductor. He knew just which houses were 'papered' and just which 'artists' allowed their names to be exploited for musical publicity. There was a gentleman who did special-feature writing for one of the Sunday papers. This rather bored middle-aged



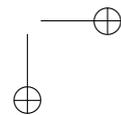
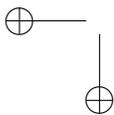


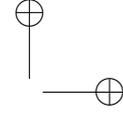
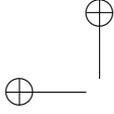
RICHARD KANE

man knew by name and face, and spoke of by his first name, almost every one whose death would have been worth a fair-sized obituary. If you happened to meet him after a big political shake-up at Washington, he always knew just what the President had privately said to one close to him or the humorous observation that Senator So-and-So had made about the affair to the President of the very esoteric Solar Club.

This evening, as not infrequently, the talk had turned upon newspapers. In a rash moment I had said to Richard that I never read them. I quoted with approval Thoreau's dictum that if you read about one murder, you got the principle, and I had implied that newspapers were primarily concerned with murders and that I was not. Richard sailed into me with something less than his usual deferential courtesy.

'That's the trouble with you academic people,' he said. 'To you there is hardly any meaning to the contemporary scene. You move in a hermetically sealed realm of ideas. The words thereof are consistent, perhaps, with one another, but they have nothing to do with the world out of which words grow. I remember your telling me once of Hegel, writing within earshot of the Battle of Jena, writing away for dear life in that marvelous irrelevant system of his, and inquiring from his servant at dinner where all the noise had come from. It is a pretty parable, Professor; I should think you would have learned a lesson from it. Most people in universities won't wake up to the existence of a contemporary world until it crashes about their



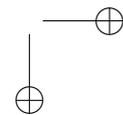
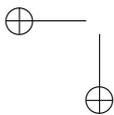


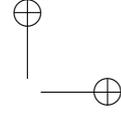
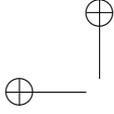
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ears. And then, like Hegel, they'll wake up to ask where all the noise came from, if they are not killed before they wake. It's good you see me occasionally, and these friends of mine you like to dismiss as mere journalists; otherwise you might not know that a world exists at all.'

I was spared from replying by unexpected aid. Sitting beside me was a young poet who occasionally joined Richard's circle. Not the least attractive thing about him was that he looked like a poet, with his wavy brown hair, his lithe figure, and the quiet depths in his large brown eyes.

'The Professor is right,' the poet said. 'Why read newspapers? What could be as dead as last week's newspaper? And it was just as dead last week. The things that absorb a civilized imagination are never found there. The bizarre, the spectacular, the accidental, the unprecedented, the exceptional, the new – all these go to make up the news. They are the riffraff and the refuse of events. The quiet, lovely things that are happening in the world, the profound, tragic, and silent forces in nature and in life, these do not get into the front pages or even into the inside columns so far as I can see. All the news of all the world! But whose world? The world of politics, too dirty, mongrel, and mad for a clean and intelligent person to besmear himself with. There is the world of scandal, the enlightening and savory details of which never get into print. There is the world of vulgar and violent crime. The worlds of beauty and of truth that come



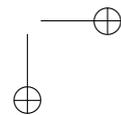
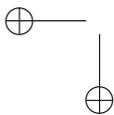


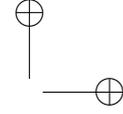
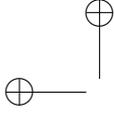
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to stir one through the senses or the passions or the mind, these are never news for the millions, and never will be. Science is not news until it screams in a death ray or a gland operation for the restoration of youth. Poetry is not news until a poet runs away with a stock-broker's wife. Art is not news until a picture is slashed by a maniac or sold for a million dollars. Philosophy does not break into the public prints until it sponsors infanticide or vegetarianism or throws some oblique speculation on the Holy Ghost.

'I could live ten years without reading a newspaper or caring much whether I ever read one again. Nor should I be missing much. I should be foregoing fourteen hundred and fifty cases of uninteresting half-wits who had killed dull nothings; I should not have found out whether or not they had been found by the police and whether or not they had been sentenced to electrocution. I should be spared the miserable details of their last breakfast in jail. But of what went on actually in their minds and hearts I should know nothing – nothing except the silliness of the sob sisters sent to put tears into the case.

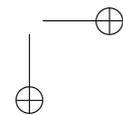
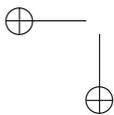
'But what should I have lost that would have been of serious interest, amusement, or importance to an adult imagination? What should I not have gained in peace, in light, and in integrity, if instead I spent my time contemplating those steady beauties and ideas that live on in the noiseless imaginations of the artists and thinkers of the world? I should have been kept alive to the sweet and strong things done and thought by that small group of people who feel and imagine.'

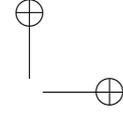
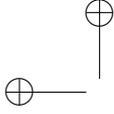




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‘Like most poets,’ said Richard, ‘you are something of a fool. Any serious imagination finds its food in the life about it, and in newspapers, imperfect though they be, you can, with a little patience and intelligence, keep your eye on the major movements of events, and catch the heartbeats of the environment in which you live. Milton, if I remember, did not find his spirit curbed, but winged, by the stimulation of political passions and conflicts. It was from the French Revolution that came some of the provocation that issued in the poetry of Wordsworth and Shelley. You poets have ceased to write the poetry of actual events and common human passions; you are writing rhetoric about literary passions and verbal acts. You move in the thin little verbalism of your intellectual circles. You never so much as guess what is going on about you, or sense the history that is living and current in your own generation. If events become old enough, they are historical and quaint for you, and you like to dress up in times not your own. You close your eyes to that passionate stream of political and social conflict that makes the note, the thrill, the adventure of our generation. The seeds of war are sown under your eye without your even noticing them. The ruins of our civilization smoulder in the news of a new chemical device or a new muffled clash between two powers in the Near East. The future glory of the race whispers in a paragraph about a new educational method or a new eugenic idea. You sneer, not seeing great fortunes, great institutions, and great careers making in the

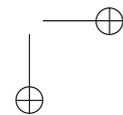
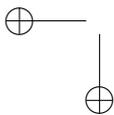


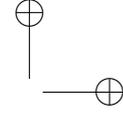
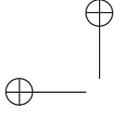


RICHARD KANE

headlines under your eyes. You live in a little backwater of petty words and thin thoughts and embroidered feelings. You don't have any sense of the geography of your own life or the setting of the lives of all your fellow beings in the world. There is drama and poetry enough for any alert and eager vision in any front page any day in any week. But because it is in a headline and because it is dated to-day, you haven't the imagination to see what it means or the intelligence to piece it together into a meaning and significance. You are no better, pattering over your verses and your *objets d'art* and your bibelots, than a narrow-minded housewife who uses the newspapers only to line her closets, and sees no farther than her pot roast and her desserts. An intelligent reading of newspapers is daily education in the meaning, glamour, and prospects of civilization. Don't read them, and you are a soliloquist in a void. Newspapers give you a pair of eyes to see farther than across the street and around the world. With their cables and their telegrams they extend your nervous system to sensitiveness to the whole planet.'

'Nonsense!' broke in Major Weldon, the banker-author who was the nay-sayer of all Richard's parties. 'Since when have you become a social press agent for the Newspaper Publishers' Association, Richard? Nobody gets out of newspapers that unity, coherence, and picture of life that you so glowingly paint. You are talking about newspapers that are not printed and newspaper readers who have never lived. Newspaper reading is simply a sober form of drunkenness. It's the



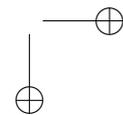
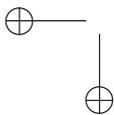


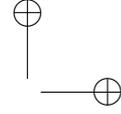
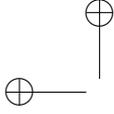
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worst possible way of getting a coherent picture of the life of our time. It's a crazy-quilt, a jazz symphony, madness shouting in loud type. To run your eye over the front page of a modern newspaper is a nightmare just off the press. "Count Proved Father"; "Child Labor Amendment Defeated"; "Denies Complicity in Murder"; "Jewels Stolen from Hotel Bedroom"; "Plan for Vehicular Tunnel under Hudson"; "Merger of Two Western Railroads"; "College Professor Weds Follies Dancer"; "Prince Goes to India"; "Hylan Will Win." It's a constant *rat-tat-tat* of irrelevance and mumble-jumble against your ears. It does make your nervous system sensitive to the planet all right, but it does not sustain a single steady emotion or provoke a single clear thought. The mind of a newspaper reader, if it could be photographed after ten minutes' reading, would be not a map, but an explosion.'

The Major paused to relight his pipe, and began walking up and down the room.

'What's more, the real concerns of human beings are hardly ever broached and certainly never plumbed in front pages. The newspaper reader is always trained to deal with the surface facts of events, always the least interesting features of them. Every time I read an obituary I realize that news is, even with the best intentions, falsifying. A true obituary would be a psychological novel, not a column of facts. The things that would really throw light on American lives and the American scene hardly ever get into a good, conscientious American newspaper. From the point of





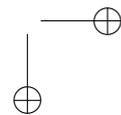
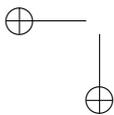
RICHARD KANE

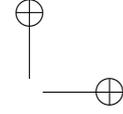
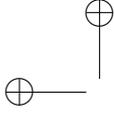
view of the city desk, all that as private citizens really interests us in the lives of our fellow men is flubdub and folderol.

‘The yellow dailies come much nearer to it than the respectable whitened sepulchers. They, at least, though wildly, try to move among the passions, motives, and thoughts that animate the common mortal being. They do not try to record life in terms of names, addresses, chronologies, and statistics. The sobs and shouts of the yellows are much nearer to life than the prim precisions of the whites. The best way to learn about your age is from novels and from the gossip of your neighbors, not from news of bank mergers, interviews with Senators, and the façades of experience that get into courts, public meetings, and congressional inquiries. It is the psychological backgrounds, the fine nuances of motive, the curious adjustments of circumstances, that really serve to illuminate, humanize, and explain events. They are never found out and seldom recognized by a reporter; they almost never get beyond the blue pencil of the copy-desk.’

The Major paused to look inquiringly at the newspapermen present, and continued:

‘As for those larger movements of men and happenings that Richard thinks you get from newspapers, you don’t. One good article in a journal of economics or political science will tell me more about what is going on in the world than three months’ steady reading of all the newspapers in the country. If you’ll pardon me the old metaphor, the average newspaper reader



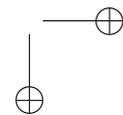
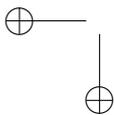


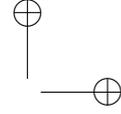
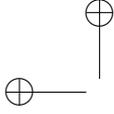
#### READS THE NEWS

reading the average newspaper is like a chameleon walking across a Scotch plaid. There is no stability in his judgment and no constancy in the materials he reads. It is a crazy-quilt mind reading a crazy-quilt world. The events that make the most noise shout audibly to him in headlines; a crime that is dead in a day takes a column; a scientific discovery that may in a hundred years change the face of civilization is recorded unintelligibly on an inside page. Things near, intimate, and human aren't important enough to print; things far-reaching and important, when they are printed, come in scrambled and hysterical doses. A good newspaper would have to be written by men who had the imagination and sympathy of novelists and the information and method of scientists. They cannot be produced by the promiscuous ignorant bipeds who at present write and edit them.'

Simon Flint, the newspaper man, had for the last ten minutes been puffing at his pipe in a silence that was a mixture of boredom, amusement, and impatience.

'I don't rate at all with all you highbrows,' he said; 'I don't even pretend to be a journalist; I am a newspaper man. For twenty years I have been writing articles all over the country and for all kinds of newspapers. I know better than anybody here the haste, superficiality, and unblushing impudence with which newspaper writers and newspaper editors sail into and deal with themes, ideas, men, and facts that it would take a lifetime of study and devotion to deal with at all.'

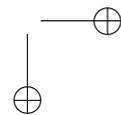
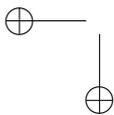


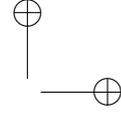
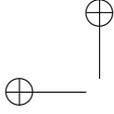


RICHARD KANE

‘I have made a three-thousand-word article out of an hour’s conversation with the psychiatrist, Bronson here, who had spent thirty years trying to clear up the mists in thousands of tortured and aberrant minds. A week later, I have done an article on prison reform on the basis of a half-day’s reading and a day’s wandering through a penitentiary with a liberal warden. I have interviewed within a fortnight a professor with a possible cure for tuberculosis, a banker with a new national-credit system, the head of a farmer’s league, a visiting English poet, and a millionaire murderer. I have wandered over the seven seas of human experience, always making sure to keep on the crest of the wave. I have had time to know nothing well and nothing intimately. I have had to confine my attention to what was new, noisily portentous, quaint, or absurd. I know perfectly well the faked and forced drama that must dress up the facts in a feature article. I know how complicated ideas must be simplified or omitted because my readers or my editor or I do not understand them. I know how the relative importance of facts for me, my paper, and my readers is in their dramatic or news value. I know all this, and yet I feel with Richard here that in many ways newspapers are the chief source of the education of our time, and that they do, all things considered, a stunning job.

‘The Major has accused newspapers of being written by promiscuous ignorant bipeds. I sometimes have the impression that more conscience and scholarship go into the making of a Sunday newspaper than into the

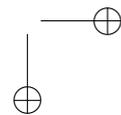
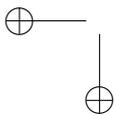


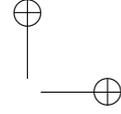
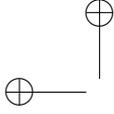


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making of many books and certainly of most poems. This emphasis on names, chronologies, and statistics that the Major has ridiculed, what is it, after all, but the scientist's respect for and precision as to facts? A cub reporter would be fired for permitting himself some of the airy generalizations delivered with pompous and fatuous certainty in our learned economic and political journals. The Professor here, I doubt not, permits himself many a dogma about the soul and immortality that no editorial writer and certainly no reporter would dare to indulge in.

'Our poet friend has complained of the fact that newspapers are interested only in the new and spectacular. Why shouldn't they be? What is that but the same sense that a poet has for the freshness and glamour of things? What makes a poem on the ancient theme of love different, magic, and distinguished? It is a fresh variation, news. If somebody tries a new experiment in domestic relationships, that is news, too, the fresh and resilient poetry and plasticity of life. The newspaper man has the spirit of perpetual youth; his eye is open to the fresh, untarnished edges of the future. To open a newspaper is to be rescued from the sense of the vanity, staleness, and unprofitableness of life. The newspaper man has his eye on the perpetually happening dawns of things, of dynasties and revolutions, of arts and careers. He can never fall into that routine which is the canker of most careers and most philosophies. He is constantly rousing others to the eager observation of new things under the sun.



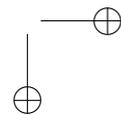
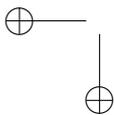


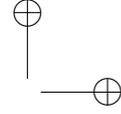
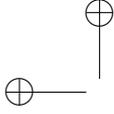
RICHARD KANE

Because he writes only about the moment, nevertheless, like a poet, he lives in that moment completely. Like the best of the Epicureans, he crowds the instant with intensity and meaning. For the general populace, he is the true and universal minnesinger; he is the freshener and vivifier of the moments as they pass in the market-places and tumults of the world. He is writing the daily epic of his generation, though, like all other epic poets, he is absorbingly concerned with one episode at a time.

‘You tell us we write about science only when it becomes deadly in an explosion of poison gas, and about literature only when it becomes scandal. If we do, it is not because death and sex are especially dear to newspaper men, but to mankind. On the other hand, the amount of space that the newspapers of this country devote to science, literature, art, and education is evidently unnoticed by the denizens of those industries.

‘For the millions of people, moreover, who do not live with books and bookish people, or who have never been in a library, we are the instruments that stave off barbarism. Except for us, there would be as great a cleft between the mass and the educated as there was between the educated monk and the peasant in the Middle Ages. Nearly all that the adult of our generation has of living contact with science, art, thought, and the larger issues of civilization, he gets from us. The professors reach but a handful; the preachers not many more; the poets scarcely any. We are the living

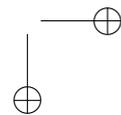
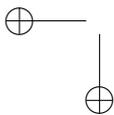


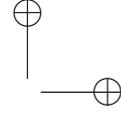
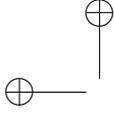


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and actual teachers of our generation. We keep under the eyes and remain masters of the imagination of our pupils long after they have lost respect for or contact with any other teacher. We follow your average man into the subway, catch his eye at the breakfast-table, or after dinner. On Sundays between breakfast and church or golf, we get a chance to insinuate into his mind a little of the meaning and background of the hasty headlines he has read during the week.

‘You all like to prate of the life of reason which is some day going to be actually got going in the world. Richard has introduced me to the works of Santayana, who sits in quiet gardens in Europe in the cool of his life writing about reason. But if the life of reason is ever got going, it will be newspaper men, not people like him, who will have brought it about. You intellectuals sit around in your little closed groups talking about the abolition of war, but it is the daily newspapers with their constant ticking of cable dispatches and their daily iteration of item after item – it is they who are going to hammer that conception home. Truth, goodness, and beauty are going to remain mere words, and even those words are going to be silenced, unless we newspaper men make them prevail. If we left it to the poets and professors and artists, the waves of misunderstanding and hatred would swell and grow until bombs and poison gas would destroy libraries and universities and concert-halls together with the rest of the planet. It is through the constant *rat-tat*, as the Major calls it, of headlines that democracy,





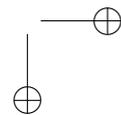
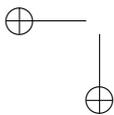
RICHARD KANE

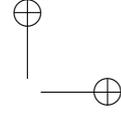
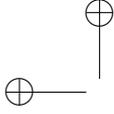
social justice, and world unity can be translated from the lingo of abstractions into the language of daily practice. Except for us the voices of the learned would be a silence in a void. Every idealistic programme would be an irrelevant soliloquy.'

Simon Flint started again puffing at his pipe.

The poet had been wincing. He hardly waited for Flint to finish.

'Bliss to be advertised to the millions! Truth, goodness, and beauty to be elected by popular vote! Never, never, in the past or future history of the world! Flint himself admits that to become news to the multitude truth must be jazzed, beauty spiced, and the good made noisy and thrilling. A philosophical faker who goes in for religion can win all the newspaper space he wants by beating the drums and cymbals in a loud life of Christ. A lonely thinker with a profound, quiet thought is lost in the racket. It's no use feeding ourselves and fooling ourselves with the thought of spreading the divine fire like thin treacle over the half-baked bread of the world. The news that is news to a civilized mind will always bore the majority; it will be interesting only to those whom Arnold Bennett justly calls the "passionate few." "The Freeman," which tried to live exclusively on the nutriment of interesting and important things, languished after four years with a handful of readers. The cleft between the barbarians and the intellectuals will always be what it was. It is simply widened by the picture paper, the yellow sheets, and the radio. The headline, the comic strip,





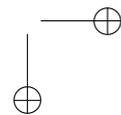
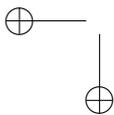
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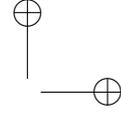
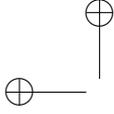
and the Sunday article simply universalize barbarism for the semi-literate. Saving the world or spreading the light by headlines! Sight worth spreading can never be spread. The world worth saving lives on quietly and unquenchingly above wars and rumors of wars, and always will. You may be sure when truth, beauty, and goodness become pabulum for the millions, they will have been completely denatured in the process.'

Fervint, the Californian, had kept still too long for his own comfort. He was already restlessly walking about the room.

'Here comes the rhapsody in blue,' Richard whispered to me as Fervint began:

'One cannot find coherence in the newspapers. That's not a complaint against journalism. It's a complaint against life. What you are objecting to is the fact that the newspapers accurately reflect the wildness, the strident tempo, the hurry and disorder of our time, our country, and our generation. As for me, I turn to the paper with my morning coffee as to any great adventure. The newspaper is not a formal summary of a directors' meeting in which the programme has been laid out in advance. It is as loud, as trumpety, as miscellaneous, and as vulgar as the life of this sprawling continent itself. Havelock Ellis says somewhere that crime is the index of a civilization. Well, anything is, and everything is. Murders in Chicago, Marathon dancing in Delaware, bicycle races in New York, prima-donna divorces, typhoid epidemics, international house parties on Long Island —



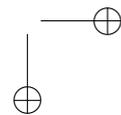
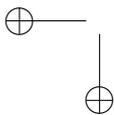


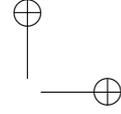
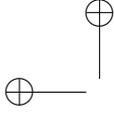
RICHARD KANE

they all interest me as the sprawling phantasmagoria of life interested Walt Whitman. If you have a weak digestion, it is a nightmare. But if you are healthy, it is a show, a circus, a mad delight. Who cares what it means or if it means anything so long as there is passion and gusto in it?

‘It’s often made me think that the paragraphers and cartoonists are far more subtle and wise commentators on life than the learned editorial writers. Life is explosive, not logical, as Richard believes; not lyrical, as the poet does. What you can get out of it is not a meaning, but a quip, a grin, or a sob. The wits on the papers seem to me the most authentic commentators on our life because they take it for just what it is – a series of amusing episodes in the crazy-quilt life of our day. A man who tries to make sense of that madness is himself mad. He is foisting his dream logic on the facts, and missing the wild fun of the facts themselves.’

‘Edward’s gone into Dionysiacs again,’ said Richard, ‘and without even a single cocktail. What you want, Edward, is a nice large insane asylum to roam around in. I cannot help thinking that the interest in the fripperies, the madness, and the absurd scintillation of things is one of the signs of the decadence of our times. There are people I know who turn to their favorite columnist comments on news before they turn to the news itself. They are not really interested in the incendiary fact that Poland is to Europe. They rejoice in the columnist who tells them that “France and Germany are Poles apart.” Give them an eclipse of





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the sun, and they think the eclipse itself is eclipsed by the wit who gets off a line about it. It is the symptom of the nervous decay of our time. What I want out of the newspapers is not a constant assault by epigram: I want a sober record on which I can frame a picture of the prospects of the civilization of which I am a part.'

As Richard concluded, we heard, breaking against the silence that followed, the muffled voice of a news-boy raucous in the soft spring air: 'Extra! Extra!' then some indistinguishable hoarse mumbling. Tommy Keenan, always pleased with a chance for physical distraction, went to the window and thrust his head out in inquiry. The rest sat listening attentively.

'I wonder what it can be,' said Mrs. Spellman, with anxiety in her always tender eyes.

'Probably just a half-wit murdering a moron,' suggested the poet.

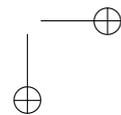
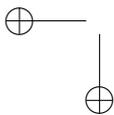
'You can never tell what it is from what those fellows say,' said Tommy, turning from the window disgustedly. 'Those chaps always mumble their words so that you have to buy the paper.'

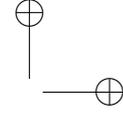
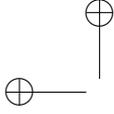
'I have a notion something's broken loose in Italy,' said Flint, gravely. 'The dispatches from Rome yesterday sounded pretty ominous.'

'I'll run down and get a paper,' said Tommy seizing his hat.

As the door closed behind him, Richard looked at us curiously.

'Here in one way or another we've been damning the papers, but whenever there is the rumor of news, how





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we all wake up! Murder, wreck, revolution – anything just so we know what it is.’

‘Something has broken loose all right,’ Tommy said as he returned, waving a pink sheet. ‘It’s Mount Etna.’ And we all listened as Tommy read in his delicious Irish cadences the story of the havoc that ancient mountain was wreaking among those remote and doomed Sicilian villages.

A little buzz of gossip and speculation, then Tommy’s voice.

‘I must see if the Giants have won.’

‘Look what kind of weather it’s going to be tomorrow, Tommy,’ Helen suggested.

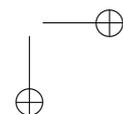
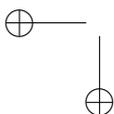
‘Fair and warmer. But here’s something for you, Mr. Poet, or whatever you are: “Prince of Wales Dines with Thomas Hardy.”’

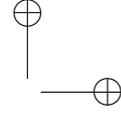
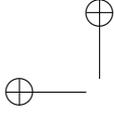
‘In some countries that would have been considered an honor for the prince,’ said the poet.

‘What are the new plays announced for the week?’ asked Fervint, he of the Little Theater Movement.

‘I’ll let you have the paper in a moment, Eddie. But look here: “Philosopher Hangs Himself.” Don’t let that put any ideas in your head, Professor.’

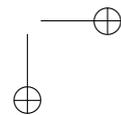
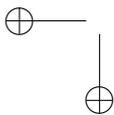
‘Well,’ said Richard, ‘I don’t think newspapers need any defense in this company. We’ll all be reading them and looking forward to them until the five-star final edition on the Day of Judgment. We’ll turn to the celestial arrivals and the infernal departures to see which column we’re in. Maybe on the last page among the city brevities there will be a short editorial by Dr. Frank Crane telling the meaning of it all.’

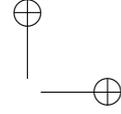
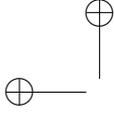




### HE TAKES STOCK OF MARRIAGE

Because Richard Kane has often talked to me in the past as to a father confessor, I do not for a moment pretend omniscience as to the inner essence of his soul. Though I have studied psychology, I know enough about human nature to know the difference between the rhetoric that makes up nine tenths even of intimate confession and the secret stream that constitutes the life of a man's private being. But I have been fond of Richard for a long time. Love, proverbially blind, ought, perhaps, to be credited, too, with preternatural insight. Affection lends sharpness to perception, and perhaps I have not, in affection, read too much into those momentary glimpses of his life out of which I construct my picture of Richard, his sensations and ideas. I can, for example, lay no claim to more knowledge of his married life than would be open to any friend of any family, and certainly to no more than a bachelor can comprehend. But Richard's views, including his unexpressed ones, are fairly familiar to me by this time, and I have seen him and Helen together enough



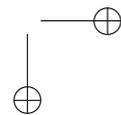
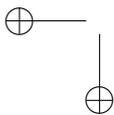


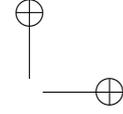
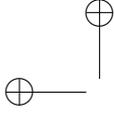
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to know about where he is and how he stands on the question of marriage.

As far as externals go and by all conventional standards, Richard is happily married. There is about him now a serenity he never possessed in those disordered years when he was floating between book and book, job and job, girl and girl, in the hunt for and the thirst for peace. Once, and not long before he was married, either, he looked upon marriage as a greasy prison-house, a drab dovecote of routine. It was indubitably associated in his imagination with middle age; it was the respectable quietus upon romance; it was a treadmill in suburbia. He had seen his friends within a year of married life translated, as it were, from the generation in which he had grown up to the generation of his father and mother.

Marriage meant concern with rents, grocers' bills, commutation tickets, and the social obligations of two families instead of one. Life was to be for him – how often I had heard the phrase in his mouth! – a soliloquy, a living in the clear pursuit of his own interests, responsible only to the call of his own temperament, and the requirements of his own peace. He was to be a free spirit living in a continually adventurous world. He was, remembering Bacon's warning, giving no hostages to fortune. With much amusement, he now recalls to me those pre-marital declarations of his. For already at the age of twenty-six Richard has been celebrating his second wedding anniversary.

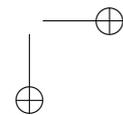
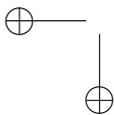


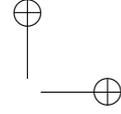
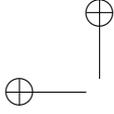


#### TAKES STOCK OF MARRIAGE

For two years, with the exception of brief absences on business, Richard has found himself coming to be greeted each evening by his lovely, if not brilliant, wife, in an apartment now so very much home that he wonders how he could ever have used that word for the hermitage in Greenwich Village in which he had dragged out a year and a half of solitude. Their etchings, chosen on happy Saturday afternoon explorations together, are beautified for him by the pleasant history of their purchase. Everything in the apartment is touched with the background of the talks, the walks, the mock-serious conferences between him and Helen that went into their buying and their placing. Richard recalls how it had taken Helen a week to win him over to the rug with its base of deep, rich blue that has now come to seem indispensable to the quality of their living-room. What fun it had been browsing together through the brass shops on Allen Street – the candlesticks on the mantel are the trophies of that expedition – or haunting the auction-rooms in the hope, finally fulfilled, of finding a piece of tapestry cheap enough and lovely enough to light up a long, narrow space in a corner between a wall and a window!

Coming home no longer meant coming to the cell of a solitary. How often he had entered his rooms in Greenwich Village and found them, for all their pleasure of books and pictures, lifeless and empty! To come home now was to reappear in a world which had been continuing its own animation during his absence, and which was not a darkness lighted only



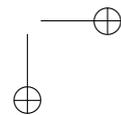
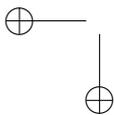


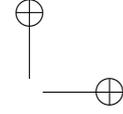
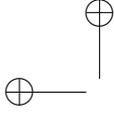
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and briefly by the warmth of his own presence. He found in it a sense of stability and security such as that which home had given him as a child. He remembered how, having failed in an examination at high school, it appeared to him as if the world had gone suddenly to utter blackness and ruin. He had come home and found the routine of the household still going, his mother still unperturbed at her sewing, his sister playing as ever with her dolls. It was something of that same security, only more personal and intimately his own, that he experienced now upon coming home. It was not only that it breathed always Helen's presence, but that it breathed, too, the history of many happy hours together. To come back to it was to come out of the irrelevant jangle of the day to a quiet continuum of animation and serenity. The place was not only a place to live, but it had and was a life of its own.

I think it took Richard some time to realize how completely he had become a married man, and how completely contented a member of that civil institution called marriage. It still amuses me to see Richard, sitting in state at table, carving on occasion, and for all his youth, and for all that it is a small New York apartment, acting the perfect host and the *grand seigneur*. It interests me to observe how much 'we' has taken the place of 'I' in his conversation, and how fully and placidly a domesticated creature he has become.

'I am really ridiculously happy,' he said to me one evening as he walked home with me from his apartment. 'I feel almost like apologizing for it. I seem to see the

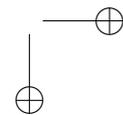
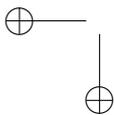


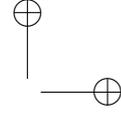
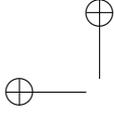


#### TAKES STOCK OF MARRIAGE

world from a fixed point of view and from a stable anchorage. Helen and I are married two years now. I don't think of marriage, if I ever did, as a grand passion. It is, when it is successful, a sweet and amiable arrangement by which two friends may live together. Sex seems far less a central fact about marriage than a kind of *obligato* necessary to give it intensity and flavor. Within six months friends and furnishings come to occupy as much of the imagination of a young couple as their passion for each other.

'But, best of all, marriage gives me, and Helen, too, I think, a curious old-fashioned sense of security. As far as I can make out, Professor, you don't seem to feel the need of knowing, when you turn the key in the lock in the evening, that there is somebody there to greet you. Really the ups and downs of a day come to seem comparatively trivial next to the quiet assurance of some one whose love is there like a constant grace and benediction – for you, apart from your successes or defeats. I used to get off a lot of sentimental stuff about friendship in the old days. Well, what two friends can have more in common than husband and wife? Where can there be more completeness and intimacy of companionship? Their love and their friends, their domestic arrangements and their furniture, their little mutual understandings and the private code of whimsies and humor that grow up between them' – Richard thought a moment – 'and their children. Well, we have no child. For the moment we don't want any. There is a complete and

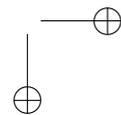
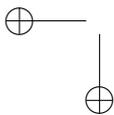


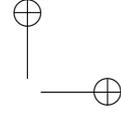
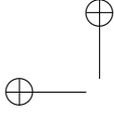


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beautiful *entente* and self-sufficiency between us that we both have a notion a child for the present would spoil. Children, too, somehow, would put us in the class of the older generation. It would mean problems for which at present neither of us feels competent. And for the moment neither Helen nor I feel any very vivid obligation to add to the population of the planet or to give to another human creature the very questionable possibility of happiness. We seem at present in a lovely niche of time; we are knocking on wood, crossing our hearts. We have seen too much of what has been happening in the marriages of our generation to feel that we are anything but absurdly lucky and impossibly content.<sup>7</sup>

It was perfectly true that Richard and Helen were, at least to the eyes of this bachelor friend of theirs, a happy couple. I would think, time and again when I saw them together, what a fortunate duo they were. They made, to begin with, so lovely a picture. Richard has arrived at that equilibrium, that image of apparently perpetual youth, which good-looking young men arrive at somewhere about the age of twenty-five. Time seems to stop for a while and to allow them a long high noon for clear feature and clean, slender form. Helen is shorter and slimmer, fragile-looking without weakness or washiness, quiet in her eyes, resilient gold in her hair, an unexpected and pleasing firmness in her finely cut lips. They were at tea once, and, looking at them in the light of a flickering fire on a December day, I decided that here was material for some one,

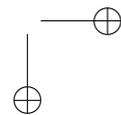
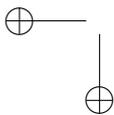


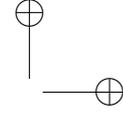
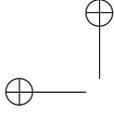


#### TAKES STOCK OF MARRIAGE

perhaps for myself, to write a romantic Golden Age novel.

I have been trying to define the kind of happiness they find in each other. Despite Richard's sober assurance to me that marriage is not with them a matter of a grand passion, it is perfectly clear that there is genuine passion at the basis of their content. It is that passion, for one thing, which I think enables Helen to probe below the rhetorical Richard who agonizes over the integration of his own soul and the fate of the world. Her caressing insight reaches to the essentially boyish spirit that hungers for affection, gentleness, and peace. It is her passion for Richard, too, I think, that makes her wish to travel with him in those provinces of the mind where, I feared, though married, he would have to travel alone. I have a suspicion that she tries to travel farther than she really can or than she really cares to. She gets ideas, but I am not sure they really get her. Of all Richard's friends I think she loves Tommy best because he is so simply and clearly human, so little given to the rhetoric of the intellectuals. She has a corner of her heart mentally reserved for me because of my affection for Richard, because I treat him like a boy. Ideas she thinks are simply my business and I do not take them more seriously than any other merchant takes his wares outside of office hours. But she makes a real attempt to follow Richard intellectually. She is beginning to move in the vocabulary of himself and his friends with ease, though she talks much more simply and much more



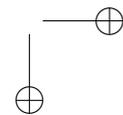
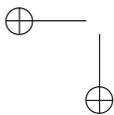


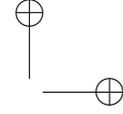
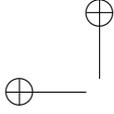
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prettily than they. She has a gift for getting the drift of arguments certainly without her domain. She is a finely gifted pianist; she is enough of a poet and an artist to feel imaginatively many things she cannot clearly comprehend.

Meanwhile, Helen has made Richard very much more of a human being. He has ceased to be a walking bundle of theories about life, and has become something of the immediate, spontaneous human being who used to charm me as a freshman. In the light of all the heat and confusion about marriage and divorce that preoccupy the pages of liberal journals and liberal conversation, it is pleasant to know that I can come, in Richard's apartment, upon one island of conspicuous adjustment and content. Passion without sting, I say to myself, community of interest without bondage, — surely if Richard and Helen can realize them, they may be realized by other young people as well.

Of late I must confess, though, to having my suspicions that the idyll is less perfect than I have been supposing. In the first place, like most sensitive minds, including the cynical ones, Richard is an incurable romantic. In Helen's very coolness, in the serenity of their lives together, I am beginning to suspect on Richard's part a little boredom and a little disappointment. 'Love,' I heard him say one night, 'is an agony and an ecstasy; marriage is a routine and an institution.' He was not talking mere literature that time; he was indulging in indirect, but audible, confession.

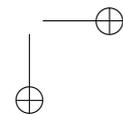
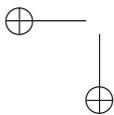


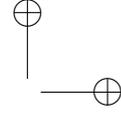
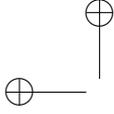


#### TAKES STOCK OF MARRIAGE

Richard is suddenly waking up to the fact that Helen is simply and completely apart from the world in which most of his day and much of his imagination is passed: she reads little, and frankly hates to hear her husband talk about his books and his business. The first hint I got that Richard was beginning to make invidious comparisons between Helen and other women of his acquaintance came one night at dinner at their house. The only guest beside myself was a young woman, Hilda Moore, who was working with Richard on an advertising campaign in his publishing house. She was a jaunty, bright creature with a mind like a thousand arrows. Her singular alertness rendered her undistinguished features alive almost to the point of beauty. Richard and she talked mostly to and for each other all through dinner. Helen talked principally to me. I could not help noticing how absorbed Richard was in Miss Moore. I thought it might be merely the preoccupation of their common business. But it was not business that they were talking. And I must admit that in comparison with this energetic creature Helen did seem alarmingly pallid and simple.

Hilda Moore had come from one of the women's colleges where she had been known as 'the beautiful Revoltée.' She had led the student revolt movement that had given her alma mater the first radical change in its curriculum that it had had in a quarter of a century. She was compact of an impressive competence, but so winning that you forgot the competence in the charm. One evening in my presence she had 'sailed



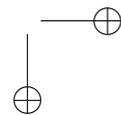
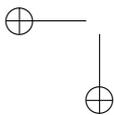


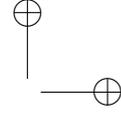
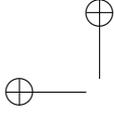
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into' universities with what in any one else would have been venom. She told me colleges were simply places for nice young people and nice professors, but that any one naughty enough or gauche enough to be interested in ideas did not belong and could not enter them, or, if such entered, they would not wait to be graduated or expelled. At the office, according to Richard, she got an extraordinary amount of work done, retaining the freshness and debonair nonchalance of an undergraduate on the hottest and the busiest of days. Indeed, to look at this young woman in evening dress, it was impossible to believe that she was the girl a large business house found indispensable.

Richard spoke of her more and more. Helen did not mind. Often when Helen was busy practicing in the evening – Helen was working hard and steadily at her music this winter – Richard would, I gathered, be spending the evening with Hilda Moore. I once twitted Richard with leaving Helen so much to herself, and he assured me it was quite all right. 'Besides,' Helen added, 'Tommy Keenan often drops in to keep me company.' He did, quite regularly. With a devotion touchingly doglike, he would sit listening for two hours to music he did not understand and hardly heard, so intently was his attention absorbed by his eyes and his eyes by Helen.

Richard did not mind. For among other things Richard had evolved an elaborate theory of a free and modern marriage which Helen had learned by a kind of faithful rote.





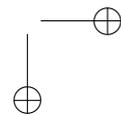
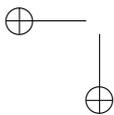
#### TAKES STOCK OF MARRIAGE

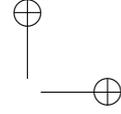
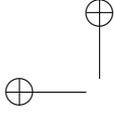
‘Helen and I have often talked it over,’ Richard explained to me one evening, ‘and we’re perfectly clear that we’re free, each of us, to lead our own life. Extracurricular activities we call it. Take me and Hilda Moore. Now, obviously, there are many things and many points of view we have in common that Helen and I have not. Hilda and I move for eight hours a day, and imaginatively for more than that, in the same environment; we live in the same world. Of course, my feelings for her are different from my feelings for Helen, but I don’t see why the mere fact of my being married should preclude the warmest kind of friendship. The same goes for Helen and Tommy.’

My eyes perhaps disclosed the fact that I thought he was protesting too much.

‘Seriously,’ Richard continued, ‘you certainly must be emancipated enough not to think that marriage should cut friendship for all other women out of a man’s life, or for all other men out of a woman’s. Fifty years ago Hilda and I would have had to hide our friendship, and pretend to ourselves that it was not what people called it, a sin, but something high and sacramental, a sort of intense Launcelot-Guinevere affair. Of course, it’s just a jolly sort of companionship. Helen doesn’t mind it in the least, and she knows Hilda and I have much to give each other in the way of stimulation and interest. In what sense is there anything wrong about it? It works beautifully for all of us.’

And, as far as I could observe, it did. At times, it is true, Richard seemed a little bored with Helen. Again,





RICHARD KANE

I would notice at Sunday evening parties Helen would look a little furtively and uneasily at Hilda. Well, I thought, one must not take these things too seriously. I supposed I had been reading too many modern novels and too many modern plays. I was not going to let any vicarious sophistication spoil for me this idyll. Richard and Helen seemed so serenely sure of each other! And there was in the former nothing of the philanderer and in the latter nothing of the flirt. New times, new manners, that was all, I assured myself.

But I was not altogether reassured. One evening I took Hilda home from Richard's. We naturally talked a good deal about him. She wanted to know what he had been like at college; she was full of enthusiasm for his competence and his charm.

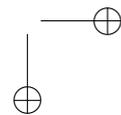
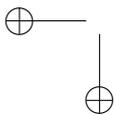
'Helen's done a lot for him,' I suggested as I was standing at the door of her apartment-house.

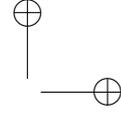
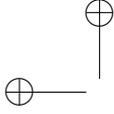
'But Helen is just a bit too namby-pamby for Richard, don't you think, Professor? I wonder if that vanilla-flavored marriage is your ideal of felicity. Richard, poor boy, is trying to persuade himself that it is. You can't say a word about Helen in his presence; not the slightest.'

Then Hilda looked at me. She sensed some doubt or some suspicion in my eyes.

'You think I am a sinister influence on Richard, don't you?' she asked, looking at me with a challenging directness.

'I'm afraid I do,' I replied. 'Richard and Helen seem to be, all things considered, extraordinarily well





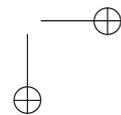
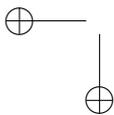
#### TAKES STOCK OF MARRIAGE

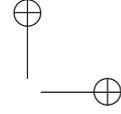
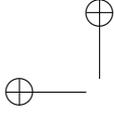
married. I should hate to have you or any one else come between them. I'm afraid to see this go much farther. You two are falling in love with each other, or have already, though Richard, for one, does not admit it or recognize it.'

'Well, don't fret, Professor, and don't try to be Richard's good angel. He's got his diploma, and he's able to take care of himself. I'm not wrecking any homes just at present.'

None the less, I confess it was with a great sense of relief that I read a month or so later of Hilda's marriage to a broker in Boston. I had noticed on my visit at a dinner a fortnight before, alone with Richard and Helen, how for the first time since I had known them together there seemed to be a definite estrangement between them. Richard was extremely self-conscious. He joked a good deal, told me a lot of chit-chat about publishing and his own work, and never mentioned Hilda Moore. And he looked uneasily at Helen. At the next Sunday evening party I came to, Hilda was conspicuously not present. But, from something Richard said, I knew he had still been seeing her outside of business.

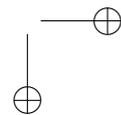
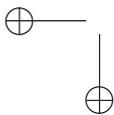
I should have liked to know exactly what was going on in Richard's mind and heart during these months. After Hilda's marriage, Richard talked fairly vaguely about it to me one evening, but I am frank to admit that my picture of what happened is at best reconstructive surmise.

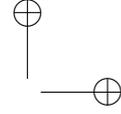
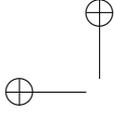




RICHARD KANE

As far as I can make out, Richard discovered that the eternal triangle is a little differently composed than it is conceived in the best conventional traditions. At the beginning I think Richard would have been surprised to learn that he was getting perilously near the eternal triangle at all. The choice that a married man has to face, Richard found out, when he began to realize whither he was drifting, is not primarily a choice between two women. He must make his decision between two modes of life, between obeisance to the scintillation of a bright, transient presence or a permanent absorption in his wife and his home. Richard, who hates to think of life as shaped by institutions or constrained by them, has, among other passions, a passion for loyalty and an unremitting allegiance to any human enterprise in which he has become involved. I might have known better than to have worried about him. For if it had come to a choice, it would have been impossible for Richard to make the hectic and rebellious one. Long before he was married, I had heard him rail at some of his contemporaries whose marriage had gone on the rocks. 'They want to have their cake and eat it at the same time,' he had said. 'Well, they can't. The things that marriage has to offer are permanent, and they ought to be willing to be good sports and give up momentary entanglements for it. At eighteen I used to believe in the right "to drift with every passion till my soul was a stringed lute," and all that sort of thing. Well, you can't do that when you're an adult living in a grown-up world.'





#### TAKES STOCK OF MARRIAGE

I do not know how much Richard would have abided by this high doctrine if Hilda had not simplified the matter for him. Richard is no Don Juan and no philanderer, but Hilda, if she had wanted him very badly, might have had him. Or perhaps she knew better.

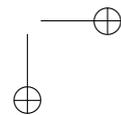
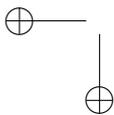
At any rate, Hilda disappeared from Richard's life and Richard's conversation, and, I suspect, from his memory. So far as I can gather, his imagination was absorbed completely these next few months in the fact that Helen was going to have a child. He – how extraordinarily the thought exhilarated him! – was going to be a father.

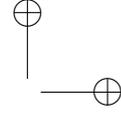
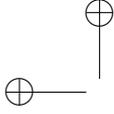
The next winter I was spending in Sicily on a sabbatical year. Here in this remote corner of the world, in the shadow of Greek temples among olive hills, metaphysics flowed more easily than it could in the interruptions of an American university. I was having an after-luncheon coffee in the luxuriantly tropical gardens behind the Hôtel des Temples. The concierge brought me a letter. I recognized Richard's handwriting. I had not heard from him in months.

NEW YORK, *January 6*

CARO MAESTRO

The tables are turned, and you are basking in the Sicilian sun, while I am wading in the January slush of New York. Well, if you should see Venus Genetrix rising from the sea, tell her her influence is still abroad in the world. I beg to announce the arrival in the solar system of Richard Kane, Junior. He's a dear little bundle of





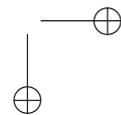
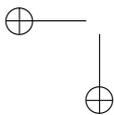
RICHARD KANE

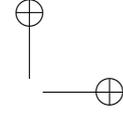
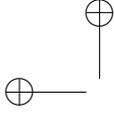
chaos. Helen insists he looks like me, but surely I never looked quite so formless and red and meaningless as that. We were going to name him after you, but Helen says it's enough having one philosopher in the family. Oddly enough, she means me.

I don't remember your ever teaching me anything about the paternal instinct. Maybe I'm the first one to have it. Of course it probably strikes you as absurd to think of me as a father at all. You'll never get over picturing me as a freshman. But I have become the very fatheriest of men. We manage, despite Junior's limited vocabulary, to have the most elaborate conversations. He misses the wit of most of what I say, but if it does not make him laugh, at least it makes him stop crying. Helen ridiculed me the other day because I brought him a rattle. It will be months before he gets that far, she says. But I have more faith in a child of ours. I am sure he looked at it for ten whole seconds yesterday.

I didn't know a little bundle of flesh and noise could so profoundly transmogrify one's view of the world. This business of being a father seems for the moment to be the only important fact about my life. Not that I'm defeated, or that I have given up the idea of some day going roller-skating on the rainbow. But there is a little breathlessness in the thought that everything I might have accomplished or hoped for has another and a fighting chance in this infant.

I am trying to think up everything I ever knew about heredity and environment. It seems a frightfully important subject now. I am encouraged to remember that many of a child's good traits come from ancestors farther back than his father and mother. Junior's grandparents, though they do not like Shaw or Stravinsky, have all the solid virtues.



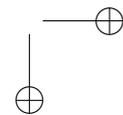
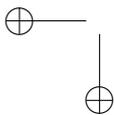


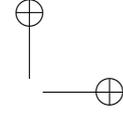
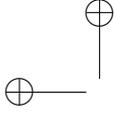
#### TAKES STOCK OF MARRIAGE

I find myself sitting here for hours regarding this blatant little mass of energy and wondering what will become of him. What can we do with him or for him? Helen says nothing for the present except buy the 'Book of Knowledge' and be ready to answer questions he'll be asking in two or three years,

One thing the child has already done is to revise all my notions of parenthood. I've had a complex these last ten years against all parents. I thought they blighted and corrupted children by their prejudices and their middle-class habits. Here Helen and I have become parents. I shudder to think what the baby will think of us two decades from now. Or whether he will think of us at all. You tell me I don't look more than twenty. I am afraid my ideas are of about the same vintage. My main aim now will be to keep up with the baby.

Now that the child is here, marriage has taken on quite another dimension. It seemed the first two years simply the close intimacy of two good friends. It was hard to think of us two as a family. Now all of a sudden our apartment has become a household, an establishment, an organized society, all revolving around the presence of a child. Even so tiny and incipient a one can make marriage seem so completely different an institution. Childless marriages seem to me a tragedy now, almost a decadence. I don't mean anything about duty to society and all that. But the fullness and meaning of marriage seem to me only revealed in the presence and absorption of children. I feel now a partnership in posterity with Helen. The future seems a real and tangible investment. Twenty years from now used to seem altogether blank and impossible. It doesn't now. All the years of the next two decades are filled with the images of the growth of Junior. His future has become my adventure. I abdicate in favor of the heir apparent.





RICHARD KANE

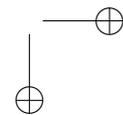
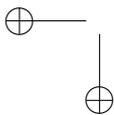
How much of life bachelors know nothing about! And  
how many philosophers, as I recall it, were bachelors!

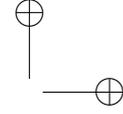
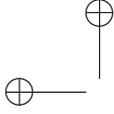
Yours paternally

RICHARD K

It is three years afterward. I am at Richard's for a week-end at the seashore during the summer. The novelty, though not the delight, of parenthood has worn off for Richard. Junior is nearly three. There is a little girl of three months. Richard seems very much married. I like the patience with which he answers all the boy's questions. There is something sweet about the way he follows him with a watchful eye lest he tumble off the porch or collide with the iron frame of the hammock. Richard Junior is a sunny, robust little fellow whose golden curls and golden smile would, save for his robustness, make him seem as fragile and fine as an angel. Helen has become a bustling young matron. She has not deserted her music, but she is for the present, and confessedly, the completely absorbed mother. For that matter, it is becoming almost impossible for me to imagine Richard outside the domestic state. I confess that on the Sundays I spend with them I think the children are too much with us, late and soon. There were no babies in Plato's dialogues.

I will be more interested in Richard Junior when he is ready to enter college. There is a felicity in Richard's absorption in his family that is natural and agreeable. Yet I am beginning to have very genuine fears for



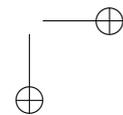
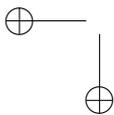


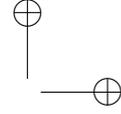
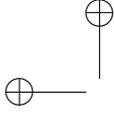
#### TAKES STOCK OF MARRIAGE

him. I am missing of late his old alert attention and engaging wonder about the broad world of events and ideas. He has capitulated to bridge, but not yet to golf. I am beginning to fear that domesticity, security, and suburbia are killing him. Perhaps torments and maladjustments are necessary to keep the soul alive. Toward sunset Richard and I walked down to the beach together. Helen was busy with the children. Richard was, perhaps, divining some of the thoughts that were going through my head.

‘Well, Professor, I seem to have capitulated to provincialism, don’t I? But I have a notion I am living in the most real of worlds. A man cannot see life steadily or see it whole who sees it from the cell of a hermit, or with the myopia of a bachelor or a celibate. A roaming vagabondage, a childless marriage, none of these things seem a life as rich and solid as this.’

Going home in the train that evening, my mind drifted back to the boy who had drifted into my office nine years ago for advice as to how to save his soul. An eager, though not eagle, spirit, free yet of the ruts of the world and unwilling to be constrained by them. Well, I reflect to myself, there is no great genius lost here, no dreams undreamed, no heights unscaled – and yet. Richard himself feels an ‘and yet.’ It occurs to him, I gather, most frequently in the hour’s ride between his suburban shore station and the New York terminal. Early in June he met a few college boys commuting to school.





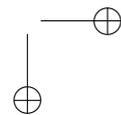
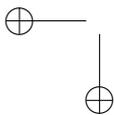
RICHARD KANE

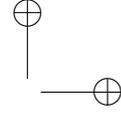
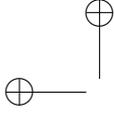
‘I wonder if I seemed to them,’ he said to me, ‘as much out of their generation as they did to me. I wonder if they are destined to the same cycle of bourgeois destiny. Perhaps it’s as good and rich a fate as any. And yet —’

We were discussing the implications of that phrase at dinner in an Italian restaurant one evening when Richard was staying in town on business. He talks now with more assurance, with a smiling deprecation of the possibilities of life, and with a note of precocious reminiscence that is a novelty in him. I suppose I shall treat him all my life as a kind of younger brother. But he has come to seem to me, though he hardly shows more than twenty-two of his twenty-seven years, a great deal older and more worldly-wise than I.

Richard was depressed, with that lassitude that comes ironically in the fresh spring of the year to those wearied by a winter’s work. We were smoking our after-dinner cigarettes.

‘I came to you ten years ago with my spiritual troubles. They’re not over yet. That may be a good sign. It’s curious how for a time a man may become absorbed in his family, and satisfied with the absorption. I have been, and am, I suppose. It saves you from loneliness and isolation and the torture of self-questionings. It almost saves you. And then all of a sudden it all seems terribly outside of you. I am maddened sometimes to think of the terrific futility of this amiable cycle I’ve got into. Helen and Junior and the baby are enough to make a happiness, I suppose; but I seem to be closed





#### TAKES STOCK OF MARRIAGE

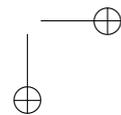
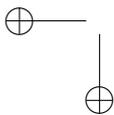
in by them. Confound it! is the only lesson life teaches you before your twenties are over that there are no rainbows really, no heights, no depths, no eternities? Only pleasant anemia and golden mediocrity? I am getting to feel as if I were spiritually in solitary confinement or marking time in a treadmill. Is that bound to be the experience of even the fortunate youths of my generation? For I am fortunate. Economically, I am secure. I've got a reasonably interesting job, an agreeable and healthy family. Is that the summit? Is that all there is? Why at twenty-eight are the stars all gone out in my heaven?

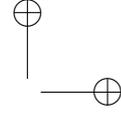
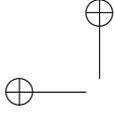
'You're tired, Dick,' I suggested; 'it's been a hard year.'

'No; it's middle-age coming on. First thing you know forty will come and be my final quietus.'

'I'm sorry, my boy,' said an elderly gentleman who had accidentally stepped on Richard's foot as we were walking out.

'Perhaps there's hope for me yet,' Richard whispered to me, smiling.

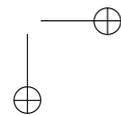
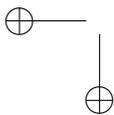


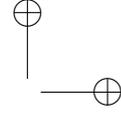
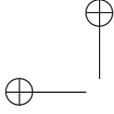


### HE PONDERES EDUCATION

The newer novelists, I gather, have discovered that the most important actions in a man's life are not his steps that can be measured in inches, nor the essential furniture of his dwelling, tables and cabinets that can be touched and weighed. The true adventures are those of the spirit, and the authentic materials of life emotions and ideas. The sophisticated fictionists have even found a technique for following the passionate recessive windings of a man's spirit. I wish I could learn their trick. For now that Richard is so securely settled down, his adventures seem completely those of the imagination. If I seem to report rather than to relive his mind, I can, perhaps, ask forgiveness, on the ground that this is an old-fashioned memoir of a friendship, not an experiment in a new-fashioned novel.

Richard's life since he was eighteen has been fairly intelligible, I think, to most of his friends, in terms of his external career. The inner history of his spirit has been at least indexed by the outer story of his life. As in the case of so many other fair unspectacular

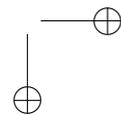
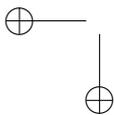


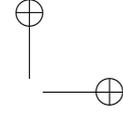
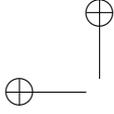


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flowers of the middle class, when one has told of his adjustments to jobs, to marriage, to children, and to those social circles which constitute his world, one has told about all that there is to tell. I have watched Richard closely, and have in him seen the word become flesh. He is more and more bounded by his work, his family, and his commutation schedule. His spirit has not been crushed completely by them, but after twenty-eight for one in Richard's station, any flights he takes are fairly certain to be flights of the spirit only.

There are friends of Richard's, of course, whose lives have not thus early fallen into the accepted and comfortable pattern. There are members of that college group of his – I have known them – who, in the words of one of them, 'have not made the great renunciation.' There is Tommy Keenan, who, as Richard predicted, went into a monastery, and found there, out of an innocence he had never lost, a peace that he had always had. There is Stephen Raith, who has, at twenty-seven, burned himself into spiritual cinders with a phosphorescence of Bohemian decay that with him passes for the divine flame. There is Alfred Delevan, working on some trade publication in Paris, hoping if he stays long enough in the shadows of Saint-Germain-des-Près, to find what little, below his lovely manners, he has of a soul. There is David Saunders, who seems actually determined to starve in the interests of a slender vein of verse. Or Ferdinand Dunn, who fled to work in the orange groves of California to escape his father's hosiery



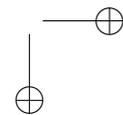
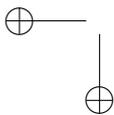


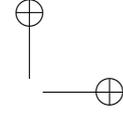
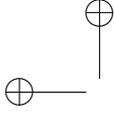
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business, and who had become, when last heard from, a contented and contemplative fruit farmer.

Most puzzling, perhaps, is Jack Booth, whom I remember as a fresh-looking, curiously grave and deliberate undergraduate. For years he has been troubling his by no means wealthy family by steadily refusing to work. They took some one's advice and sent him to a psychiatrist, whom Jack cheerfully told that he was all right and so were his glands, but that there was nothing on reflection that seemed to him worth doing. He meant it, and he sticks to it, and he spends his days now walking miles and miles by himself, or mooning for hours by the river. There is Firth, once a really witty sophomore, making quite a swathe now with routine-manufactured squibs for the smart magazines, in the hope of saving enough money to take time for the strange and passionate novel whose theme has been haunting him since he was a student of mine in Philosophy A. Weirdest of all, is the case of Kwitko, the shrewd young Russian, who, when last heard from, had become something equivalent to a successful ward heeler among the foreign colony in Shanghai, where, he writes, he has been living like a lord.

But this is the memoir of Richard, twenty-eight, father of two children, holder of a genteel job in a publishing house that keeps him regularized, from nine to five, fifty weeks a year. As Richard has never had delusions of creative grandeur, I do not think he frets at the sense of genius crushed; as he is blessed with the modest materials of content, I do not think

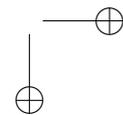
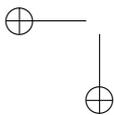


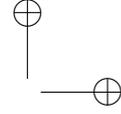
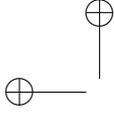


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he sobs quietly to himself at two in the morning, to think that ecstasy has passed him by. I think he is learning to be resigned, indeed to be happy in spiritual explorations, though they be conducted from a city apartment, or from the porch of a standard little summer home. Oddly enough, I think Richard has arrived at an equilibrium and clarity of thought that it is impossible for many of his friends, who think of him as having capitulated to Mammon, and as having abandoned the loveliest of lost causes and as having been stifled by bourgeois content. For Richard views experience now from a fixed if not from an altitudinous viewpoint. From the security of a responsible and not unhappy citizen, he looks out upon the world now with a detached sovereign eye, or in upon himself without fear to look steadily on what he finds there.

Richard has been looking in and out lately a good deal. A good part of his thinking these last few months has revolved around what, save that the word has become so institutional in its flavor, one might call education. It is Richard Junior who has made the theme exciting to him. Often, as he listens to his three-year-old son asking him half-articulate questions, Richard finds himself renewing a somewhat shaken faith in the miracle of transformation that may be performed on the young human animal. He has already watched a mass of crying chaos become a grave, stammering, tottering little parody of an adult. He has watched Richard Junior make himself the gradual master of an





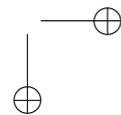
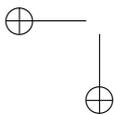
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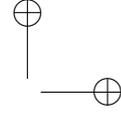
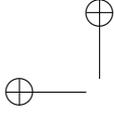
exciting world of objects to handle, of colors to see, of flowers to taste, of sounds to hear.

Richard is determined, to begin with, that his son shall not be robbed of that vivid education of the senses that he so completely missed being given as a child. It was not until he got to Europe that Richard discovered the use of his eyes at all. It is still a shock to him to discover how little he knows about actual colors and the flowers and birds. Helen, so much more simple in the realm of ideas, is so much more the master here. And doubtless his own ideas would have been sharpened and freshened for being touched with the tang of the senses.

The senses! How much more peace he might have had if he could have learned to rest his eyes in quiet, beautiful absorption on the living surfaces of things! What increased precision there might have been in his thought if he could have learned to be exact with his fingers on actual and tangible matter.

Richard's mind went back over his own education, and, considering it on its sensuous side, like the hero of a Russian novel, at the ripe age of twenty-eight, he bemoaned his wasted life. One week-end in the spring, he and Helen had gone to the Connecticut farm where he had been used to go when he was a child. It was glamorous and fresh; the hills had been washed fresh by the rain. Everything was a glistening green, but it was all to him a miscellaneous and indiscriminate loveliness. He got from Nature, as he once told Helen, a vague Wordsworthian sense of goodness. But that



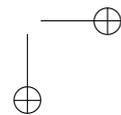
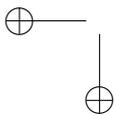


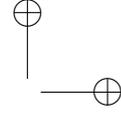
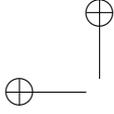
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was hardly what one could decently call seeing with a knowing eye natural things each in its discriminated and immediate loveliness.

It was the same with doing things. It humiliated him often to think how little he could do with his hands. He could not whittle a stick into a whistle, or sharpen a pencil properly. And as for cooking for himself on a camping trip, he could think of choosing more direct ways to die. He amused Helen by having a little workshop fitted up in the basement of their summer cottage; he would learn enough about tools eventually so that Richard Junior should not think his father a fool with his hands. He was, indeed, beginning to have the urbanite's sentimental atavism, racial nostalgia for the soil. The townsman, Richard reflected, is half-educated; he never comes in contact, through sharpened sight or through the pressure of manual doings, with that compulsive ambient world of physical things among the shadows and after-images of which ideas are spun.

Much of this I heard from Richard at various times over a number of months. These days one would find his desk in his study cluttered with catalogues of experimental schools. Finally, Richard told me with some pride that he had decided to send Richard Junior the following year to the Forest School, a modern experimental establishment conducted under the inspiration of the latest psychologies. It was staffed by the most expensive teachers, some of whom returned their salaries to the school, and all of whom had been

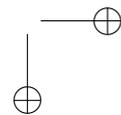
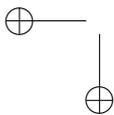


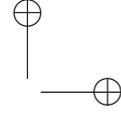
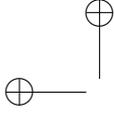


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psycho-analyzed. It was attended by the tiny scions of the most notoriously intellectual families in New York. A roster of the school would have sounded like a children's performance of the city's most advanced intellectual life. Richard invited me one evening to dinner to meet a young woman who taught at the school. Miss Prendergast was, save for her dogmatism, hardly the conventional school mistress. And I think in some heavy-handed way she did feel that it was the job of the school to waken children to the freshness and glamour and freedom of joy that might lie open to sure senses and uncorrupted hearts. Her conversation was certainly not compounded of those timid reticences and respectabilities which make up the table-talk of the traditional schoolmarm. Her acquaintance with the more esoteric works of Havelock Ellis was intimately and publicly displayed. Her heretical observations on everything from birth to burial were as vigorous as her own towering and muscular person. It was clear she was genuinely devoted to her school and her educational creed; she could not think, or at least talk of anything else.

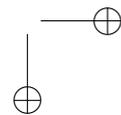
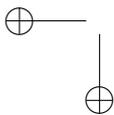
'You will see, Professor,' she said, 'what effect these experimental schools are going to have. Instead of the repressed, self-conscious adolescent who now walks into your college classes, you will be meeting sure, clear, young intelligences frankly at home among other people and among things. Come to the school some time with Mr. or Mrs. Kane, and we will show you what a free school, a children's school is like.'

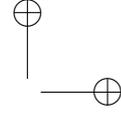
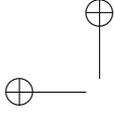




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Richard went soon after, with misgivings, as he would have had with the best of schools, for schools appeared to him always a very painful remedy for the original sin of human ignorance and savagery. He had not, as a child, balked at school particularly. But he had never quite got over the separation between the classroom and life which prevailed from the kindergarten to the college. As he and Helen walked together toward the Forest School, they talked a little reminiscently and a little sadly of their own school-days. But shining images still lingered of those first days in that typical old-fashioned rigid school that he had now come to detest. He remembered those long fidgeting eternities for five hours a day on the benches of the class of the suburban public school he had attended. There had been the dreary old maids talking in thin, strident tones to him and forty others of the rules for long division, or the conditions for the use of 'shall' and 'will.' There had been the hours upon hours of listening to other boys stammer through a reader that he had finished the first week of the term. But there had been, too, that initial radiant day of exciting loneliness, when he had been left for the first time in a room filled with other children and presided over by a strange, prim lady, whose name he did not know. How he had wondered whether twelve o'clock would ever come, and whether he would ever see his mother again! What an agony of isolation had been that first noisy recess in the yard! There came to his nostrils still the smell of the freshly washed floors in that new suburban



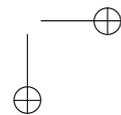
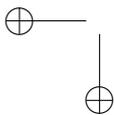


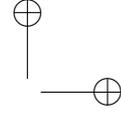
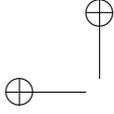
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building. How odd that that, of all the multitude of impressions of that first day, should linger chiefly in his memory!

What a formal world children of his generation had been compelled to live in from nine to three, with a brief escape that was no escape into the schoolyard at recess, or to the quietude, but the easy and jolly quietude, of luncheon at home! How completely separate had been those hardware benches, those stiff postures and stuffy rooms of the school, from that fresh life of the streets and hills, of coasting, of snowpiles, of baseball, and stamp collecting, in which the real life of his pre-adolescent years had been spent! Well, Miss Prendergast talked a little too dramatically, and a little too dogmatically, but these newer educators might, indeed, have discovered some way to make of the school a complete and living world in which the pupil might learn to live and flower instead of being pressed to death among the leaves of a book.

They were in the school building. Miss Prendergast greeted them. 'You don't check life at the door,' she was saying. She appeared for all her modernist boosting and propaganda to be right. If the school appeared, especially among the younger children, to be a little noisy, it lacked almost completely that regimental atmosphere which was to Richard's mind indelibly associated with education. Children were not here stiffly sitting in compulsory attention to teachers who told them wearily about things about which they did not care to hear or understand. Here was a lively group

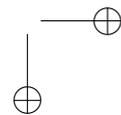
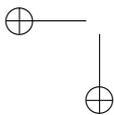


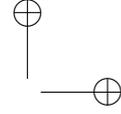
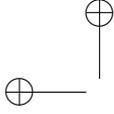


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of youngsters planning and preparing, with the not too obtrusive guidance of a teacher, their luncheon. There was one group that Richard saw learning history by a kind of miniature research, and actually writing their own textbook. In the higher grades Richard saw them printing their own newspaper, and holding a little court for their own discipline. Miss Prendergast was obviously pleased at his and Helen's interest and astonishment. These children certainly seemed to be learning something, but – perhaps because they were genuinely learning – to be alert and radiant and happy. Not the least of the miracle was to Richard the fact that even so formidable a person as Miss Prendergast was no ogre to these youngsters, but a friendly, guiding presence whom they called without self-consciousness by her first name. Richard Junior was registered for the following year in the Forest School.

The picture and the practice pleased him, indeed, a little more than the theory, though he had a few doubts and scruples as to both. As for the theory, there was a little too much talk, Richard thought, about freedom, about letting children follow their own impulses and lead, from the age of two, their own lives. He wondered just what would happen, if some little savage, say that exuberant little son of a sociologist, who had been pointed out to him at the school, should wantonly take his drawing-board and hit his neighbor, as Richard Junior had recently hit a little playmate, over the head.

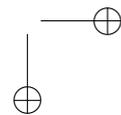
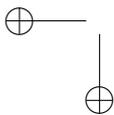


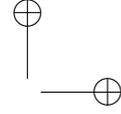
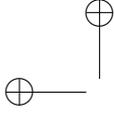


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He had, moreover, never been able to make out from Miss Prendergast, or from any one else, just what it meant to say that the children were to learn only what they wanted. Was it not one of the lessons of experience, one, by the way, that the grown-up children of the world never learned to care for or cared to learn, that there were many things it was necessary and useful to know that it was a trouble to acquire. It was all very well to talk about letting a child obey its impulses, but Richard was by this time conservative enough to feel that obeying one's own impulses and mastering algebra or a language were two different things, and that they frequently collided with each other. It was inspiring to talk about freedom, but what was the hard-earned experience of the race worth if it were not utilized in turning the random energies of the young into something like effective discipline? Well, doubtless all these things were understood by these new experts, and Richard was not going to permit himself at twenty-eight to share the doubts and prejudices of middle-age.

The important thing was that these new educators were, for the first time in the history of education, apparently, taking the child's viewpoint. Richard knew well what it meant, in the old sense, to speak of a good child. It meant good, from the standpoint of an adult. A good child was one who did not bother its elders. A statue would not have bothered them at all. The schools had been for so long a conspiracy of regimentation in smoothing noisy little barbarians

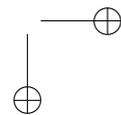
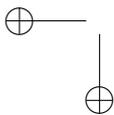


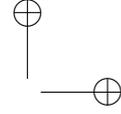
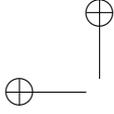


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into the death of a mould and a routine! It was worth any amount of effort, patience, and experiment to keep unspoiled and undulled that curiosity and wonder out of which come all science and all art, and which education, as Bertrand Russell somewhere suggests, does everything to kill. Richard could see that it required patience. Helen's was endless. Two hours with Junior and his questions taxed Richard sometimes beyond all bearing.

'The joy of mental adventure.' Was not that, after all, the chief good that education, if it were education at all, could give its victims? And how quickly Richard had watched it evaporate in himself and among his friends! It was natural enough that curiosity about the physical world should become a little frayed, when all things had become an ambient physical habit. It was not to be expected that the flavor of physical sensation should remain the free and novel rapture that it was to a small child. But was it necessary that that large and wakened curiosity about men and women and affairs that came with adolescence, was it inevitable that that, too, should fade and vanish with maturity? At least it seemed so. There was even a premium put on abandoning curiosity as soon and as completely as possible. Take the case of Albert Mantz, who had at college, more than any other student Richard had known, the temper and motives of the scientist. There was almost nothing in books or in life that had not been food to the unflagging alertness of that nervous, bright-eyed scholar. How often Richard had met him





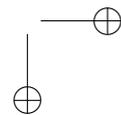
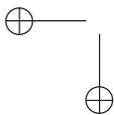
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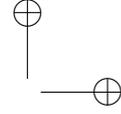
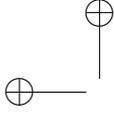
on the campus to listen to his endless and accurate chatter about ancient religions, or obscure Flemish painters, or discoveries in negro sculpture, or the lucid acquaintance he seemed to have with the new doctrine of relativity! But Richard had watched him settle down into the precise routine of the archeologist, and, now, outside of Etruscan tombs which he had studied for a year in Italy, there was nothing that this youth seemed to care to know.

The field of knowledge had, in any case, become so vast that even a man with no obligation except to his own enlightenment, could no longer hope to compass it. And the moment he entered a business or a profession, society practically paid him to burrow deep into his own little hole, and to forget the landscape outside it. And as for curiosity as to the rationale, the origin and function of the religions, the customs, the economic arrangements by which men lived – Richard was no fossil, but he was beginning to realize already how the years piled up one convention and one assumption after another by which one felt one's self obliged unquestioningly to live.

Candor seems to die about the same time with curiosity; one could not ask too many questions whose answers one vaguely felt in advance would be perturbing. What education could teach people to take the risk of being uncomfortable?

What would he do, if he were to start over again? Richard was asking himself the purely academic ques-

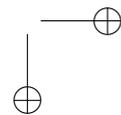
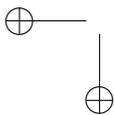


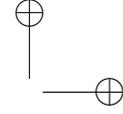
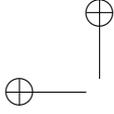


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tion that many young men suddenly put to themselves at about the age of twenty-eight. And Richard had another object lesson than Junior about whom, after all, it was as yet difficult to tell. He had become profoundly interested and more than casually attached to Paul, a young cousin of theirs aged fourteen who was staying with them for the summer. Paul was in spirit not unlike, I imagine, what Richard must have been at his age. He was a tall, thin boy with a pleasant Southern drawl, and a habit of saying precisely what came into his head. Of this there was a good deal. I suppose what amused and attracted Richard to him chiefly was that he seemed to have no scruple or self-consciousness whatsoever about saying whatever he felt provoked to. He had been ill a good part of his life. His slender frame made him look a little too wraith-like and spiritual, not to carry a hint of ominous frailty and possible disease. But Paul's reactions were perfectly healthy if his fine pale face was not. And the long leisure of a sick-bed had given him more time and more impulse to contemplation than was possible to more active children.

Paul's responses to life were, so far as Richard could make out, all first-hand. He had not, though one had an intuition it would come later, at the moment any passion for reading. Such books as he read at present were confined principally and oddly to history. Richard tried to interest him in poetry, but he thought 'those poets ought to say what they had to say more plain.' Just at present he had a positive prejudice against



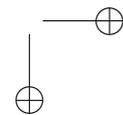
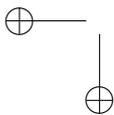


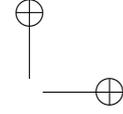
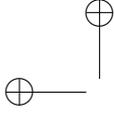
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books. 'All they do is to spoil your disposition,' he said. 'Mother takes a book and sits down, and spends the afternoon asking people not to bother her.' All his generalizations, and he was prone to generalize, came from people and things. And his boyish logic had the unusual, untechnical virtue of honesty.

There were several little legends Richard was collecting about young Paul's conversation. There was that conversation they had one afternoon when Paul had come home from church. 'What did the rector talk about, Paul?' 'Oh, God 'n' things,' Paul responded briefly. And later in the day he casually shot bullets into the assumptions about an ordered and purposeful universe, and raised dialectical objections, though he did not know the word 'dialectical,' as to the belief that God had existed forever. That past winter he had been quite ill. At first the doctor thought he had typhoid and gave him a blood test. 'Please go ahead 'n' treat me for typhoid,' Paul said on the doctor's return; 'this diagnosis is killing me.'

Mingled with his always half-conscious irony was an affection that at fourteen, the pitiless age, he tried to conceal. He was living with a lonely divorced mother, and his shrewd young eyes had learned to follow the vicissitudes of his mother's emotion. 'Well, mother,' he said in a matter-of-fact tone, 'you're lonely and sick of life again, aren't you? Well, don't depend on Walter; he'll be married soon; he's the marrying kind. But don't worry, mother, I'm not; nothing in it. You and I'll jes' keep this ol' house for years 'n' years. There,

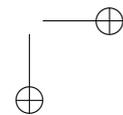
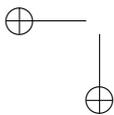


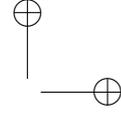
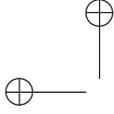


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now, you feel better, don't you? You should, anyway, after all this lovin' I'm givin' you.' And he put an affectionate arm on his mother's shoulder.

It was Paul's candor and curiosity that made him so attractive to Richard, and it was candor that education always killed along with an inquiring spirit. The two were perhaps indissociable. Paul was soon going off to a very correct and quite Gothic English type boarding-school in Connecticut, where he was to be prepared for one of the big Eastern colleges. What would become of his drawling and idiosyncratic solitude, his engaging first-hand responses to what people said, his honesty and irony and spiritual freshness and exuberance? Richard shuddered to think of all that gradually crushed out in the elegant moulds of the conventional boarding-school, and smothered into the silly, slick urbanities of the standard collegiate world. Richard would hate to see Paul's so personal mistakes in grammar, his long New Orleans drawl disappear; he would not want Paul to ape the mannered speech of the collegiate East, and learn, like his older brother, to speak Northern. It would be horrible to see this 'original' ironed into one of the sleek-haired, golf-clothed, yellow-slickered nonentities who passed for the fine flower of the best college traditions. Or would Paul resist it, and become one of those strange, promising solitaires at college who find on a campus, as its one redeeming feature, a chance to browse for four years with a few congenial spirits, who discover, even in a





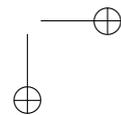
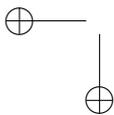
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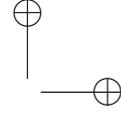
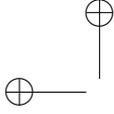
regiment of standardized sillies, for four years a chance for a companionable freedom?

Richard talked Paul's future over with the latter's family. Paul's older brother wanted him to go to his own college, Yale. Richard sighed a little. Almost Richard felt it were better that Paul did not go to college at all. It might be worth the experiment with a boy like him to try something totally different for four years. What might not be done with the time and money conventionally spent at a university, if it were spent on books and experience and travel! There was obviously so much lost motion at college; on the one hand, the folderol of the fraternities and college life; the stagnation and red tape of college work on the other. We boasted so much of the number of people who went to college in America. It was hardly better than boasting about the number of cheap cars. The results were, indeed, analogous; standardization, and a dull, antiseptic mediocrity.

He knew, of course, the traditional reasons for going to college. There was the liberal culture, the fundamental disciplines, the essence of contemporary civilization – they were at his own college giving that all now in one freshman course – and the background of contemporary culture. How well it always read in the catalogues! How poor it actually was in the practice and in the product!

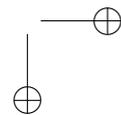
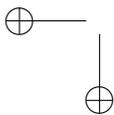
How small a universe professors talked about to how small and privileged and essentially corrupted a class! For the class of people that, generally speaking,

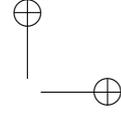
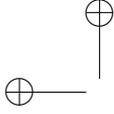




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went to the big Eastern colleges was corrupted, if not by wealth then by security; by an absurd sense that there was something separate and distinguished about college men, something special and miraculous about college education. The three things that Richard had come to believe genuinely enlightened a man about his place in life and men's condition in the world were a sense of the realities of sex, the beauties of nature and art, and a knowledge of the actual physical and economic conditions by which men of necessity lived. He had at college got none of the first. Those furtive little lectures on social hygiene, given in the freshman physical education course, could hardly be called an education in sex. Nor had the talk-fests at his fraternity taught him anything but a guilty feeling of possessing a sophistication that he did not have. His actual education in sex had come from Havelock Ellis, from older men of the world, and, so far as practical and literal experience was concerned, from certain quite unacademic girls in America and Europe. At college, he had in his fine arts courses got only a bare formal scratch on the surface of beauty; in an æsthetics course only a futile young professor's rhapsodical twaddle as to what beauty meant. American universities seemed to have found a compartment for education in everything but beauty, and latterly a place even for that. But one could not learn on a campus to make beauty domestic in the soul, nor could it through lectures become native and domestic in the world. So far as understanding those actual conditions of life,



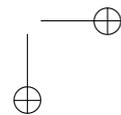
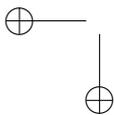


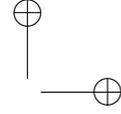
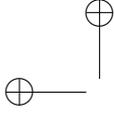
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and pressures of necessity which made the matrix of life for ninety-five per cent of the inhabitants of the planet, the economics textbooks had taught him worse than nothing. He had picked up far more by three months in a furniture warehouse, and by half an hour's conversation with a German farmer who had eked out a miserable existence for twenty years on one of the unfertile Connecticut hills.

A year in Europe had, perhaps, when he counted it up, been his chief education. Why should Paul not have more, to wander not alone among cathedrals and museums, but to move freely among the haunts and homes of literally all sorts and conditions of men? Would not a year on a ranch, or on a farm, or in a factory, be for Paul, or for any one, a more serious way of learning among men how men actually lived?

Two things, of course, that one was supposed to get chiefly and exclusively at universities, were science and philosophy. Richard knew how little about the spirit or the scope of science even the average bright undergraduate got from pottering for a year around a laboratory. But certainly, if college gave nothing more than a consistent philosophy, it would be worth going for. Surely that was the least that should be given to those who came with the eagerness and unfrayed candor of youth. The business of education was certainly ultimately that of giving a meaning to life. If men were not to move through existence as mere blind automata, sleeping, eating, and breeding machines, they were entitled to some coherence, some





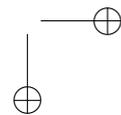
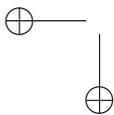
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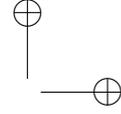
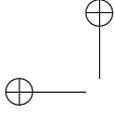
pattern that would give a rationale to their lives. But that was precisely what the philosophers of our generation seemed unable to give; it was certainly not to be looked for among the professors of philosophy, chiefly bloodless archeologists roving among petrified ideas.

Nor was it helping young men out of the ruts of mechanism and animality to assure them, on the best of laboratory evidence, that they were merely animate machines. To read a meaning into life, teachers would themselves have to be gods. By merely denying the existence of God, they did not thereby prove that they partook of the divine nature. Philosophies, Richard still retained his original undergraduate notion, were merely picturesque notions and guesses as to the nature of things. One guess was as good as another, or as bad, since all guesses were bad that did not even hope or pretend to be correct.

It was absurd to speak of education at all, when the whole process was one vast anacoluthon, a sentence without a meaning, a highly systematized talk about what was basically and cosmically nonsense. Science showed the accidental nature of things, and placed man coolly where he belonged, a nervous speck on a casual clod of stardust. In what sense, then, could a man be educated at all, what meaning could a teacher find or dare to give students to carry as a stabilizer through life?

Possibly there was none. But Richard retained the clear, sweet hope that some patterns might be made still, even in chaos, and that, even in a meaningless





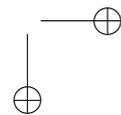
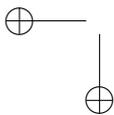
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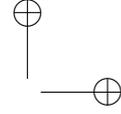
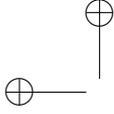
world, some things might be beautiful as they were purposeless, like wine, and music, and love.

Of old, people had come to the magisters at the universities looking for the Truth, known by Aristotle, and revealed in Christ. And now the only truth left was that there was none to learn. Or they had come to learn and live according to the canons for the established goodness. And now the old ideals of goodness seemed cancerous with evil.

Perhaps it was time now that one gave up looking in education for anything but a training in sensitiveness to beauty, the large and lovely domain of the free. Such a sensitiveness outlasted and stilled ambitions, and was possible as a retrieving solace even in the restricted contours of a limited and disappointing life. Even at twenty-eight there was room still for those flashes of liberation that came with a sonata heard in a concert room, or in a line of poetry that revealed with a strange persistent vitality the colors of a glamorous world Richard had often felt he should not see or meet in ecstasy again. At twenty-eight the pattern of action had become limited, and the hard logic of reflection led only down blind alleys to walls of disillusion blank and absolute. But it might still be possible to find, in a polished sensuousness, some sustaining music, if not some sustaining faith by which one might live.

But to be sensitive to life demanded an education of the individual, not the regimentation of a mob. If Richard had any powers of persuasion – or if he could think of a substitute – Paul would not go to college.

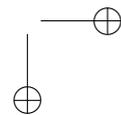
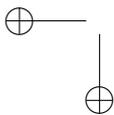


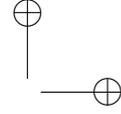
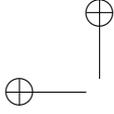


### HE LOOKS AT ART

When Richard Kane, nearly ten years ago, came into my office at the university and described himself as a 'nearly,' he came as close as any one could come, with a single epithet, to describing himself and his type. He was a 'nearly' in precisely those realms in which he might have wished he could move and arrive, the fine arts. There was certainly about Richard now nothing that suggested the artist. He had the faintest gift for creation in words, but five years of advertising work for a publishing house had scotched if not killed it. Nor was there anything about this trim young American to suggest the æsthete or the connoisseur. If I had now met him for the first time, I should certainly have thought of him simply as a fairly typical, finely cut young American business man.

But one cannot spend an evening with Richard even now, after he has been eight years away from college and after he has been fixed in five years of standardized and tepidly happy married life, without feeling that every now and again the urgency of the artist simmers in him. There are moments, occasional and futile,



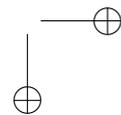
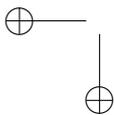


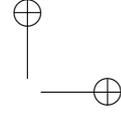
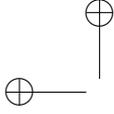
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when he feels there is almost nothing he would not give to translate a fleeting impression of loveliness into something enduring, beautiful and his own only. One would hardly care to use the word 'religion' at all about a mild young pagan like Richard living in an irreligious age. But Richard himself might, I fancy, be willing, if he were to admit to having any religion, to define it in language in which beauty would surely have a part. Certainly it is only beauty now that can carry him to peaks from which he may cry sincerely, 'O Altitudo!' It is now principally from beautiful things that he gleans from time to time a peace that has about it something of the intensity of a grace and benediction.

I like to recall now that, in the French sense, I assisted at one of Richard's early awakenings to beauty. It was when I took him to his first symphony concert. I do not think he had ever heard fine orchestral music before. The two chief numbers were César Franck's D-Minor Symphony and Strauss's 'Death and Transfiguration.' The performance was none too good. It was clear to me, too, that Richard's musical sense was still too incipient to grasp anything but the massive power and clear volume of the music. But he responded with a sincere and surprised pleasure, deeply moved by the rising resonances of the brasses, so characteristic of Franck, and even more by the massed ecstasy of the strings in Strauss.

Richard found then, and has since found, in music a nervous thrill that nothing, certainly nothing but the climaxes of love, have ever given him. He is inclined

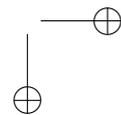
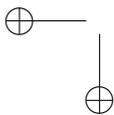


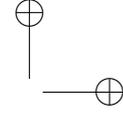
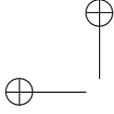


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to think with Pater that, in their perfection, all arts approach the condition of music, the mystical union of form and matter until they merge in a voluminous march of vibrancy and power. It is from music, too, that Richard gets the sentiment that about first-rate art in any field there is something more than sentimentally holy. That feeling comes to him largely from those moments in a concert-hall when a noisy, vast, miscellaneous audience is hushed for a moment by the absoluteness of great music greatly played into the stillness of awed delight. And, though he has attended hundreds of concerts, Richard will never all his life be immune to the excitement that comes with the first massive attack by the violins or horns.

Any character is more than a single theme, and I am not trying to convey the impression that suddenly, at twenty-eight, Richard's mind turned freshly and finally to the fine arts; that the life of business and of his family became for him only a transient interruptive nightmare; that he lived for and only in pictures, symphonies, and books. That was hardly possible, nor would it have been agreeable to Richard, who found a certain robust interest in his day's work, and an unmistakable delight in his family affairs. But life had become fairly smooth and easy now, and Richard began once more to look out upon it with the eye of the unillusioned but cheerful pagan. Certainly if there was any faith for a young man to have in our generation, it was faith in the loveliness he could find or make – Richard had his doubts about the latter – in the world.

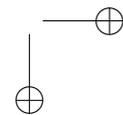
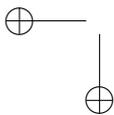


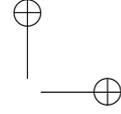
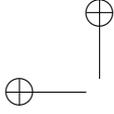


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Making beauty was not for the mediocre like of him. It was ten years since he had made himself ridiculous by writing a quite terrible sonnet. He had never had the remote illusion that he could do anything with plastic materials; though he had almost painfully wished he could when he had been with his Dutch friend, Dey Essers, in Taornina. He learned then how an artist begins to look at the environing landscape as a possible composition, and to see the world always in a frame. Richard had envied his friend the power to turn those Sicilian images into colored memories on canvas, and he knew when he wished it that the wish was pathetic and absurd.

The making of beauty, Richard early decided, was not in the hands of the yearning and the sentimental. The business of creating a work of art was a matter for technique and training. And the final quality was dependent on something that, even if one had years of freedom to spend on discipline, made discipline and technique seem trivial. Great beauty, the kind that seared itself into your senses and flowed like a river of fire through your memory, that was not – as the sentimental democrats believed – everybody's possibility, 'every man's genius.' There was a lot of wistful foolishness talked about the creative impulse. Richard knew better. There were soggy human animals by millions who could never remotely be thought of as stepping or wishing to step out of the regiment or the machine. And the 'creative impulse,' where did it lead? The hell of mediocrity was paved with artistic good inten-



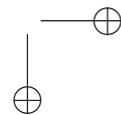
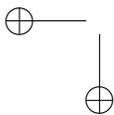


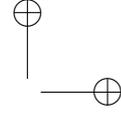
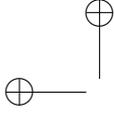
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tions. The divine afflatus, the deep perennial spark – there had been a good deal of footless rhapsodizing about it; but it was real, and it was lavished upon few. Richard had read all those encouraging little books about pottering in a garden or making your own crockery. Thus, ‘in a small way,’ ‘after a fashion,’ you were supposed to be doing the Muses’ business. He had attended evenings of the little tinklers at the Poetry Society. He had seen some of his friends fumble hopefully with clay. He knew how Bob Sobel, who played the ‘cello bearably, was studying composition evenings hoping to acquire enough theory to make himself a composer. But Richard was not fooled. He had not seen Michelangelo, read Milton, or heard Beethoven for nothing.

No; considered from the standpoint of eternity, the world of affairs and the intimate satisfactions of a family might seem trivial. They might appear dull and transient in comparison with those great achievements of loveliness in which the life of imagination endured, the life beyond life as Cabell called it, the dreams more real and solid than reality. But Richard respected the communion of genius too much to place any one, last of all himself, casually among that great society. The most that a sensible person could hope to do was to live vicariously among them and quietly and discriminatingly applaud. This Richard found the time and inclination to do in all the arts.

Though Richard had thus become an amateur critic and taster of all fine things, there was about him noth-

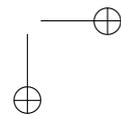
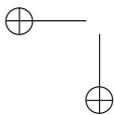


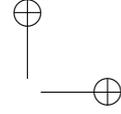
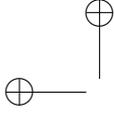


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ing of the limp æsthete. He had had his Yellow-Book period. There had been nearly a whole year abroad when he tried to maintain a stained-glass attitude in a sunset scene. That was almost impossible now. Richard had been for too long a time absorbed in the broad daylight of business and the healthy trivia of domestic life to be able to relapse completely into the tepid literature and the tea-time philosophy of the æsthete. Richard could hardly read now the 'Discus' (the monthly organ of the 'most advanced æsthetic interests in America,' interests – on the whole – pallidly imported from Europe), so ultra-refined was it and so essentially sickly. It was filled with pretentiously abstract poetry that none save latter-day Pythagoreans could understand. Its fiction was corrupted with a soft poison of perfumed decay. Its ideas were the cold, belated light of stars long since dead. It seemed to whisper abstractedly of a cosmos that had disappeared. Richard had always opened the tan sheet with a reluctant morbid curiosity. He had finally dropped his subscription after hearing a friend of the editor remark at a luncheon that the circulation of the 'Discus' had now been whittled down until it was read only by those seriously interested in æsthetics.

Occasionally he and Helen would have in to dinner, or for the evening, people interested in one or another of the new movements in the arts. But Richard preferred reading in the evening or hearing Helen play. These nouveaux artists were, he supposed, rather more than all right in their way. They were trying sincerely

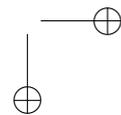
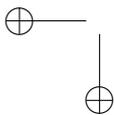


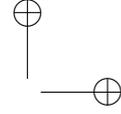
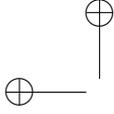


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to make new experiments in form and in subject-matter. But there was something about them; he could not tell; he did not like them, Dr. Fell. It did not seem really necessary that æsthetic interests should make people either wan or ridiculous. And the great figures of the arts had certainly not resembled the hero of Gilbert and Sullivan's 'Patience.' Once, when a particularly fine-spun young æsthete had been with them for the evening, Richard remarked to Helen after he had left, 'Let's go to the Albany Lunch and have a ham sandwich; this has really been just a bit thick.'

Richard is in the obvious sense no æsthete, and he is not particularly *persona grata* among the circles of High Art. But it remains true, none the less, that æsthetic sensitiveness has become, perhaps, the most positive fact about his character. He is less inclined to generalize than he was ten years ago; but if he were, he would be inclined, I know, to say that Beauty is the only thing that matters any more. Certainly nothing else does permanently or vividly. About religion, as traditionally conceived, Richard says little and does not think much. To all intents and purposes, those old theological formulas are out of the modern world completely, and no little flare-ups of Fundamentalism can stop the progressive petrification of the Church. Those fair, false myths of Christianity he had come only to appreciate after he had ceased to believe. They are now, too, only things of beauty, lovely images which the Christian world has made of its compassionate divinity





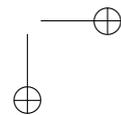
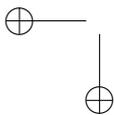
RICHARD KANE

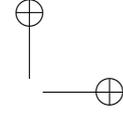
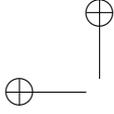
or delicious prefigurings, as in the naive imaginings of a Fra Angelico, of an immortality of bliss.

Social service? Richard had as a high-school boy been caught up before the war on the optimistic flood-tide of Wilsonian liberalism. But was it not as far back as his junior year that he had outgrown the shibboleths of the political Messiahs who were always so busily campaigning for the good life, and so seldom illustrating it? And there were dozens of reasons why the hopeful formulas and sour indignations of the liberal weeklies left him cold. Business? Well, about even so charming and pleasant a one as that of publishing, Richard had no illusions. Business was where one earned one's living, at best not too unpleasantly, and life began after five. Marriage had become a pleasant routine; he would not exchange it for more thrilling patterns or kaleidoscopes of life; the children were interesting, promising, and lovable; home was a harbor. All that could be called happiness, if one could be happy without scaling any heights.

Perhaps that God in whom he no longer believed knew that intense joy was a nervous strain. Anyway, God or physiology made tense delight come in flashes, and those flashes came principally from the arts. The eyes of this settled young man turned, as they had first clearly turned in Paris, to the achieved loveliness that men's hands and imaginations had created.

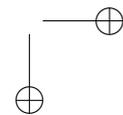
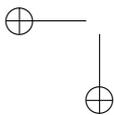
Richard regretted always that as a child his eye and his æsthetic attention had not been trained. For he had learned, by watching and listening to his young Dutch

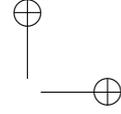
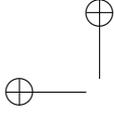




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painter friend, how little one actually saw with the routine eye one used for ordinary pursuits and casual objects. The things about one were simply labels or signals to precipitate action. One hardly saw at all, in the sense in which for an artist every landscape fell into a composition, and all sights fell naturally into imagined colors on canvas. Richard had learned much in Europe, but perhaps chiefly he had come into the birthright of the artist's vision. He had envied Dey Essers. Dey had brought Taornina home with him personally in his portfolio; he had only fragments in his memory, and postcards that were parodies of those recollections. But he had learned with and from Dey to look at picture or at landscape for what was actually there to the eye, instead of using the so actual and beautiful thing as a spring-board to go off into sentimental reverie. He had learned how one might follow the lines of the picture until one's being lived and moved among the lines on canvas; he had learned to look at color until, for the moment, those reds and greens and blues became the vivid and pervasive air in which one lived. Perhaps one could never get quite the artist's feeling before a canvas, the intimate sense he must have in his fingers of how that broad brush stroke was made, his craftsman's awareness of just how that particular subtlety of repetition in color or balance of mass was done. But Richard had come a long way from loving girls in pictures because they were wistful or passing by the silver radiance of the early Corots to flee to Correggio because his themes were sweet.

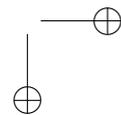
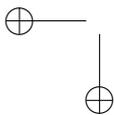


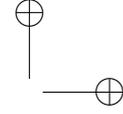
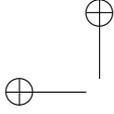


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Richard had come to have an almost astringent attitude toward painting. To limit one's attention to what was actually there to see, to exclude all sentimentalism and all literary interpretation, to get painting through and only through the organ to which it was addressed, the eye – that became the goal which he set for himself in painting. For a time after his return to America, he had been a little surfeited by all the painting and sculpture he had seen, and he had hardly gone into the Metropolitan twice a year. For a while, indeed, he had come to hate the sight of a museum. A living human being, caught by the tumult of contemporary interests, he reasoned, had no time to waste on the mausoleums of beautiful things that museums were at best. One entered their turnstiles only to come into a snug, upholstered tomb of dead beauty embalmed in frames.

But now Richard found the old hunger for line and color coming back, and himself tramping the private galleries again trying to find out what the new painting was about. Perhaps the latter-day critics were right, and there was progress in art as there was in science. There would have been a time when he would have denied the meaning of time in art and insisted that the last word had been said in plastic creation two thousand years ago on the Acropolis, or, at latest, five hundred years ago in Florence. New times, new visions, and new hands to translate novel insights into durable images on canvas or in marble – sometimes he thought he knew what these latter artists of the

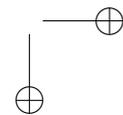
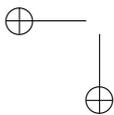


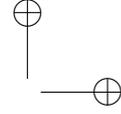
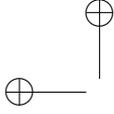


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new day were doing. It had been hard after Italy, especially after the Florentines, to adjust one's eye from the habitual classic structures and patterns to an interest in surfaces of sheer-colored light. Monet's pictures of Rouen sometimes seemed hardly to reveal structure or clothe a pattern at all. But how quickly one came to love those subtle façades of pure tinted radiance, which were Monet's special gift! If he ever got back to Paris, Richard promised himself, it would be that little collection Cammondo in the Louvre, almost always neglected by the tourist, that would interest him more than a dozen of the famous Grande Galerie. But painting had moved far since those *plein-artistes* had shocked the academicians, and Richard was by no means sure, especially after reading their more metaphysical propagandists, that he knew what they were driving at.

He had been invited to see the gallery of a wealthy Philadelphian who was said to have one of the best collections of modern French painting in the country. This energetic and informed gentleman spoke almost as if there had been no painting before Cézanne. Perhaps Richard saw what these moderns were trying to do. At any rate, he told himself and his host that he did. He saw landscapes that seemed to him really to have depths and perspective, still-lives that gave him an acute sense of living things actually seen before one, full and round. But it seemed to him also that he had seen something like that before in those unnoised old-fashioned Chardins in the Louvre. Cézanne, at

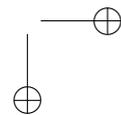
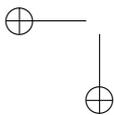


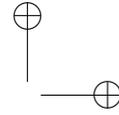
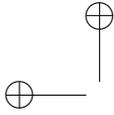


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least, he could get; and the unmistakable movement and glamour of Degas's ballet-girls; and the fullness and absolute authenticity in movement, the astonishing naturalness and perfection of composition in his portraits of those seared, full-bodied working-women of his.

But there were 'points north' in the recent pioneer movements in art that left Richard frankly puzzled. There were those artists who were reducing painting to sheer abstraction and what one of their unofficial spokesmen called 'significant form.' Richard would have liked to know just what they were talking about, and even more just what they were painting. It was very well to write about eliminating all elements of representation in painting, and certainly the painter owed his first responsibility to the eye. But likewise line and color had to be the line and color of something; and though the human being saw with his eye only, it had to be the eye of a human being. You would have to destroy memory and imagination, and all those half-conscious reverberations of mood that came with any sensation, before you could reduce painting to sheer relations of form and color. Richard was most puzzled when he came to the exhibits of the so-called 'Independent Artists.' He spent a whole Saturday afternoon among the crowds who gaped at the novelties and gabbled at their meaning. We had gone together, and Richard, still feeling that I had once been his teacher, would occasionally, in vain, turn to me for enlightenment.



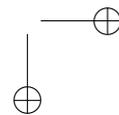
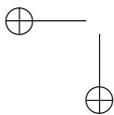


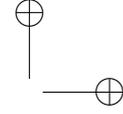
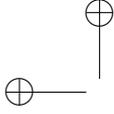
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‘There,’ said Richard, pointing to a strange thing that howled at you in a savage medley of crazy line and incredibly scolding shrieks of color. I could make nothing more of it than he. But I reminded him that the classicists had always howled down the modernists, and one ought to be careful. ‘Well, I’m a little suspicious,’ Richard said, somewhat petulantly, ‘of that violence which passes for power. These new artists can get my attention by howling at me, but I don’t feel obliged, therefore, to give them my praise.’

Richard often remarked to me and his other friends that he thought there was a good deal of obvious bunkum about much of this professed modernism. ‘The other day a young writer, who is doing a book on the modern painters for us, came in with a recent *chef d’oeuvre* created by a very modern young friend of his. He told me it was a picture of Brooklyn Bridge and represented symbolically the striving and upward reach of American life, its large dimensions, its overreaching arches, and what-not. I turned the picture right-side up after he had explained it to me, looking at it upside down. Well, a good deal of so-called modern theory is like that; it’s a rational theory about a crazy practice.’

So he gave up painting for a while. He had only Saturday afternoons for the galleries, and they were crowded then with the sickening *matinée* chatter of the embryo connoisseurs. The galleries, too, made him homesick for Europe; and it looked now as if it would be decades before he would have time or money enough to be in Europe again. He might as well take



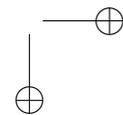
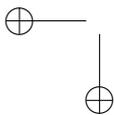


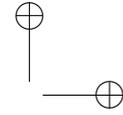
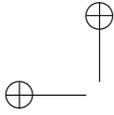
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the best in art at the place he happened to be. And New York had certainly in the last decade become the musical capital of the world.

In Richard, too, musical sensitiveness was more native and voluminous than was his response to the plastic arts. At best he got out of painting the pleasures of a careful discrimination; except in the greatest pictures it seemed to him you never got quite the sense of mystical union that the arts at their high points gave you. He had been genuinely stirred by some of Michelangelo; there was one Cézanne – simply a bare tree among fallen snows – that gave him a sense of having caught a tree, in its absolute and beautiful essence, for the first time in his life. There were a few paintings in which your life became for an instant an intense and overpowering act of vision. But most paintings looked at you, aloofly, and it seemed to be altogether unurgent whether you perused them or not.

Schopenhauer put it melodramatically, perhaps, but in listening to music it was the soul itself that was tormented by the strings. And music Richard had loved ever since he could remember. That much, at least, in the way of imaginative stimulus he had not been deprived of in his dull suburban home. He had learned to play the violin, and the feel of the fingering and bowing was with him yet. The development of his musical taste had been genuine and slow. It began when, as a boy, he kept his ears close to the door of the Victrola in a vague childish rhapsody over the 'Angel's Serenade.' It had grown into an indiscriminate thirst



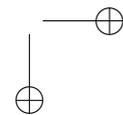
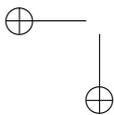


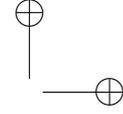
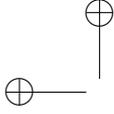
#### LOOKS AT ART

for the large massive sound of a symphony orchestra. There came that rapturous discovery of the unerrant splendor and simple perfection of the Beethoven Fifth Symphony and, after wandering among many moderns, a return with fervor to the three great B's. Where in the modern musical world could one find such clarity and power?

Richard likes to think now that he has outgrown the stage when music was simply a 'drowsy reverie interrupted by nervous thrills.' Though one would hardly believe it, observing Richard at concerts, his head bent forward and his lips parted at moments in a smiling surprise at some sudden glory of counterpoint or some unbelievable sustained sweetness of flute. The thrills now come from different music than formerly, and the absorptions of following theme and structure make concerts for him now something more than lotus-eating to orchestral accompaniment. His chief intensities come now from that vibrant and voluminous mathematics that is a Bach fugue; he would come through wind or storm, or break any ordinary engagement for even a poor performance of the intricately tender wanderings of Brahms's First. César Franck, his first introduction to symphonic music, now remains his constant and familiar friend. How clear and strong and resonant a friend is this master of austere pattern and exultant singing!

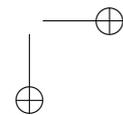
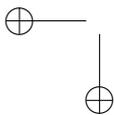
But Richard has not, in the evolution of his musical taste, lost the simpler values and joys in finding the more exquisite and subtle. Of the latter, the chief

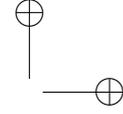
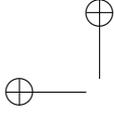




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glory for him is the infinitely complex structure of music itself, a flowing architecture, a Platonism become articulate, a mathematics that has found a voice and sings itself sinuously into the mind. There is the never-to-be-outgrown lusciousness of massed strings; the Philadelphia Orchestra taught him the full miracle of that beauty, and the still imperative flare of brass and drums. But there was one pleasure and one mystery that outranked them, that no sophistication of musical structure could ever destroy. There was in music a profound singing undercurrent that spoke out of unimaginable depths to something deeper and simpler than anything notable by the senses or legible to the mind. In the greatest music there was something at once engulfing and compassionate, whose commencement was a stirring and a signal, and whose close was a quietude. It was music, not books as Anatole France had suggested, that constituted the hasheesh and opium of the modern world. It was often said in New York that musical audiences were of all audiences the most intelligent. 'Rather the most sensitive,' Richard thought to himself as he turned one evening to look at his fellow concert-goers at a Philadelphia concert, 'the most sensitive and the most neurotic.' Music had become the safety-valve of the sophisticate's emotions; the beginners got it in the more obvious hysterics of Tschaikevsky; the more discriminating in the subtle singing movements of Brahms. But all alike, whether they admitted it or not, got out of music tense renderings of dark ambient forests of emotion. They

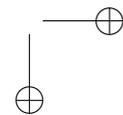
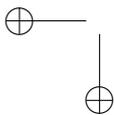


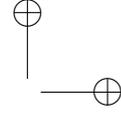
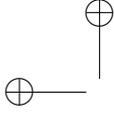


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read into the high treble waves of the violin passages moods for which they could not find vent in action, for which they could find no words themselves nor any in the brittle skeptical writers on whom they fed. Once, in that unapproachably lyric second movement of the Brahms First Symphony, Richard found to his confusion that he, who had trained himself to avoid sentimentalism in music, could hardly refrain from breaking into tears; although he said nothing more to Helen than 'How wonderfully Stokowski has disciplined those strings!'

But in music, too, Richard was facing confusion. In his resolve to keep an open mind to the novel in all the arts, he had subjected his ears to every possible outrage of assault by the musical moderns. Here, too, it would have been helpful if one had known just what these men were trying to do. They talked much and loudly about it, to be sure. They were writing in new scales; they were dropping the easy fluency of melody for the Neo-Greek music of detached chords. They were exploiting the striking and stirring power of dissonance. A place was being found for the grotesque. Richard, at a concert one evening, found himself hissing along with several others who thought an abominable shriek of confusion called 'Hyper-Prisms' too much even for tolerant ears. He knew he ought to be ashamed of himself and more cautiously open-minded as to what posterity might think about it. Wagner had been hissed too; and the critics, some of the best of them, had thought Beethoven in the Ninth Symphony had gone mad.



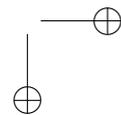
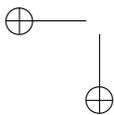


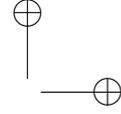
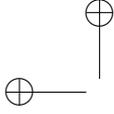
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But one could be too tolerant, and there had been a lot of noisy fools now forgotten who had been hissed into the oblivion they deserved. Debussy had certainly brought new pastel shades into music; Strauss now seemed almost tame. Perhaps Richard Junior would one day find loveliness in these mad things the Group of Six were doing, and be able to sit without fidgeting through a concert of the International Composers' Guild. For the present, Richard would stick to the three B's.

Confusion everywhere, even in the arts, where, in a crazy world one had thought to go for the repose of clear intention and clean form. It was the same even in those arts where a person with Richard's interests might have expected to feel at home.

There was the theater, for example, though for the contemporary theater Richard had little use. Counting out the vast miscellany of vulgarity and nonsense that was produced each year to fill buildings that were called playhouses, there was to Richard always something second-rate in the theater compared with other arts. It was so inevitably theatrical. Recently dramatists had learned to abandon the more obvious conventions and *clichés* and routines of the theater; but the stage remained a place ultimately of tinsel and artifice; the glamour of it was so obviously cooked-up and conventionalized; the effectiveness depended upon so many accidents and tricks of voice, of scene painting and of light. Two or three times a season – one had given up expecting to find it more than that – one came



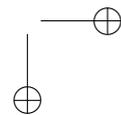
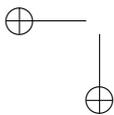


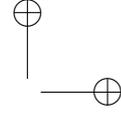
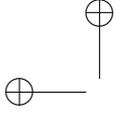
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away from the final curtain with a sense of having seen something that cut deep into the meaning, beauty and terror of life. But Richard had never learned to be at home in the theater. He came into it frankly for moments of nonsense or enchantment, and he seldom got the latter even from the most subtle new effects in lighting or from the high-art productions of the Theater Guild. He turned back to books chiefly as to a first and persistent love.

It was sweet of a winter evening to find that even in New York it was possible to resist distraction and spend a happy evening in the quiet security of books. Richard had often pictured to himself the solitude of a rural retreat. If one were living in a hamlet, one might have the peace and leisure to read through the masterpieces one had for so long been wanting to read. There flashed back upon his mind the picture of that charming English business man at whose hedged suburban home he had spent a week-end. He had marveled at the man's genial erudition, his roving acquaintance with Burton and Thomas Browne, and the little private byways he had cut for himself through the poetry of the eighteenth century. If he were only living in one of the despised main streets of the country, he might, simply because there was no one to talk to, like his English friend, read himself deep into urbanity and civilization.

But it was possible, even in New York, to have that final luxury of isolation, solitude in the market-place. Now Helen and he made it a habit to stay at home

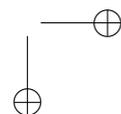
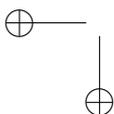


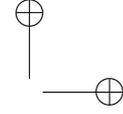
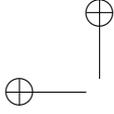


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several evenings a week; the children were asleep; the household was stilled. Often they would read aloud to each other. Helen preferred to have her husband do the reading. I came upon him one evening reading out of Wordsworth's 'Prelude.' I begged him to continue. He has a clear, well-pitched voice, masculine in its strength with a surprising, almost feminine, justness of intonation. There is an unpretentious expressiveness to his reading, and Richard has always had a native feeling for rhythm that, with a little more originaive spark, might have turned him into a poet.

It was odd this resurgent, persistent entry that poetry made into his life. For a few years after he had left college, poetry had signally failed to thrill. In Europe it had seemed faint and verbal compared with the substantially realized beauty of the plastic arts. On his return, when he first was plunged into affairs, the voices of the poets had seemed to him thin echoes in a void. What dinky little noises these poetasters made! After all, the men who controlled the tides of commerce, managed education, swayed government, or even those who made their vagabond lives into lyrics, were so much more interesting and effective than those who sang wanly in words. If the Philistine only had the language of poetry, what poetry he might make of his comings and goings and intrigues, his buildings and destroyings! The poet batted off what the unpoetic did. There was as much poetry in ten minutes in Wall Street or in New York Harbor as in a hundred little





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lyrics in the little reviews. Then poetry would come suddenly into his life and tell him that he lied.

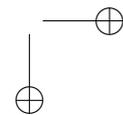
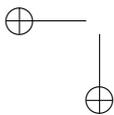
He came one evening upon the familiar lines of Wordsworth:

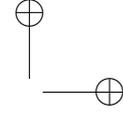
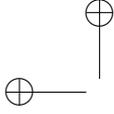
*'The marble index of a mind forever  
Voyaging through strange seas of thought alone.'*

Or in a magazine or an anthology he would find a phrase that would release old incredible uprushes of emotion. There was an induplicable magic about good verse; it turned mere brute being by a word into a beatitude. 'Poetry' – he recalled that passionate defensive sentence of Shelley's – 'is the center and circumference of knowledge.' Almost it seemed that. Certainly, if he could have imagined himself an artist, it would have been as a poet he would have wished to be known.

But poetry, too, had gone mad. It had gone in for a thin brilliance of epigram, which little minds substantiated for littler passions. Poets now wrote lyrics with a back-fire of apothegm. They corroded their already unhealthy emotions with the acid of intellectual malice. There were dozens of puny little neurotics trying to imitate Whitman's roaring freedom. In the austere intellectual passion of E. A. Robinson, he found almost the only poetic food of his own day.

It had come, indeed, to seem almost that the age of poetry had passed, and that only fools these days would try to be or could be poets. He had been irritated at first when Elmer Cliff, a solemn young man, assistant editorial director of the firm, had assured



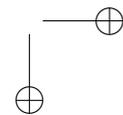
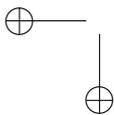


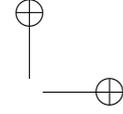
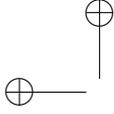
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him at lunch that poetry was an adolescent passion. 'Nobody,' Elmer had assured him, 'writes poetry to-day who has any decency or sense of shame; everything sensible can be said in prose; the poet wallows in a pig-sty of his unnecessary emotions.'

Elmer Cliff had been exaggerating a little; but perhaps he was right. There appeared to be good reason why fiction was peculiarly the art of the modern world. It could follow the sinuosity of emotion; it was a free and wandering form; it could move among details and among ideas which would corrupt and kill poetry. And Richard found in the most modern novels something new, beautiful, and strange. In those new weird works that were now appearing (he had bootlegged a copy of James Joyce's 'Ulysses') Richard thought he had found a form of literature that rendered in terrible and intimate accents the perturbed heartbeat of the modern spirit. The Parthenon frieze was the quintessence of Greece; sculptures at Chartres revealed the core of the medieval mystery; perhaps these new, half-articulate novelists were finding a form to turn into beauty the chaos of the modern scene and the modern soul.

It might appear from the foregoing that Richard was an æsthete completely living only in the arts. I often wondered what would have happened if he had suddenly inherited a hundred thousand dollars from the rich bachelor uncle who had sent him to Europe. Would he have spent his life in making the most of the sensations that freedom might have made possible for him? I doubt it.

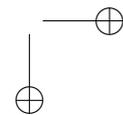
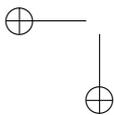


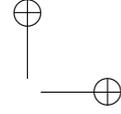
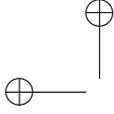


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There was evidence from time to time that Richard found leading the life of the sensitive imagination troubling in America. Not that he felt that he must follow the mobs of the new genteel to the golf courses and country clubs. He had not been dragooned by the surrounding money-madness into the lust for money; Richard had never been badly bitten by a passion for luxury or standard amusement. But there were many reasons why even Richard, free from the usual corruptives of the spirit, sometimes feared the current poisons in American life would, like the carbon monoxide in the motor-crowded streets, ultimately 'get him.' The great enemy of the soul was the daily wear and tear. Richard found himself at the end of a day at the office a 'tired business man.' There were relatives to be visited, there were boring people one could not escape seeing. Helen and he had certainly been ruthless in cutting out of their lives the major bores. But there were limits to rudeness, and good manners were greater restraints to life than good morals.

There was something more than that. Richard had the feeling – how was one to escape it in America? – that being interested in the arts was just the least bit exotic. Perhaps Henry James in fleeing America had been simply acting honestly on the inescapable truth that the sensitive and the fine-tempered had no conceivable place in American life. Well, Henry James had had an independent income for one thing. And Richard had said thumbs down to this expatriation business long ago.

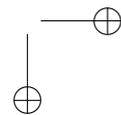
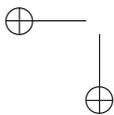


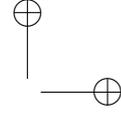
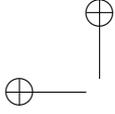


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Would it not be wiser to give up going against the current, and become one of the bovine herd, so unthinking and so untroubled in its days; to become one of these men met at lunch whose chat was all of golf; these women Helen saw whose talk was all gossip and bridge? When one lived in Carthage, why not do as the Carthaginians did? Why not go after money and spend it in the grand manner?

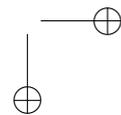
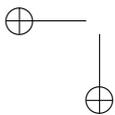
Richard had turned down two or three attractive offers from large general advertising agencies because he liked to be in a business that dealt with books. Helen and he did not want luxury. He was free even from the ennobling taint of ambition. He was content to be a stingless Voltaire cultivating his garden. That was all true. But one could no more help being distracted from devotion to the beautiful things one truly cared about than one could help noticing the billboards that were stuck up maddeningly along the roads through the gentle New England hills. It would be possible to resist luxury and vulgarity, but their presence polluted the spiritual atmosphere. One could not walk on the heights or among the gods when one lived in a vulgar and cheap civilization. Why try to live as if you were a young Athenian promenading with slim aristocrats on the Acropolis, when you were only an ageing young American lunching with golfing money-grubbers in New York? Become a good citizen, a respectable neighbor, a standardized member of the great middle class, the backbone of the country.

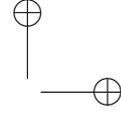
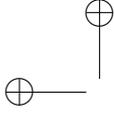




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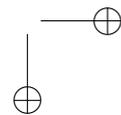
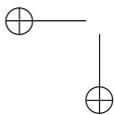
Why not, indeed? Richard often thought that these careless young vulgarians, with their motors, their golf, and their jazz, got a certain continual pounding vividness out of life that he, for all his tutored tastes, did not. Why not become one of them completely, and cease to be an alien in his own land? Become one of them? It would be easier to break with his friends or with his family than with that invisible society that had 'no birthday and no native land.' It was possible, even in America, with a few friends, a little money, and a little leisure, to move in that community among which in any age few had moved – the society of free spirits and eternal things.

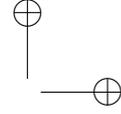
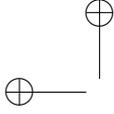




### HE TURNS TO POLITICS

Every time a youth like Richard Kane turns up at the university, I revive my old sentimental Platonic dream of a philosopher-king. It is absurd, I know, to think that these striplings, even the most intelligent of them, can reform the world. It is ridiculous to think that many of them, five years out of college, will want to. But I continue to cherish the fancy that a band of young *illuminati*, with clarity of intelligence and straightness of intention, might, if they could be or could get started, do something toward initiating the Perfect State. Not that I would expect them to go into politics as at present conceived. But I have the suspicion that if they did go into that miasma of public life, it might turn into something splendidly different. I should never have connected such dreams with Richard. The last thing in the world Richard seemed to care about was politics; it was the remotest point toward which I could have imagined his mind turning. I was no less than amazed, therefore, during the recent Presidential campaign to find him wearing a campaign button, and to hear him invite me to a





#### TURNS TO POLITICS

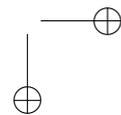
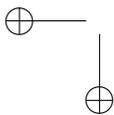
not distant street corner, where he was stumping for the Third Party.

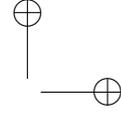
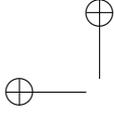
‘What’s happened to you, Richard?’ I asked. ‘Why has the Olympian come down from the heights into the market-place? Is the air altogether too fine in those regions in which you’ve been moving lately?’

‘Oh, I don’t know,’ Richard answered. ‘I guess I’ve joined the group of young men who still think something can be done. Certainly something ought to be. I’m back again where I was as a sophomore, anxious to make the world a better place to live in.’

Thus Richard came back to the politics he had deserted almost completely, so far as action was concerned, since he had carried a banner and tooted a horn along with a number of other twelve-year-olds who were having a rousing time in a torchlight parade for the election of a reform mayor.

Richard’s interest and loss of interest in politics had followed the usual course of an educated, liberal, and progressively disillusioned young American. The word ‘politics’ is invested for him with whole layers of association. It brings back first the sounds of his father’s voice raised in unintelligible condemnation of a number of things that Richard, out of an eight-year-old loyalty and mystification, came to hate, too – workingmen’s compensation, Democrats, and a low tariff. In his neighborhood all the decent people were Republicans, and only the drunken Irish across the railroad were Democrats. But party and filial loyalty had not blinded his catholicity of taste in political



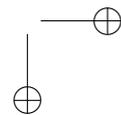
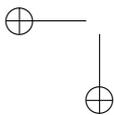


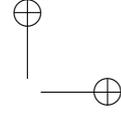
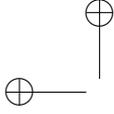
RICHARD KANE

buttons, and politics came for a time to mean chiefly a wide assortment of candidates' faces (including that of the Socialist Labor candidate), of which he had the best collection in the neighborhood.

It was a far cry from politics through his father's voice and campaign buttons, to the great imaginative thrill he derived from Aristotle's glorious use of that word, for the comprehensive science by which the lives of all might by wise men be remoulded along the clear lines set by intelligence. Between torchlight processions and Aristotle had come a whole cycle of enthusiasm and disgust.

I should like to have known Richard in his first political phase. It was when he was sixteen, just finishing high school, and he had become passionately convinced of the radical social injustice current in the world. He had become the friend of a Russian Jewish newsdealer, aged twenty, the first person Richard had ever had anything much to do with who had, it appeared, from childhood never known economic security. He and his family had been compelled by pogroms to flee from Russia. His father had died on the way to this country. He was supporting his mother by selling newspapers from a shabby little news-stand near the railway station. He was selling papers by day and studying hard by himself in the evening. In that comfortable little town for the comfortably fixed there was no evening high school for workers. In hurried but imperfect English he had persuaded Richard (who used to drop in to read all the magazines and buy one) that there



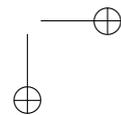
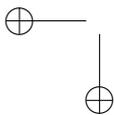


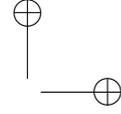
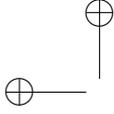
#### URNS TO POLITICS

was something radically wrong with the state of society. Richard had derived from him a guilty feeling for knowing where his next breakfast was coming from. The newsdealer introduced him to the works of Karl Marx.

Richard likes to tell of going to the library and asking for a copy of 'Das Kapital' and not finding it there, and finding also on going home that his father had never heard of it. On a week-end trip to New York he discovered the book in a second-hand bookstore and spent on it the money he had wanted to save for fishing tackle. He could not understand it. Rabinowitz, the young Russian Jew, explained it to him. Standing by the news-stand and interrupting his harangues to sell copies of 'Argosy,' 'Snappy Stories,' and the 'Evening Journal,' he would inflame this blue-suited, Oxford-shirted little son of a bourgeois with a quickened conviction that bourgeois civilization must go and at once. Once he took Richard, much to the disgust of the family, to a Sunday afternoon meeting of the Young People's Socialist League in New York. Richard had a thrill timing the twenty-nine-minute demonstration for Debs and waving his red flag wildly with the rest of the overheated and foreign-looking mob. He had come home and tried to make clear to his amused father that the latter was living off the blood of sweated labor.

Those red days seem far away and dead now. 'I wish I could now have as great passion for anything as at sixteen I had for saving the world,' Richard said





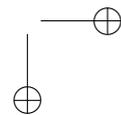
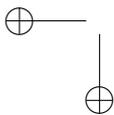
RICHARD KANE

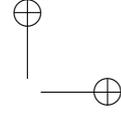
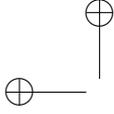
to me one day after describing his early explorations into Socialism. 'Life seems less warm since the days when, as a subfreshman, I went to my father's office and passionately told his employees that they were wage slaves. The only flag one seems to carry after one settles down is the white flag of truce.'

Hardly more irrevocably in the past now seems that short spell when he exchanged evolutionary for revolutionary Socialism. He had read Wells's systematic and programmatic 'Utopia.' He had fed on the dull cerebral jargon of salvation peddled by the liberal weeklies. Through his freshman year, but not longer, he had felt that intelligence, information, and professors of politics, could possibly save the world.

That is all over now, and has been for some time. The dirty backwash of the years after the war sealed his abnegation of politics. He had winced at the collapse of Wilsonian liberalism; he frothed at the election for a second time of a vulgar fool to be mayor of the greatest of modern cities. Politics was nothing for a sane man to soil his hands or his mind with. If he had had any lingering notion that America might produce a class of free, responsible, and generous minds to turn the rule of men into the rule of reason, he was willing to acknowledge, in the face of contemporary headlines, that he had been mistaken.

Politics had of late become for him, under the tutelage of H. L. Mencken and others, a large, broad farce for frivolous and contemptuous delight. 'How,' he asked me once after reading a report of a particularly



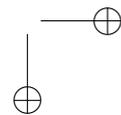
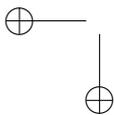


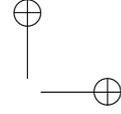
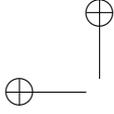
#### URNS TO POLITICS

asinine controversy at the Board of Estimate, 'could so wise a man as Plato have been such a fool? Certainly two thousand years after Plato, the men in leading government posts in Europe and America are hardly what you would call philosopher-kings. If any one appears showing such scrofulous signs as these, they take care to kill them quickly with hemlock or ridicule, or oblivion.'

So Richard made the most of politics as a spectacle, not to be taken too seriously, and not even, so far as humor goes, any too refined. So far as one could judge, some of those in public life who played the most farcical rôles, like Mr. Bryan in the guise of a saviour of Christianity, regarded themselves as playing high tragic parts. And there were others – Richard knew one of them professionally – who spoke portentous nonsense to a stupid public, and mocked their own solemn inanities to their friends. Richard had met at a formal dinner a man who had a national reputation for rotund and glittering idiocy. He was pictured in all liberal quarters as the perfect solemn ass. Richard discovered after five minutes' conversation that he was a shrewd and alert mind, as aware as any one of the calculated nonsense he spoke to what he called 'that beast, the public.'

Meanwhile there was sufficient to divert the mind hungry for comedy, and æsthetic sensibility had not blinded him to his sense for the ridiculous. He would read vast dull chunks of the 'Congressional Record' to come across some charming incredible silliness; he





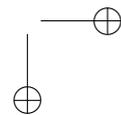
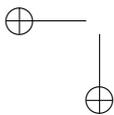
RICHARD KANE

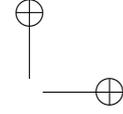
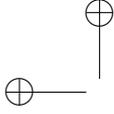
would turn page after page to see just what bad poetry Congressmen could find to quote. He would hail with glee H. L. Mencken's unearthings of shamelessly public stupidities, from the provinces, including New York.

Simon Flint, his newspaper friend, had taken him several times to the depressingly absurd Democratic Convention held in New York. One thing only – Newton Baker's impassioned plea for the League of Nations – gave him a faint reminiscent liberal thrill. But he came away from the other sessions with a contempt, that was a cross between amusement and despair, for the kind of persons in whom the political interests and political destinies of the country seemed to be lodged. Seasoned observers assured him that it would have been the same at any convention of any party, and that this poor sample was as good as any.

Richard had never had any illusions about public affairs, but it was painful now to find even his disillusion had been too feeble. Issues which involved not only the Nation, but (so interlocked had life become) the world, were being settled by fritterers, time-servers, and fools. He had only recently met a highly competent young woman who had, in the cause of the abolition of child labor, had personal contact with every Senator and almost all the Governors in the country. Her report could hardly have been exhilarating to any one save to a literary ironist on the march for food.

Richard's actual contacts with political officials had been few; the passport bureau and the post-office were almost the only branches of government with which he

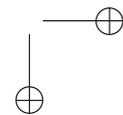
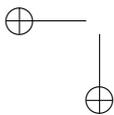


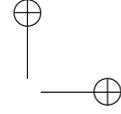
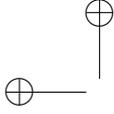


#### URNS TO POLITICS

had had any serious business. Gold lace and breathlessness unaccountably clung about Richard's image of the way affairs were conducted by the politically great. But any lingering sentimentalisms were gradually being eradicated by Gorham Watson, who had for a number of years been in the Washington bureau of a New York newspaper, and was now in Paris. World issues seemed to be settled by little men, pompous fools with just as much pettiness of motive and shortness of sight as could be found in a sewing circle or a town meeting.

The wise man would wash his hands of the whole political scene. Was it not said that in the worst days of Philadelphia's political corruption, the respected old families had consciously given up politics, and retreated to the cultivation of society and art, as the aristocrats in the 'Decameron' had fled to gardens of pleasure forgetful of the plague? Richard was hearing a good deal these days about what had become, with the smarter sophisticates, a religion of indifference, so far as the political scene was concerned. There were parties he and Helen attended occasionally, at which the only form of wit required was the ability to remember and to mention the name of a Mayor, a Governor, or a President. One could throw a company into convulsions by merely suggesting that a public official loved music, read books, or was even decently literate. It was becoming one of the formulas of the intellectual *beau monde* to identify an interest in politics with a small mind, and success in politics with



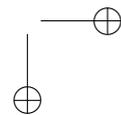
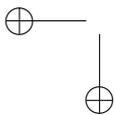


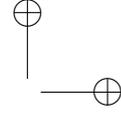
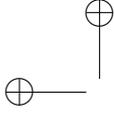
RICHARD KANE

no mind at all. Politics was pictured as a system of low, cunning devices, used by men (who, apart from cunning, were mindless) to control by low, cunning devices a howling and mindless mob.

A selfish and Philistine machine, on the one hand, a senseless and Philistine mob on the other – that was the spectacle of politics, Richard said to himself, that a contemporary is invited to contemplate. There did not appear to be any good reason, moral or practical, why one should join a group of ignorant, clever villains for the purpose of manipulating a hopeless and depraved public. There would have been a time when Richard would have been taken in by the call to service. There were reasons – he had read them in dozens of Commencement speeches – why men of intelligence, training, and culture should plunge into the anarchy and corruption of political life. What were science and scientific method worth if they could not reshape the institutions by which men lived so that one might walk in cities nearer to the heart's desire?

Richard had first been touched at college with the idea of a responsible intelligence 'cleaning up' society. The picture of Plato's philosopher-king going down into the marketplace lingered with him yet. It had been revived recently in absurd form by a mild paranoiac who had drifted into his publishing house, and by some chance had come to his desk. This amiable, gray-haired eccentric had ten years before retired from business, and in the solitude of a mountain cabin had evolved after four years a simple scheme of social

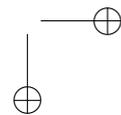
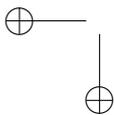


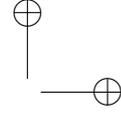
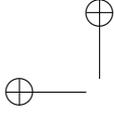


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salvation. He was going to organize the 'owls' of the country, an organization of its unmistakable wise men. These men were not to be found in universities (the man, thought Richard, is not as crazy as he looks), but to be selected on the basis of education. That was where Plato had gone wrong. There were rare owls in every walk of life; here a garage mechanic, there a teacher, there an engineer, there a cowboy on the plains. They were recognizable by a kind of intuition communicable by a special technique. Both the intuition and the technique had been revealed to him, Mr. Lovejoy, alone. The whole thing was described in his book. These owls were to be given charge of the country, and in a month you would not recognize it. Richard was an owl. Mr. Lovejoy had seen that right off. He must help Mr. Lovejoy get the book published, help him get it rewritten, in fact. It needed rewriting.

Richard out of curiosity took the manuscript home with him. It was rambling and wild, but the man was by no means a complete fool. These owls of his, running a regenerated society – was he not, perhaps, in his slightly touched way, a pathetic little parish Plato? Was it senseless altogether to suppose that a group of gifted leaders might rejuvenate a society? At least meeting him started in Richard's mind his now half-forgotten notion that if men of intelligence, endowed with enthusiasm and knowledge, should enter politics, something fine and transforming might come of it. Sometimes, in his rare heroic moments, he thought



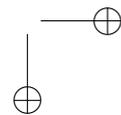
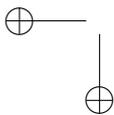


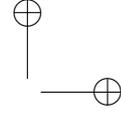
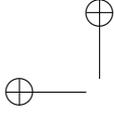
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of doing something about it. This, too, despite the fact that he saw no hope in the professional politician. He knew a young lawyer who had gone into politics and in an incredibly short time had been elected to Congress. He had watched him transformed from an always noisy idealist to a handshaker and a time-server. He knew the official administrative type, too. He had sized that up way back in his university days. He knew the official manner, the official voice, and the official mind that corroded once adventurous spirits with smug cancerous growths. There was no hope there. The old parties had long become meaningless labels to him, and the new programmes thin verbal hopes in pathetic unread reviews.

The La Follette boom started, and Richard thought that here at last was a place for a liberal citizen who had wearied of the old meaningless formulas. Here was a standard to rally around, a programme that an adult in full possession of his senses could support. And for three months, with a profound conviction that it was hopeless, that even success in politics was failure, and liberal success the most futile of all, Richard gave every spare moment to La Follette publicity, and wore himself thin trying to persuade mobs he despised to vote for a man whose chances he knew were zero. And La Follette at best remained to him the symbol of an ineffective protest rather than the banner of a hope-laden creed.

Richard dropped in wearily one evening after he had been talking for two hours on a street corner. 'And



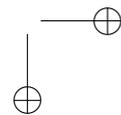
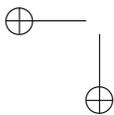


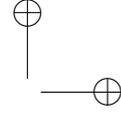
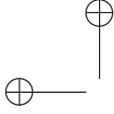
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suppose La Follette is elected, what difference can it make?’ he said in his unrecognizably hoarse voice. ‘I stopped for a moment in the midst of my shouting this evening and looked into the faces of the crowd. I wondered what they would do with the millennium if it came, and if there could be a millennium with such people alive.’

But it was Edward Lawrence, the leisurely young connoisseur whom Richard had met on a boat coming from Europe, who definitely clarified and almost sealed for him his disgust with politics. Edward had breezed in unexpectedly during October while Richard was hard at campaign work, but was persuaded to take an evening off. They went to Voisin’s for dinner, to a chamber music concert afterward, and then to Lawrence’s exquisite gray-tinted little apartment in the fifties for highballs and a chat.

‘This is all rather silly, this campaigning of yours, Richard. Suppose you get the country a smooth-running bureaucracy, where every square-faced moron owns his own standard house and his private two-hundred-dollar car: I suppose you would call that progress.’ With his musician’s fingers, he flipped the ashes from his cigarette. ‘As far as I can make out, Richard, the things that you and I and the civilized people of the world, very few, care about, are the lovely and diverting things in life. Well, those have always flourished best in a society of slaves. Confound it, I wish that slave had got more White Rock, as I asked her to. There are natural slaves to-day, just

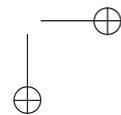
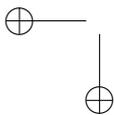


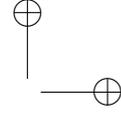
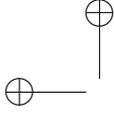


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as there always have been, and as there always will be. It's about time you stopped being a Messiah, Richard. Save what little you have of a soul, and don't start reforming the world. The world won't thank you, it won't be reformed, anyway, and it's hardly worth reforming, most of it!

Richard fell under Lawrence's aristocratic spell, although he tried to discount from the doctrine his amiable manner and his large income. He knew the biography out of which Edward's theories arose. This youth was a sensitive plant out of Oklahoma (probably the only one, Richard reflected), and he seemed to flourish better transplanted. He had gone to school in Kansas, and somehow, with that inauspicious birthplace and schooling, had developed early a taste for George Moore. He had developed, too, a tutored fastidiousness toward life, and a large smiling capacity for enjoying its more urbane delights with gusto, and its more robust pleasures like a gentleman. He loved all fair surfaces, and liked to dabble even in ideas when they were as finely flavored as old wines or as seductive as young women. He had a positive and genuine pain at the thought or the experience of ugly things, and kept his eyes turned away, as he could afford to, from sordid or cramped lives. Poverty and necessity had become for him the major uglinesses, and politics, even at its finest and most idealistic, seemed to him a messy art for relieving the stress of the dirty, poverty-stricken lepers of the earth.



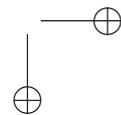
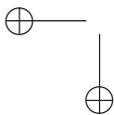


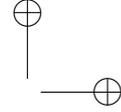
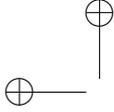
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One Saturday he had come out to the seashore to spend the day at Richard's. He had complained that he had dashed into the subway to catch a train; it would be faster than a taxi. 'It was a horrible experience,' he said. 'Have you ever ridden in the subway at seven o'clock in the morning? You see only slaves, many of them black, and most of them grimy. Who else but a slave would hold a job that compelled him to be at work at seven? They're sheer human muck that stink to heaven. That's the sort of rubbish your social reformers are trying to save. Really, the pleasures of life are too important to spoil with that sort of tosh.'

So Edward Lawrence, so far as Richard could observe, moved continuously in his smooth empyrean of financially secured bliss. His life, so far as he could make it that, was a series of caviare moments in a clean and landscaped world.

The gospel as well as the practice was attractive. One could go through life with the feeling that the vast majority on the planet were greasy automata, no more to be considered than the factories in the bonds of which some of Edward's funds were invested. One could assure one's self that civilization with its cruelties and lacerating injustices was to be justified because it made possible a sweet, boudoired life for a few choice, fine-tempered spirits like one's self. Richard recalled the old image of the aristocrats as the brain of a nation, and the plebs as its belly by which it was fed. A pretty and consoling philosophy which would enable one to dismiss politics as the concern of bourgeois or



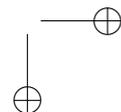
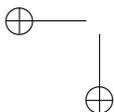


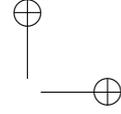
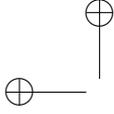
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sentimental minds that had nothing less foul-odored to think about.

Richard knew, too, that the new psychologists were giving the support of statistics to this latter-day aristocracy. He had once attended a lecture where the lecturer had exhibited the intelligence chart of the country. He had noted how the pyramid of intelligence narrowed from its broad base of mediocrity to the thin, uncrowded apex of genius, how on the nether side it tapered off gradually to idiocy. There were an amazing number of quasi-imbeciles current in our society, most of them outside of asylums and many of them in responsible positions. Who constituted that great common people for whom he was working? It was constituted of dull, slavish mediocrities and worse, that large solid area which voted, read the funny papers, followed the commands of the advertisers, and hooted down any variation from its own sodden norms. It was these who howled down science and art with their own odorous and ancient superstitions; it was these who enacted their tom-tom emotions into laws. Was it for these that a free and sensitive mind was to give up its energies and its life?

Edward Lawrence was right. One had a right to live, so far as one could live at all in a brutal civilization, among those choice objects and those fair modes of life, which the Stone-Age minds on the vast plateau of mediocrity would howl down and shoo away if they could. To these phalanxes of Philistinism courtliness was effeminacy, grace was foolishness, and any refine-



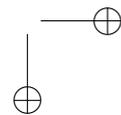
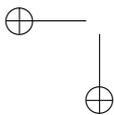


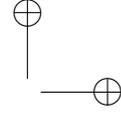
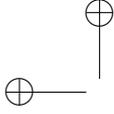
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ment or civilization of life was so much frippery. Why save those millions against whose very brutalities and vandalism the rarer values of civilization had always been so narrowly saved? 'The new barbarians' – some ill-tempered old Tory had recently used the phrase – but right reason and ill-temper in these days had a right to march together!

Richard joined the Indifferentists again. Or rather he would have, save that certain considerations, that an older generation would have called conscience, gave him pause. Most attractive, indeed, this picture that Edward Lawrence painted – and exemplified – of young lords of light making and enjoying the fine fragilities of existence, while the meaningless millions toiled and bred and died. But Richard had not observed without misgiving what a good deal of this young lordliness amounted to, and what it did. One could hardly condone the rank cruelty and terror under which the ninety-five per cent lived and endured, simply for the sake of producing a few smiling spirits like Edward. For many of the young lords were far less of a justification than he. Was the excuse for anarchy and horror in the conditions of present-day society, the slaving by men in millions in the damp of mines or the hot hell of furnaces, was it to fill country clubs with lithe loafers in plus fours, or town houses with gilded idiots in evening clothes?

It was all very well to be reminded that the beautiful paths and palaces of Versailles had been built by serfs for kings. Richard knew, too, that the meditative



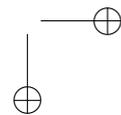
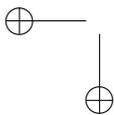


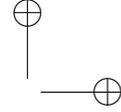
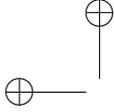
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young gods on the Acropolis had trodden on the backs of slaves. Plato, Aristotle, and Phidias had been living in no communistic commonwealth, and Plato's own socialism would have been despised by Karl Marx. And would a socialist commonwealth even in its prosperous mediocrity find a place for that flaming abnormality that is original science, philosophy, or art? Richard had his doubts.

The modern mind had become, perhaps, unreasonably tender. 'Be hard,' Nietzsche had written. Richard would have liked to be. The doctrine of the superman was an easy way out. Democracy had had a chance, and it was, confessedly, on all sides, a failure. It had made masses of ignorant, stupid people comfortable and literate, but had it done more than that?

Richard was discovering to himself, however, that he remained, for all his willful aristocracy, an incorrigible and sentimental democrat. What was there about Edward Lawrence and his type that seemed to him false and thin? Why had he never been able to swallow without wincing the doctrine of the superman? Well, for one thing, it was difficult for him to overcome the feeling of pity and softness that in former days had made him – all the charity organizations to the contrary notwithstanding – give something to every professional beggar he passed. There was always the chance that just this case might be genuine, and Richard had never got over John Bradford's cogent argument, 'there, but for the grace of God, goes John Bradford.'

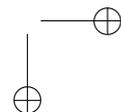
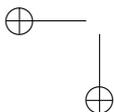


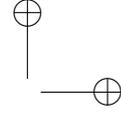
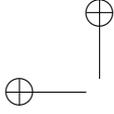


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It was hard to be hard. Security at twenty-eight did not shield you or seal you hermetically from the insecurity, the sordidness, and pathos in which most lives in most modern cities are lived. On trips to Boston Richard would see from the train windows those dim and horrible streets along the railroad track. He would look into dull windows, bedclothes hanging out of them, and not infrequently leaning out over the bedclothes stolid faces of fat, sad women who peered out of these drab holes upon the Pullmans as they rumbled by. Even from the comfort of a home facing the park it was hard not to regret that people lived like that. There was the limp little Italian shoemaker near his home, with eight children and a dying wife. There was Hooker, the elevator man in his building, who had been caught one day in the elevator shaft and crippled terribly for life.

Things had improved; Richard knew that. Certainly there was nothing now quite as brutal and heartrending as those early days of the factory system that he had read about in a dusty volume on the Lancashire Mills he had found for his history honors essay in college. Life had been mitigated. Yet what of the children in the Southern cotton mills. He could never forget the look of white-faced horror in the eyes of the lovely Southern lady who winced, over lunch at the Waldorf, as she told of the conditions in her husband's factory. There was still the grinding, burning slavery of the steel mills, though that inferno had been shortened now to eight hours a day. The damp, suffo-





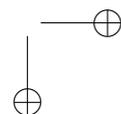
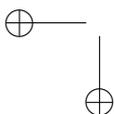
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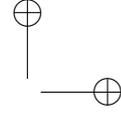
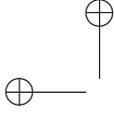
cating horrors of the mines, the men stifled in building tunnels under rivers, the youths thrown from the iron skeletons of skyscrapers, the stench and nausea and routine brutality of the slaughter-houses – Richard got a sickening sense of all that from headlines and from hearsay; he knew how much more frightful the first-hand realities must be. In the smooth confines even of middle-class life, one could not live oblivious of these foul cancers that lay at the basis of our civilization. One had the half-consciousness, always, of living in a fiend's Paradise.

Richard talked to Edward Lawrence one day about some local, particular sore he had discovered in the body politic. He had worked far into the night in his office building, and, stumbling against one of the charwomen as he came out, he got into conversation with her. He was aghast at her hours and wages. 'It's not fair, Edward, it's not fair. You and I and people like us sitting pretty here in the universe, while these wretches by the million. . . .'

'You've got a saint's complex, Richard,' Edward retorted; 'positively morbid, old man. You'll be beating a drum for salvation next, you will, and you'll be calling all capitalist sinners to repentance. What's the use? Rich men can't get into Heaven, anyway, you know. You're in a bad way, Richard.'

Maybe he was. Though it was not a sense of horror and cruelty, since he had few opportunities to see them, that provoked Richard to a sense of pity and indignation. It was rather the constantly growing con-

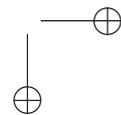
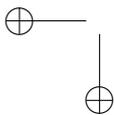


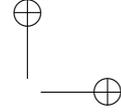
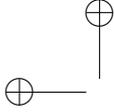


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viction that the smeary millions whom Edward and the funded baronets despised had (psychological tests say what they please) possibilities that had never been touched or tried. That little boy, the son of the Italian shoemaker, who occasionally brought the shoes from his father. One might be mistaken. Yet those bright eyes in that undernourished face spoke of something that a little more generous 'distribution of wealth,' as the economists called it, might turn into goodness or beauty. The boy was quitting school as soon as he could get his first working papers. Again at a band concert in the park, watching thousands of commonplace faces fairly transfigured by music that was neither blaring nor sentimental, Richard questioned whether the snobbishness of the lordlings was not simply so much unchallenged poppycock. He had watched the pathetic, mystified, eager expressions on the faces of the thousands in the Metropolitan Museum on a Sunday afternoon. Nobody had ever guessed what a genuine cultivation of taste among the million might produce. This wistful muddle before painting and sculpture had in it the germ of discrimination and rapture. So far what the millions had of leisure was simply a tired respite that needed excitement rather than beauty. And whatever possibilities of interest and enriching of the imagination existed were paralyzed by the pressure of the country club ideals that wealthy youth had set as the standard and type of civilization.

Possibilities lost, and, worse still, Richard reflected, possibilities ruined! He had listened to Bronson, the

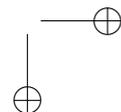
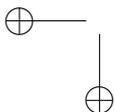


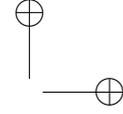
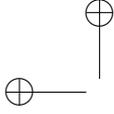


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psychiatrist, for one fascinating, ghastly evening. The man had simply, without any trumped-up heroism or pathos, recounted a dozen cases that had drifted in one day to his clinic at Bellevue. Within eight hours he had met a whole raft of lives that had been shattered into delirium or worse by fears and torments that a decent or an ordered civilization would have made impossible. There was a woman who had been driven mad because some wise puritans had decided that information about birth-control was a crime. Another might have been saved, if there had not been all the established legal horror of divorce. A girl of twenty had been driven from the noise and infinite dull click of a machine in a factory to jump from a window, and have her body saved by a miracle, but not her mind.

He had spent another day in the dreary State prison at Ossining. It was not the cell-blocks or the maddening hopeless routine of the place that worried him most. What depressed him above all was his feeling that here society was herding together on this gray shore of penal despair all the hulks and driftwood that it had itself wrecked and that it could find no salvage for. He had thought particularly about that when he found himself reading in the papers for a couple of weeks of the activities of a 'bobbed-haired bandit.' Found and sentenced at last, she had turned out to be a wan, hard little waif, brought up by drunken parents, seduced at fifteen, and at nineteen sent to expiate the sins of an archaic civilization in a State prison.



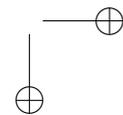
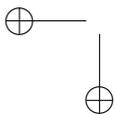


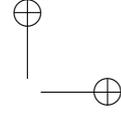
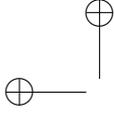
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Richard had no desire to become one of those solemn social workers and reformers, whose lives are one long, lugubrious concern with injustice and despair. Yet could not a concentrated effort on the part of the decent, the liberal, and the intelligent in a community make gradually a social order in which the waste of human material should be less tragic, and the possible flowers of human association more permanent, pervasive, and secure? Try as one would, one could not live in a modern city without having the spectacle of these surrounding leprosies flash insistently across the walls of whatever rose garden one could, with money and education, make of one's life.

He knew what Edward Lawrence and the country clubmen would say. Why sacrifice a fair and rounded existence or shadow it with a sentimental sense of guilt or regret, because one's shoemaker was poor and had eight bright, starving children, and a dying wife? Boccaccio's lords and ladies had told tales that were no less seductive because the plague was raging about them in the city of Florence below.

It was impossible – at least Richard knew it was for him – to live in a human vacuum, or to think that the possibilities of life were exhausted by that vacuous, comfortable community in which his own life and the lives of his class were passed. Whence came the illusion that the fairer modes of experience were to or could be enjoyed only by those who went to Groton and Harvard or their equivalent, or could afford to pay bootleggers for gin or chartreuse? Irony and pity had been exalted

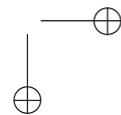
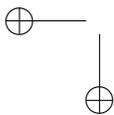


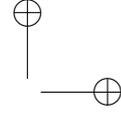
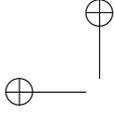


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by Anatole France into twin gods. Irony was a cheap, tepid, literary passion. The Russians had been wiser; tenderness, infinite tenderness had been their gospel. The smooth aesthetes with their tutored passions were confined to their inbred cliques and heavily cushioned salons. They were cut off inevitably from the tang and pressure of acute human living, from those wrestlings with the soil and the strugglings for bare existence which made the stuff of genuine laughter and tears. It was true, too, of the social reformers. It was the soul of man, the ultimate concern of any politic, that escaped them absolutely in all their calculated and systematized Utopias.

Democracy was a failure. Richard was hearing this on all sides, even from the now tired radicals. But then democracy had never been tried, certainly never in any radical sense. Christ, Saint Francis, and Tolstoy had been, perhaps, the only ultimate democrats in human history. What did all these little tinkering with proportional representation and short ballots mean if the heart and intelligence of reformers remained undemocratized. No one in the modern world seemed any longer to believe in the spirit of man, or to believe that it existed save in an economically or social select few. It took a true democrat to believe that below corruptions of class, or economic status, or differences in intelligence, there was in every man something precious, serious, and beautiful that used to be known as a human soul. One might believe that, even at seven





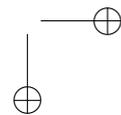
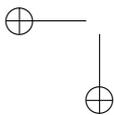
#### URNS TO POLITICS

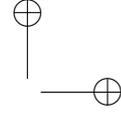
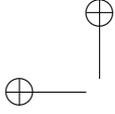
o'clock in the morning in a subway car loaded with heavy faces buried in the picture papers.

Love, not in the little boudoir sense in, which now alone it seemed to have a meaning, but in the old forgotten Christian sense in which Dante had used it, might still be the motive lacking to transfigure civilization. Politics and love certainly seemed solar distances apart; Ghandi in India alone seemed to illustrate their possible connection. The Western world with its hates and greeds and competitions had forgotten it.

Richard once at Edward's, after three highballs, had enunciated the doctrine of love in politics. Edward mildly pointed out that love had never been enough. 'Peasants rotted of the plague while your great lovers of mankind talked to them about the love of God, Richard.' The saints had been compassionate and helpless. Had the political scientists been much more helpful? Their drab mathematics of salvation could never save the world or move mankind. John Stuart Mill was not of much more avail than Saint Francis.

What if the methods of science and the motives of love should eventually be fused? Richard suspected that out of such a union might come a politics that was at once noble and fruitful. Never had men seen so much or felt so little. Knowledge allied to pity – what might not an understanding tenderness for the human spirit wherever it lay incarnate, what might not such a politics, based on such a doctrine, make of the world? The lives of men might be moulded to sweeter and

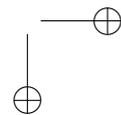
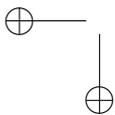


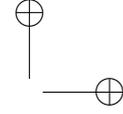
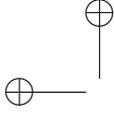


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serener models. The arts would be the fair fruits of life, not flights from it.

Richard was turning to politics again. Even in his own day, a politician might arise who would be, in the great sense, a statesman. He would, of course, have to be at once a poet, a scientist, and a saint. Richard looked with not too much hope at the headlines in the morning paper. There was no portent of such a one in the current skies.

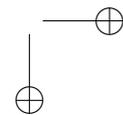
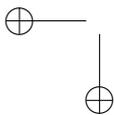


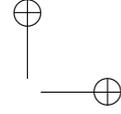
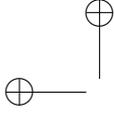


### HE HUNTS FOR GOD

Every once in a while I have my qualms about teaching philosophy to young men. More than once I have had undergraduates drift in and assure me that Herbert Spencer or William James, abetted by myself, was taking from them their faith, their most precious equipment for withstanding the shocks of education. No philosopher could have robbed Richard Kane of a creed. I do not know when I have met a temperament more quietly habituated to living without the need for the presence of God. No evangelist could have done much with him. He was born a pagan, though into a Presbyterian home. And since the Presbyterianism of Richard's parents was largely a matter of church-going and church sociables, religion in any literal and stern sense was almost completely absent from his childhood. There was thus no faith for Richard to lose at college: I am beginning to suspect that he would have been much happier these last ten years if he had been able to find one.

Religion, in any vital sense, is, I am aware, a vivid and inner experience more than an institution or a



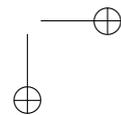
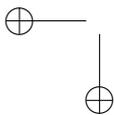


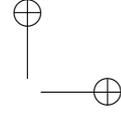
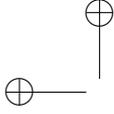
RICHARD KANE

creed. I know, therefore, that any guesses I may make as to what were Richard's concerns with God and godliness are impertinent surmises as to what has been going on in the most secret center of that moving interior process that one calls a man's soul. Yet time goes on. One grows more confident of knowing one's friends. What after all is friendship in essence, if not an identity of vision and a conspiracy of common feeling? One cannot help after a while following out, from a hint or a gesture, what dreaming steps one's friend may next take in his imagination, or what backward turn of reverie he has just made.

It seems natural enough to me now to find that at twenty-eight Richard is not through with religion. As I have watched him flutter in thought and action through love, politics, and art, I have known that for him they could never be enough. It was only a matter of years, I was sure, before a temperament like his, at once sensitive and reflective, would have to look through the hither side of the contemporary scene for a beyond that was satisfying and final.

It seems to me now that I knew Richard would some day be hunting for God, even when, as a corollary to his early radicalism, he had thought himself through with religion forever. No Thomas Paine and no village atheist could have been more completely through with anything tainted with the church or the supernatural. No mind, however healthily brutal, could have been less in need of that consolation which more lacerated spirits find in the tender certainty of salvation. At



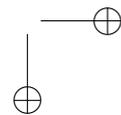
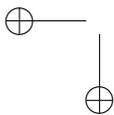


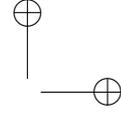
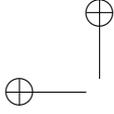
#### HUNTS FOR GOD

forty-five, it is said, Tolstoy, waking suddenly to the void of days without meaning that was his life, turned with a terrible hasty passion to the divine. On those not frequent occasions when Richard became depressed he turned to the theater, to his friends, and, later in his life, to Helen and the children.

The hard-boiled atheistical stage lasted, as it usually does, only a short time. Religion for the first time came seriously into Richard's life in the form of that seductive modernism that keeps all the beauty of the ancient beliefs without believing them, and knows that, though Christ never lived, the story of Christ and the pattern of his life remain moving and eternal. It was not till it took the form of poetry that religion meant anything to Richard at all. It stirred him as intently as music or painting only after it had become like one of those. Certainly those drab Protestant services in his suburban home town, the dull foolish Sunday School, and the urbane fashionable pastor, had never remotely moved him in any religious sense.

The storms of adolescence had likewise passed Richard by without any of those revealing lightning flashes or claps of demoniac thunder that occasionally fix religion as a terrible intense awareness in an unhappy sixteen-year-old. He had been deprived, by the same token, of that miracle of belief that often for suddenly illumined souls bathes the common sunlit landscape with a preternatural light. He walked through all his teens like a late and smiling Lucretius among the machinery and the mechanistic ideas of modern life.

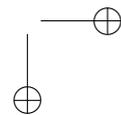
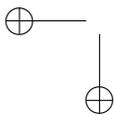


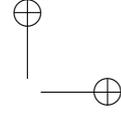
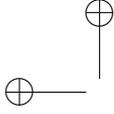


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There was during his adolescence no conflict for him between religion and science, for religion in the sense in which it could have conflicted with science for him did not exist. I recall with what distinct annoyance he listened to one of his classmates in a course in philosophy hold up the proceedings to insist that he could not believe in evolution because he was a good Presbyterian. It seemed to him he had discovered himself sitting next to a student who had been born in the Stone Age.

The stir and wonder of a first-hand religious Richard would indeed well have wished to know. In his teens, however, he remained as immune to them as the lad in Grimm's fairy tale had remained obtuse to the meaning of that shuddering that had never shaken his frame. All through college and the years following, Richard was to meet otherwise broad-daylight souls who had shared the midnight mystery of the presence and actuality of God. It was Tommy Keenan who had first made Richard vaguely appreciate what that could mean. 'I feel God,' Tommy had said, 'in my room at night. I know he is there, though I cannot see or hear him, just as you feel sometimes when you are sitting reading in a chair that somebody you know and love has come into the room behind you on tiptoe, though you have neither seen nor heard him enter.' There was that cynical young Jew, Harold Rosenbaum, who doubted, flaunted, and sneered at everything, and yet who seemed sincerely to cherish a conviction, untouchable by the testimony of the senses or the



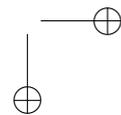
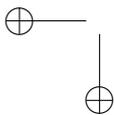


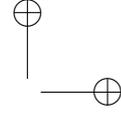
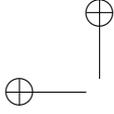
#### HUNTS FOR GOD

scalpel of logic, that God was there with him, sweetly and irretrievably.

For Richard himself religion came to have a meaning through a more tepid literary route. I had lent him once during his college days a copy of Santayana's 'Interpretations of Poetry and Religion.' In that exact and flowing prose he had been introduced to the conception of religion as a form of poetry. It was in the symbols of gods and creeds, so the book seemed to indicate, that the human imagination had enunciated large moving images of its conceptions of good and evil, of beauty and terror. The arts at their heights gave such a sense of mystic union as the saints used to call oneness with God. All forms of religion became for Richard large poems with the cosmos for their canvas and salvation for their theme. Christianity had been for him in his suburban adolescence simply the peculiarly depressing and repressive social activity of a small town. It had meant dull sermons, dull music, and generally intolerable Sundays. From Santayana and from the cathedrals of Europe, Richard discovered how profound and moving a poetry of human life the Christian tradition had enshrined.

So for Richard during the first few years out of college, if religion had any motive power it was the motivation of a noble and tender art. The Word of God became for him, indeed, more full of grace than truth. The surfaces of religion came to be weighted with a dim symbolic unction, though he could not have told for the life of him what was signified exactly by the

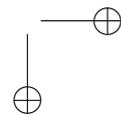
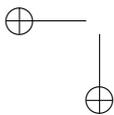


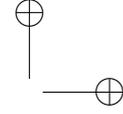
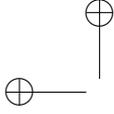


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music and the incense and the light gloriously filtered through stained glass or the soft stirring shadows upon arches and altars. He would find himself repeating to himself the grand organ-like language of the prayer-book. Meaningless little shivers of exaltation would go through his frame while, attending an ultra-High-Church service, he heard a suave young rector read the lesson in a vibrant, calculated voice.

Almost the whole year of his hermitage in Greenwich Village he had 'heeled' the churches. He would go to Saint Mary the Virgin's for the Procession, to Saint Bartholomew's for the music, to the Quaker Meeting-House for religion in its bare private essence and simplicity, to Saint Patrick's at midnight of the New Year for the scarlet and the music and the sonorous Latin of the Mass. He had not left out, either, a service almost primitively Fundamentalist. There he listened in unbelieving wonder to a hoarse, defaming defender of the faith talk of the hell-fire that would consume the filthy modernist minds. The vulgarness of the oration did not blind him to its sincerity or to the hold that it seemed to have on this mass of blank faces and dull brains. Once he had gone to a synagogue with his classmate Harold Rosenbaum. It was a thoroughly orthodox service; he had been stirred greatly and incomprehensibly by those moanings and chantings, and by the sight of these tragic-looking old graybeards shaking backward and forward in their mumbled guttural prayers.



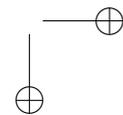
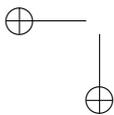


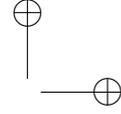
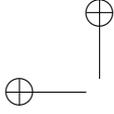
#### HUNTS FOR GOD

For a time even – Richard himself smiles at the recollection now – he tasted of religion as a connoisseur sips wines. He tried to elicit from each of them its characteristic flavor: to read himself into the form and unction of the High Church, to become a direct and simple communicant of God with the Quakers, to be swayed like a true Catholic by the awful mystery of the Mass, to believe in and pray intensely to the terrific Hebrew God. He knew, while he tried these various flavors of belief, that with him they were only flavors, and that it was the taste and not the belief that he cherished.

This period of religious æsthetic affected for a time the externals of his life. The little alcove of his bedroom was separated from the rest of the living-room by a heavy black curtain. In the center of the curtain hung a large silver crucifix. There was a wooden image of the crucifixion, picked up at Bruges, that for one short affected spell hung above his bureau. And during the same period he would intone random passages from the Book of Common Prayer before going to sleep.

It was all in the vaguest sort of way thrilling, and because it was cloudy and self-conscious Richard had spoken of it to few of his friends. Certainly that group of clear-eyed young moderns whom Richard first saw after his return from Europe would have been merciless to this fusion of Ruskin and Cardinal Newman that he was trying to become. It did not take Richard long himself to see the foolishness of religion that was nothing but incense and unction and music.

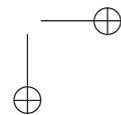
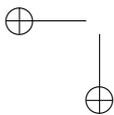


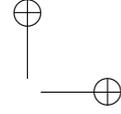
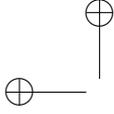


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Tommy Keenan, whose simplicities had cured Richard of many affectations, had cured him too of this. At the New Year's Eve at Saint Patrick's, which they had attended together, Richard had watched Tommy closely. He became thoroughly ashamed of himself for trying to identify his thin æsthetic interest in religiosity with the real thing, so evident and so beautiful in Tommy's voice and in Tommy's face during the service. He sickened from then on of what came to seem, and still seems to him, a false and illicit perversion of religion. You believed in God or you didn't. There was an end of it. This prettifying imitation of religious passion, this attempt to get out of the theatricals of a service the spell of a creed – was there not something rather foolish and exotic about all of it? When Helen came into his life and showed him what the edge of unaffected passion looked like, he gave up heeling the churches altogether.

Now at twenty-eight, so far as any one could judge, religion had for some years been out of Richard's life altogether. He had made up his mind, after playing about like a belated Pre-Raphaelite with religion, to be honest and face squarely his world. After all, all these fair, false myths and absurd, seductive ceremonies had too long hypnotized the imagination and enslaved the intelligence. Richard, at twenty-six, had thought himself quite through with religion, as, at one time or another, he thought himself through with politics, and art, and education.

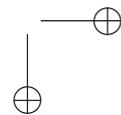
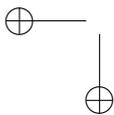


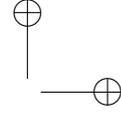
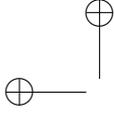


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At least Richard tried to persuade himself he was through with it. Then at twenty-eight – the wrong age, according to statistical averages, as Edward Lawrence had assured him – he found himself undergoing something similar to a conversion. At any rate, it began like one. Richard was having again a bad case of sick soul. The first suggestion I had received of it came the night in the Italian restaurant when he assured me that the stars had all gone out in his heaven. They had, too, one by one. The glamour of marriage had faded and domesticity had begun to chafe. He had turned to the arts. But one could not make a pattern or a permanence out of the lovelier interludes of things. Politics? In a different age Richard could easily have been swayed to revolutionary fervor. But he was living in the post-war twilight, not in the sunrise days of the Revolution of 1848. And his few months of activity in behalf of the Third Party had taken the edge off that passionate political hope.

The stars had, as he remarked to me in the Italian restaurant, quite gone out in his heaven, and any heaven he had dreamed of had disappeared. I felt about Richard that evening at dinner a depression more complete than I had been willing to admit to him or to Helen, or to myself. I had hoped that the vacation they were planning in the Adirondacks that summer would bring him back to normal resilience. They were fleeing to the mountains that year to escape the routine social life to which they were exposed at the seashore resort which had become their accustomed summer





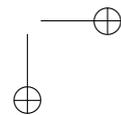
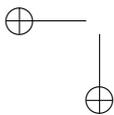
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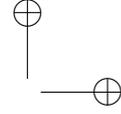
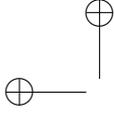
place. I came for a fortnight's visit and found Richard in a strangely perturbed state. Helen was obviously worried. At sunset of an August day, Richard and I went out in a canoe together.

'Now, Richard, what's the trouble? I've been here for a week and have been watching you pretty closely. There's something on your mind. What is it – business, Helen, the children? – I wish you'd tell me about it.'

'Nothing, everything, Doc. For two cents I'd chuck myself in the lake and not come up. I would, honestly, I give you my word; there's nothing in it. If it weren't for Helen and the children –'

I hardly could resist smiling at the melodrama of it. A handsome young man lounging in camping clothes in a canoe on a flawless summer day on a jeweled mountain lake, and talking in this nonsensical manner about suicide. I could not imagine what there could be to worry Richard. He was obviously in good health; he had, so far as I knew, no financial troubles; nor any domestic difficulties. I was tempted to tease him. There was something, though, in his eye, of unmistakable agony and melancholy, and I knew Richard never talked tragically for effect. I pooh-poohed his depression as gently as I could, told him he had been working hard, and gave him all the salubrious little prescriptions that those at ease with life hand out to spirits in travail or crucifixion. Rest was what he needed; he had been moving at too fast a pace; – lots of milk, and walking, and horseback riding. This business of being a nerve specialist must be easy, I said to myself.

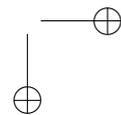
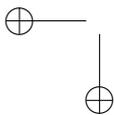


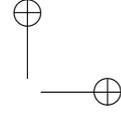
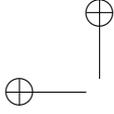


#### HUNTS FOR GOD

As Richard tied up the canoe at the dock, I suggested finally that he mustn't talk like a sophomore, or a fool who has been reading Schopenhauer, and the two of us went to dinner. Richard acted with decent cheerfulness at table, but afterward Helen drew me aside: 'There is something wrong with Richard,' she said; 'I wish you'd find out what it is. It seems impossible to cheer him up. He doesn't think I've been noticing what's been going on inside him, but I have. It's something more than the fact that he's been working hard. He's got a terrible case of the blues. It's lasted on and off for months. I wish you could help straighten him out.' I promised to try.

That evening, in the quiet of the moonlit veranda, I got Richard to talk. He spoke very slowly at first like one trying to put into words what has been so silent in his own heart and so privately locked there that he does not quite know what it is going to sound like when put into words. He seemed almost to forget my presence and to talk as if he were simply putting into language for himself what had been coursing inarticulately through him for the past year. Often he hesitated, as if he were not sure I should believe him, or as if he could hardly believe himself. Every once in a while I became acutely conscious of the chirp of the crickets, or the soft lapping of the water against the shore. It was midnight before Richard had finished. A retelling of it will bear about the same relation to the original that the score does to the playing of music,



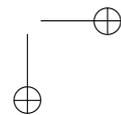
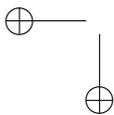


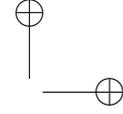
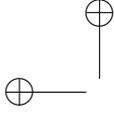
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or, more accurately, that a clinical report bears to the agonies that a patient has acutely suffered.

The clinical report will have to be something about like this: When Richard's activities in politics had ceased the previous November, it had been for him suddenly the end of everything. A black void of nothingness had been the long perspective into which his imagination looked. I know well that any competent psychiatrist would set it down to overwork, and a physiologist would find a dozen other things to explain Richard's condition before he would invoke any consideration of God. But here at twenty-eight one night in November, Richard woke up and found that life held nothing, absolutely nothing, that had or held any meaning for him. At two o'clock in the morning he woke up and held a dialogue with his own soul.

'I really seemed to be talking to myself, frankly and freely, for the first time,' Richard said. 'It was like that self-communion with the soul that you once said was the essence of Plato's dialogues. Here in the stillness of the early morning I felt like a disembodied phantom that lived in a shadow-world talking to the real enduring me that had lived hidden and obscured below all the noise and distraction of my life. And my real self, soul, or whatever it is, seemed to be speaking to me out of the absolute stillness. It was terribly still: I could hear Helen breathing: a fire engine sounded in the distance: but my soul and myself seemed enclosed in a silence that lay beyond the edge of the universe. "There isn't anything, anything in life," my soul was



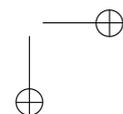
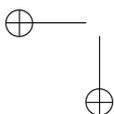


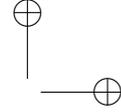
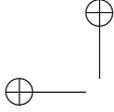
#### HUNTS FOR GOD

saying, “except a slow progress to death. You forget death for a while; you ignore it. But it is there, looming and absolute. Living is an interval between oblivion and oblivion. And what is that interval?” my soul asked. “It is filled with comings and goings, with plans and hopes, with successes and failures – and even the successes are failures, and it leaves nothing, leaves no mark, is as if it were not. It is a nightmare in a forest, and you never wake to see the sun, but fall asleep again to final darkness.”

‘I give you my word I was frightened. I’ve had a sense of terror before, but nothing like what I got from that voice which was myself, carrying me down, down, to abysses of meaninglessness and void in those gray hours. I stirred and trembled. I got up and switched on the light. Helen turned to me, and looked at my white face and asked me if I had seen a ghost. “Just had a dream,” I told her. I had seen a ghost, too, the ghost of my own foolish life, and of the foolish lives of every one on the planet. Well, that was just the beginning. Ever since I’ve been hunting for God, or He’s been hunting for me, I don’t know which. The trouble is, I still can’t believe in Him; I won’t believe in Him; I know that He does not and cannot exist. And yet I need Him, or somebody like Him, to live. Tommy Keenan, with his little childish mysticism, is still wiser than all those modern friends of mine you’ve met of a Sunday evening at my house.’

Richard did not pretend that in that nocturnal dialogue of himself with his soul he had had a revelation of

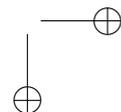
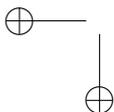


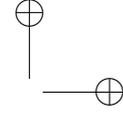
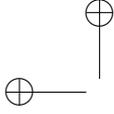


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God. But something had broken through the barriers, the Unconscious I believe it is fashionable to call it now, and told Richard what he had for the last two years been feeling: that somehow there was fundamentally a void in his life, and in all contemporary lives, an aching emptiness that no amount of intellectual small talk could fill, a silence so vast that all the noises of modern thought and modern action sounded in it like a tiny whisper.

Nobody looking at Richard the day after his 'conversation' could have imagined that he had had a vision in which all values had for him become a zero. At the office the next morning he appeared as spruce and efficient as ever, though a little paler than usual. The change that had come over him may have been profound, but it was internal, and he determined to keep it strictly private. What would they think in his office if he should tell them that for the first time in his life, at two o'clock that morning, he had become acquainted with his own soul? That sort of thing simply was not done. It was an experience he could talk about to no one. 'I thought of telling you about it,' he told me. 'But you would simply have recommended a few books on the religious experience, or sent me to a psychiatrist, or ordered a few weeks in the open air, or a course in comparative religion. I've been in no mood for that sort of thing. I didn't talk to Helen about it either; she would have been worried to death or would have made fun of me, one or the other. Lord! I thought I was through with religion. But none of us





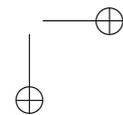
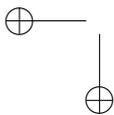
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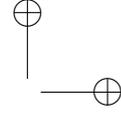
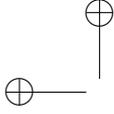
is. Here I've been spending the whole winter trying to find a faith.

'The first thing I did was to go to Montreal to visit Tommy Keenan in the monastery up there. I found him walking in the garden. I don't think I've ever seen any one so peaceful or happy in my life. But there's no help for me there. I shall never turn to Rome. I was nearly driven there by æstheticism some years ago. But I'm through with that. I don't mix up the theater and God in my mind any more. And I can't quite simplify myself enough to swallow whole what Tommy takes on mystic faith. I still need a little reason even in rapture.'

After the visit to Montreal, Richard looked carefully around the contemporary world of ideas to see what there was that could give an honest and adult mind something that it could without sentimentalism or hypocrisy accept as a faith. He had tried the music and the poetizing of the æsthetes and found them wanting. He was through with the Pre-Raphaelite Christs and the Christianity that spoke the language of the nineties. His soul had spoken to him at two in the morning and had convicted him of living like a foolish phantom in a futile race with shadows. He could not answer it with chants and intonations. He could not pretend he found meanings in life, through beautiful symbols that he never once, apart from their beauty, took seriously.

Richard began to envy the few people he had ever known – doubtless there were millions he did not know

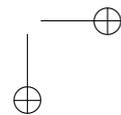
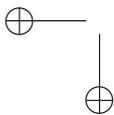


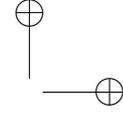
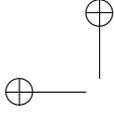


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who were equally enviable and for the same reasons – whose faith no shattering of fortune could break and no acid of ideas corrode. The gloom of his own depression was lighted by his memories of those kneeling women before the images of the Virgin or of a patron saint in a French cathedral. Come hail or famine or the death of some one loved, and these simple creatures had a comfort and certainty not possible to blatant atheists or to the soft æsthetes who dabbled with the metaphors of religion. He envied that strange paradox of cynicism and mysticism, Harold Rosenbaum. Harold knew all you could possibly tell of mechanism and evolution, and remained quietly sure of God across all the rough places in life, across even the jagged abysses into which his own thought led him. Sometimes, even, Richard was jealous of the Fundamentalists, though by these he did not mean the loud propagandists who played on the superstitions of the ignorant. He looked rather with wistfulness upon the ignorant themselves, who found their intensest joy and clearest security in their derided idolatries.

Richard found himself, indeed, trying desperately to cease, firmly and finally, the search for God. But the more he tried, the more compulsive seemed the search. For the first time he knew what Francis Thompson had meant by fleeing God down the years. It was impossible now, so it seemed, to recover that easy sense of walking solidly in the sunlight that had been his constant gift before he had held that terrifying conversation at dawn with his own accusing essence.

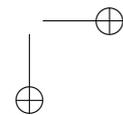
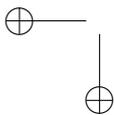


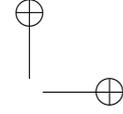
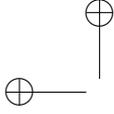


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It would have been laughable to him a short while back to think that he would ever hunger and thirst for religion. In that now infinitely remote period, he had been content with what he had called to me in his letter from shipboard 'faith in life,' credence in the possibility of turning that bright interval between oblivions into something coherent, clean, and beautiful. It had never before seemed to him cause for tears that life revealed no clear pattern. Part of the joy and challenge had been to make patterns out of chaos. He had always thought it sentimental to fret because science promised that some day the world was going to burn up or freeze. The bitterness or sadness with which modern writers had looked upon an icy mechanism without soul and without meaning had appeared to him a literary affectation. There was a lot to be enjoyed and to be done before the quietus that ended any single life and the catastrophe that would be the ending of all things.

What a tough young mind he had been, and how short a time ago! Now there sounded to him constantly the sad admonition that his soul had made to him in the silent hours he had lain awake before dawn. 'Life is nothing,' it kept repeating to him in memory; 'the whole kaleidoscope of living is nonsense, irremediable nonsense. Why try to make a clearing of reason in a forest of essential futility and horror? Why think even rosebuds delightful when all things, even rosebuds, end in dust and worms?' 'Dust and worms; worms and dust.' This was madness, surely, to be repeating such



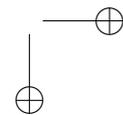
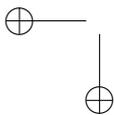


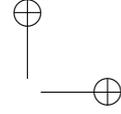
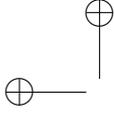
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lugubrious rubrics to himself as he waited for a train in the subway, or as he paced the smoking-room during the intermission at the theater. The thought of decay and death would invade him horribly when he came in to say good-night to the children. A little shivering sense of cosmic absurdity would course through him ironically whenever he found himself straightening out his desk or priding himself on saving a moment or shortening a routine. Again and again at night, a wordless dirge of horror at the meaninglessness of life would hum softly, steadily, maddeningly, through his brain.

Richard vaguely remembered that he was in a state that psychologists had called the sick soul. He remembered, too, that in many famous recorded cases the sick soul had been saved by a sudden flash of divine revealed splendor. That would never come to him. Except for his conversation with himself, he had never had anything entitled to be called a mystic experience. He was not likely to now. Nor would he be taken in by one. No adult mind could be satisfied by an unseen presence that sent shivers down one's spine. There was little enough comfort in being made aware of an electric influence that could not be attested to by the sense or assented to by the mind. No moment's indefinable rapture, any more than a moment's love or beauty, could rescue him permanently from this dark night of the soul in which he blackly moved.

Perhaps he had better see a psychiatrist. But there was nothing wrong with him. He did his work as well



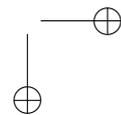
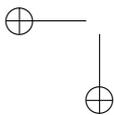


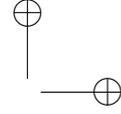
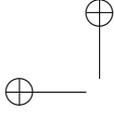
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as usual. People told him that he looked a little peaked sometimes, and Helen upbraided him for his long silences. But in any case, what could a psychiatrist tell him? That the universe was all right and that what he needed was fresh air? It was the old way of silencing the profound corroding doubts that ate into the subsoil of one's being. The wise, the certain, the sensible, no longer deigned to argue with a skeptic; they accused his complexes or his digestion.

No: he must by himself try to find his way back to the old pagan certainties again. The world was a meaningless mechanism and man a complicated casual accident in it. Well, what of it? Why should he be worried, who had been long habituated to the gray picture the physicists and biologists had made of man and nature? Why fret because he could not cherish any longer the out-moded pictures, so false and beautiful as they shone out of the ivied poetry of the Christian tradition? Why should he need a faith except faith in himself? What was education for if not to train him to stand squarely on his own feet, in an honestly conceived universe? The blue-print of futility that the naturalistic philosophers of our day were giving us left little consolation. But was there not solace enough in the felicities to be found in love and pictures and friends? If one wanted the rarer flights and intensities, was there not among these secular miracles enough to rival the transports of any of the saints?

Literal faith was over and done with. And Richard knew that he could never accept as a substitute those

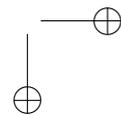
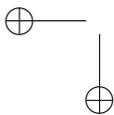


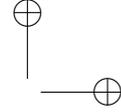
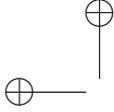


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thin symbols and tinklings with which he had been momentarily captured by the æsthetes. But he faced, willy-nilly, the fact that faith remained as necessary as it was impossible. It was just at this time that he came upon a book that stirred him as if it had been written expressly to meet his own crises. In 'The Tragic Sense of Life' Unamuno, the eloquent Spanish thinker, had hit the essential truth and agony of the matter: the modern heart longed for what the modern mind could no longer believe. But what did the heart still crave? Immortality? Living forever was a vulgar hoggishness of vitality. Freedom? What difference did it make, practically, if the world were fated or free? When it came to an actual choice, one chose just about the same on the basis of either illusion. God? Merely the overwhelming traditional epithet to hush all questions, evade all answers, and avert the conclusion that no answer worth making was possible. It was certainly not God, or Freedom, or Immortality in the traditional sense that he craved. 'Why, then,' he kept asking himself, 'am I somehow hunting for God?'

The answer was simple and it came to him one day simply. The first night of his vacation here by the mountain lake he had taken the canoe and paddled down swiftly to the end to prevent himself from thinking. He stopped and heard the lapping of the water against the prow of his canoe. Here were all the identical eternal sounds that had impressed him with their beautiful persistence whenever he had had a chance to be among the hills or by the sea. It was a quietude



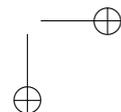
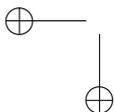


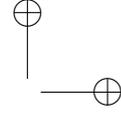
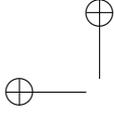
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and a blessing to come again and again upon uncaring and enduring eternity, the towering changelessness of mountains, the unvarying chirp of crickets, the recurrent rustle of grass or the stir of wind on the lake. Always he had tried to explain to himself what was the note of melancholy that he felt in those inevitable voices of the sea and woods. Now he knew.

This so beautiful whispering world of nature was eternal; nothing else was. One lived, the modern soul in the modern city, tossed on restless waves of time, torn with ambitions, racked with anguish or with triumph that would soon, too, be washed away in the universal waterfall of time. Even those high pauses of beauty one met in the arts, or those *cæsuras* of tranquillity or affection which were possible even in a jazz age, could not long endure. Here in the murmur-accented silence of the summer night Richard knew what all modern souls were looking for, an escape from time to eternity, from that restless momentum of the modern world to a stable and shining island of peace. Without that, life was a mere breath, a transience and a defeat.

It was because they could not find such an island that a great many of the little cynics pretended that they liked the flood. He could not fool himself so. But what could he cling to in the clamor? Almost every one he knew was lost in the whirlpool. Some were trying to forget the madness and confusion by drowning it in noise. He had seen them at night clubs with their clappers and their gin and their loud-mouthed attempts to flood boredom with laughter. He

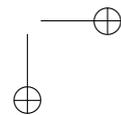
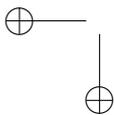


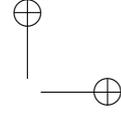
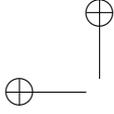


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had met them at parties in Greenwich Village, and had watched them until the early hours of the morning, trying to have a good time constructed chiefly around petting and puns. There were others, including myself, who were trying to live securely in the little eddy and backwash of a college or a university. Edward Lawrence was continuing with a quiet cynicism and a large income to gather rosebuds and forget the ultimate worm.

But none of them had found security or eternity, with the possible exception of Tommy, and Tommy's way was for Richard impossible. The things that mattered, in any permanent or serious sense, were what a generation previously one might have called the things of the spirit, and Richard felt as he had felt when looking from the Palazzo Michelangelo upon the outspread moonlit city of Florence below: that it was precisely these things that a universal flood of barbarism was threatening to destroy. The soul like Narcissus, had come in these scientific days to be gazing upon its mechanical image too long, and might be drowning itself, as it assuredly seemed to be doing, in a sordid death of machinery and routine. One must return to religion in the sense in which Pater's Marius had kept piety for the ancestral gods. Surely there must be something to love in the desolation, some religion that one could make honestly one's own. Without that it would be impossible to live. These mountains were opiates, but they were not a permanent peace.





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It was after midnight when Richard finished. He turned to me with his young, always surprising smile. 'You never thought I'd take religion so seriously, did you? Belated adolescence? Maybe. Why didn't you give me a more waterproof modern point of view at college? I should have been spared all this.'

I had to leave about a week later to keep a lecture engagement in the West. The remainder of the summer I scarcely had more than a line from Richard. He still seemed deep in his slough of despond. I was a little irritated with him. 'It's a pity,' I thought, 'that the boy can't have learned these last ten years to take life a little more naturally. Eternal romanticist, wanting something that no world can give.'

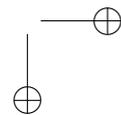
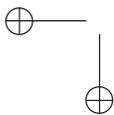
On getting back to the University, late in September, I found a letter from Richard. It was dated from town.

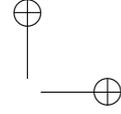
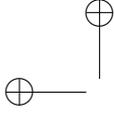
CARO MAESTRO:

I don't know whether you've got back to the University yet or not. But I want you to know that the cloud has lifted, I have found a little light. I haven't seen God, or anything like that. I never shall. I'm too insulated with modernity for that. I've come to the conclusion, anyhow, that seeing God in the old sense would hardly satisfy me. It may be these four weeks of mountain air. The last time I had a burst of exuberant faith was in mid-ocean.

Oddly enough, it's getting back to the city this time that has given me a sudden lift.

I know what's been wrong with me. I've been aching for a nursery religion. I wanted a cosmic ear to talk to,



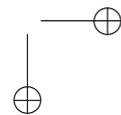
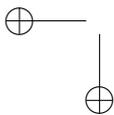


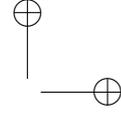
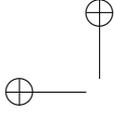
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a Father to hold my hand when I was in trouble. And I shall never find that kind of God any more, and I'm beginning to wonder why I ever wanted such a one.

The last morning in the Adirondacks I got up early and took a long walk along the trail that runs off into the forest back of our house. The blood pounded almost articulately through my veins, and I began to have something of the feeling that Wordsworth must have had, hearing a language in the glistening of the grass. There may be no meaning in the universe. Certainly, taken all together, it reads like something terrible or absurd. Yet there is undeniably an electric energy sheer and undefeatable in men and things. Out of that I shall find enough to make a religion.

I'm no longer optimistic about the possibilities of making a pattern of beauty out of life and nature: the forces of ugliness and decay are too powerful and unremitting. But I have learned what may be a more durable wisdom. Beauty and intelligence and order may never come to be universally current in the world. I doubt enormously that they ever will. But they remain none the less eternally current in the minds of men, and their steady gleam is sufficient godhead. I shall never see God as the mystics used to see Him, but I recognize now that I have often seen divinity. It comes in a flash or a moment that records itself immortally in the heart, in a sound of music, a curve of marble, a gift of gladness or generosity in a friend, the sudden miracle of green in a forest at daybreak. All these desolate little atheisms cannot touch me. Divinity hedges more creatures in the world than kings. There is immortal loveliness, enduring and returning beauty, which may be touched again and again by the sure-fingered and the open-eyed. For clear minds and gentle hearts, in every generation, the word becomes flesh and lives among men. In the face of the





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corrosions and defeats of daily life that is sufficient religion to cling to. One's heaven is peopled with the angels of one's own ideals. Life becomes a loyalty on the side of the angels. What better religion has any saint ever had? What other in our day is possible? The old stories of conversions have a certain perpetual truth. God is found in the longing for Him. It is the longing that is God.

Yours always

RICHARD

I sat in my office chair speculating a little about Richard. Faith in the resilient energies of men and things, a divinity found in high aspiration or in tragic or beautiful moments in affection or art – here, indeed, was a new dispensation. Would Richard succeed in making a religion without a God, and a poetry out of loyalty to ideals he had found in his own soul.

There was a knock at the door. I put down Richard's letter. A youth of seventeen walked in, looking not unlike what Richard had looked like ten years before. He was saying something about wanting to take a course in philosophy. Philosophy might help him straighten out his ideas about religion and sex and life and what-not. He hoped he might find some clear formula for living before he got through. I fingered Richard's letter.

