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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Henry James, Aesthete 3
Church Windows 7
H. Henry Holocaust, Rebel *A Satire* 8
The Ambushers *A Story* 10
What Is Gandhi's Message For Us? 15
Music... 16
Spring Came *A Poem* 18
The Right Hand of God *A Story* 19
Memoir of a Miner 21
Private Henry S. Polarie..................... 22
Saturday Night at the Bienvenu *A Story* 23
The Vacation *A Story* 25
On Reading a Paper in Public Vehicles 27
From a Song *A Poem* 29
Resignation *A Story* 30
The Case of the Comics..................... 33

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Music... 16
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The Right Hand of God *A Story* 19
Memoir of a Miner 21
Private Henry S. Polarie..................... 22
Saturday Night at the Bienvenu *A Story* 23
The Vacation *A Story* 25
On Reading a Paper in Public Vehicles 27
From a Song *A Poem* 29
Resignation *A Story* 30
The Case of the Comics...................... 33

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THE

LITERARY MAGAZINE

OF

WILKES COLLEGE

WILKES-BARRE • PENNSYLVANIA

SPRING • 1950 VOL. III • NO. 3

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HENRY JAMES, AESTHETE

Ted Wolfe

Throughout the numerous novels of Henry James may be found several recurrent themes—the story of Americans in European society, the story of Europeans in American society, studies of diverse psychological types. There is one subject, however, which must not be overlooked, and that is the subject of the aesthetic arts. How beneficial to James and his readers that person could be who undertook to perceive and explain that above everything else in the world, James worshipped beauty; to him all things are decidedly beautiful, or they are decidedly unbeautiful. James speaks directly through Roderick Hudson when the latter comments, "We have really lost the faculty to understand beauty in the large ideal way," and later, bluntly, "I care only for perfect beauty."

Like Christopher Newman in *The American,* Henry James could not produce the pictures and the statues that gave him pleasure, but nothing could prevent his aesthetic enjoyment of them. James goes a step further than Christopher Newman, however, and produces what he later calls art, his novels. And through this medium, and through characters such as Roderick Hudson, James fairly shouts (he *has* to shout) to the world that he, Henry James, is in love with the beautiful. In this James achieved a certain fame, and like Roderick Hudson, he made the most of his fame, touching conceit. Of Roderick, James says, "Surely youth and genius hand in hand were the most beautiful sight in the world," and one can not help noting that here James is also thinking of himself. Like Roderick, his creator had a genius that combined sincerity with power; he "regarded all things in the light of his art, and had a lively desire to transmute all his impressions into production." The result for James was a voluminous body of good works (and this is debatable, of course). Roderick produces some of the finest sculpture of his time, but "fizzles out" as Grandoni predicted. Roderick degenerates somewhat, and then ends his own life. James, too, "fizzled out" in America, and though he did not commit suicide, he did finally sever relations with America. This was his suicide.

James does not confine his mediums of expression to the central figures of his novels. In any experience, through any character, James takes the chance to speak out his beliefs and thoughts concerning his intense regard for the beautiful. "Dorchester" Babcock, the travelling clergyman in *The American,* is "extremely fond of pictures and churches," and has very decided views on art. "Art and life," he says, "seem to me intensely serious things, and in our travels in Europe we should especially remember the rightful, indeed the solemn message of art."

This is almost, indeed *is,* a religious view on the subject. Just as religion has a solemn message, so does art, for James. And like the religious enthusiast, James, from experience, learned to disregard the opinions of the world concerning his beliefs. As Gabriel Nash says, "You don't *begin* to have an insight into the art of life till it ceases to be of the smallest consequence to you what you may be called. That's rudimentary."

James thoroughly hated a narrow-

minded view of art, and of the exercise of aesthetic appreciation; in James, the true artist, this is only natural. He often includes in his stories characters who have this feeling towards art. These people, however, are usually ridiculous, weak people from the start, or else James eventually presents them in a ridiculous light. Thus Roderick's lachrymose mother, with absolutely no understanding of art, and no respect for her son's aspirations, denounces sculpture, at sight of statues of nudes, as an "insidious form of immorality." Lady Agnes Dormer, in *The Tragic Muse,* suddenly finds herself in the swirl of an aesthetic-minded circle of friends that includes her son and younger daughter. She becomes afraid for her children, especially after meeting the aesthete Gabriel Nash, who exerts a powerful influence over Nick Dormer. Lady Agnes realizes fearfully that Nick will not follow in his father's political footsteps because of Nash's influence. She exclaims that "the 'aesthetic' is a horrible insidious foreign disease that is eating the healthy core out of English life." For these people James has no sympathy, and it is in this light that he presents them to the reader.

James's aesthetes, his art-loving characters, are characteristically artists in their love of the beautiful. Young Roderick Hudson has the eye of the true artist. Rowland's cousin, Cecilia, says of Roderick, "Good, bad, or indifferent, the boy is an artist—an artist to his fingers' ends." Roderick soon displays this for at his first meeting with Rowland, his future patron, he dispenses with the formal, usual introductory conversation, and comments that Rowland has a good head, one that he would like to model. And it is with this sculptor's eye that Roderick looks at everyone. The youthful portraitist, Felix Young, of *The Europeans,* sketches all his surroundings as he sees them—everyday scenes and life, people, landscapes. Felix was rapid and skillful, and "possessed the pictorial sense." Everything he saw interested him, and he appreciated it. Like Ruskin, he believed that "The ugliest objects contain some element of beauty." He says to Mr. Wentworth, "I should like to do your head, sir. . . . It's an interesting head; it's very mediaeval. . . . It's delightfully wasted and emaciated. The complexion is wonderfully bleached." Mr. Wentworth is not ugly, but he is not beautiful in the pure sense. Yet Felix, with his artist's eye, sees in him a picturesqueness worthy to be expressed on canvas. James follows his own sermons closely. He believes artists should select "none but the richest" subjects, and to his mind, the subjects he wrote about were the richest, carefully selected with his artist's eye.

In a very clever and amusing way, James shows, in *The Spoils of Poynton,* his contempt for those who are not admirers of the aesthetic arts. While he and his mother are visiting at Waterbath, the estate of the Brigstock family, Owen Gereth falls in love with Mona Brigstock. The Gereth family for years have been proud of their extraordinary taste in art; the result of this has been a house full of rare art treasures at Poynton, the Gereth menage. The taste of the Brigstocks is, in a word, "vulgar." Thus Mrs. Gereth deplores her son's feeling for Mona. To Owen's mother, Waterbath is "smothered with trumpery ornament and scrapbook art, with strange excrescences and bunchy draperies, with gimcracks that might have been keepsakes for maid-servants and nondescript conveniences that might have been prizes for the blind. They had gone wildly astray over carpets and curtains; they had an infallible instinct for gross deviation and were so cruelly doom-ridden that it rendered them almost tragic." The whole picture was horrible and dreadful to Mrs. Gereth and Fleda Vetch, her companion, and "each confided to the other that in her own apartment she had given way to tears." The Brigstocks, it seems, had literally

plastered the entire inside of the house with varnish, "advertised and smelly." Fleda was convinced that "the application of it, by their own hands and hilariously shoving each other, was the amusement of the Brigstocks on rainy days."

Then the Gereths and Fleda return to Poynton, the pride of the ages, sole solace for Mrs Gereth's old age, "Poynton . . . the record of a life . . . written in great syllables of colour and form, the tongues of other countries and the hands of rare artists. It was all France and Italy with their ages composed to rest." One more look at Poynton, and Mrs. Gereth knew that Owen could never marry Mona, that Waterbath and Poynton could never merge. Fleda cried at the beauty of Poynton. Mrs. Gereth tells her, "there were things in the house that we almost starved for! They were our religion, they were our life, they were *us!*" She reveals the passionate, almost frenzied fever of the collector of objects of art, the fever that led Rowland Mallet to finance Roderick's stay abroad, the fever that Christopher Newman felt when he bought his first picture, a clever copy of Murillo's Madonna.

The scenes of James's "art novels" take place, for the most part, in the great art centers of Europe—Rome, Florence, Paris. James realizes the importance of the old masters, and of what can be learned from them. Rowland sees in Roderick Hudson the invisible something, the unproved talent, yet he makes Roderick study the masters, hoping that their works will inspire the young man to action. This presence of the earlier European masters was important to James, and the reader is given the impression that without studying the masters, a novice could hardly succeed. In his own work James modeled after his great predecessors, notably Balzac. They were products of a Golden Age that is no more. We have lost something, perhaps "the faculty to understand beauty in the large ideal way." Rome was sure to have a great influence on visitors. "Enjoy, enjoy," Rowland tells Roderick. "All the wonderful things there—pictures, ruins, statues, beggars, monks—are impregnated with life; they are the results of an old and complexed civilisation." Rome is to the aesthete what Bath is to the rheumatic.

How serene a picture we get of Christopher Newman, and others, reclining on a divan in the Museum of the Louvre, studying and enjoying the masterpieces with a guidebook and a pair of opera glasses! Of Paris, James wrote, in a letter to William Dean Howells, dated May 28, 1876,

> The great merit of the place is that one can arrange one's life here exactly as one pleases—that there are facilities for every kind of habit and taste, and that everything is accepted and understood. Paris itself meanwhile is a sort of painted background which keeps shifting and changing, and which is always there, to be looked at when you please, and to be most easily and comfortably ignored when you don't.

James seems to have tried every possible chance he had to emphasize that Europe had so much that America didn't have. Of the Palais de l'Industrie Nick Dormer says, "This place is an immense stimulus to me; it refreshes me, excites me, it's such an exhibition of artistic life. It's full of ideas, full of refinements; it gives one such an impression of artistic experience." This is the passion that Theobald feels in the presence of Michaelangelo's "David," and Cellini's "Perseus."

James stressed the European scene for the study and enjoyment of the aesthetic arts for one logical reason—they could not be found in America. To James, that is something that cannot be denied. Van Wyck Brooks says of James that he "always felt that the great life, the creative life, was a European secret, that it was almost open to question whether an American could be an artist at all." America just did not have

the proper atmosphere for the sustenance of the fine arts.

Roderick Hudson, with true Emersonian leanings, claims that America can throw off the yoke of dependence on Europe, and produce an art of her own. He doesn't see why America shouldn't produce the greatest works in the world. We are the biggest people and we ought to have the biggest ideas. The biggest conceptions, of course, would eventually result in the biggest performances. His friends in Rome, however, thoroughly addicted to European and Renaissance art, warn Roderick of any "high-flown pretensions."

This devotion to the beautiful with which James is preoccupied can only be exercised in leisure moments. Only in idleness do we find time to really explore and appreciate beauty. Such leisure time, of course, is enjoyed, normally, only by the moneyed classes. And to James, society is most beautiful when it can properly live with the beautiful. As an artist, he himself wrote only for the few.

James was one of the first writers of fiction in English to concern himself with the aesthetic, and he regarded the novel as the "most magnificent form of art." In his "Art of Fiction" he claims "the other arts, in comparison, appear confined and hampered." This is an almost verbatim echo of Gabriel Nash's comment that the theater, the lowest of the arts, is a "commercial and social convenience which may be infinitely worked. But important artistically, intellectually? How *can* it be—so poor, so limited, a form?" The playwright has to confine himself to such things as acts, limited stage facilities, and midnight after-theater parties. There was so much freedom in a picture, a statue, a novel. One could build slowly, surely, carefully, and have room to complete anything he started.

James tried in every way to make novel-writing an art. He developed a style, elegant and forceful, that mirrored a poignant, investigative mind. Of him Dr. Reuben Post Halleck wrote,

> In a few perfectly selected words the subtlest thoughts are clearly revealed. In these masterpieces, the reader is constantly delighted by the artist's skill, which leads ever deeper into human motives after it would seem that the heart and mind could disclose no further secrets. Such skill shows a mastery of language rarely surpassed in fiction. At his best, James has a fineness and sureness of touch, and a command of perfectly fitting words, as well as elegance and grace in style.

Substitute "strokes" for "words" and it would almost seem that Dr. Halleck is describing a painting. James's acquaintance with the giants of European literature in the nineteenth century—Flaubert, the Goncourts, Daudet, Maupassant—awakened in him a sense of form. To him the supreme value in fiction was form, which was what made the novel worthy of being called art. This is the same form, in the classical sense, which James insists that artists have in painting, sculpture, and architecture.

Just as James contends that a painting or statue should be realistic, so he argues that a novel must be also. Theobald says, "No one so loves and respects the rich realities of nature as the artist whose imagination caresses and flatters them." This is a repetition of what James says in his "Art of Fiction," ". . . the air of reality . . . seems to me to be the supreme virtue of a novel . . . it is here that [the novelist] competes with his brother the painter in *his* attempt to render the look of things, the look that conveys their meaning, to catch the colour, the relief, the expression, the surface, the substance of the human spectacle."

James lived and wrote only in the light of the beautiful. This must be realized in order to understand and appreciate James. His books fairly scream, "I WANT TO SHOW YOU THAT ONLY THE BEAUTIFUL, THE TRULY AESTHETIC, ARE WORTH THE ARTIST'S EFFORT."

After reading James's novels, one is steeped in the aesthetic vapors of artistic life. He has been reading about artists, he has been reading an artist's work. It is an experience not soon forgotten, and it is, or should be, rare that a reader finishes a Henry James novel without a better appreciation and delight in the aesthetic arts.

CHURCH WINDOWS

Albert T. Cole

In our modern, fast-moving life nothing acts more as a stabilizing force than do our churches. Everything changes rapidly, inwardly and outwardly, but the church alone remains firm and true, an anchor for our faith and ideals. As the years pass, one's church becomes more than just a building or a place for worship. With time it becomes a place filled with memories and associations, a kind of logbook, where one can trace the important events of his life. One of the best mediums of recollection are the tall, stained-glass windows bearing in rich color, scenes from the life of Christ.

During most of the year, on ordinary Sundays, the windows are things of beauty whether the day be bright or grey, but on holidays, the light pouring through the leaded panes seems to take on a special significance as though they too felt the importance of the festival.

On Christmas morning when the chancel is a thicket of evergreen relieved here and there with scarlet poinsettias, the russet robe on the seated figure of Christ, with Mary at His feet and Martha hovering in the background, seems to diffuse an unearthly richness far lovelier than the poinsettia's bloom. Indeed the tinted aura lends a brilliance to the greenery never seen in nature except, perhaps, after a spring rain. At the evening service tall white tapers rise from beds of pine and spruce on the window ledges around the church and the feeble, wavering light picks out high spots of color on the now muted sheets of glass. Their beauty and depth of hue are now for the world outside and serve to beckon the latecomer along with the peal of the bell.

In sharp contrast to the conservative tones of the Christmas festival, the bright, fresh colors of Easter, tempered with royal purple, ride the first surge of spring to bring a reawakening in nature and in the hearts of men. The bright sun streams through the many colored windows casting soft, velvety tints across the creamy trumpets of nodding lilies standing on long stems on the window sills and on either side of the lectern. Each window becomes a separate shrine and its message more urgent and clear than ever before. The purple margin of the windows, worked into Gothic points, forms a perfect background for the whiteness of the Madonna lilies, and the picture is complete.

These same windows have spread soft radiance over other congregations in equally troubled times sending them away renewed and refreshed. Our own generation has need of the steadying influence, and future generations too will find solace in their beauty.

As one sits and contemplates the huge congregation, the bright faces of the children's choir on the one hand, the sober, complacent features of the adult chorus on the other, and between them the earnest rector nodding and gesturing in his pulpit, he is struck with a deep assurance that here is one place that will always be the same. A long absence will find things unchanged in a changing world. A church is a wonderful place to come home to, a point of return.

H. HENRY HOLOCAUST, REBEL

Anthony J. Andronaco

H. (Hubert) Henry Holocaust was born March 27, 1918, in Pardon, Maine. His father, D. Ember Holocaust, who spent sixty years as chief engineer on the small rail line running from Pardon to Pleasantvale, was a short, stocky man much given to witnessing dog fights.[1]

When H. Henry was three years old he entered Harvard Law School. At this time Archibald MacLeish was teaching there. There is nothing in H. Henry's writings to indicate that the two ever met. (An interesting subject for speculation in this respect, however, is the fact that Mr. MacLeish is still alive, and H. Henry isn't. Can we be justified in drawing any conclusion from this? If so, what?)

While at Harvard (and even during the two previous years at the Lewister Nursery School) H. Henry showed a somewhat rebellious spirit toward restrictive regulations. This aspect of rebelliousness was a quality that he nurtured very carefully and developed into a many-sided, brilliant personality structure that could be seen for miles on a clear day. In his diary at this time he confides " . . . and everything. Frankly I was afraid she would completely miss the fact that I was being rebellious, so I insisted upon taking my exams alone at night under the stars. The result was far from what I expected; she agreed! I knew full well this would wreck my chances of ever becoming famous, since all famous people rebel against restrictive regulations, and I cast about in desperation for another point to argue. I believe I have the beginning of an idea. . . . This afternoon I read about how Van Gogh lost an ear. . . ."[2]

During the summers while he was at Harvard, H. Henry was a steady contributor to the *Chitling Rocket,* the *Wailing Shirker,* and *Frye's Manual of Arts and Letters.* It was in the latter that his famous quatrain, "Phone Plaza 9-404B and Ask for Elsie," first appeared. This established him firmly with the *avant garde* group that was meeting regularly in Club Aux Armes on Cannon Street in Boston. (It is interesting to note that none of the members of this group ever became famous enough even to have their rebellious school days recorded for posterity. In fact, we do not so much as know their names. Often H. Henry mentions "those guys" in his diaries, but authorities can't agree upon whom he means.) Sudden success was taken calmly by H. Henry. He led a normal, quiet life, taking time out only to join the Young Atheists' League, blow up the philosophy wing of the Boston Beaux Arts Building, print two books of verse, and send a letter through a spirit medium to Alexander the Great. These years are known as his "Green Period" since he went about advising all his artist friends to use more green in their paintings.[3]

[1] According to Skinzer in his comprehensive tome, *Railing from Pardon to Pleasantvale,* Mrs. Holocaust once asked her husband what he thought of the new hat she had just purchased from a Yankee peddler. His response was, "Dearie, I wouldn't wear it to a dog fight." Diving and Liming both deny the authenticity of this statement, but the later critics have come to accept it as quite true. The hat in question still hangs in the cloakroom of the Fifth Street Church for Semi-Moderns in Pardon.

[2] This was written on June 4, 1928. Seven years later H. Henry managed to lose both his ears in the bridle room of his dearest friend's riding stable. The cause of this accident has never been determined, although several stable hands who were present in the building at the time all attest to the fact that H. Henry's voice cried out very loudly, "Watch that whiffle-tree!" This was followed by a crash of falling harness and a scream. D. Lansing, the Holocaust veterinarian, avers that the scream was from a horse upon which the whiffle-tree had fallen. However, this must be taken with a grain of salt, since the Holocaust family maintains that horseshoe prints were on the ceiling *long before* the accident occurred.

In 1937 occurred the now famous Beer Scandal. H. Henry had been out of school for twelve years and was constantly publishing verse and prose works. In search of material of a nature conducive to profound and significant meditation, he entered quite innocently into Lou's Urn, a small, dingy, smoke-encrusted bar that had lent its authentic atmosphere to almost every biography and autobiography ever written in America or about an American. In preparation for just such an occasion H. Henry had learned to smoke and to pronounce carelessly the trade-names of seventeen local beers (and ales) plus twelve national ones. In his autobiography[4] he states:

> When I entered, Lou was standing not far from the urn about which I had heard so much. I was frankly anxious to talk to her, since I felt that she was the key to my whole philosophy, and without her my fourth sonnet would never find its final tercet. I had no idea at the time that she had been drinking heavily and was unsteady in her balance. In my anxiety to remember the beer that I wanted to order (Fritz's Swiss Yodelbock, I believe) I had failed entirely to notice that one of Lou's heels was loose. As I drew close to her, Lou wheeled around to face me. The heel (of her *left* shoe, I believe, and not the right as some of my enemies maintain) slid out from under her and pitched her backwards into the urn. The policemen came to my cell later and told me that the urn was made of brass and Lou had been extricated by use of a can opener, but I can't help feeling to this day that it was all a spurious story at my expense. I do recall that when the newspapers had published the account I received several blistering letters from some readers in London and Melbourne and two congratulatory notes from Villa Park in Missouri.

This account is followed by a recapitulation of the theme that is found in every volume under the heading: "More About My Rebelliousness At School."

When Holocaust's dear friend, I. M. Ditto, left New England in 1938 to settle permanently in Zamboanga, H. Henry withdrew from Boston society and his Bohemian friends and occupied himself increasingly with poetry. For four years he never left his room.[5] For information about his activities during this period we have only seven volumes of poems and five hundred pages of a rough draft for his autobiography to go by. From these meagre sources we are able to piece together a fairly accurate picture of Holocaust's "Silent Period." This is the time of his soul-searching odysseys that led him from the prophets of the Old Testament through the writings of Thales of Miletus, Mme. de Maintenon, Descartes, Spinoza, Hume, Schleiermacher, Windelband, Wundt, Eucken, Nietzche, Rousseau, Darwin, Marx, and Blackhead. In one of his poems of this period there appears this heart-rending line:

> "Oh, my aching back!"[6]

The call to arms in World War II forced H. Henry to leave his room. This was the occasion about which his niece wrote so poignantly in a letter to her high school sweetheart. "Uncle Hubert (she writes) finally left for the Navy. He tried to rebel again, just for the record (he was working on the twenty-second volume of his autobiography) but the wicked officers wouldn't hear of it. They admitted they would

[3] Holocaust detractors maintain this was done from selfish motives, since H. Henry's uncle (Sidney) owned a pigment factory that turned out only green paint. Others are sure H. Henry did this merely to protect his own eyesight, since he knew he would be asked to view his friends' finished paintings. I personally believe H. Henry was mischievously trying to show off.

[4] H. Henry Holocaust, *I'll See Me In My Dreams,* Little, Boy and Blue, Zurich, 1949, vol. 22, p. 2.

[5] Frankette Fleece in her *Comments on Holocaust* takes the view that he never *entered* his room during these four years. Obviously Miss Fleece is either biased or confused or both.

[6] This line appears in almost every Holocaust poem, but the one most familiar to American readers is "Leaves of Absence."

much rather let him stay at home but were concerned about civilian morale. At any rate, dear Theo, Uncle Hubert is gone. I miss his usual stamping and shouting whenever anyone contradicted him. Poor Uncle! I do hope he finds his . . . [this word is blurred and unreadable] where he's going."[7]

For material on H. Henry's life in the service of his country we are indebted to the complete court martial records of the U. S. Navy. Several officers and enlisted men knew him personally and were willing to talk freely about him. The freedom of their language, however, prohibits direct quotation in a treatise of this sort. Still, we cannot completely pass by his military career without any mention of the influences that later gave rise to some of his finest verse. H. Henry approached all the activities of his new life from the poetic point of view. The esthetic quality of captains' inspections, bag inspections, and "happy hour" calisthenics made a deep impression on him, an impression that was destined to last until his dying day. Several trustworthy sources quote him as having said many times, "I'll never forget this!" More poetically, he expressed it in startingly clear, polished verse in his first post-war volume, *I Felled a Bigger Tree.*

> With dazed smile and spreading
> cheek
> I mutely wait for signal nod
> To send me off exhausted, weak;
> I'm flesh no more, but sod.
> Don't let them do it to you, son,
> Don't whiten at their fiery eyes,
> Remember that the race is won
> By him who lives, not dies.[8]

In recognition of his brilliant style H. Henry was presented in 1946 with the Cave Canem Award which also cited him for producing the work most helpful towards the goal of American self-realization and spiritual re-evaluation during the post-war period of readjustment. In the preface to the prizewinning volume, *Sheaves of Leaves,* (misquoted as *Leaves of Sheaves* in the May, 1946, issue of the "Monday Morning Mail") H. Henry says of his aims in writing the book:

> I tried in these poems to fix my sights on the pseudo-referential entities that would lend themselves to subjective contemplations of a sort befitting the thematic appraisal (if not the actual comprehension itself) of the states of becoming, is-ing and once-was-but-now-is-passing elements of consciousness. Indubitably the uninitiated will immediately challenge the validity of my presumptions from a purely Darwinian point of view. I tried very hard to straddle all these partisan matters by concentrating on neutral connotations only, leaving the logical outcomes to people more qualified to deal with them than I. As a poet I demand the right to fix the figures that I use to suit the imagery necessitated by the constant fluctuation of my subject from instantaneous instants to the more mellifluous but hardly less pizzicato-like morsels of moving Einsteinian time-concepts.
>
> If I have oversimplified this matter, it is only to make certain that no doubt remains in the mind of the reader about the course that America as a conscious-unconscious, self-regarding and extrorse soul-substance must pursue in order that she may avoid on the one hand the Scylla of spiritual desiccation and on the other the Charybdis of searing self-destruction through false evaluation of the dwindling sense of duty that is dulling our senses like the noxious juices of the scuppernong. Nevertheless, I see no justification for pessimism. After all, *omnia mutantur, nos et mutamur.*[9]

This blindingly lucid exposition of the road to national racial salvation earned for H. Henry the nickname "Old Intuition." Unfortunately the young poet was far from pleased, and six months after writing the above-quoted preface, he published an essay[10] claiming that all his knowledge was of the *pre*-intuitive sort, "as befits the psycho-cerebral constitution of the poet, who thoroughly transcends his own corporeal and spiritual ego to become one with the essence of the Brahma spirit. This is achieved not by any ritual of work, study, and preparation, but by virtue of astrological propitiousness of birth. I tried to express this in elemental terms in my poetic drama, 'Planetary Voodoo.' "

Of course, all students of the recent literary scene in America now realize that it was just this poetic drama that brought to H. Henry the last burst of renown which carried him through to wealth and glory until his untimely demise in 1949. Critics are still fighting the battle of the so-called typographical error that occurred in the first scene of the third act. Eudora is rhapsodically pouring forth the excellences of her poet-husband (in this case H. Henry himself) and in a surfeit of generosity she bursts into an extravagant song in which she voices her desire to share the glory of her husband with all her fellow countrymen. Many critics still insist that the song originally started with, "Spread your cheers throughout the land!" which by some perverse trick of fate found its way into print as, "Spread your *cheeks* throughout the land!" Since "Planetary Voodoo" was published after H. Henry had had his first severe stroke, he was not approached with the question of which reading was the one he had intended. The poet died not more than three weeks later, and the problem remains unsolved to this day.[11]

Before bringing this short sketch to a close, I feel that a bit more light can be shed on the life and mentality of H. Henry if we inspect the tools with which he worked, namely, words. Heather Templemain in her book, *A Study of Unusual Verb Constructions and Adjectives in the Works of H. Henry Holocaust,* noted that the pattern of words in all of H. Henry's works was more or less set by his very first poem, "Sedition Song." In this work of twenty-four stanzas Miss Templemain found the following verbs used: disobey, violate, infringe, shirk, defy, kick over the traces, bolt, take the law into my own hands, doubt, and destroy. The adjectives are surprisingly similar in connotation: mutinous, seditious, insurgent, recalcitrant, lawless, disobedient, unsubmissive, ungovernable, and unruly. Of course, on this slim evidence we are not to judge too patly. That is the mistake of unscholarly investigators, warns Miss Templemain, who feels that one can only surmise that H. Henry was a blazer of trails, a great-hearted and misunderstood genius who reached Olympian heights not necessarily because he wrote magnificent poetry but *because he rebelled.*

It is not my intention in this treatise to attempt a judgment of H. Henry. I believe it is still too soon to gauge his effect on the country and perhaps on the course of world literature as well. That his writings will stimulate embryo authors and poets I have no doubt. Just how much, remains to be seen.

One significant fact is that at present the poet's life story is being filmed in Hollywood by one of this country's foremost picture companies. The most outstanding indication of the special treatment that is being given to the subject is the report that Billi Club, the noted French jazz authority, is composing the background music for the film. It will be done entirely with glockenspiels and genuine Congo tom-toms. It is obvious, therefore, that we have not heard the end of H. Henry Holocaust, genius and rebel.

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7 J. J. Chinolathe, *Letters of Letty Sink,* The Wine Press, 1948, p. 29.

8 From "Harelip Boy with Spreading Cheeks."

9 Latin: All things are changing and we are changing with them.

10 *In the Pig's,* pamphlet published by P. Soir & Cie., Brest, 1947.

11 Marmon and Sons, who published the drama, lost the original manuscript in a fire. However, that company now has on file letters from seven million ex-service men and women who believe the wording must of necessity be "Spread your cheeks . . ." if it is to have any intrinsic meaning at all. Would the author, they argue, have used *cheer* in the plural?

THE AMBUSHERS

A Story by Wendell Clark

Jesse Kemp swaggered a little as he left the post office and walked down the main street of Woodville. He was conscious of the eyes watching him, and he reached up and tilted his hat a little more to one side. He was justifiably proud of his new hat. It was a twenty-dollar Stetson, pure white, with a high crown and a wide brim. The hat made his blue jeans look faded and his high-heeled boots look dusty, although they were as clean as usual. When he was halfway to Benson's drug store, he stopped and examined the hat carefully for a possible speck of dust.

The group of men in front of Benson's watched curiously as Jesse came up the street. "What makes a guy like that?" Danny Price asked. "Everybody knows he's never been farther west than Moline."

"He can dress anyway he wants," Joe Beach said disgustedly, "just so he don't tell me any more of his Indian stories. Jeez, he had me cornered for half an hour one day. The hell of it is, he really believes them."

Sidney Pattison spoke. "Doc Benson told me he got that way reading Westerns. Buys three or four every Saturday, he says."

"How can that old lady—what's her name, Morgan—how can she stand him?" questioned Danny.

One of the other men laughed. "He don't bother the widow Morgan any. She's as deaf as a board."

"Let's have some fun with him," Joe said suddenly. "Danny, you and Sidney block the sidewalk. The rest of you close around him when he gets here. Quick now!"

Jesse Kemp stopped a few feet away from Sidney and Danny and stared at them suspiciously. "Whatcha want?" he said, "whatcha want?"

Joe stepped in front of him. "Say, old man, got a cigarette?"

"Nope. I got the makin's though." He pulled out a tobacco sack. "You're welcome to roll one."

"Thanks," Joe grinned and took the sack. He creased a paper and shook the brown grains slowly into the crease. The grains piled high and spilled over the edge of the paper. Joe shook the sack harder and all of the tobacco poured on the ground. "Jeez, old man, I'm sorry," Joe apologized. "Wasn't watching what I was doing." The men laughed, and Jesse's face reddened. He stooped over to see if any of the tobacco could be salvaged, and Joe picked the white hat neatly off his head. Jesse grabbed for the hat, but Joe held it high in the air with one hand and pushed Jesse back with the other. "Slow down, old man, I just want to look at it."

"Give it back!" Jesse yelled. "Get your dirty hands off my hat! Give it back!" Danny and Sidney grabbed his arms.

"You'll get your hat back," Danny promised. "Joe just wants to see it, don't you, Joe?" Jesse trembled in their grasp, but he stopped struggling. Joe turned the hat over and over in his hands, caressing it like a kitten. He winked at the men.

"Nice hat, old man. It's awful new, though. I always say a hat's no good 'till it's broken in. Here, I'll show you how I break 'em in." Joe worked his jaws vigorously, then spat into the white Stetson and jammed it on Jesse's head. The men howled with laughter. "Let him go," Joe commanded. Jesse stumbled up the street tugging at the hat.

"Look at him go for his handkerchief!" Sidney gasped, breathless from laughing. "Didja see him?"

When Jesse reached the Morgan farm, he did not go immediately into the house. Mrs. Morgan was fussing around the kitchen table when Jesse came in from the barn. He was bareheaded, and his cheeks were still flushed. "Sit down and eat your dinner, Jesse," Mrs. Morgan said, "and put the food away when you're done. I'm going over to Mrs. Bailey's for a while." Jesse nodded and sat down. He ate slowly and silently. Mrs. Morgan disappeared into the front room, and, in a few minutes, the front door slammed. Jesse got up quickly and stepped to the window. When Mrs. Morgan was out of sight, he walked boldly through the house and up the stairs to Mrs. Morgan's bedroom. He stopped inside the door and looked around the unfamiliar room. It was simply furnished with a large bed, twin highboys, a full length mirror, and a small table. Jesse pulled out a drawer in one of the highboys but closed it at the sight of neat piles of feminine clothing. He jerked open drawer after drawer in the other highboy, running his hand under musty stacks of shirts and underwear, until he found a small revolver. Jesse counted the dull gray bullet noses and stuck the gun in his belt. He paused before the mirror long enough to jerk the gun from his belt and to point it at his reflection. He smiled at himself; then, shoving the gun inside his shirt, he slipped down the stairs and out to the barn.

It was a week later, and at night, when Jesse went back to town. He sneaked down the rear of the stores to Benson's and entered through the back door. Danny, who was standing in front of the store with the others, saw him first. He nudged Joe and said, "There's old man Kemp, Joe. I didn't think he'd have nerve enough to come to town so soon."

Joe turned and stared through the window. "Yeah, but he didn't have nerve enough to wear his hat." He chuckled. "We ought to fix him for trying to sneak one over on us. Wonder what we could do that would really give him a good scare?"

"He talks a lot about Indians," Danny said, "but I bet he'd turn green if he saw one."

"He wouldn't even have to see one!" exclaimed Sidney. "All he'd have to do is hear one, and he'd kill himself trying to get away!"

"We could ambush him on the way home," Danny suggested. "A couple of good war whoops and we could play 'fox and hounds' with him all night."

"That's a good idea," Joe agreed. "Where's a good spot to lay for him?"

"I know just the place," Danny said. "There's a deep ditch on both sides of the road just before you get to the Morgan farm. We could hide there."

Joe turned to the half dozen men who were listening and asked, "Are you guys with us? If you are, let's go."

One of the men, Jim Carver, hesitated. "They say it's bad luck to pick on a crazy guy," he said. "I don't think I'd better go."

"Aw, come on," Joe urged, "we're not going to hurt the old man, just have a little fun with him. Anyway, he's not crazy. He just thinks he's smart."

"Well, I guess it wouldn't hurt—"

"Naw, of course it won't hurt anything. Are you coming? Good! Let's go, boys, we'll have to hurry to get there before he does."

The men walked rapidly for ten or fifteen minutes. Danny had a small flashlight, and he led the way down the dark road. Finally, Danny flicked off his light and called, "This is the place. Should we all get on one side of the road, or should we split up?"

"We'll split up," Joe decided, "then we can trap him in between us. And listen, when we jump him, yell as loud as you can, but don't yell anything he can understand."

"Somebody's coming down the road now," Danny said. "We'd better hide."

The men scrambled into the ditches on each side of the road. Leg muscles tensed as the soft pad-pad of footsteps in the thick dust grew nearer. The men in the ditches held their breath. When the man was between the two groups, Joe screamed. It was a terrible, screeching cry, and it was like a knife in Jesse Kemp's stomach. Shrieking, jabbering figures bounded out of the ditches around him, and Jesse ran. A hand grabbed his shirt, and he ripped himself free. He fled down the road with the men howling and whooping behind him.

The men were fifty yards or more behind Jesse when they reached the Morgan farm. "Hey, look!" Danny shouted. "He didn't turn in at the house—he's gone in the barn!"

"Stop! Hold it a minute!" Joe called. The men halted a few yards from the barn. Joe lowered his voice. "He's probably hiding in the hayloft. If he is, let's give him an old fashioned war dance before we go up."

"Let's get in there before he leaves," Danny said impatiently.

The men crowded into the barn and searched the ground floor. "I told you," Joe whispered, "he's in the loft. Let's hold that dance." The men resumed their yelling and stamped around and around the floor. At last, Joe swung up on the hayloft ladder and clambered up, with Danny and the others at his heels. Joe was at the top when a shot split through the noise and echoed around the barn. The war whoops and yells stopped instantly. The barn was silent.

Danny, who was still on the ladder, felt around in the darkness for Joe, who was crouched on the floor of the loft. His hand brushed against him, and he whispered, "Joe? Who's he shooting at?"

"Shut up!" Joe hissed.

The men waited quietly, but there was no noise, no movement, in the loft. After several minutes, Joe said out loud, "Hand me the flash and come on up." The men crawled up the ladder and stood near Joe. The beam of the flashlight probed behind bales of hay and sacks of feed.

"There! Look there in the corner!" Danny sucked in his breath sharply. "Jeez! Look at him!" Jesse Kemp was slumped in the corner, an expression of terror still on his face. The white Stetson hat was in his left hand, with its brim wrinkled by the pressure of his fingers.

Jim Carver said, "My God. Oh, my God," repeating it over and over.

"We'd better get out of here," Sidney said, twisting his shirt button.

"Yeah," agreed Danny, "but what are we going to tell—"

Joe interrupted him sharply. "We don't have to tell anybody anything. Somebody'll find him tomorrow."

The men climbed down the ladder and filed out of the barn. As they walked back up the road, Joe said, "I can't figure it." He shook his head in a puzzled manner. "I never thought he'd have a gun. Jeez, he might've killed one of us."

WHAT IS GANDHI'S MESSAGE TO US?

Dorothy Travis

"Mother, is he really great?" asked a young English child as she gazed at a knobby little brown man wrapped in a simple, white cloth. It was hard to believe that this small, insignificant-appearing man held in his hands the essence of one world.

What was the secret of the magnetic force that Gandhi exerted over the millions of his followers who called him Mahatma, meaning The Great Soul? What was the character of this man who had left so great and lasting a stamp, not only on India, but on the whole world? To answer these questions it is necessary to study the man, his religious beliefs, and the application of these beliefs in the teaching of his followers.

Mohandas Karamachand Gandhi was born in Portbandar, India, on October 2, 1869, of well-to-do Hindu parents. He was murdered in February of 1948, by the bullet of an assassin. Gandhi had asserted that love was the law; how else should he die but through hatred? He had feared machines in the hands of men not wise enough to use them, had warned against the glib, the new, the plausible; how else should he die, but by a pistol in the hands of a young intellectual?

Gandhi followed his father and grandfather in their belief of non-violence. He was a slight boy and later as a man never weighed more than ninety pounds. He was soon taught self-control by his mother. Once young Mohandas saw a deadly scorpion running toward his mother's bare foot.

"Mother, a scorpion! Kill it! It will bite you!" cried the young boy.

"Be still, my son, if you do not frighten it, I shall not be hurt."

She watched the creature crawl upon her heel, then slowly removing her scarf from about her shoulders, she reached down, picked up the scorpion and dropped it out of the window.

"Now it will not harm me, nor will I harm it," she remarked gently.

Gandhi's attitude toward the West was like that of his mother toward the scorpion. He knew that the white world would bite if he struck.

Therein lay his startling political theory. Gandhi asked his nation to exercise self-control, astute practical statesmanship. Violence we could have understood and coped with. He used a silk scarf against us—gentle ruthlessness against a sword. He picked us up, figuratively speaking, and dropped us out of the window by refusing to co-operate with white rulers.

Gandhi was educated in Africa, England, and India. He studied law in London. He knew that the western nations craved peace. He was no demagogue. He was a statesman choosing the only weapons for unarmed India. He knew these weapons to be civil disobedience and passive resistance.

As a practical general he used three policies: (1) passive resistance, (2) economic boycott, (3) loving one's enemy while hating the untruth for which he stood.

Most of Gandhi's critics fail to realize that he came to the wearing of the loincloth by slow, studied changes. He tried western clothes, western culture, and western vices until a passion for living the truth paved the way for changes in his personal life. "He was a

master dramatist, using moral bullets in his spiritual machine guns. . . . If he were not the greatest politician among the saints, he surely was the greatest saint among the politicians."[1] Gandhi was skilled in shrewd law tricks, humorous or smart diplomatic maneuverings; he built his achievements upon political showmanship and courthouse politics. He did not escape reality but pursued it in the teeth of all the words of doubtful meaning, such as "power" and "progress." To him these words meant a self-controlled people, living in an economic self-sufficiency in harmony with each other.

This is the key to the man. He taught that there is no better answer for a wise political destiny than the practice of ethical love. Gandhi aimed to bring our social conscience abreast of our technical achievements.

We will remember the shock of recognition of this man's power when we think that three hundred million people laid aside active violence because a little, dried-up old man refused to put a bean in his mouth, refused to eat.

Gandhi may be regarded as an efficient saint or major prophet. Like Lincoln, he had acknowledged human dignity; like Christ, he had concerned himself with an inter-spiritual grace by which he obeyed the divine law written on his heart.

If, in a thousand years from today, history is to record the man of the twentieth century, it may well be that either Karl Marx or Mohandas Gandhi will be that man—the machine and the revolution or a co-operating world ruling itself with responsible harmony and without tragic violence. It is the question of the ultimate success of the idea behind the United Nations, or the idea behind the Iron Curtain.

It is curious that a non-mechanized India, rather than the West, may truly claim the man who put in force the ideals of western civilization. For, if this age of the atom bomb does not belong to Gandhi, then there may be, as Mr. Toynebee suggests, no one left to write the history of it one thousand years from now.

[1] "Saints and Heroes," *Time Magazine*, vol. 51, pp. 24-26 (February 9, 1948), p. 25.

MUSIC . . .

Herbert Rosen

. . . is my opium. Of course, no one can see the leaden pallor or the degeneration of body usually present with narcotic addicts; but music will produce in me the customary delightful dreamy calm, pleasant exhilaration, and beatific visions without any billows of yellow smoke. Alone, these symptoms might be for the best, but there is another aspect which is much worse. I find myself unable to concentrate on any business at hand because of the melodies running through my mind. Never did I conceive that Vivaldi's *concerti grosso* or Schumann's symphonies could be such deterrents to thought. Just as the drug addict squanders his money, so I often dissipate mine on music, when it could have gone for better purposes. Yet even if I could change my ways, I would not.

Music, when it moves me, penetrates to the deepest fibers of my body, and has me completely in its grasp. There is

something wonderful in music. Words are wonderful enough; I find some stimulation in the printed page. But music is something else again. I hear music, not with my thoughts, but more basically with my emotions, with the very root and substance of my being. Music plunges me deep into sorrow and then raises me to spheres far above the clouds. It marks out ennobling paths for my feelings. It soothes me and in the same moment inflames me. How it does this, I do not know, but perhaps the reason lies in the fact that music, alone of the arts, deals directly with its element. The awesome sonorities of Stravinsky's *Petrouchka* do not reach my ears through any inter-source. The composer's ideas are set forth in the sound itself. The artist can do no more than lay a splash of pigment on his canvas for sunlight. He can only touch the face with lines to show grief, to take a little from the size of the pupil to produce in us the terror that contracts it. The author is even more limited. His feelings and thoughts must first be laboriously put into words and then translated in the reader's mind, all

along the way losing overtones of response much in the same manner that recorded music loses some of the resonance of the concert hall. It is all an attempt to translate the image of our thoughts. But the musician works firsthand. The waves of the air, not a representation of them, are his material. It is not with an imitation of sound, but with sound itself, that the orchestra roars its exultation or the violins mournfully tell us that the lovers, Romeo and Juliet, are dead. Mozart could not have expressed his "black thoughts" with the feeling of tragedy in his G Minor Symphony so well in any other medium.

It is regrettable that I have to write of the music I love so well in the terms of almost poetic nonsense that I dislike so much. Maybe I can state my ideas more to my own satisfaction with someone else's words. Aldous Huxley, in his essay *Music at Night,* writes that a modern abstract painting has great meaning to "anyone in the least sensitive to the eloquence of pure form." But to the person without perception of this sort the painting will say nothing. I have to admit that I am in this class with respect to painting.

Much of the same reasoning applies to music. For someone with sensitiveness to the eloquence of pure form in sound a Brahms symphony produces a feeling of sublimity. Without this sensitiveness a person can draw no meaning at all from the symphony. It has none of the vigor or meaning that can be given in words to express actions and ideas which the music does not usually imply. This person must realize that, as in art, comprehension of the music requires a sensitiveness to "the eloquence of pure form" that is just as much a matter of heredity and training as a sensitive ear for musical tones, and that people who lay claim to having this comprehension but cannot express their feelings in concrete terms are not all impostors.

Perhaps the greatest part of my interest in music has to do with my efforts to move from the passive field of listening to the active ones of performance and composition. It is an indisputable fact that the skillful execution of masterpieces of music may broaden and enrich the man who does it, but never the sort of playing that I do. The only par-

donable excuse for the atrocities I have committed in the name of music is my own pleasure. Still, that may not be sufficient reason for everyone. At times my family must think that Saint-Saëns surely must have had me in mind with his parody of the piano player in the *Carnival of the Animals.*

Music plays on my intellect and emotions in a most enjoyable manner, but this fact is still not enough to make me a musician. Yet, in becoming familiar with the difficulties of a work, I acquire a greater respect for really competent performance of fine music. I know—did I not sit and listen to Mozart's A Minor Sonata the other night? I knew the piece well. Hadn't I attempted it many times in the previous months? But that simply meant that I could appreciate the excellence of a really competent performance all the more. Why, there was that statement of the theme in the bass where I just couldn't keep it all from sounding like something from the Oriental hit parade. And there was that trill in the second movement where I had to be practically dragged out from under the wreck. Oh, and many more. What an experience it was to hear the same familiar notes, this time caressed by a talented artist at the keyboard of a splendid piano.

After the concert I felt that I had at last a long life's work cut out for myself. It is learning to play that sonata. This is not the idle dream that one might think, because I come of a rather long-lived family. It is certain that I shall be fully occupied until the last moment. To my mind, there can be no more glorious end to human existence than, at the age of eighty-six, to play Mozart's A Minor Sonata superbly just once, take a bow, and let the concert end.

SPRING CAME

Robins perched among the trees
Warbled with a friendly ease.

Flowers blossomed forth in hues,
Crimsons bright and misty blues.

Insects scurried on the ground,
Rushing to the homes they'd found.

Breezes fluttered in the air,
Free from human pangs of care.

Children skipped with lively mirth,
As Spring, once more, returned to earth.

Irene Janoski

THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD

A Story by Herman R. Kessler

He saved the organ and the pulpit until last, to dust. He preferred to work with an oiled cloth rather than a feather duster. The wood grew warm and was smooth to the touch, and what is important, he did not hurry. He worked over each pew until the wood glowed richly under the lights. He would finish a pew and then stop and stand awhile. He wore an apron over his old but neatly pressed blue serge suit. In his mind he saw the picture of himself standing there at the end of each pew, looking the way he looked and feeling the way he felt on a Sunday morning, when he was being watched, his head bowed, his hands folded gently in front of him, with the faint flutter of excitement in his stomach and legs, as he waited for the collection plate to be passed to him. He would close his eyes and wait, swaying slightly; years of doing this enabled him to time the journeying plate so that he did not have to watch it being passed along. While he stood, he could feel the heavy pulse of the organ vibrate in his chest and the music seemed to flow through his blood. Before he held out his hand for the collection plate, he brushed the flat of his hand along his trouser leg to wipe the moisture from his palms. At such moments he felt that his spirit would burst from his confining body. He could feel his face glow, as though it were being caressed by a warm breeze.

Halfway down the aisle he stopped working and sat down. He sat at the right end of the pew, where he had sat in this church ever since he could remember. The way he liked the church best was by candle-light. The shadows flickered and danced and the candles spluttered ever so faintly. As a child, sitting here, he had seen that the street lamps behind the stained glass window had moved with the wind and the figure of the saint had glowed as though it were smiling on him. It was his secret as a child which he had never told anyone. He half expected the figure to step down from the window and come to him and take him by the hand and lead him out into the night. He shivered with the weight of this thought. It was almost as though he had been singled out of the congregation, and this thought had lingered with him a long time. He liked the image of the young boy and he could see his pale hands gently patting the shoulders of a little boy who was wide-eyed and flushed with the strength of an overwhelming secret. He arose and began to dust again, and he moved carefully in and out of the pews until he finished the front row.

He knelt on the cushion in front of the chancel-rail to dust around the spindles. The wood of the chancel-rail was darker and richer than the wood of the pews and the dust stood out more clearly. He took the thin edge of the cloth, as a piece of string, and worked it around the cuts in the spindles. Not a speck of dust missed his quick eyes. On his knees like this, kneeling on the cushion in front of the chancel-rail, his hands barely touching the wood, he thought of the thing that totally absorbed him, communion. He knelt for a long while and did nothing. The upsweep of feeling would not form into any picture, or words. He arose and took off his apron; a soft nervous laugh escaped from him, the sound of it booming in the empty church. He laid the apron on the back of the front pew and walked up on the altar, treading noiselessly on the thick rug. As he dusted the organ he became deeply excited and his pale hands flew quickly

over the wood, like birds startled into sudden flight. He caught the distorted image of his own face and body on the polished surface. He liked that, too; it made him chuckle. He stepped back from the organ. He could see quite clearly the way the organist looked from the back. He pictured her swaying body as she reached for the keys and pedals, and sent out the booming tones that reached into the corners of the church, and then hung suspended, cloud-like, from the roof of the church.

Then he turned to do the three high-backed chairs that stood behind the pulpit. He had to kneel to reach the dust under the chairs. When he finished he stood up and brushed the knees of his trousers very carefully. He dusted the pulpit and laid down the cloth. He placed himself behind the pulpit facing the empty pews; he ran his eyes over the huge print of the Bible which lay open before him. He began to read; his thin nervous voice flooded the church; his voice rose and fell, worked to a high pitch, and stopped dramatically. He read a full chapter in this fashion, unaware of his restless hands as they reached out to emphasize the emotion in his voice. It thrilled him to think the church was full. He looked over the empty pews filling them with the people he knew belonged there. How easy it was to place them! Their week-day faces showing through their pious expressions! Everyone was scrubbed and dressed in his best clothes, and the children listened closely. He trembled with the thought of it.

He placed himself majestically in the center chair behind the pulpit. He placed his elbows on the arms of the chair. The left arm trailed away along the arm of the chair with the fingers dangling gracefully at the end. He rested his forehead on the fingertips of his bent right arm in a pose of profound meditation. His lowered eyelids shut out the scene of the church. He sat there.

"Excuse me," boomed a voice.

He arose quickly to his feet. Below him, at the chancel-rail, stood a dark-haired man, nervously fingering a soiled gray hat. The man continued, "I was driving past and saw the light. I thought I'd stop in."

"I ——" the words locked in his throat.

"I know this is irregular," the man apologized; his voice was somewhat strained. "I have never done this before and do not know what to say. I want to pray and do not know what to say. Will you help me?" The man's voice faltered, and then, nervously, unexpectedly, he knelt at the chancel-rail, head bowed.

The sexton walked slowly down the steps toward the kneeling figure and placed his hands on the man's shoulders. The man did not look up, nor make a move.

"Let us pray," he said, but no words came to his mind. He felt the rise and fall of the man's shoulder blades; all he knew was that the man was breathing. He closed his eyes, and the silence enveloped them. After awhile he faltered an "Amen." He removed his hands from the man's shoulders. The man stood up.

"I am very grateful, Reverend," he said, and turned and walked away, down the aisle, and closed the door. He heard the sound of a motor chattering in the night, and then it was gone. He turned to pick up his dust cloth and then walked down to pick up his apron.

"Good evening, Henry," a voice shattered the silence.

"Good evening, Reverend," he answered. "I have just finished." The minister's full fat face seemed to float down the aisle.

"Was there someone in here looking for me? I was upstairs and my wife said that someone had come into the church." The minister's voice was full, and his lungs took in air like a bellows, with a sharp hissing sound.

"A man did come in," he answered, "but he was just looking for directions. He was from out of town, just going through."

MEMOIR OF A MINER

Len A. Shetlin

As the miner and laborer sat eating lunch that morning it seemed no different from any other day. The miner, Ben, tossed out a scrap of sandwich as usual—for the rats—but there was no answer of scurrying feet. Ned, the laborer, noticed it first. "What's the matter with our buddies this morning?" he asked curiously. He threw an apple core out to the center of the road and idly watched for the reaction, but there was none. Every other morning the rats were virtually tumbling over one another to snatch the first pieces of food flung out to them. This day it seemed that they were not hungry. Ben declared, "Oh, they'll get around soon." But after a few minutes Ned noticed all was quiet and that no animals appeared to fight over the scraps—amusing the men with their antics. He said quietly, "You know, Ben, if the rats go, it's time for us to go. They know, buddy, they know."

Ben snorted impatiently, "Ah, cut that talk out." He had always scoffed at the old mine legends that credited these little creatures with the uncanny ability to foresee approaching danger. "Superstitions," he contemptuously labeled them.

They were working in the "robbings" removing the last portions of once thick, wide seams of anthracite coal. Now the pillars were narrow, and slush, or fill, was used to support the tremendous weight of the roof. As they advanced, it was necessary to place large props and timber in rows as each yard of coal was blasted out. In the event of a "squeeze" these supports would furnish ample warning by cracking and bending under the terrific weight. The men finished their lunch and commenced the day's work without further reference to the morning's unusual incident. They completed the day's work and went home as usual. Next morning as Ben strode to the fireboss's shanty he received a shock, for the fireboss looked at him grimly. "Your place is caved in, Ben. Did you get your tools out yesterday?" Ben was amazed. "No," he asserted with unmistakable surprise. "It wasn't squeezing, and everything seemed normal when we left." Later, when Ben recalled the previous day's experience he pondered. Ned's words were pregnant with meaning now: "When the rats go, it's time for us to go." Ben silently admitted, maybe there is some truth in these stories after all.

A few years later, when the old No. 4 Shaft had long been robbed out and closed, Old Ben was still earning his living in the depths of a coal-mine. As they say, "Once a miner, always a miner." But Old Ben was working in a modern mine now. Mechanization had replaced the old-fashioned methods of producing coal. The same old customs, however, survived. The men still sat at the entrance to their working place to eat lunch before beginning the day's work. This morning Old Ben had thrown his coat over one end of the toolbox. He sat on the other end and began to delve into his lunch-box for a sandwich. Stanley, his laborer, sat across from him chatting gaily about the previous night's chicken dinner at Joe's Cafe. He, too opened his lunch and, choosing a chunk of bologna, he munched heartily, all the while telling Old Ben the details of the good time, while Old Ben slowly unwrapped a sandwich and proceeded to eat. Suddenly the laborer stopped and stared.

"Well, I'll be—look, Ben, quick! There goes a son-of-a-gun with your coat." Desperately tugging and pulling Old Ben's coat from the box was a huge rat. Startled, Old Ben hastily placed his sandwich down, and leaped to his feet to retrieve the now fast-moving coat. As soon as he left his position there was a deafening roar behind him. He and Stanley dashed madly to the safety of the gangway. Coat, rat, everything was forgotten for the moment. When it became quiet and the dust had settled, they cautiously returned to investigate.

A large section of the roof had broken away without warning. The spot where Old Ben had been sitting was completely covered by a mass of rock and shale. Stanley was chattering excitedly: "Jeez, Ben, if it wasn't for that rat you'd o' been buried!" Old Ben nodded agreement. A long-forgotten incident had come back into his mind. Ned had declared: "They know, buddy, they know."

PRIVATE HENRY S. POLARIE

James W. Reynolds

My interest in Private Henry S. Polarie was aroused the very first time I saw him. His appearance in itself was striking enough to attract attention; he was tall and very thin, with a long, sunbrowned face topped by a thatch of straw-colored, unruly, very blond hair. It was at the end of our first day in basic training and everyone was regretting the fact that he was a member of the United States Army. Captain Adams, an understanding man at heart, was sardonically explaining to us, the defenders of the land, the many virtues of army life. He didn't seem at all affected by the heat which we, the recruits, thought unbearable. With a great deal of eloquent profanity he climaxed his talk with this question, "Now, how many of you punks are yellow-bellied enough to admit that you lied about your age to get into this army?"

Of course no normal person would answer that, but this was the precise moment when Private Polarie decided to become acquainted with Captain Adams. Up shot a thin, brown arm, grotesquely protruding from a much too large sleeve, and a lazy but loud Alabamian voice with no hint whatsoever of shame or remorse broke the dead silence: "Heah ah am, suh. Ah'm only sixteen years old."

Merely to say that Captain Adams was surprised would be to err—he was baffled and bewildered, as much by this wholly unexpected answer as by Polarie's sad, blue eyes and personal appearance, for, as far as looking the part of a soldier went, Polarie was a sad failure. What surprised the rest of the unhappy lot was the fact that Polarie was not bucking for a minority discharge. What moved him to antagonize Captain Adams on this, our first day, was more than we, as individuals, could understand.

At first the captain was speechless; Polarie had him at a disadvantage. In a few seconds however, he recovered, completely ignored Polarie, and sweetly informed us that we were through for the day, to go and clean our rifles and shine our brass and shoes, and that if any of us had any problems or complaints that it was just too bad, and he hoped we slept well.

That was just the beginning. Within a few days Polarie once more became the center of attraction. His rifle was rusty; it was a mess; Polarie couldn't understand it. He didn't understand the platoon sergeant either when he told him to clean it.

Amazing as it may seem, Polarie managed to stay in the army for six full weeks. How he did it, God only knows. They couldn't make him do anything. He'd start to clean his rifle, but he'd never finish; there always seemed to be a card game that distracted him.

Captain Adams, after a time, decided that it would be much easier to humor Polarie than to attempt to combat his perturbing remarks, incurable laziness, utter irresponsibility, and complete disregard of any sort of punishment that could be imposed upon him.

Polarie, although he was spared from persecution by the understanding soul of Captain Adams, was unhappy. He had no money; he wanted a discharge; he ranted; he raved—he'd see the inspector general, the chaplain, the Red Cross. Then Polarie got paid—seventy-five dollars; he was amazed by his sudden good fortune. No longer did he want a discharge; now he wanted a pass.

His pay, however, lasted no more than four days; a new watch, a trip to town, a few card games, and Polarie no longer liked the army. Again he was without funds. He didn't despair though, and was somehow subtle enough to borrow sixty dollars from several of his card-playing cronies. Once more he assailed the nearby city on pass. He was cagey this time; he didn't waste his money—no, sir, he bought a radio and sent it home.

The next Saturday, after inspection, Captain Adams called him in; something was wrong with his rifle—I think. Four days later Polarie's totally unexpected discharge came through. Captain Adams smiled; the first sergeant looked relieved; the platoon sergeant relaxed for the first time in weeks; those to whom he owed money looked desperate; and Polarie, innocently and with an air of injured self-righteousness, packed his bags, and with many sincere promises left for Alabama, never to be heard from again.

SATURDAY NIGHT AT THE BIENVENU

A Story by John Bator

The movie crowd had just arrived as Carl put on a clean apron. They were high school couples who sat in the booths and sipped cokes and played love songs on the juke box. Carl envied them. It was Saturday night, warm and clear, and they had nothing to do but go home and sit on the front porch until the night became cool enough for sleep—while he had to work. He felt sorry for himself. Leaning over the sink and facing the customers, he began his job—washing dishes. The sink was so placed because the dishwasher could

help wait on people who sat at the counter. Carl did not think about the hours that were before him because the thought of them sickened him. He worked perfunctorily.

The restaurant filled rapidly. They were older folks now, and Carl knew them as the café crowd. It was one o'clock, all the cafés were closed, and these people, not desiring to go home early, stopped here for a bite to eat. He began to feel bitter, as he always did about this time. Above the blaring jazz tunes they played on the juke box, they shouted to their friends the uncouth jokes they had heard that night. These people were noisy, half drunk, and demanded immediate service. They laughed hilariously, they sang, they broke dishes, they quarrelled. They were, Carl thought, disgusting. The booths and seats at the counter were filled with them, and some stood in the aisle waiting for vacant seats. The waitress ran about in an insane manner, trying to serve everyone at once, trying to remember where each order went. She smiled, but Carl knew she felt as he did—tired and disgusted. The cook looked like an automaton. Beads of perspiration polka-dotted his forehead and his shirt was wet with sweat. Carl disliked this crowd. His head began to ache, his feet and back were sore, the hot water caused his hands to swell and his cut finger tips to sting. As Carl labored, his eyes were fixed on the door that seemed only to let people in. No one, he thought, was leaving. He imagined the door stuck, propped, locked, bolted, and chained so that the influx would cease. He fought a profound desire to sleep, and an even greater desire to cry.

The clock with the luminous hands showed five A.M. The café crowd had gone, and the playboys were in, they and their girls. Carl disliked them more than the others. They were drunk, they always were, and lipstick smears were on the boys' faces and shirt collars; and the girls—well, he disliked them because of their effrontery. Carl smiled at them, talked with them, and appeared only a bit incurious. However, he restrained his emotions, even though he wanted to stand on the counter and shout at them, shout what unmitigated fools they were. Yes, they were fools because they were forsaking sleep, sweet precious sleep.

Dawn had begun to replace the night and the playboys and their girls left—satisfied that they were awake all night. The place was empty just long enough for Carl to sweep and mop. The truckers came and he was glad to see them, glad because he liked them, glad because they tipped well, because they were commiserative, and because he knew that when they left his shift would be over.

Carl's relief arrived at seven. He left him an empty sink and hot water. He discarded his now greasy apron and sat down—very tired. His blind friend came in and they talked, Carl all the while remembering from William Tell,

> And he—he must drag on through
> all his days
> In endless darkness!

Carl ate his usual ham and eggs, stepped out into the morning and looked at the sun for a moment, and then walked home—to sleep.

THE VACATION

A Story by Merton E. Jones

She called to him again, more harshly this time. Slowly he fought his way back to consciousness, trying to recognize this voice that was grating on his raw, jumpy nerves. He felt stiff and uncomfortable. He wanted to get back to sleep, back to heaven. He didn't want to get up. He wished he could stay in bed forever.

Suddenly he was wide awake. He lay still and felt the oppressive dampness pressing him against the sheets. Then the fear came. This was it. This was the day he was to go back. Just the thought of it made him feel warmer. The fear rode over him, making him want to be up and about, anywhere away from it.

The floor felt cool against his bare feet. He went to the window and leaned with his elbows on the sill, looking out. There was a fine drizzle falling in the early darkness. It made no sound, but he felt its force. He felt it seeping into everything outdoors, relentlessly soaking everything with its miserable dampness. His fear soaked into him as the rain into the soil outside. The air was close. It felt stale and sticky.

Going into the bathroom, he knocked his shoulder against the door in the dark. Instantly a sheet of pain knifed its way down his side. He suddenly felt sick to his empty stomach.

He leaned against the wall until the worst of the pain passed. Then he filled the bowl with cold water and splashed it over his face and head. It made him feel fresh and clear, and dispelled the pain in his shoulder. His nerves no longer felt so raw, and the fear subsided a little. For the first time since he had gotten up he felt alive.

Back in the bedroom he put on trousers and an undershirt. His face and neck were red from the cold water and toweling, in contrast to the pale white of the rest of his body. When he leaned over to put on his shoes the pain returned. It settled into a dull throb in his shoulder, a steady beat that promised to last some time.

Before he went down the steps he snapped on the hall light, insurance against bumping his shoulder again. The thought of working all day, his first day back, with it hurting this way was not pleasant. The fear would be bad enough. Pain would make it unbearable.

There was a pleasant smell of fresh coffee that made the air in the kitchen cheerful, unlike the oppressive closeness elsewhere in the house. The table was set, with the juice already squeezed and put beside his plate. His wife was not there. He sat down and unfolded the newspaper that lay on the table. He heard a sharp, metallic clang outside, and then quick, decisive footsteps on the back porch. He lowered the paper, waiting for his wife to come in. He wondered if she was still angry, if they would have another argument this morning.

His wife came in, her face covered with small drops of rain, like transparent beads. "Hi, sleepy head," she said cheerfully.

"Hello, Flossy, what were you doing out in the rain?" he answered. "I thought it was my job to take out the rubbish."

"That was just while you were an invalid," she said. "Now that you're better I guess I'll have to get back in

practice." Her face was strained with her obvious attempt to appear cheerful. He noticed the dark circles under her eyes; her forehead was wrinkled, the way it always was when she tried to lie or pretend.

"Yeah," he said. "I guess you'll really miss your houseboy." He was grateful to her for not continuing the argument.

She did not answer. Probably she did not trust herself to talk. During breakfast he began to feel uncomfortable. He wished she would say something to break the silence, even begin the argument again.

He thought of last night, remembering the fight in little snatches. She had said that he was not yet well enough to go back to work. His shoulder should have a few more weeks to heal. He had said that if he didn't go back now, he would never go back.

That was when she had really started. She had reminded him of his desire to retire young, while he could still enjoy life. He was forty-five now. Wasn't that old enough? They had the money. He had earned good wages, and she had saved all that she made teaching school. They had their home and the cottage. What was the use of going back?

The memory made him feel worse. They had both said terrible things at the end, things that neither had meant. He did not want to argue again, but still he could not let it hang like this. It would only make them both unhappy. But still, what could he do? It wasn't his place to make the first move.

She knew that he wanted to quit. That was what made the argument so silly. She wanted him to quit because she knew he was frightened. He would not quit because of his fear. It was not that he wanted to be heroic. It was just that when he did get out he wanted it to be on his own terms, not the mines'.

He was sick of the mines; he admitted it. He was sick of them, and he was suddenly afraid of dying in them. No, not suddenly afraid. He had been afraid ever since his accident, six months ago. Six months isn't sudden. Six months is a long time in any man's life.

These four months since he had gotten out of the hospital had been the happiest of his life. He and his wife had enjoyed the spring at the lake. They had traveled. They had seen many of the things they had always wanted to see. Now they had to end like this, with his injury still bothering him, and the fear still fast within him.

What was it that had made him afraid, afraid of death and the mines? Was it the rockfall? Was it the rocks that started to slide so suddenly that he didn't see them until it was too late? Was it the pain and horror of lying beneath them, and feeling them crush his shoulder and squeeze his spine out of place? Was it the hospital smell, the smell that always made him so sick, and the long weeks of lying there, feeling helpless and impotent? Or was it the doubt that had grown in him as he lay there? The doubt that had gnawed at him like a dog at a bone, making him feel unsure of himself for the first time in his life?

He didn't know what it was, but he knew that his wife had recognized his fear. She knew, and she had decided that it would be better if he never went back. O. K., so that was what she thought. He thought the same thing, but still he had to go back. He could not get along without knowing just what it was he feared.

He rose from the table, very politely excusing himself. It struck him that at this rate they would soon be acting as they had on their honeymoon.

He went upstairs and finished dressing. He came back to the kitchen, lit a cigarette, and straddled a chair while his wife finished packing his lunch. When she closed the bucket and turned to him he was surprised at the tears that danced in the corners of her eyes.

"What's the matter, Flossy?" he asked.

"Nothing, Evan. It's just that I'm not used to getting you off to work anymore." She made vain attempts to wipe the tears from her eyes. "I guess I'll get used to it again."

"I guess so," he said flatly.

"Evan?"

"Yes, Flossy?"

"I'm sorry about last night. I'm sorry and ashamed. Neither of us meant what we said. Let's forget it. We can forget it, can't we?"

He smiled. He suddenly felt great, as though the sun had come out and driven the gloomy weather away. Everything would be all right now. He knew by the conviction in her voice that she was through trying to make him quit.

"Sure, Flossy, we can forget it. I've already forgotten most of it. It doesn't make that much difference."

"Six months make a big difference," she said. "In these six months I've learned how wonderful it is to not be afraid. I've learned that it is possible to live without worry and anxiety."

"Now, Flossy, we're forgetting it, remember?" He unwound himself from the chair and kissed her. "Give me my lunch and let me get going. I've got to go out and win us some bread."

It was while he was backing the car out of the garage that the thought struck him. She had learned to live without fear, while he had learned to live with it. All these months she had been completely happy, while always he had had this gnawing fear. It wasn't that he hadn't had a good time. He had, but still there had been the fear.

But Flossy had known the fear, too. She had known it all the years he had worked in the mines. This vacation had been the only time she had succeeded in forgetting it. He had never thought of her side of it before. She must have known some hard times in those years. Now that he was returning to work she would know even more fear.

He backed the car into the street. Flossy was waving to him from the front window. He waved back and started down the street. The rain ran down the windshield in little rivers at the edges of the paths the wipers made. The weather no longer depressed him. He felt fine. For the first time in months the fear was gone.

ON READING A PAPER IN PUBLIC VEHICLES

Arthur Bloom

Truly an interesting subject, reading a newspaper in a public vehicle. But one must begin at the beginning which is, of course, securing the newspaper. This may be done in the conservative way by buying a paper. However, for those seeking new worlds to conquer and new heights to climb one could become either a "watcher" or a "recoverer." Now a watcher is an extraordinary individual. He enters the public vehicle with a noble stride and glances selectively through the passengers noting carefully the reading habits of each. To the watcher, each reading habit indicates a definite reader. For instance, the one who appears fully engrossed in the financial page is never selected as

watcher prey, for such an individual is too engrossed in a single page and seldom does he change that page. That one page is apt to become extremely boring.

Be equally wary of the "jump reader." This type reads only the headlines and opening paragraphs. Certainly all have had the painful experience of having someone turn a page when in the midst of a most interesting and enlightening article. This is, to say the least, most disconcerting. The perfect choice for the watcher is the "hurrier." Here we have a most acceptable individual, one who rushes through the paper in a fairly methodical round of madness. He grabs the paper with the gusto usually associated with wrestlers. With one hand firmly holding one section and another quickly leafing through other pages, the hurrier shifts from one section to another in this fashion . . . front page, comics, sports, and editorial page. So, as one becomes tuned to the habits of the hurrier, he has ahead of him many minutes of satisfactory reading.

Another type of newspaper connoisseur is the "recoverer." This individual is a member of the nobility of all readers who do not buy their own papers. For, whereas he does not stoop to picking up street papers, neither does he develop the rather insolent manner of the watcher. Then too, the recoverer need not have the acute vision of the watcher, who frequently must scan a paper from very peculiar angles, hanging on straps, across aisles, over seats, etc. On entering the bus the recoverer will usually proceed to the rear, for it is here that most newly discarded newspapers are found. But if these green pastures have become barren, the recoverer must follow his type study. He will seek the individual who seems to be observing the street signs rather closely, for this spells a quick departure, usually leaving a paper behind. The recoverer may become involved with another type of reader who is often listed as the "dozer" type. This individual goes to all the trouble of buying a paper, seats himself in the vehicle and then promptly falls asleep. There have been authentic records of recoverers who have worked out agreements with dozers whereby the recoverer can read the paper and the dozer can enjoy completely restful sleep; all the recoverer had to do was wake the dozer up when the bus approached his stop.

A talented recoverer will rarely sit beside a woman reader, for he knows that a woman will most often take the paper with her. I've heard it said that housewives use this paper (designed for the reading public) to line waste baskets, garbage cans, and closet shelves. This is unethical.

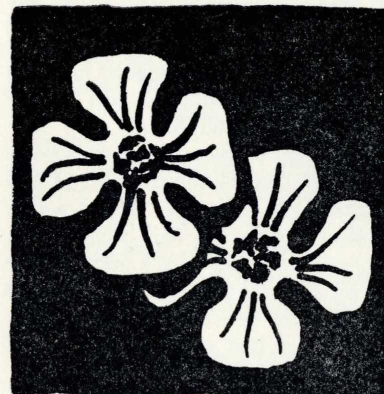
After a paper has been secured the next step is folding it for easier reading. Of course, one may revert to the small, tabloid type paper, but this is unfair and reduces considerably one's prestige in the honor guild of transit newspaper readers. One school of newspaper folders prefers the half-column crutch. This requires an initial preparation of about three minutes. (Some experts have been clocked at a speedy two-and-a-half. I find it hard to believe this, but if you want to accept it, okay.) This method consists of folding each page in half, the long way, and then folding this section in half once again. This makes a convenient reading form. There is, however, one glaring disadvantage, and this is discovered in reversing the pages. In order to do this the whole process of folding must be reversed. This is apt to be quite messy.

Among those who know paper folders best there is one fold that indicates sheer genius. This is the cross-page method. Truly the cross-page artist is a master, one who has graduated out of the menial half-column crutch into the absolutely ultra elite. In order to really appreciate this master, one should examine carefully his work. Note the delicate regular folds and counterfolds, but note particularly the diagonal fold wherein lies his greatest contribution to newspaper folding. This unique fold allows complete control of the situation at all times.

This brings up an important point, complete control of the situation. For, should a folder in any situation lose control, allowing his paper to come apart, and then lose his temper as a result of such a performance, he would or should be instantly dropped as an undesirable member of the brotherhood. Such a person should transfer his attention to magazine reading. I have heard it said that magazines do have material worth reading at times, but of course this material, as far as I'm concerned, is suited strictly to home consumption.

The other day I noted an unusual situation. Here was a watcher carefully scanning a cross-page artist who was also a recoverer, and as such, had just received his paper from a dozer. This represents a most perplexing group study, or don't you agree?

FROM A SONG



B.

Richard

Rutkowski

What was that shape, girl child,
Little dark-faced girl child
Dressed in white as you walked
Through life? You heard the sea
Far in the summer sun,
But stood in the shadow
To hear the happy song.

You saw the tree that bloomed
White blossoms in the dark.
You tried to hold a flower
But then the tree was gone
In the night-deep shadows.
You walked dark-faced through life
And could not hold the flower.

You ran and cast aside
Your white clothing, you ran
To where warm sands were by
The sea with sunbright waves.
You sang a naked song
For joy, girl child, you danced
And sang beside the sea.

RESIGNATION

A Story by Chester Malishewsky

"I'm going down the corner, Emma. I saw Sam Kurtz down there a couple of times. Maybe Mr. Seibolt knows where I can find him."

A woman's voice followed the hollow slam of a refrigerator door. "O.K. Get a quart of milk."

"Just a quart of milk? Nothing else?" He hung in the doorway to catch her reply.

"Just milk. Nothing else."

He held the door momentarily against a sudden gust of March wind, then pushed his back against it. He stepped off the little porch, hunched his head into his shoulders, and leaned into the quick cold blasts of air that swept the lonely street. A block later, he stepped through the door of a small, box-like building above the corner of which a weather-beaten red sign creakingly proclaimed that "Seibolt's Store Serves Pepsi." A man's bent form protruded above the ice-cream freezer, and a fellow leaned idly against the candy show-case cracking red pistachios with his teeth. The fellow glanced up from his task and muttered an indistinct "Hi!"

As if it had been connected with the closing door, a head popped up from behind the ice-cream freezer. A tall thin frame gradually straightened itself and a pleasant voice said, "Hello, Jed. Kind of windy out. Want something?"

Jed nodded, "Yeh, Mr. Seibolt, want to know if Sam Kurtz has been around here lately."

Mr. Seibolt placed his hands above his kidneys as if to straighten out some kinks. He puckered up his eyes in thought, then shook his head. "No. Haven't seen him for a while. I heard he left town."

"Left town?" Jed asked quickly.

Mr. Seibolt grunted, "Yep." Then with interest lighting his eyes, he asked, "You have trouble with insurance, too?"

"Yeah," Jed said disgustedly, "I got a cancellation notice."

Mr. Seibolt's voice thinned with conviction, "That Sam is no good. I had trouble with him. He's no good. I wouldn't buy any more policies from him. I've heard a lot about him just lately."

Jed punched one gloved hand into another. His voice thickened with emotion, "I sure would like to catch up with him. This is the second cancellation I had."

The fellow at the counter brought his eyes up from a pistachio which his fingers were worrying. He said, "He had some trouble lately. He was up the court-house, I know. Someone had him arrested for something. I don't know what it was for, though."

Mr. Seibolt's voice issued somewhat muffled from below the counter, "I had insurance from him once." He straightened slowly again. "I had trouble with him over that policy. He's been in here since we got this place. Wanted me to take out some fire-insurance with him. I told him I had enough. He hasn't been here since."

Jed said savagely, "He sure is rotten. How can people get so low?"

Mr. Seibolt leaned forward confidentially. "Low? You know what he does? His wife gives him ten dollars to send a money order to their son. He makes out the money order down at the post office, shows his wife the receipt and then comes in here to cash it. What do you think of a guy like that?"

Jed shook his head sympathetically, "Boy, he must be rotten right through. I never heard these things before. I thought he was O.K. He sure seems like a nice guy."

Mr. Seibolt said, "Hmph," scornfully, and turned to adjust some bottles on a shelf. He said to the wall, "I've heard a lot of stories about him. Lots of people talk in here."

Jed walked slowly to the large front window and looked thoughtfully into the street. Mr. Seibolt came out from behind the counter and went across the room to a magazine rack. He poked around the magazines, then said irritably, "He gave me a check once. He ran up a bill, and gave me a check. The check bounced. I made him pay though."

The fellow at the counter pointed a pistachio at Jed, "That's what it was. He was up the court-house because of a bad check. I remember hearing about it now."

Mr. Seibolt turned around with a magazine in his hand, "Yeh, that's what it was. I know he was up the court-house for something, and I think that's what it was for."

Jed turned away from the window and spread his hands in an imploring gesture. He asked, "Why don't they lock him up?"

Mr. Seibolt raised one shoulder slightly and said dispiritedly with a slight whine, "What can you do with a guy like that? Sam doesn't . . ."

"Do with him?" Jed cut in brusquely. "Are they gonna leave him around to rob people?"

Mr. Seibolt said hurriedly and soothingly, Oh, don't get me wrong, Jed. I'm not for him. He's no good. I know that. Why I have a bad policy here I can show you. Wait a minute, I'll show it to you." The fellow at the candy case said to no one in particular, "I've got to go. So long."

Mr. Seibolt came through the swinging door that connected the store and house. He was impatiently leafing through an old leather folio. He said triumphantly, "Look! Here it is. It's supposed to be good until December, 1951, but it's no good now!"

Jed turned the policy over in his hand. "Why isn't it good?"

Seizing the policy, Mr. Seibolt waved it to emphasize his words, "Why? Because Sam is supposed to make out three copies: one for the customer, one for the company, and one for himself. Sam never sends one to the company. He does all the signing himself."

Jed bristled, "But what's that got to do with it? I got Sam's signature on the receipt, and I have the policy."

"That doesn't do any good," Mr. Seibolt said haughtily.

Jed asked belligerently, "Why isn't it any good? He's their agent. He gave me the policy. I've got the receipts to prove it. I paid him the money and have the receipts. That's all I need."

Mr. Seibolt shook his head conciliatingly, "I can see how you're figurin', but you aren't covered. The policy's no good."

Jed walked slowly to his former position before the large window. Neither of the men spoke for a couple of minutes. Then Jed asked without turning, "Where does Sam live? It's around here somewhere. In this neighborhood, isn't it?"

Mr. Seibolt picked up a rag and switched it across the top of the counter. "I don't know where his home is, but I heard he's staying with his mother. He's probably out of town now though."

Jed's face was drawn with anger as he faced around. He growled, "I was to his office down-town. He's gone. I know his phone's disconnected. But he told me he owned a home around here somewhere and that he was renting it. The people that rent the home must know where they pay rent."

Mr. Seibolt paused in his polishing and gazed thoughtfully out of the window. He scratched his chin reflectively and said slowly, "I think his mother should know. Her place is right above yours. The next block."

Jed leaned forward hopefully, "On Green Street?"

Mr. Seibolt nodded, "Yeh, but I don't know the exact house."

Jed pulled his gloves tighter, "I'll find it, and I sure hope he's there." He lifted the collar of his jacket and started for the door.

Mr. Seibolt walked down toward him behind the candy counter. He asked with a slight smile, "How much did you get taken for, Jed? I lost fourteen dollars."

Jed paused with his hand on the door. He said heatedly, "The money doesn't mean a thing. It's just that he came in the house and lied. I wouldn't care if it was twenty cents. It's not the money."

Mr. Seibolt agreed affably, "Sure, I know what you mean. A guy wants to do a neighbor a favor and . . ."

"Yeh, that's the way it was," Jed said savagely. "I shoulda gone down-town and bought the darn thing. It was just that he lived around here." Jed yanked open the door and muttered, "I'm goin' to see if I can find him."

"Let me know how you make out," Mr. Seibolt yelled.

Jed walked hurriedly up the street. He rolled his shoulders and punched a gloved fist into the palm of a hand. He hunched forward as if he were anticipating a fight. Above his house, he swirled around the corner and marched resolutely down Green Street. A couple of kids were coming up the street tossing a baseball back and forth. Jed stopped and inquired gruffly of the nearest, "You know where Sam Kurtz lives?"

The kid paused and pointed down the street, "Right below our house. The one with the blue roof."

Jed flung a "thanks" over his shoulder. The kid threw the ball and then called over his shoulder, "I don't think there's anyone there but the old lady." Jed did not look back.

He stopped momentarily before the low iron gate, then pushed it open. He clumped up the short stairs, and strode down the long porch to the back door. He stooped to peer into the kitchen and saw the remains of a meal on the table. He banged his knuckles against the door. A couple of seconds later the door opened and a little, white-haired lady stood framed in the doorway. She looked at him inquiringly and he blurted, "Does Sam Kurtz live here?"

The woman nodded and said with a heavy accent, "Yah."

"Is he home?" Jed asked.

The woman shook her head as if she did not understand.

Jed repeated, "Is he home?" The woman smiled apologetically and said, "Sam no home."

Jed growled, "Where is he?"

The woman shrugged her slight shoulders and shook her head, " I don' know. Sam not here."

Jed raised a fist, opened his mouth, and stood there. He slowly dropped his hand to his side, shrugged his shoulders and turned away. The woman leaned out of the doorway and called something to him. He muttered, "Ah, what the hell's the use. Only a couple of bucks."

Jed walked down the street, kicked open his gate, and opened the front door into the March wind.

"Is that you, Jed?" his wife called.

Jed grumbled, "Yeh, it's me." He hung his jacket on a clothes-tree, and walked into the kitchen. His wife looked at him over a dish she was polishing.

"Did you find Sam?" she asked.

"No. I just came from his mother's place. She lives right over there." He pointed out the back-door window.

His wife came to look over his shoulder. She asked, "Did you find out about the policy?"

Jed mumbled, "Uh-uh."

"Didn't his mother know anything?"

"His mother didn't speak English."

"Oh."

"I sure was mad. But what's the sense of getting mad. She wouldn't know what I was yelling about. I'll see Sam some day."

His wife laughed and said, "Well, live and learn. Did you bring the milk?"

Jed grunted in surprise, "No. I'll go back and get it." He walked into the living room and said over his shoulder, "Well, that's sixteen dollars down the drain. Live and learn is right."

THE CASE OF THE COMICS

Wendell Clark

". . . it seems to me that the trash of my generation was superior to the trash of today. I submit that *The Rover Boys in the Everglades* and *Frank on a Gunboat* are preferable to Superman and his kind on two counts: they were cleanly and clearly written, and their characters were credible and not entirely unrelated to the child's experience."

CLIFTON FADIMAN,
Reading I've Liked.

Blood is the basic ingredient of comic magazines: pools of blood, puddles of blood, and rivers of blood. Deliberately spiced with sex, sprinkled with sadism, and served to our children in lethal portions of six hundred million copies annually, the comic books are creating a nation-wide uproar in homes, schools, churches, and civic organizations. Comic books are the crux of a two-sided social problem which, on the one side, clashes with moral, ethical, and legal criteria and, on the other side, threatens two of our basic constitutional rights: the right of freedom of choice, and the right of freedom of speech.

The first complaint about comics appeared with the first issue of the magazines. Although this reaction is to be expected when any new type of literature is introduced, the continuation of the anti-comic movement was entirely unexpected, and its growth has been almost as spectacular as the rise of the comic books. The attacks against comics are so violent that it is a difficult task to separate feeling from fact and passion from proof, but no matter how distorted the arguments for and against comics may be, there is no confusion about the issue at stake. Comic books are accused of contributing to the delinquency of the nation's children by over-stimulation of sex and by undue emphasis on fantasy, crime, and sadism.

Before delving into the actual problems created by the comic magazines, we should examine the industry itself. A comparative newcomer in the publishing world, the comic magazine appeared during the two years following Munich and met with instantaneous success. In 1941, sales ran as high as ten million copies a month. This amounted to twelve million dollars a year in "kid's money," a silver stream of dimes flowing from small, grimy hands. Last year, circulation reached fifty million copies a month and grossed a yearly profit of sixty million dollars. Nearly thirty publishers place on the newsstands thirty-seven bimonthly, one hundred monthly, and ten quarterly titles.

The format of the comic book consists of garish colors, hard-to-read printing, and poor continuity. It is a true pulp magazine in all respects. In content, the comic book caricatures the range of human interests: adventure, science, humor, crime, nonsense, magic, fantasy, horror, sex, love.

The attempt to link actual crimes to the influence of comic books is a major aim of the opposing faction. This is usually done by inference, a faulty reasoning from effect to cause, and leaves much to be desired in the way of proof. A newspaper article notes that a policeman was slain by a "teen age boy who

admitted to be a constant reader of comic books." A magazine feature describes a thirteen-year-old boy who murdered a young playmate and who "told his lawyer he reads all crime comic books he can get." At times, however, comic books and crime are related in a more direct manner. For instance, in British Columbia, two small boys, aged eleven and thirteen, read forty to fifty comic books each week. Apparently following in the footsteps of their literary heroes, they stole a .30-.30 caliber rifle from an unlocked car, pried their way into a truck, and helped themselves to cigarettes. Then, fully equipped for a raid, they headed out of town. At a nearby highway, the boys masked themselves with handkerchiefs and hid in a ditch. When a car approached, they fired a warning shot, but the car failed to stop. The boys shot again, the driver screamed, and the car hurtled into a ditch. Finding the man dead, the would-be bandits became frightened and fled. But crime sits heavy on young shoulders, and a week later one of the boys confessed. At the trial, Crown Prosecutor Arthur McClellan said, "I think these two unfortunate boys have been strongly influenced by what they have been reading."

What is it they, and other children, have been reading? Let us take a page from one of the comic books and, in order to examine it closely, turn it into a narrative:

> In the drowsy quietness of mid-afternoon, the owner of a small side-street restaurant sits alone at a table, fingering an empty glass, and waits for the evening trade. Suddenly, the door bangs open; a revolver shot tears apart the silence and crashes around the walls. The owner slumps forward, his head falling between his outstretched arms. An ever-widening pool of blood spreads across the table, smearing white shirt cuffs, and runs in tiny rivulets around the limp fingers. Quickly emptying the cash register, the gunman flees to a waiting car.
>
> As the car roars down the highway, the driver, a pretty blonde girl, argues with the killer. "Why do you have to keep on killin' this way? You're beginning to give me the creeps!"
>
> The man snarls, "SHUT YOUR MOUTH! Anyway, if they get me, the chair ain't gonna burn me any more for one killin' than for a hundred! Besides, when I got a gun in my hand, I feel like a king! I WANNA KILL! I CAN'T STOP KILLIN'!"

The illustrations depicting this story are typical of most crime comics. The red flash of the gun is emphasized; facial expressions are twisted into vivid images of terror and agony; the victim's body is crumpled grotesquely; and, always, there is blood.

The publishers, in defense of crime comics, say that law and order always triumph over evil; that children identify themselves with the good characters; and that, if a child is affected by crime comics, he is emotionally neurotic or unstable. Dr. Frederick Wertham, noted child psychologist, says that the latter argument is like the lawsuit a man filed against the owner of a dog which had killed his pet rabbit; in defense, the dog owner declared that the rabbit started the fight. Dr. Wertham feels that the root of the crime comic problem is this: while crime comics show the victory of authority, they also show the killing of the forces af law and order, as well as the killing of criminals; they tend to lower the value of human life in the eyes of the child; and they immunize the child against pity and the recognition of cruelty and violence.

The shapely, buxom young girls who appear in the pages of the comic books are accused of providing the youthful reader with unhealthy sex attitudes. An oft-quoted case in point is that of the small boy who, when asked what he wanted to be when he grew up, replied enthusiastically, "I want to be a sex maniac!" Seriously, it is easy to see that a constant emphasis on sex could have an injurious effect on impressionable young minds. For a boy, the result may be a perverted idea of feminine allure springing from a misconceived relating of love and violence. For a girl, the result may be a feeling of inferiority, perhaps one of insufficiency, because she does not have the shapely legs, full bosom, and rounded hips of the heroine. Even more dangerous to the young girl is the arousing of a fear of sex which may result in frigidity.

The apologists for sex in comics say that this over-stimulation of sex is harmless; that it is a healthy outlet for children. In an effort to promote this attitude, some publishers have child psychiatrists, educators, sociologists, and psychologists endorse their publications. Although this stamp of approval relieves the worried minds of many parents, it proves neither the healthiness nor the harmlessness of the book's sex content. For parents who are more difficult to convince, the publishers print an open letter in which they defend the rights of "good, clean comics"; paradoxically, the surrounding pages are still spattered with blood. Here is such a letter, reproduced in part:

> Marvel Comic Group,
> A letter to our readers and their PARENTS!
> Hi, Friends:
>
> . . . in England, back in the 18th Century, book stores were called "slop shops of literature," simply because they sold novels. Dr. Samuel Johnson . . . most vociferously defended the right of booksellers to sell the new, much abused novels and the right of authors to express themselves in this medium if they desired.
>
> But what Dr. Johnson defended most enthusiastically was the right of the public to read what they wanted to read. And what we are defending is the right of youngsters to read whichever they like of the many, many good, clean comics currently being published.
>
> Just as the critics of the 18th Century rapped the books which are now classics, in the same way there are critics of today, screaming and tearing out their hair, because a new magazine . . . is not to their liking.
>
> And let the people of America decide if they want to be swayed by critics exercising premature judgement . . . or if they want to wait and watch, and soon realize that most comic magazines are really good, clean, healthful and entertaining reading matter.
>
> *The Editors*
> *Marvel Comic Group*
>
> P. S.—Remember: Dr. Jean Thompson, School Psychiatrist, Child Guidance Bureau, New York City Board of Education, is now our Editorial Consultant. Dr. Thompson's professional examination of our magazines, as advisor to our staff, is your guarantee that the Marvel Comic Group magazines are striving to bring you the very best in reading matter . . . and it is also your best argument that no one should ever take away your right to read these magazines.

This magazine is composed of three picture stories. The first is entitled "Lem Perkins, the Weak-Minded Gun-Crazy Killer." In this "healthful and entertaining story," fourteen murders are committed, three men are seriously wounded, and two more fortunate men are beaten senseless.

Comics occupy a unique place in the literature of today. Although all children are attracted to them, surveys show that a good many adults are constant readers of the comics. One survey, based on educational background, reveals that twenty-five per cent of the comic addicts are elementary school graduates, twenty-seven per cent are high school graduates, and sixteen per cent are college graduates. Another

survey, based on age groups, tabulated the following results.

Age	Male	Female	Copies Read
6-13	95%	91%	12-13 a month
12-17	87%	81%	12-13 a month
18-30	41%	28%	7- 8 a month
31-on	16%	12%	6 a month

The publishers are aware of these facts and arrange their material to interest the adult market. The fatal error in this procedure is that what is good for the childishly minded people may be objectionable for children. There is a difference between what children need and what they want; this difference makes them select comics over books we would prefer them to read. The ideal for children's reading needs is well expressed by Mrs. Grace Hogarth, a New Hampshire librarian, who says, "Children emerging from rattles to picture books, children who are today living in an upside-down world, need books to make them laugh, to make them feel secure, and above all, to make them believe in the permanence of good and beautiful things." This is what children need; but, in trying to fulfill this ideal, we fail to consider the child's craving for knowledge of the adult world. We purify the child's literature; we labor conscientiously to make his books understandable to him, and we succeed in producing books which leave nothing to his inquisitiveness. In the better books, aimed at the child's reading level, there is no trace of the adult element which is so goading to his curiosity. The fact that comic books contain this element of "grown-ups" may be the determinant in the child's choice of reading material.

Not all comics are bad. The influence of the better comics touches upon every phase of American life. The comics contribute new words and phrases, inspire songs, and originate customs. Although most language contributions consist of slang, some of the expressions are now an invigorating part of our daily conversational language: "Let George do it" (Jiggs); "heebie-jeebies," "time's-a-wastin'" (Barney Google); "goon," "jeep" (Popeye); "foo," "twerp," "bodacious," "banana oil," "discombooberate," and many others. In music, comics gave us "Barney Google, with the Goo-Goo Googley Eyes," and "Popeye the Sailor Man." Even Krazy Kat inspired a ballet. And over five hundred schools and colleges hold an annual jubilee on "Sadie Hawkins Day." In a more subtle manner, comics stab healthy pin pricks of criticism into the inflated balloons of labor and management problems (Orphan Annie) and economic conditions (Li'l Abner and his schmoos). During the war, comics helped to sell war bonds, combatted intolerance and absenteeism, and argued the need for an international police force.

Although these contributions are a part of the folklore of our country, part of our "growing pains," and, as such, have historical and cultural value, their greatest significance is in the demonstration of the potentialities of comics: ability to be amusing and entertaining, inventiveness to be inspiring and informative, and power, immeasurable power, to exert influence.

Today, the comic book problem is at a crisis. Over fifty cities restrict the sale of comic books as a direct result of action by civic and church groups. One city prohibits the sale of comic books on the assumption that they are pornographic literature. Another city censors comics with the cooperation of the distributors. Ordinances in other cities ban the sale of comic books, authorize the censorship of publications in advance of their release, and solicit the voluntary cooperation of magazine distributors in removing objectionable books from the newsstands.

The crusade against comics increased in vigor with the municipal conquests, and several bills were introduced in state legislatures. In New York, the Feinberg bill, which would establish a board of comics review in the State Education Department, passed the State

Assembly in February, 1949, only to be vetoed by Governor Thomas E. Dewey on constitutional grounds. The state legislature, uneasy under the pressure of public opinion and hesitant of defying higher authority, appropriated fifteen thousand dollars and set up a joint committee to make a study of the comics situation. The study is still in progress.

In Pennsylvania, House Bill Number 1242, introduced by Mr. Toomey on March 14, 1949, would bar comics which set forth "the commission of arson, assault with a deadly weapon, burglary, kidnapping, mayhem, murder, rape, robbery, theft, or voluntary manslaughter." This bill prohibits comics to anyone under eighteen years of age and provides for a maximum penalty of a five hundred dollar fine and a year's imprisonment. The Toomey bill was referred to the Committee on Judiciary on March 15, 1949, where it made its first and last stop on the agenda of the General Assembly.

The reason for the lack of success of state legislation of this type is the storm of protest arising from minority groups all over the country. The American Civil Liberties Union attacks these measures as potentially capable of bringing every daily newspaper under censorship. Other patriotic organizations, newspapers, and publishers argue that the control of sale and distribution of literature interferes with the basic constitutional rights of freedom of choice of the readers and freedom of speech of the publishers.

The comic book publishers are not deaf to the sounds of battle; while maintaining their right to free speech, they are hurrying to clean up their industry. By establishing a code of ethics, fourteen publishers hope to improve their magazines in this manner: "Less sex, no crime detail, no sadistic torture, a minimum of slang and no vulgar language, no 'alluring' divorces, and no ridicule of or attack on any religious or racial group." The Association of Comic Magazine Publishers appointed an advisory committee to "take positive steps toward improving comic magazines and making maximum use of them as a medium for education." They will seek improvement so that comic books will become an educational force, improving legibility, lettering, raising standards of art work and accuracy of representation, and cooperating with all organizations interested in child welfare.

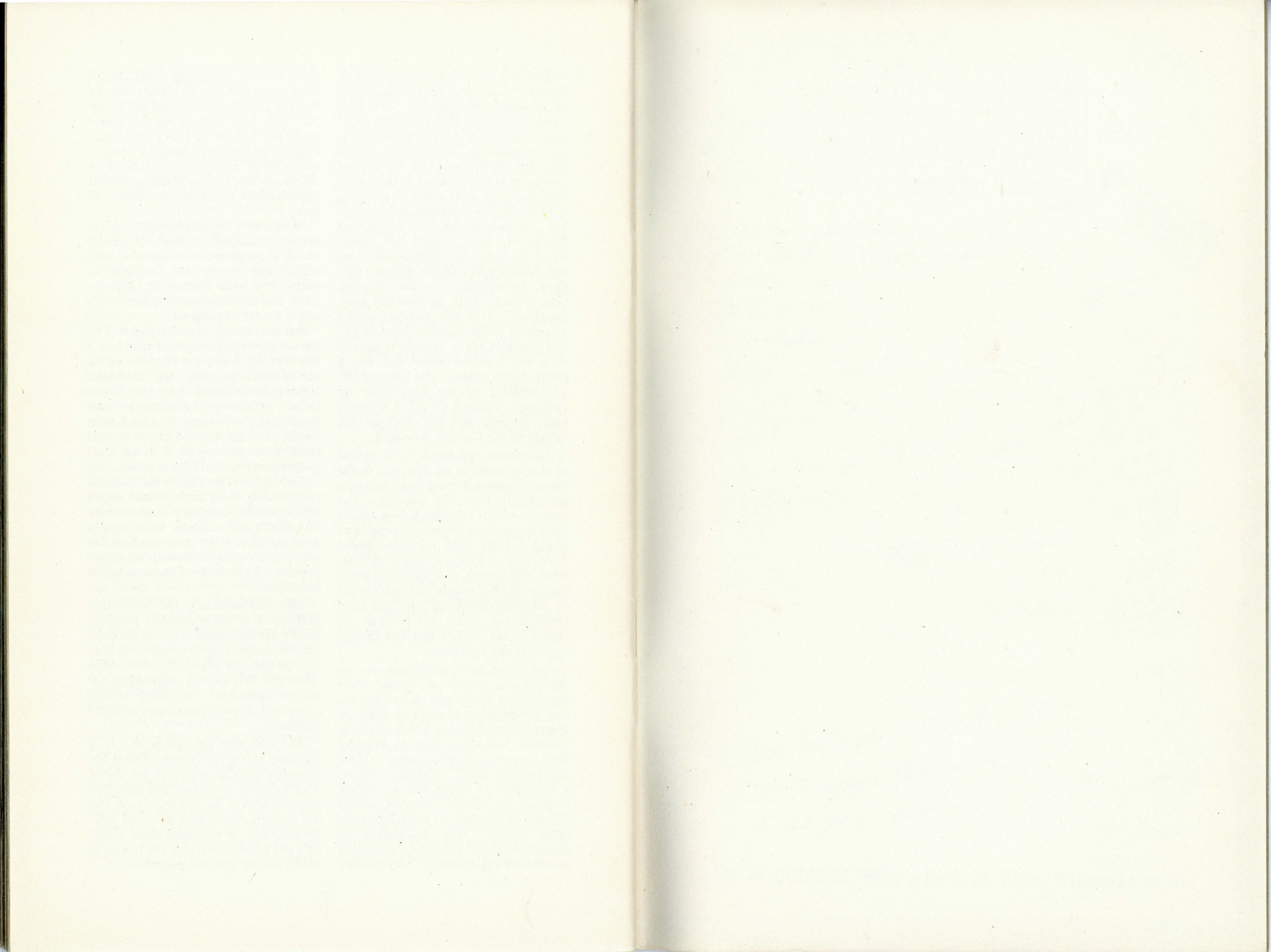
Meanwhile, impatient public opinion forces municipal control of comic books, urges governmental control, and argues that society has the right to select what will further its development, and to ban, or control, that which might hinder its progress.

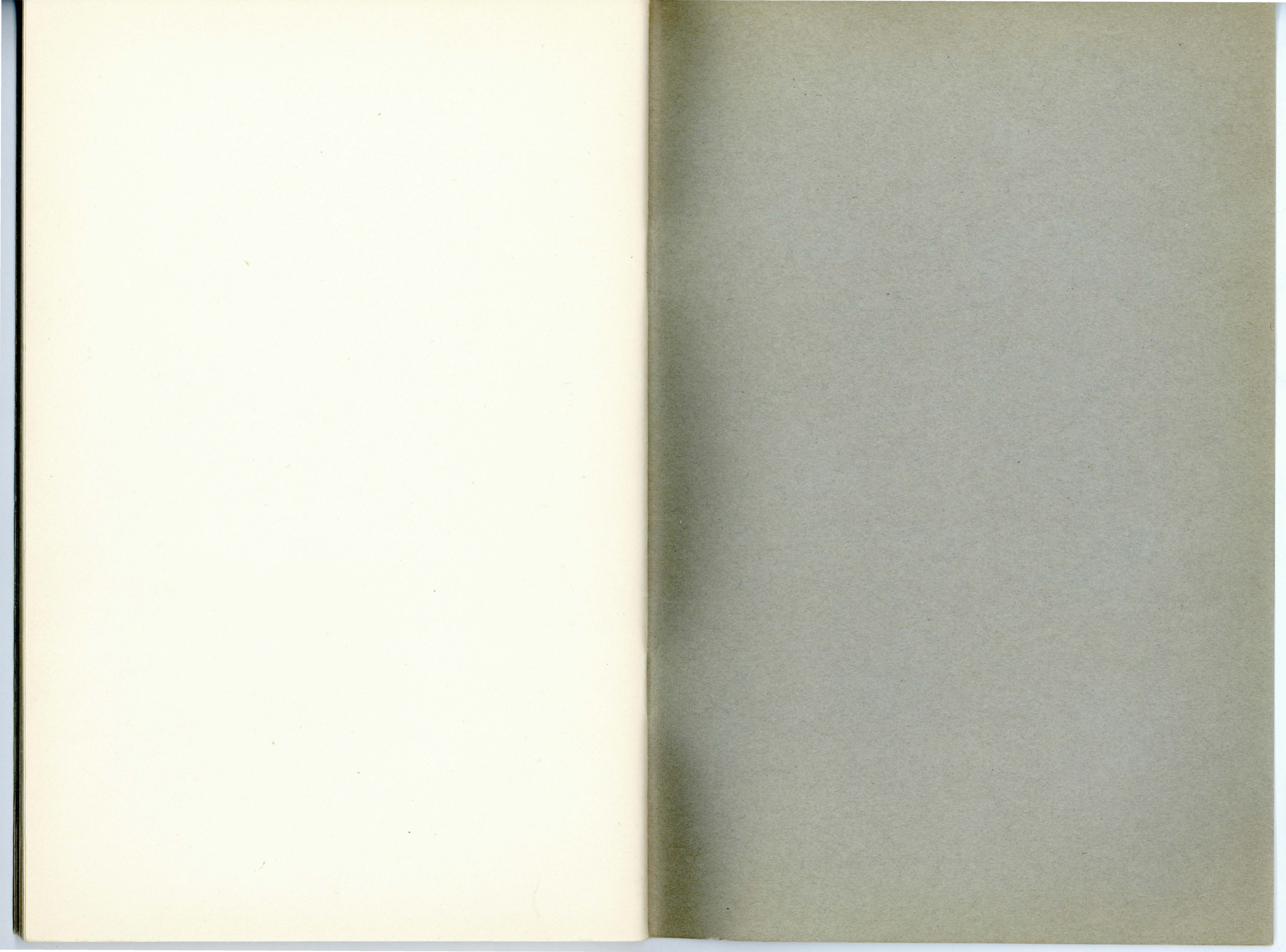
But does society have this right? The human rights of freedom of speech and freedom of choice are the essence of our democracy; they are hard-won rights to be defended at any cost. Legislation permitting interference with these rights, in the case of comic books, would pave the way for future restrictions. Once the barrier is down, dangerous controls could be imposed.

Comics can be controlled without jeopardizing these basic human rights which we have recently confirmed in importance and value by an extremely great sacrifice; there is no sanction for any restriction, or limitation, that might prevent the privilege of their complete enjoyment.

The ideal solution to the comic book problem is a self-censorship program among the publishers. Some of the publishers, recognizing a program of this type as the only practical answer, have taken the first step by organizing advisory committees, adopting ethical codes, and observing minimum editorial standards.

The next step belongs to us. It is our duty to see that these controls are generally adopted, that they are vested with sufficient authority, and that they produce results. In this way alone, can we force the observance of moral obligations, and, at the same time, eliminate any possible threat to the freedoms which are our greatest possessions.





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First Federal Savings and Loan Association of Wilkes-Barre

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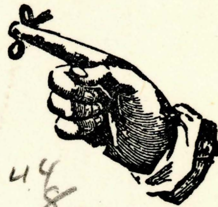
"Keep In Mind"



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11 forms
75
75
825

1875 sheets or 4 reams

280
28
2240
560
7840

1500
6
9000

280
40
11200

44
7
308
11
319