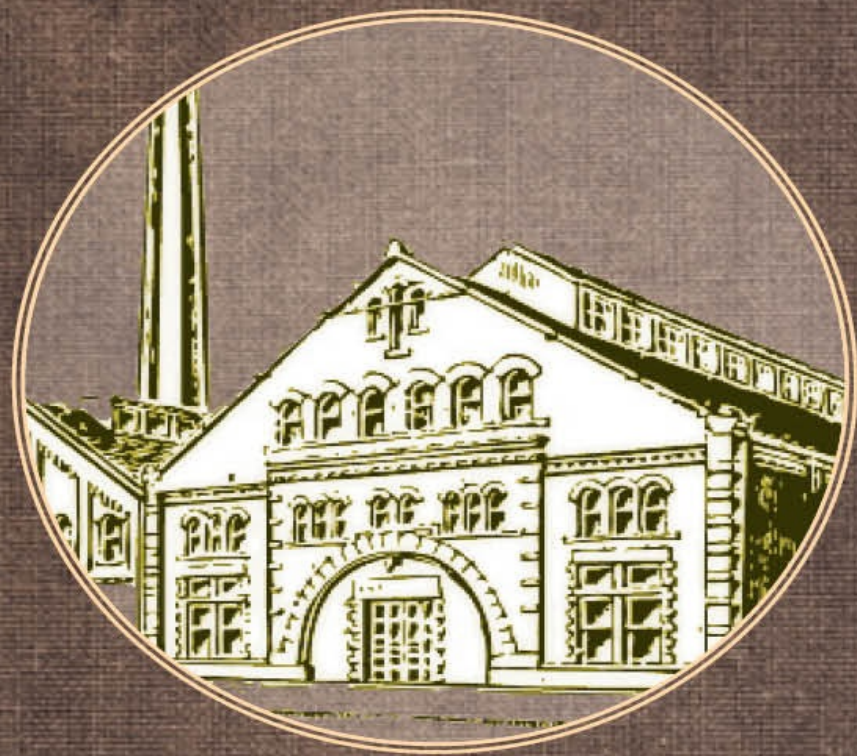


ERNEST
HEMINGWAY



**THE TORRENTS
OF SPRING**

HARPERPERENNIAL  CLASSICS

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Ernest Hemingway

HARPERPERENNIAL  CLASSICS

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AUTHOR'S FINAL NOTE TO THE READER
ABOUT THE AUTHOR
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ABOUT THE PUBLISHER

PART ONE

Red and Black Laughter

The only source of the true Ridiculous (as it appears to me) is affectation.

HENRY FIELDING

CHAPTER ONE

YOGI JOHNSON STOOD looking out of the window of a big pump-factory in Michigan. Spring would soon be here. Could it be that what this writing fellow Hutchinson had said, "If winter comes can spring be far behind?" would be true again this year? Yogi Johnson wondered. Near Yogi the next window but one stood Scripps O'Neil, a tall, lean man with a tall, lean face. Both stood and looked out at the empty yard of the pump-factory. Snow covered the crated pumps that would soon be shipped away. Once the spring should come and the snow melt, workmen from the factory would break out the pumps from piles where they were snowed in and haul them down to the G. R. & I. station, where they would be loaded on flat-cars and shipped away. Yogi Johnson looked out of the window at the snowed-in pumps, and his breath made little fairy tracings on the cold windowpane. Yogi Johnson thought of Paris. Perhaps it was the little fairy tracings that reminded him of the gay city where he had once spent two weeks. Two weeks that were to have been the happiest weeks of his life. That was all behind him now. That and everything else.

Scripps O'Neil had two wives. As he looked out of the window, standing tall and lean and resilient with his own tenuous hardness, he thought of both of them. One lived in Mancelona and the other lived in Petoskey. He had not seen the wife who lived in Mancelona since last spring. He looked out at the snow-covered pump-yards and thought what spring would mean. With his wife in Mancelona Scripps often got drunk. When he was drunk he and his wife were happy. They would go down together to the railway station and walk out along the tracks, and then sit together and drink and watch the trains go by. They would sit under a pine-tree on a little hill that overlooked the railway and drink. Sometimes they drank all night. Sometimes they drank for a week at a time. It did them good. It made Scripps strong. Scripps had a daughter whom he playfully called Lousy O'Neil. Her real name was Lucy O'Neil. One night, after Scripps and his old woman had been out drinking on the railroad line for three or four days, he lost his wife. He didn't know where she was. When he came to himself everything was dark. He walked along the railroad track toward town. The ties were stiff and hard under his feet. He tried walking on the rails. He couldn't do it. He had the dope on that all right: He went back to walking along the ties. It was a long way into town. Finally he came to where he could see the lights of the switch-yard. He cut away from the tracks and passed the Mancelona High School. It was a yellow-brick building. There was nothing rococo about it, like the buildings he had seen in Paris. No, he had never been in Paris. That was not he. That was his friend Yogi Johnson.

Yogi Johnson looked out of the window. Soon it would be time to shut the pump-factory for the night. He opened the window carefully, just a crack. Just a crack, but that was enough. Outside in the

yard the snow had begun to melt. A warm breeze was blowing. A Chinook wind the pump fellows called it. The warm chinook wind came in through the window into the pump-factory. All the workmen laid down their tools. Many of them were Indians.

The foreman was a short, iron-jawed man. He had once made a trip as far as Duluth. Duluth was far across the blue waters of the lake in the hills of Minnesota. A wonderful thing had happened to him there.

The foreman put his finger in his mouth to moisten it and held it up in the air. He felt the warm breeze on his finger. He shook his head ruefully and smiled at the men, a little grimly perhaps.

“Well, it’s a regular chinook, boys,” he said.

Silently for the most part, the workmen hung up their tools. The half-completed pumps were put away in their racks. The workmen filed, some of them talking, others silent, a few muttering, to the washroom to wash up.

Outside through the window came the sound of an Indian war-whoop.

CHAPTER TWO

SCRIPPS O'NEIL STOOD outside the Mancelona High School looking up at the lighted windows. It was dark and the snow was falling. It had been falling ever since Scripps could remember. A passer-by stopped and stared at Scripps. After all, what was this man to him? He went on.

Scripps stood in the snow and stared up at the lighted windows of the High School. Inside there people were learning things. Far into the night they worked, the boys vying with the girls in their search for knowledge, this urge for the learning of things that was sweeping America. His girl, little Lousy, a girl that had cost him a cool seventy-five dollars in doctors' bills, was in there learning. Scripps was proud. It was too late for him to learn, but there, day after day and night after night, Lousy was learning. She had the stuff in her, that girl.

Scripps went on up to his house. It was not a big house, but it wasn't size that mattered to Scripps's old woman.

"Scripps," she often said when they were drinking together, "I don't want a palace. All I want is a place to keep the wind out." Scripps had taken her at her word. Now, as he walked in the late evening through the snow and saw the lights of his own home, he felt glad that he had taken her at her word. It was better this way than if he were coming home to a palace. He, Scripps, was not the sort of chap that wanted a palace.

He opened the door of his house and went in. Something kept going through his head. He tried to get it out, but it was no good. What was it that poet chap his friend Harry Parker had met once in Detroit had written? Harry used to recite it: "Through pleasures and palaces though I may roam. Where you something something something there's no place like home." He could not remember the words. Not all of them. He had written a simple tune to it and taught Lucy to sing it. That was when they first were married. Scripps might have been a composer, one of these chaps that write the stuff the Chicago Symphony Orchestra plays, if he had had a chance to go on. He would get Lucy to sing that song tonight. He would never drink again. Drinking robbed him of his ear for music. Times when he was drunk the sound of the whistles of the trains at night pulling up the Boyne Falls grade seemed more lovely than anything this chap Stravinsky had ever written. Drinking had done that. It was wrong. He would get away to Paris. Like this chap Albert Spalding that played the violin.

Scripps opened the door. He went in. "Lucy," he called, "it is I, Scripps." He would never drink again. No more nights out on the railroad. Perhaps Lucy needed a new fur coat. Perhaps, after all, she had wanted a palace instead of this place. You never knew how you were treating a woman. Perhaps, after all, this place was not keeping out the wind. Fantastic. He lit a match. "Lucy!" he called, and

there was a note of dumb terror in his mouth. His friend Walt Simmons had heard just such a cry from a stallion that had once been run over by a passing autobus in the Place Vendome in Paris. In Paris there were no geldings. All the horses were stallions. They did not breed mares. Not since the war. The war changed all that.

“Lucy!” he called, and again “Lucy!” There was no answer. The house was empty. Through the snow-filled air, as he stood there alone in his tall leanness, in his own deserted house, there came to Scripps’s ears the distant sound of an Indian war-whoop.

CHAPTER THREE

SCRIPPS LEFT MANCERONA. He was through with that place. What had a town like that to give him? There was nothing to it. You worked all your life and then a thing like that happened. The savings of years wiped out. Everything gone. He started to Chicago to get a job. Chicago was the place. Look at its geographical situation, right at the end of Lake Michigan. Chicago would do big things. Any fool could see that. He would buy land in what is now the Loop, the big shopping and manufacturing district. He would buy the land at a low price and then hang onto it. Let them try and get it away from him. He knew a thing or two now.

Alone, bareheaded, the snow blowing in his hair, he walked down the G. R. & I. railway tracks. It was the coldest night he had ever known. He picked up a dead bird that had frozen and fallen onto the railroad tracks and put it inside his shirt to warm it. The bird nestled close to his warm body and pecked at his chest gratefully.

“Poor little chap,” Scripps said. “You feel the cold too.”

Tears came into his eyes.

“Drat that wind,” Scripps said and once again faced into the blowing snow. The wind was blowing straight down from Lake Superior. The telegraph wires above Scripps’s head sang in the wind. Through the dark, Scripps saw a great yellow eye coming toward him. The giant locomotive came nearer through the snow-storm. Scripps stepped to one side of the track to let it go by. What is it that old writing fellow Shakespeare says: “Might makes right”? Scripps thought of that quotation as the train went past him in the snowing darkness. First the engine passed. He saw the fireman bending to fling great shovelfuls of coal into the open furnace door. The engineer wore goggles. His face was lit up by the light from the open door of the engine. He was the engineer. It was he who had his hand on the throttle. Scripps thought of the Chicago anarchists who, when they were hanged, said: “Though you throttle us today, still you cannot something something our souls.” There was a monument where they were buried in Waldheim Cemetery, right beside the Forest Park Amusement Park, in Chicago. His father used to take Scripps out there on Sundays. The monument was all black and there was a black angel. That was when Scripps had been a little boy. He used often to ask his father: “Father, when we come to look at the anarchists on Sunday why can’t we ride on the shoot the chutes?” He had never been satisfied with his father’s answer. He had been a little boy in knee pants then. His father had been a great composer. His mother was an Italian woman from the north of Italy. They are strange people, these north Italians.

Scripps stood beside the track, and the long black segments of the train clicked by him in the

snow. All the cars were Pullmans. The blinds were down. Light came in thin slits from the bottom of the dark windows as the cars went by. The train did not roar by as it might have if it had been going in the other direction, because it was climbing the Boyne Falls grade. It went slower than if it had been going down. Still it went too fast for Scripps to hitch on. He thought how he had been an expert at hitching on grocery wagons when he was a young boy in knee pants.

The long black train of Pullman cars passed Scripps as he stood beside the tracks. Who were in those cars? Were they Americans, piling up money while they slept? Were they mothers? Were they fathers? Were there lovers among them? Or were they Europeans, members of a worn-out civilization, world-weary from the war? Scripps wondered.

The last car passed him and the train went on up the track. Scripps watched the red light at its stem disappearing into the blackness through which the snowflakes now came softly. The bird fluttered inside his shirt. Scripps started along the ties. He wanted to get to Chicago that night, if possible, to start work in the morning. The bird fluttered again. It was not so feeble now. Scripps put his hand on to still its little bird flutterings. The bird was calmed. Scripps strode on up the track.

After all, he did not need to go as far as Chicago. There were other places. What if that critic fellow Henry Mencken had called Chicago the Literary Capital of America? There was Grand Rapids. Once in Grand Rapids, he could start in in the furniture business. Fortunes had been made that way. Grand Rapids furniture was famous wherever young couples walked in the evening to talk of home-making. He remembered a sign he had seen in Chicago as a little boy. His mother had pointed it out to him as together they walked barefoot through what now is probably the Loop, begging from door to door. His mother loved the bright flashing of the electric lights in the sign.

“They are like San Miniato in my native Florence,” she told Scripps. “Look at them; my son,” she said, “for some day your music will be played there by the Firenze Symphony Orchestra.”

Scripps had often watched the sign for hours while his mother slept wrapped in an old shawl on what is now probably the Blackstone Hotel. The sign had made a great impression on him.

LET HARTMAN FEATHER YOUR NEST it had said. It flashed in many different colors. First a pure, dazzling white. That was what Scripps loved best. Then it flashed a lovely green. Then it flashed red. One night as he lay crouched against his mother’s body warmth and watched the sign flash, a policeman came up. “You’ll have to move along,” he said.

Ah, yes, there was big money to be made in the furniture business if you knew how to go about it. He, Scripps, knew all the wrinkles of that game. In his own mind it was settled. He would stop at Grand Rapids. The little bird fluttered, happily now.

“Ah, what a beautiful gilded cage I’ll build for you, my pretty one,” Scripps said exultantly. The little bird pecked him confidently. Scripps strode on in the storm. The snow was beginning to drift across the track. Borne on the wind, there came to Scripps’s ears the sound of a far-off Indian war-whoop.

CHAPTER FOUR

WHERE WAS SCRIPPS NOW? Walking in the night in the storm, he had become confused. He had started for Chicago after that dreadful night when he had found that his home was a home no longer. Why had Lucy left? What had become of Lousy? He, Scripps, did not know. Not that he cared. That was all behind him. There was none of that now. He was standing knee-deep in snow in front of a railway station. On the railway station was written in big letters:

PETOSKEY

There were a pile of deer shipped down by hunters from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, lying piled the one on the other, dead and stiff and drifted half over with snow on the station platform. Scripps read the sign again. Could this be Petoskey?

A man was inside the station, tapping something back of a wicketed window. He looked out at Scripps. Could he be a telegrapher? Something told Scripps that he was.

He stepped out of the snow-drift and approached the window. Behind the window the man worked busily away at his telegrapher's key.

"Are you a telegrapher?" asked Scripps.

"Yes, sir," said the man. "I'm a telegrapher."

"How wonderful!"

The telegrapher eyed him suspiciously. After all, what was this man to him?

"Is it hard to be a telegrapher?" Scripps asked. He wanted to ask the man outright if this was Petoskey. He did not know this great northern section of America, though, and he wished to be polite.

The telegrapher looked at him curiously.

"Say," he asked, "are you a fairy?"

"No," Scripps said. "I don't know what being a fairy means."

"Well," said the telegrapher, "what do you carry a bird around for?"

"Bird?" asked Scripps. "What bird?"

"That bird that's sticking out of your shirt." Scripps was at a loss. What sort of chap was this telegrapher? What sort of men went in for telegraphy? Were they like composers? Were they like artists? Were they like writers? Were they like the advertising men who write the ads in our national weeklies? Or were they like Europeans, drawn and wasted by the war, their best years behind them? Could he tell this telegrapher the whole story? Would he understand?

"I started home," he began. "I passed the Mancelona High School—"

"I knew a girl in Mancelona," the telegrapher said. "Maybe you knew her. Ethel Enright."

It was no good going on. He would cut the story short. He would give the bare essentials. Besides, it was beastly cold. It was cold standing there on the wind-swept station platform. Something told him it was useless to go on. He looked over at the deer lying there in a pile, stiff and cold. Perhaps they, too, had been lovers. Some were bucks and some were does. The bucks had horns. That was how you could tell. With cats it is more difficult. In France they geld the cats and do not geld the horses. France was a long way off.

“My wife left me,” Scripps said abruptly.

“I don’t wonder if you go around with a damn bird sticking out of your shirt,” the telegrapher said.

“What town is this?” Scripps asked. The single moment of spiritual communion they had had, had been dissipated. They had never really had it. But they might have. It was no use now. It was no use trying to capture what had gone. What had fled.

“Petoskey,” the telegrapher replied.

“Thank you,” Scripps said. He turned and walked into the silent, deserted Northern town. Luckily he had four hundred and fifty dollars in his pocket. He had sold a story to George Horace Lorimer just before he had started out with his old woman on that drinking trip. Why had he gone at all? What was it all about, anyway?

Coming toward him down the street came two Indians. They looked at him, but their faces did not change. Their faces remained the same. They went into McCarthy’s barber shop.

CHAPTER FIVE

SCRIPPS O'NEIL STOOD irresolutely before the barber shop. Inside there men were being shaved. Other men, no different, were having their hair cut. Other men sat against the wall in tall chairs and smoked, awaiting their turn in the barber chairs, admiring the paintings hung on the wall, admiring their own reflections in the long mirror. Should he, Scripps, go in there? After all, he had four hundred and fifty dollars in his pocket. He could go where he wanted. He looked, once again, irresolutely. It was an inviting prospect, the society of men, the warm room, the white jackets of the barbers skillfully snipping away with their scissors or drawing their blades diagonally through the lather that covered the face of some man who was getting a shave. They could use their tools, these barbers. Somehow, it wasn't what he wanted. He wanted something different. He wanted to eat. Besides, there was his bird to look after.

Scripps O'Neil turned his back on the barber shop and strode away up the street of the silently frozen Northern town. On his right, as he walked, the weeping birches, their branches bare of leaves, hung down to the ground, heavy with snow. To his ears came the sound of sleigh bells. Perhaps it was Christmas. In the South little children would be shooting off firecrackers and crying "Christmas Gift Christmas Gift!" to one another. His father came from the South. He had been a soldier in the rebel army. 'Way back in Civil War days. Sherman had burned their house down on his March to the Sea. "War is hell," Sherman had said. "But you see how it is, Mrs. O'Neil. I've got to do it." He had touched a match to the white-pillared old house.

"If General O'Neil were here, you dastard!" his mother had said, speaking in her broken English, "you'd never have touched a match to that house."

Smoke curled up from the old house. The fire was mounting. The white pillars were obscured in the rising smoke-wreaths. Scripps had held close to his mother's linsey-woolsey dress.

General Sherman climbed back onto his horse and made a low bow. "Mrs. O'Neil," he said, and Scripps's mother always said there were tears in his eyes, even if he was a damned Yank. The man had a heart, sir, even if he did not follow its dictates. "Mrs. O'Neil, if the general were here, we could have it out as man to man. As it is, ma'am, war being what it is, I must burn your house."

He motioned to one of his soldiers, who ran forward and threw a bucket of kerosene on the flames. The flames rose and a great column of smoke went up in the still evening air.

"At least, General Sherman," Scripps's mother said triumphantly, "that column of smoke will warn the other loyal daughters of the Confederacy that you are coming."

Sherman bowed. "That is the risk we must take, ma'am." He clapped spurs to his horse and rode

away, his long white hair floating on the wind. Neither Scripps nor his mother ever saw him again.

Odd that he should think of that incident now. He looked up. Facing him was a sign:

BROWN'S BEANERY THE BEST BY TEST

He would go in and eat. This was what he wanted. He would go in and eat. That sign:

THE BEST BY TEST

Ah, these big beanery owners were wise fellows. They knew how to get the customers. No ads in *The Saturday Evening Post* for them. THE BEST BY TEST. That was the stuff. He went in.

Inside the door of the beanery Scripps O'Neil looked around him. There was a long counter. There was a clock. There was a door led into the kitchen. There were a couple of tables. There were a pile of doughnuts under a glass cover. There were signs put about on the wall advertising things one might eat. Was this, after all, Brown's Beanery?

"I wonder," Scripps asked an elderly waitress who came in through the swinging door from the kitchen, "if you could tell me if this is Brown's Beanery?"

"Yes, sir," answered the waitress. "The best by test."

"Thank you," Scripps said. He sat down at the counter. "I would like to have some beans for myself and some for my bird here."

He opened his shirt and placed the bird on the counter. The bird ruffled his feathers and shook himself. He pecked inquiringly at the catsup bottle. The elderly waitress put out a hand and stroked him. "Isn't he a manly little fellow?" she remarked. "By the way," she asked, a little shamefacedly, "what was it you ordered, sir?"

"Beans," Scripps said, "for my bird and myself."

The waitress shoved up a little wicket that led into the kitchen. Scripps had a glimpse of a warm, steam-filled room, with big pots and kettles, and many shining cans on the wall.

"A pig and the noisy ones," the waitress called in a matter-of-fact voice into the open wicket. "On for a bird!"

"On the fire!" a voice answered from the kitchen.

"How old is your bird?" the elderly waitress asked.

"I don't know," Scripps said. "I never saw him before last night. I was walking on the railroad track from Mancelona. My wife left me."

"Poor little chap," the waitress said. She poured a little catsup on her finger and the bird pecked at it gratefully.

"My wife left me," Scripps said. "We'd been out drinking on the railroad track. We used to go out evenings and watch the trains pass. I write stories. I had a story in *The Post* and two in *The Dial*. Mencken's trying to get ahold of me. I'm too wise for that sort of thing. No *politzei* for mine. They give me the *katzenjammers*."

What was he saying? He was talking wildly. This would never do. He must pull himself together.

"Scofield Thayer was my best man," he said. "I'm a Harvard man. All I want is for them to give

me and my bird a square deal. No more *weltpolitik*. Take Dr. Coolidge away.”

His mind was wandering. He knew what it was. He was faint with hunger. This Northern air was too sharp, too keen for him.

“I say,” he said. “Could you let me have just a few of those beans. I don’t like to rush things. I know when to let well enough alone.”

The wicket came up, and a large plate of beans and a small plate of beans, both steaming, appeared.

“Here they are,” the waitress said.

Scripps fell to on the large plate of beans. There was a little pork, too. The bird was eating happily, raising its head after each swallow to let the beans go down.

“He does that to thank God for those beans,” the elderly waitress explained.

“They’re mighty fine beans, too,” Scripps agreed. Under the influence of the beans his head was clearing. What was this rot he had been talking about that man Henry Mencken? Was Mencken really after him? It wasn’t a pretty prospect to face. He had four hundred and fifty dollars in his pocket. When that was gone he could always put an end to things. If they pressed him too far they would get a big surprise. He wasn’t the man to be taken alive. Just let them try it.

After eating his beans the bird had fallen asleep. He was sleeping on one leg, the other leg tucked up into his feathers.

“When he gets tired of sleeping on that leg he will change legs and rest,” the waitress remarked. “We had an old osprey at home that was like that.”

“Where was your home?” Scripps asked.

“In England. In the Lake District.” The waitress smiled a bit wistfully. “Wordsworth’s country, you know.”

Ah, these English. They travelled all over the face of the globe. They were not content to remain on their little island. Strange Nordics, obsessed with their dream of empire.

“I was not always a waitress,” the elderly waitress remarked.

“I’m sure you weren’t.”

“Not half,” the waitress went on. “It’s rather a strange *story*. Perhaps it would bore you?”

“Not at all,” Scripps said. “You wouldn’t mind if I used the story sometime?”

“Not if you find it interesting,” the waitress smiled.

“You wouldn’t use my name, of course.”

“Not if you’d rather not,” Scripps said. “By the way, could I have another order of beans?”

“Best by test,” the waitress smiled. Her face was lined and gray. She looks a little like that actress that died in Pittsburgh. What was her name? Lenore Ulric. In *Peter Pan*. That was it. They say she always went about veiled, Scripps thought. There was an interesting woman. Was it Lenore Ulric? Perhaps not. No matter.

“You really want some more beans?” asked the waitress.

“Yes,” Scripps answered simply.

“Once again on the loud ones,” the waitress called into the wicket. “Layoff the bird.”

“On the fire,” came the response.

“Please go on with your story,” Scripps said kindly.

“It was the year of the Paris Exposition,” she began. “I was a young girl at the time, *une jeune fille* and I came over from England with my mother. We were going to be present at the opening of the exposition. On our way from the Gare du Nord to the hotel in the Place Vendome where we lodged, we stopped at a coiffeur’s shop and made some trifling purchase. My mother, as I recall, purchased an additional bottle of ‘smelling salts,’ as you call them here in America.”

She smiled.

“Yes, go on. Smelling salts,” Scripps said.

“We registered, as is customary, in the hotel, and were given the adjoining rooms we had reserved. My mother felt a bit done in by the trip, and we dined in our rooms. I was full of excitement about seeing the exposition on the morrow. But I was tired after the journey—we had had a rather nasty crossing—and slept soundly. In the morning I awoke and called for my mother. There was no answer and I went into the room to waken Mummy. Instead of Mummy there was a French general in the bed.”

“Mon Dieu!” Scripps said.

“I was terribly frightened,” the waitress went on, “and rang the bell for the management. The concierge came up, and I demanded to know where my mother was.

“‘But, mademoiselle,’ the concierge explained, ‘we know nothing about your mother. You came here with General So-and-so’—I cannot remember the general’s name.”

“Call him General Joffre,” Scripps suggested.

“It was a name very like that,” the waitress said. “I was fearfully frightened and sent for the police and demanded to see the guest-register. ‘You’ll find there that I am registered with my mother,’ I said. The police came and the concierge brought up the register. ‘See, madame,’ he said. ‘You are registered with the general with whom you came to our hotel last night.’

“I was desperate. Finally, I remembered where the coiffeur’s shop was. The police sent for the coiffeur. An agent of police brought him in.

“‘I stopped at your shop with my mother,’ I said to the coiffeur, ‘and my mother bought a bottle of aromatic salts.’

“‘I remember mademoiselle perfectly,’ the coiffeur said. ‘But you were not with your mother. You were with an elderly French general. He purchased, I believe, a pair of mustache tongs. My books, at any rate, will show the purchase.’

“I was in despair. In the meantime the police had brought in the cab driver who had brought us from the gare to the hotel. He swore that I had never been with my mother. Tell me, does this story bore you?”

“Go on,” said Scripps. “If you had ever been as hard up for plots as I have been!”

“Well,” the waitress said. “That’s all there is to the tale. I never saw my mother again. I

communicated with the embassy, but they could do nothing. It was finally established by them that I had crossed the channel with my mother, but they could do nothing beyond that. “Tears came into the elderly waitress’s eyes. “I never saw Mummy again. Never again. Not even once.”

“What about the general?”

“He finally loaned me one hundred francs—not a great sum even in those days—and I came to America and became a waitress. That’s all there is to the story.”

“There’s more than that,” Scripps said. “I’d stake my life there’s more than that.”

“Sometimes, you know, I feel there is,” the waitress said. “I feel there must be more than that. Somewhere, somehow, there must be an explanation. I don’t know what brought the subject into my mind this morning.”

“It was a good thing to get it off your mind,” Scripps said.

“Yes,” the waitress smiled, the lines in her face not quite so deep now. “I feel better now.”

“Tell me,” Scripps asked the waitress. “Is there any work in this town for me and my bird?”

“Honest work?” asked the waitress. “I only know of honest work.”

“Yes, honest work,” Scripps said.

“They do say they’re hiring hands at the new pump-factory,” the waitress said. Why shouldn’t he work with his hands? Rodin had done it. Cezanne had been a butcher. Renoir a carpenter. Picasso had worked in a cigarette-factory in his boyhood. Gilbert Stuart, who painted those famous portraits of Washington that are reproduced all over this America of ours and hang in every schoolroom-Gilbert Stuart had been a blacksmith. Then there was Emerson. Emerson had been a hod-carrier. James Russell Lowell had been, he had heard, a telegraph operator in his youth. Like that chap down at the station. Perhaps even now that telegrapher at the station was working on his “Thanatopsis” or his “To a Waterfowl.” Why shouldn’t he, Scripps O’Neil, work in a pump-factory?

“You’ll come back again?” the waitress asked.

“If I may,” Scripps said.

“And bring your bird.”

“Yes,” Scripps said. “The little chap’s rather tired now. After all, it was a hard night for him.”

“I should say it was,” agreed the waitress.

Scripps went out again into the town. He felt clearheaded and ready to face life. A pump-factory would be interesting. Pumps were big things now. Fortunes were made and lost in pumps every day in New York in Wall Street. He knew of a chap who’d cleaned up a cool half-million on pumps in less than half an hour. They knew what they were about, these big Wall Street operators.

Outside on the street he looked up at the sign. BEST BY TEST, he read. They had the dope all right, he said. Was it true, though, that there had been a Negro cook? Just once, just for one moment, when the wicket went up, he thought he had caught a glimpse of something black. Perhaps the chap

was only sooty from the stove.

PART TWO

The Struggle for Life

And here I solemnly protest I have no intention to vilify or asperse anyone; for though everything is copied from the book of nature and scarce a character or action produced which I have not taken from my own observations or experience; yet I have used the utmost care to obscure the persons by such different circumstances, degrees, and colors, that it will be impossible to guess at them with any degree of certainty; and if it ever happens otherwise, it is only where the failure characterized is so minute, that it is a foible only which the party himself may laugh at as well as any other.

HENRY FIELDING

CHAPTER SIX

SCRIPPS O'NEIL WAS looking for employment. It would be good to work with his hands. He walked down the street away from the beanery and past McCarthy's barber shop. He did not go into the barber shop. It looked as inviting as ever, but it was employment Scripps wanted. He turned sharply around the corner of the barber shop and onto the Main Street of Petoskey. It was a handsome broad street, lined on either side with brick and pressed-stone buildings. Scripps walked along it toward the part of town where the pump-factory stood. At the door of the pump-factory he was embarrassed. Could this really be the pump-factory? True, a stream of pumps were being carried out and set up in the snow, and work-men were throwing pails of water over them to encase them in a coating of ice that would protect them from the winter winds as well as any paint would. But were they really pumps? It might all be a trick. These pump men were clever fellows.

"I say!" Scripps beckoned to one of the workmen who was sloshing water over a new, raw-looking pump that had just been carried out and stood protestingly in the snow. "Are they pumps?"

"They will be in time," the workman said.

Scripps knew it was the factory. They weren't going to fool him on that. He walked up to the door. There was a sign on it:

KEEP OUT. THIS MEANS YOU

Can that mean me? Scripps wondered. He knocked on the door and went in.

"I'd like to speak to the manager," he said, standing quietly in the half-light.

Workmen were passing him, carrying the new raw pumps on their shoulders. They hummed snatches of songs as they passed. The handles of the pumps flopped stiffly in dumb protest. Some pumps had no handles. They perhaps, after all, are the lucky ones, Scripps thought. A little man came up to him. He was well-built, short, with wide shoulders and a grim face.

"You were asking for the manager?"

"Yes, sir."

"I'm the foreman here. What I say goes."

"Can you hire and fire?" Scripps asked.

"I can do one as easily as the other," the foreman said.

"I want a job."

"Any experience?"

"Not in pumps."

"All right," the foreman said. "We'll put you on piecework. Here, Yogi," he called to one of the

men, who was standing looking out of the window of the factory, "show this new chum where to stow his swag and how to find his way around these diggings." The foreman looked Scripps up and down. "I'm an Australian," he said. "Hope you'll like the lay here." He walked off.

The man called Yogi Johnson came over from the window. "Glad to meet you," he said. He was a chunky, well-built fellow. One of the sort you see around almost anywhere. He looked as though he had been through things.

"Your foreman's the first Australian I've ever met," Scripps said.

"Oh, he's not an Australian," Yogi said. "He was just with the Australians once during the war, and it made a big impression on him."

"Were you in the war?" Scripps asked.

"Yes," Yogi Johnson said. "I was the first man to go from Cadillac."

"It must have been quite an experience."

"It's meant a lot to me," Yogi answered. "Come on and I'll show you around the works."

Scripps followed this man, who showed him through the pump-factory. It was dark but warm inside the pump-factory. Men naked to the waist took the pumps in huge tongs as they came trundling by on an endless chain, culling out the misfits and placing the perfect pumps on another endless chain that carried them up into the cooling room. Other men, Indians for the most part, wearing only breech clouts, broke up the misfit pumps with huge hammers and adzes and rapidly recast them into axe heads, wagon springs, trombone slides, bullet moulds, all the by-products of a big pump-factory. There was nothing wasted, Yogi pointed out. A group of Indian boys, humming to themselves one of the old tribal chanties, squatted in a corner of the big forging room shaping the little fragments that were chipped from the pumps in casting, into safety razor blades.

"They work naked," Yogi said. "They're searched as they go out. Sometimes they try and conceal the razor blades and take them out with them to bootleg."

"There must be quite a loss that way," Scripps said.

"Oh, no," Yogi answered. "The inspectors get most of them."

Upstairs, apart in a separate room, two old men were working. Yogi opened the door. One of the old men looked over his steel spectacles and frowned.

"You make a draft," he said.

"Shut the door," the other old man said, in the high, complaining voice of the very old.

"They're our two hand-workers," Yogi said. "They make all the pumps the manufactory sends out to the big international pump races. You remember our Peerless Pounder that won the pump race in Italy, where Franky Dawson was killed?"

"I read about it in the paper," Scripps answered.

"Mr. Borrow, over there in the corner, made the Peerless Pounder all himself by hand," Yogi said.

"I carved it direct from the steel with this knife." Mr. Borrow held up a short-bladed, razorlike-looking knife. "Took me eighteen months to get it right."

“The Peerless Pounder was quite a pump all right,” the high-voiced little old man said. “But we’re working on one now that will show its heels to any of them foreign pumps, aren’t we, Henry?”

“That’s Mr. Shaw,” Yogi said in an undertone. “He’s probably the greatest living pump-maker.”

“You boys get along and leave us alone,” Mr. Borrow said. He was carving away steadily, his infirm old hands shaking a little between strokes.

“Let the boys watch,” Mr. Shaw said. “Where you from, young feller?”

“I’ve just come from Mancelona,” Scripps answered. “My wife left me.”

“Well, you won’t have no difficulty finding another one,” Mr. Shaw said. “You’re a likely-looking young feller. But take my advice and take your time. A poor wife ain’t much better than no wife at all.”

“I wouldn’t say that, Henry,” Mr. Borrow remarked in his high voice. “Any wife at all’s a pretty good wife the way things are going now.”

“You take my advice, young feller, and go slow. Get yourself a good one this time.”

“Henry knows a thing or two,” Mr. Borrow said. “He knows what he’s talking about there.” He laughed a high, cackling laugh. Mr. Shaw, the old pump-maker, blushed.

“You boys get along and leave us get on with our pump-making,” he said. “Henry and me here, we got a sight of work to do.”

“I’m very glad to have met you,” Scripps said.

“Come on,” Yogi said. “I better get you started or the foreman will be on my tail.”

He put Scripps to work collaring pistons in the piston-collaring room. There Scripps worked for almost a year. In some ways it was the happiest year of his life. In other ways it was a nightmare. A hideous nightmare. In the end he grew to like it. In other ways he hated it. Before he knew it, a year had passed. He was still collaring pistons. But what strange things had happened in that year. Often he wondered about them. As he wondered, collaring a piston now almost automatically, he listened to the laughter that came up from below, where the little Indian lads were shaping what were to be razor blades. As he listened something rose in his throat and almost choked him

CHAPTER SEVEN

THAT NIGHT, AFTER his first day in the pump-factory, the first day in what was or were to become an endless succession of days of dull piston-collaring, Scripps went again to the beanery to eat. All day he had kept his bird concealed. Something told him that the pump-factory was not the place to bring his bird out in. During the day the bird had several times made him uncomfortable, but he had adjusted his clothes to it and even cut a little slit the bird could poke his beak out through in search of fresh air. Now the day's work was over. It was finished. Scripps on his way to the beanery. Scripps happy that he was working with his hands. Scripps thinking of the old pump-makers. Scripps going to the society of the friendly waitress. Who was that waitress, anyway? What was it had happened to her in Paris? He must find out more about this Paris. Yogi Johnson had been there. He would quiz Yogi. Get him to talk. Draw him out. Make him tell what he knew. He knew a trick or two about that.

Watching the sunset out over the Petoskey Harbor, the lake now frozen and great blocks of ice jutting up over the breakwater, Scripps strode down the streets of Petoskey to the beanery. He would have liked to ask Yogi Johnson to eat with him, but he didn't dare. Not yet. That would come later. A in good time. No need to rush matters with a man like Yogi. Who was Yogi, anyway? Had he really been in the war? What had the war meant to him? Was he really the first man to enlist from Cadillac? Where was Cadillac, anyway? Time would tell.

Scripps O'Neil opened the door and went into the beanery. The elderly waitress got up from the chair where she had been reading the overseas edition of *The Manchester Guardian*, and put the paper and her steelrimmed spectacles on top of the cash register.

"Good evening," she said simply. "It's good to have *you* back,"

Something stirred inside Scripps O'Neil. A feeling that he could not define came within him.

"I've been working all day long"—he looked at the elderly waitress—"for *you*," he added.

"How lovely!" she said. And then smiled shyly. "And I have been working all day long—for *you*."

Tears came into Scripps's eyes. Something stirred inside him again. He reached forward to take the elderly waitress's hand, and with quiet dignity she laid it within his own. "You are my woman," he said. Tears came into her eyes, too.

"You are my man," she said.

"Once again I say: you are my woman." Scripps pronounced the words solemnly. Something had broken inside him again. He felt he could not keep from crying.

"Let this be our wedding ceremony," the elderly waitress said. Scripps pressed her hand. "You are

my woman,” he said simply.

“You are my man and more than my man.” She looked into his eyes. “You are all of America to me.”

“Let us go,” Scripps said.

“Have you your bird?” asked the waitress, laying aside her apron and folding the copy of *The Manchester Guardian Weekly*. “I’ll bring *The Guardian*, if you don’t mind,” she said, wrapping the paper in her apron. “It’s a new paper and I’ve not read it yet.”

“I’m very fond of *The Guardian*,” Scripps said. “My family have taken it ever since I can remember. My father was a great admirer of Gladstone.”

“My father went to Eton with Gladstone,” the elderly waitress said. “And now I am ready.”

She had donned a coat and stood ready, her apron, her steel-rimmed spectacles in their worn black morocco case, her copy of *The Manchester Guardian* held in her hand.

“Have you no hat?” asked Scripps.

“No.”

“Then I will buy you one,” Scripps said tenderly.

“It will be your wedding gift,” the elderly waitress said. Again there were tears shone in her eyes.

“And now let us go,” Scripps said.

The elderly waitress came out from behind the counter, and together, hand in hand, they strode out into the night.

Inside the beanery the black cook pushed up the wicket and looked through from the kitchen. “Dey’ve gone off,” he chuckled. “Gone off into de night. Well, well, well.” He closed the wicket softly. Even he was a little impressed.

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