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S O W H A T ?

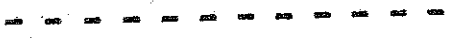
So this: For many years I have wished to write a series of impressions of the people I come in contact with in the village. Not photographs carefully posed to give the best possible likeness of each person, in the most becoming dress, the hair carefully arranged, of the most flattering angle of each face. Not that at all. This is fiction, and if facts creep in, it will be mere coincidence. In the main, people are very much alike, the sums of their lives, in the final reckoning, are similar. Yet each has a spark, a spirit, an individuality, whatever you want to call it, that transcends all likenesses and makes him stand out in inviolate aloneness, tragic or jovial, but unlike any other.

I shall, then, if I can, try to grasp that spark of difference and build on it. Be it understood by all concerned that wanting to do a series of impressions and the accomplishment thereof are two distinct efforts that dwell in realms not at all similar. The first is conceived in that delightful realm of imagination and reverie in which all things become possible in the delightful rosy glow of wish-fulfilment. The other must be fashioned in the repelling, isolated dungeon of hard work, discouragement and frustration. But friendliness will keep me company, and the fulness of life will reward me.

I shall gather these impressions especially for ~~for~~ the

visitors from Abenia who came last autumn, like the very spirits of the harvest, bringing flowers and fruits from the garden. Especially for one of these who related how she strolled along the main street of the village looking for the most suitable store in which to buy for her husband pajamas.

She bought them, but not in the right store.



W A R N I N G !

The most frequent compliment given a scribe, but meant as a severe and scathing censure, is: You meant so- and-so, Anyone can tell you were writing about that person. Before I would discuss my neighbors and friends I would go drown myself in the lake, or words to that affect. Not to ^{the scribe} me directly, of course, tact being a predominating trait of all critics, but it would reach ^{her or him} me, by telepathy, or something. It would be a compliment, just the same.

For I have read a book by a writer who never was outside of Africa, certainly was unaware of this village, yet I could place each character among my acquaintances. I have read books by foreign authors who not only have never visited these regions, but who were born, worked and died before this part of the world was settled, yet the men and the women they wrote about are similar to my neighbors and my friends. This apness at similarity is, I believe, termed universality. If I have it, I must expect

criticism, if not, my words will have no flavor. It is hard either way, but I will chance it...

Each one of us is inevitably a stranger^{to} every other, secret globes of personality that touch only on the merest tangent of their bulk. By that tiny fraction we must understand the whole. How difficult, then, to judge by facts only when we have so few to go by. Our knowledge must be aided by an all-inclusive compassion, by tolerance, by that lovingkindness that realizes that if all were understood, all would be forgiven. So---to convince you, if that is necessary, that I mean well, I shall begin with myself, the scribe in this village.

This is not a village, really a city of over eighteen thousand! and I am a scribe by courtesey, but let us not be too fussy about terms, or about anything. I shall tell ~~what~~ happened one night when I was about one year old. I remember ~~what~~ happened the night I was born, but I need not go that far back. One year and a few months of age will do. Do not laugh at this, please. I can prove each of my statements. For instance, I have been proving to people for years that each of my birthdays is thirty-five. If my arguments are followed, I am sure to convince my listeners. **B**ut they become impatient, just as ~~when~~ the theory of relativity is explained. But is Einstein wrong? Let's skip Albert and get back to Ella, or better, Hinda Matilda Seligman-Ahrnsohn.

As just stated, this is not a village; and I, possibly, have no right to talk of myself as a scribe. Yet by inherited tendencies, because of circumstances, because of that tiny spark of difference from all others that marks every person, telling of tales happens to be my diversion, and sesame to a delightful state of being. There are folk who demand luxuries of every kind. Some gamble, others take to drink. The great majority merely devote all their energies to keeping up with the Johnses. I merely like to put one word after another as thoughts enter my mind. On the whole, I claim, it is not a vicious fault, nor greatly disturbing to anyone. My trusty Oliver is a bit noisy, but not anywhere as disturbing as if I were practicing on a saxophone.

My fellow villagers are a bit puzzled by my avocation. Being mainly materialistic, they fail to see the good of gainless pre-occupation. It is difficult to discuss immaterial values--delicate and as precious as the scarcely remembered dream just before waking. Of course it is a waste of time. But must one be practical all the time, like a slave? It was the pride of my ancestors that they always managed to have time for study and reflection, without neglecting their stern duties. So--now I shall return to that episode when I was one year of age.

A FAIRY TALE

The Poet was scarcely fifty years old when Death drew near him to claim his life. The Poet was a man of great courage and of vision; death to him was but the supreme adventure of living. But the thought of leaving the Saint and their children tore at his heart night and day, making negligible the pain of ^Proaching dissolution. He had only partly recovered from a paralytic stroke, another would mean the end. The doctors had ordered the quiet of the country, no worry, but he was not deceived. A Jew in the Polish Pale was never free from worry. He felt the icy breath of the Angel of a Thousand Eyes as he stood one sleepless night by the crib of his youngest born.

The Poet had a devoted father's love for all his children, but this littlest one, the youngest and most helpless one, for whom he could do nothing at all, who will never even have a memory of his face, aroused agonies unbearable, tore at his very soul.

With a suppressed groan, he lowered his pain-racked and partly stiffened body into an armchair near the sleeping infant. With his hands and arms motionless along the arms of the chair, with his head lowered so that his dark beard was pressed upon his bosom, he looked along the years of his life like so many disconnected scenes in a play.

There had been the ardor, the promise, of youth. So much he would do for his long-suffering people. Ah, ~~only~~ one life to give, but he would give it so freely, so fully, so generously, it must avail! His poems, composed in the most beautiful, most classical Hebrew,

were known and highly praised in the small town where he lived and in many neighboring communities. A great future was predicted for the eager, dark-eyed boy whose brown, unruly hair was still shot through with a childish glint of gold. His happy parents named him above all their children as their crown of glory, and shielded him from all material cares, and encouraged him to devote all his time to study and to writing. His education was the best a small town in Poland offered nearly one hundred years ago. That is, he was being prepared for the rabbinate.

Before he was twenty, a marriage was arranged for him. Did that interlude last months or a year? It was now as a fair dream that had little to do with reality: a glowing jewel in the dark pattern of his life that marked the end of youth, of dreams. He had forgotten, almost, what she looked like. She died so soon, and so suddenly.

How proud she had been of his poems which he would translate into Yiddish for her. They boarded with his parents and were still free from all care. She treasured his poems in a little carved box she had brought from home.

Sometimes, in the late summer afternoon, they would walk to the edge of the town, in a field, near a fragrant pine woods, he would translate for her the Hebrew phrases of passionate devotion, his dreams, his hopes for the saving of his tortured people. She would be breathlessly still with wonder and delight, would pull at his earlocks and name him the *Messiah*, the helper

long awaited. She sickened, and was gone.

Soon after his mother died. His father remarried. Sisters and brothers began to drift away to homes of near relatives, or married and either lived with in-laws or had homes of their own. He continued his studies at home, too grieved and bewildered to know what to do, or to care.

One day his stepmother pointed out to his father that his gifted son was living in sin. A man, nearly twenty-five, without a wife? Marriage brokers began to come, talking at great length with his father and stepmother, but he would have none of them.

But his father insisted that for once he must listen. There was a girl, only sixteen, but of his kind. A sort of saint who insisted that she will marry no man unless he was not only highly educated, but an angel from heaven beside. Her people were getting concerned about her, and her father was rich and would provide amply for a son-in-law. So he married the saint, commenced life again in the rather larger town, in the household of his wife's parents, and took up business.

But there was that carved little box filled with poems dedicated to world made glorious and safe for even the most oppressed. These could not go with him.

One fair summer twilight, before he stood under the marriage canopy a second time, he carried the box to the little field near the fragrant wood. Slowly walking along the dark trees, bitterly weeping, he tore each poem many times, scattering the fragments in the grass at his feet. If he had looked back, he would have seen

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extraordinarily perfect white daisies wherever his steps had led, that had not been there when he came. He did not look back and would not have seen them if he had, for his eyes were blinded with his tears. He never wrote poetry again, but his compassionate love for his people never left him.

The Saint and the Poet had many adventures in living, happy and sad. Their first three children died in infancy or at birth. Death drew them together. There had been days of rejoicing, years of prosperity. Other children were born to them, and lived. After years of married life, and business, the Poet wished to get his certificate and enter the rabbinate, take a post somewhere and live quietly, continuing to study. His health had never been robust, business was trying and not to his taste.

Families on both sides objected. It was against all traditions for one to enter the rabbinate as a means of livelihood. The many rabbis in the family, and among his forebears, gave their services free, and made a living in trade. The Saint was willing to deprive herself of every least luxury to help the Poet into more congenial ways, but the family would not allow it.

So the Poet and the Saint, their small son and daughter, ~~went~~ to live in Moscow, where he became a commission merchant. The family prestige and his own integrity making a small amount of financial success certain. There he met congenial people, Jews and Gentiles, became known for his idealism and intellectual attainments and was *reasonably* quite happy, but his health did not improve.

The Tzarist Imperial Russian government, after about a decade, of more or less peaceful residence, made possible by influence, judiciously placed bribes, and so forth, required that the Poet and his family leave the holy precincts of Moscow and return to the Pale. Friends, both Jewish and Gentile, tried their utmost to lessen this blow, but to no avail.

They returned, at last and painfully, to the town in the Polish Pale where the Saint first saw light. These years in Moscow had greatly enlarged the worldly knowledge of the Poet, had shown him a modern world, a present world of action and endeavor of which he had before hardly had an inkling in the many ancient books he had studied. His earlocks had practically disappeared; his clothes had become modern; his beard neatly and stylishly trimmed. The exquisite torture of being compressed into a social form he had outgrown was lightened by the thought of the good he might do, the reforms he might bring about.

His commission business was taken over by the Elliashovs of Kovno, his sister and her husband, wealthy wholesalers, and so a small income was assured him. The Saint, as always, was willing to make any sacrifice, go into business, if necessary, to help in whatever he should decide to do.

Now, nearing fifty, with three sons and three daughters to establish, beside the mite before him, he was leaving her to face life's hardships alone. More bitter than gall and wormwood was the bitterness of that thought in his mind.

All these years his greatest efforts had been given to improving the condition of the Jews in

*the small city - which he loved. To safeguard
the future of his wife and children he could do
very little - the writer of the Pale.* 10

Thousands of Jews lived ~~in close together~~ in the town to which

~~he returned~~ with almost no knowledge of the world outside of their cramped quarters, with no means of getting any knowledge. The Hashibah, or Hebrew College, to which boys and young men came from a large area, confined its training altogether to preparations for the rabbinate.

The Poet pleaded and argued for years before he finally convinced the Khol that the majority of boys would be happier if they received ^{training} for the practical business of life, while not neglecting the study of the law and the knowledge necessary for a pious, observing Jew. How can it be expected that every young son of a farmer, hatmaker, carpenter, or any humble person, should eventually find a post as ~~rabi~~, or be fit for that post?

~~By this time the~~ Poet was elected treasurer of the Hebrew College although there were many far richer men eager for that honor. The community had begun to feel the quality of unselfish leadership and listened attentively to his clear, ringing voice at meetings, to his words of encouragement and sound counsel.

The reform he immediately put into effect was as simple as it was startling. He merely began to pay salaries from the bottom up. The argument being: The least assistant ^{is usually poor,} lives from hand to mouth, while the man higher up ~~usually~~ has connections and credit. A Hebrew College even so many decades ago needing always more than it had in the treasury, even as at present. And that funds should be more ample, taxes were ordered on luxuries. Luxuries in the ghetto? Well, the family that could afford chicken for the Sabbath paid a

at a peck extra for the slaughter of the fowl. There were other small taxes that had helped to swell the total that were an innovation. And above everything else, there was the monumental work of collecting funds with which to build, equip, and hire master workmen for, the planned industrial school that was to supplement the academic Hebrew teaching. The Poet had given more time to public affairs than he did to his business. The Saint did all she possibly could to spare him all business worries, content to be the helpmate of so gifted a man, glad that through his efforts light would come into the dark places.

When his own children began to attend school and became ready for higher education, the Poet, remembering his own limitations, began to agitate for more worldly knowledge, for languages beside Hebrew. He encouraged a young friend of his to establish a private school where ~~languages~~ ^{knowledge} might be acquired ^{outside} the usual pious routine. To answer all criticism, his three sons attended that school. ~~That~~ ^{It} school prospered beyond his hopes, and his friend with it.

The sword of disaster fell on him, and his, so suddenly, so cruelly. When he had become ^{almost} ~~fully~~ happy again.

He was the treasurer of the community and was guiding its affairs into peaceful, happy ways--so unusually peaceful that he had been called the man of peace. The industrial building was about completed and ~~nearly~~ equipped with tools to teach boys a variety of trades while they studied in the college proper, ~~and~~ ate "days" and slept where they could. Master workmen had been hired

to instruct the boys, and were coming into town shortly. A welcoming banquet was being planned, with triumphant speeches. His family was well, and a little child had come to him--so much to live for, His Name be praised.

Much praise, he knew, was due to the Saint who stood between him and many of life's cares. But, alas, with all her care and foresight, she had not been able to keep one little care from him. Merely a letter from a relative which was delivered when she was absent from home for a very short time. A letter he never would have seen if she had seen it first. A letter from a near relative whom the Poet had often befriended, who now demanded the return of a sum in language only a relative ~~whom one has often befriended~~ could use. ^{Pass} In a flash, all the complicated material needs of his growing family became evident to the Poet. The uncertainties of the future of his sons and daughters, the burden the Saint was carrying, the inescapable limitations of the Pale, the sorrows of the entire world which he could lessen in his lifetime less than a drop in an ocean, ~~All~~, all descended upon his sensitive soul, ~~as~~ gates of a great spillway might be opened by the touch of a lever, so ^{had} was that, in itself, inconsequential ^{wrought mischief} letter. When the Saint returned from that unfortunate absence, brief as it was, the Poet lay speechless, and immovable, in paralysis.

Slowly, very slowly, he recovered ^{partial} the use of his right side. His voice came back, a husky whisper, that used to ring out to awake men to their better selves. Now the doctors advised the country air, pleasant surroundings, no worry of any kind. Another

stroke would certainly prove fatal. His sister was providing a country home for her young married daughter; he was going there tomorrow.

With the Angel of a Thousand Eyes so near, so cold, will he ever come back to work and plan for his family as a father must? And his dear, poor Saint, how can she ~~manage that~~ ^{face the future} breed alone? He tried not to think of the industrial school, where everything had come to a standstill ~~with~~ ^{during} his long illness. And the doctor advised him not to worry!

And this littlest one, how will life treat this atom? Slowly he stretched out his still uncertain right hand and inserted his long, thin finger into the chubby little fist of the sleeping infant. He felt clearly the warm pressure of her tiny fingers. Perhaps he may recover--a miracle may happen.

Faintly somewhere a clock began to strike the hour of midnight. The Poet began to raise his body slowly in that dimly lighted room. He must get some rest; tomorrow's journey will be trying. He must do all he possibly could to help his recovery. He had forgotten his finger in the baby's grasp and felt a pull on his arm. With overwhelming force he realized how far he was from being well.

His baby clinging to his almost useless hand... Anguish ~~filled~~ flooded through him, meaningly words escaped his tortured lips, Forsake me not in my need, O my God and my Strength. The past vanished from his mind, the present ceased to matter, only the future loomed, filled with dread forebodings of disaster. For the Saint and his other children he did not know what he could do, but

for this smallest one he he must make the supreme effort.

With words of compelling prayer, with all the stored might of his imagination, with strength of will and with wisdom seldom given to men, he tore at the fabric of his very soul and wrapped the tiny sleeping one so that the harshness of reality should never reach her directly. Now she was safe, in a vision and a dream, a refuge in times of stress, an ever present help; as if a ladder was always at hand by which to climb out of the trivial and sordid into sunlit skies where the breath of the sea blows cool.

The child opened large, sleep filled eyes, gazed for a moment with unseeing seriousness into the dark, burning eyes in the pallid face, smiled slightly, let go of the finger, closed her eyes in quiet sleep.

End of Fairy Tale

THE GENTLE PSYCHOANALIST

Before we skip decades and begin seriously on the tales that properly belong to BUYING PAJAMAS, let us bear in mind that the Gentle Reader is very often an Amateur Psychoanalyst and is very apt to search for "real" reasons for individual traits. It is so important, nowadays, to investigate one's psyche! We have been told by ever so many lecturers, and read the identical warnings in books and in magazines, that a child is, practically

irrevocably conditioned by the age of seven. (What an alibi!) After that, life becomes just a struggle to overcome what, in most cases, are indelibly marked characteristics. So it surely must follow that you will hold me blameless for my peculiar personality content when you consider my conditionings. A keen psychoanalyst, although amateur, (whisper: they all are—yet) my Gentle Reader, or otherwise, will understand all—and deal kindly with the village scribe

A W A K E N I N G

My first memory is one of unreasoning terror. There is a bulging shape on a floor, covered with a black cloth. Candles, in brass and silver candlesticks, burn about that sombre form, but the room is filled with daylight. A woman with blond, curly hair, crouches near and sobs uncontrollably. I am in my mother's lap and scream and scream and can not stop my screaming. My poor mother must take me home before the prescribed days of mourning. No one can understand what came over the child, surely too young to know she is fatherless. Never before had any one heard so young a child scream so fearfully. As if her soul was being torn from her. That bulging, black shape on the floor, surrounded by burning candles, that hideous fear, stand out clearly among my earliest memories.

THE V I L L A G E

The Village, it has not been happily named, so we will just refer to it as the Village, is situated on perfectly level ground on the Hudson River in the foothills of the Adirondack Wilderness. A place of many comfortable homes with just enough business section for convenience. Its many thoroughfares are thickly lined with shade trees, mostly elms and maples, planted many decades ago. From any distance, from any height above the village, the houses are almost hidden by the luxuriant foliage when the trees are in leaf. It should have been given a name to indicate its kinship to the forest, or some Indian name.

The sound of the the name it has is not pleasing to the ear, it has no reference to any historical event, or to any one locally prominent at any time. By reason of its location and history, as well as natural loveliness, it should have an Indian name or one that would suggest the environment. A name that would bring to mind a picture of lush, green plains, fragrance of evergreen, the mystery of hills that rise on the horizon on all sides except where the terrain suddenly dips towards the river. The Hudson is not navigable at this point, but is a place of quiet, dammed-in wide stretches of water, sudden falls, great rocks and caves.

The village is an exceptionally attractive place of well-cared for homes, surrounded by bushes and many flowers in their season, shaded by mighty trees, a lovely setting for happy homes and peaceful hearts. But who can know what home is happy, what heart at peace?

THE INHABITANTS

Light over Chaos

The people here average about as people do in other, larger places, only there are fewer of each kind. Groups are not isolated by their own large numbers. Neighbors here can learn that difference of nationality and creed is not, in itself, an unforgivable offense. We are, in a way, a cross section of mankind under a powerful microscope.

If anywhere the long hoped for brotherhood of men can have a practical beginning, it will be in the small places where, by choice or compulsion, men and women learn to know each other as they really are, free from prejudice and ancient fanaticism.

Among the eighteen thousand, or so, population Jews number about three and one half per cent, about six hundred souls. Among this small number may be found representatives of nearly every group of Jews the world over, from the strictest Orthodox to the most Reformed to the altogether assimilated, but whom every one terms Jew just the same. The Orthodox, and their first generation which claims to be Orthodox but is nothing of the kind, is the largest.

Every Christian denomination is represented among the populations. Although ever so many more in number, yet no group is altogether large enough to be sufficient unto itself. There are continuous getting together of the more public minded of each group. Gentile and Jewish, for civic and, to a much lesser extent, social reasons.

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Fanaticism, racial hatreds, bigotry are thus somewhat minimized.

Very liberal donations from Christians have helped to build every Jewish building here--the old Synagogue, the Community House, the Temple. Whenever an appeal is made, the Jews that have the means, help a Christian cause.

Everything serene and lovely, so what is there to tell about? No struggle, no story. Calm and peaceful are the surface waters of a great lake, a child would be safe in a frail canoe on its limpid waters. A breeze comes from the mountain tops, grows stronger, held between the hills, the waters churn and boil, even the experienced captain of a large steamer must use his skill to the utmost not be dashed against the island near the channel or the rocks on the shore.

The storm dies down, the waters are calm again. Imagine yourself at the bottom of the lake anywhere. Living things flash about and prey on each other, even as the birds and the beasts in the forest near your door. Struggle never ceases and has always been. To what end we still do not know, but hope--for a Reason for the long struggle, the many sorrows, the brief joys that make up life. When turmoil, motion, ceases, life is done.

So, for argument's sake, we shall go back in time, when chaos reigned supreme. This is fiction, and we can do as we please.

There is very little chance, practically none, of any volcanic eruptions in these regions. Once in many years a slight tremor may be felt, which quickly subsides and no harm is done, except, if that be harmful, ^{the recollection and recital of} tales of similar tremors in former years. The rock formation here is so old and so solid, we live in peace. But---

O N C E U P O N A T I M E

Long ago, very long ago, before there was day or night, before there was earth or sea, or seasons, or life of any kind, elemental forces wrenched and tore at all matter and pandemonium reigned, an immeasurable ^{assurable} seething of liquid, of gases, of forming matter exploding into gaseous clouds to mingle with the wrath and the turmoil that filled space.

Slowly, slowly form began to emerge. There were eruptions that threw up mountains, creating vast craters. that heaved and rose above the mountains that crumbled as they heaved upward. Immense clouds of forming and ^{disintegrating} ~~demolished~~ matter filled all space. Lightning cut through and through the sticky blackness with great jagged swords of fire. All heaved and boiled mightily. There are no words adequate to tell of the never-ceasing confusion. Unformed seas unformed land, all the forces within and without incessantly, violently ground and raged one against the other. Earth tore at her orbit. Any moment might see earth annihilated, scattered into space, cease to be.

A small still voice said: Let there be light.

Years, millions of years passed. Commotion, upheaval, never ending elemental strife continued. Through thick fogs and scalding steam, a gray light glimmered. Oozing mud and muddy waters covered the earth. Mountains erupted in volcanic violence and in fiery violence were demolished. Seas rose to meet the burning lava and earth was hidden in great cloud of steam. Fire and water detonated in thundering reverberations round and round the forming earth. There was no life, only violence.

A cool breath came from the distant skies: Peace.

The mountains continued to tremble, but remained formed. The seas to heave mightily, but within their boundaries. Earth slowly, slowly became covered with living green. The struggle kept on.

Forests rose too quickly and were consumed by their own too abundant life. Gigantic growth that burned and grew again. Through the quick, lush growth lizzards crawled and monstrous living shapes, destroying one another. Volcanoes tore at the earth, the seas still tumultuously rose and fell.

A cold breath blew round the earth, covering with ice all life, all death.

Years uncounted passed by in the river of time. ~~There was~~ only glistening ice; clear, blue, distant skies. Too cold for clouds or mist. The sun rose and sank on a frozen earth in sudden

splendor, unheralded by streaming colors; leaving sudden darkness, with no glowing aftermath. The moon rose clear and large. Immense stars crowded the firmament and shone through the moisture-drained atmosphere. Time moved on. A hundred thousand years being but a tiny droplet in that measureless river.

Then---the beginning of a reviving, life giving warmth, and waters gently flowing.

Who can tell how many millions of years have passed since the seething mass of fire and gases was violently separated from the sun by a cosmic catastrophe and the forming of this quiet village? Only a few thousand miles beneath the shaded thoroughfare, the comfortable homes, the pretty flower gardens, terrific heat rages, rocks and metals are melted and fused and flow like water. Only through the thinnest parts of the earth crust can its rage be made known to men's destruction. This quiet village need ~~have~~ no fear.

The many shade trees grow slowly, gain in girth and in graceful height, in orderly fashion, changing in loveliness with the seasons. The hills that nearly surround the place, the river that flows by, are constant, change but with the seasons. There are no sudden growth, no crashing, flaming forests, no monsters trailing through the dense growth, devouring what they may. There are gentle deer in the forests, possibly a few bear and smaller animals. Fish in the lakes, but fi

the lakes, all, all protected by reasonable game laws...

Where are the mighty forces that nearly sent earth whirling from her orbit? Where is the terrific strength that send valleys mountain high, and mountains to mingle with the waters of the sea? The heights are at peace and constant flows the tide. The mighty struggle continues, in the human soul.

Again and again a small still voice has said: Love one another. The whisper penetrated to every part of the earth. All people are aware of it, yet there is no peace. Do justice! The prisons are filled and overflowing, fear dwells with the rich and the poor alike. It should be so simple and so easy. A beautiful world with so much in it, enough for every living being to be happy with. But fear and happiness can not dwell in the heart together.

End of the Argument.

F O R I N S T A N C E

While passing through the village, you are held up for a few minutes by a red light. While your car is waiting for the traffic to begin to move again, you idly admire a big, spreading elm near the curb. You glance idly at the large, three-storied house over which the elm towers, at the two little girls playing on the lawn. If you are at all fond of antiques, you might even wish to enter that house, examine it from cellar to attic for treasured pieces of another age. You would not be disappointed.

You would find many relics of a bygone age, but not those you expected. The many large rooms would contain few, if any, modern pieces. Every piece of furniture, every carpet and rag rug, would be old and worn, and not too much of anything, as if any piece worth while had been sold quite some time ago. But what is left, the sweep of the rooms, the handsome fireplace, indicate that once there had been means and social pretensions, that the family for which this house was built and furnished had the right to consider themselves people of importance.

And so they were, and so the mother of the two little girls playing on the lawn considered them when she was flattered to receive the attentions of the only son of the house. It was all so romantic. He had just been graduated from college and she from the local high school, and he was so fond of all outdoors, especially of bird life. But let's first have a better look of the house and its environs.

As you wait for the red light to change so that you may go on, you may notice that on either side of the house we are talking about are two smaller, modern houses, vacant, with For Rent signs prominently displayed. You may wonder why such attractive houses should lack tenants. You may also hear the chirp and chatter of birds, or the sudden barking of a dog, which changes to a snarl. Now let's go inside again.

The interior is neat, a bit dark because of the old furnishings which contain few bright colors and blinds drawn almost to the sills

Beyond the dim hall is a large dining room. At the table an old woman is sitted, mumbling and shaking, shaking and mumbling, her hands lie idly in her lap, her eys are vacant, her mouth never closes as she mumbles, but no words can be understood. You feel that she has sat there for decades, and will sit there shaking and mumbling until death puts and end to it. You shiver slightly and we move on.

A middle aged woman in a calico dress with her graying hair dressed in a ^mpopadour, not too tidy, as if she was working very hard when our visit interrupted her, goes with us to the attic to see if any interesting pieces may be there. As we mount the narrow stairs, we hear a chirping and a twittering of birds of different specie and wonder how so many and so varied an assortment can be kept in a house and why. The birds are suddanly silenced by the vicious snarl of a dog.

The attic is crowded with such a number of articles of furniture and wearing apparal we immediately decide that this household has never heard of the space-creating rummage sale, and as immediately decide, in humane kindness, that the lady of the house beside us, with the pompadour which is not very even, probably has too much work to attend ladies aid meetings and such and learn the many great virtues of the rummage sale. With your heart aglow with kindness at the charitabliness of your thoughts, you ask about the little girls you have seen playing on the lawn.

The woman's face glows pale, her lips close in a thin line, her eyes grow sombre as she says quickly, " They are my granddaughters

whose mother has deserted them." As she stalks grimly about, showing you the contents of the attic, your mind whirls with dismay and you buy something anything, to atone for having asked what was a very ordinary question.

Now we are back in your car, the light is green, and as we ride on, let me clear up that puzzling house over which the very handsome elm towers its huge, protecting branches. That elm was planted there by the first owner of that house who built it to be the homestead of many generations to bear his name. He had come, a simple woodman, to the Adirondack Wilderness, had made a small fortune cutting the virgin forests and selling the lumber. He had built this fine home, furnished it in the best manner. There was enough for him and his so that not another tree need be felled as far as he was concerned. A gentleman of leisure, with a stable and horse as good as any in the village.

But something happened along the generations. His granddaughter preferred to sit in one place, shaking her head and to speak softly to herself. She was an heiress and married well, nevertheless. Her grandson was a bright chap, fond of nature and bird life. Too much so, alas. Soon after he left college, where he specialized in forest he met, and soon married, a pretty young girl of ordinary circumstance who was highly flattered to become a member of so long established a family.

Ten years after her marriage the young wife had two daughters and much knowledge of birds. When her health and condition would permit, her husband would take her to the nearest, or farthest, wood and tell her about the life and the habits of the birds there.

The young husband did no work of any kind and claimed there was no need he should. The family income had dwindled, but there *was* were still something to sell, if bills became too pressing. When the mumbling old woman should be taken to her reward, a certain portion of the principal would become available. A car would be bought and the house partly re^turnished, why worry, or work? She was past eighty and could not last forever.

When the younger girl was six months old, the young husband had a happy idea. Why not be natural and live like the birds and be as happy?

It seemed so very simple, he laughed aloud in bright-eyed glee. The family owned land in the hills, really all of the side of a mountain. The four of them would go there, build a home in the trees and live as happily as the birds. He sang like a robin while his hands knocked on the wall with the swift, light strokes of a wood pecker. And if any more babies came to them, and he hoped there would be many more, they will be reared like the birds.

The young wife agreed and asked for one day in which to pack the little he thought might be taken with them. All night she sat between the cribs of her little ones, thinking.

She was now twenty-one and married nearly three years, or was it three centuries? So much had happened, so much and so rapidly, like a whirling kaleidoscope had been those years.

Before she could look at reality, while her eyes were, *still* blinded by girlish, romantic glamour, her first baby was coming. She must not do anything rash, must learn not to tremble with fear ~~at the~~

when near the shaking, mumbling old woman; must learn to get along with no new clothes or comfort or luxury of any kind. Must sit and wait till the bay came, in a black cavern in a mountain in which a dread volcano raged and might destroy her at any ~~time~~ moment. She still had her village pride.

The baby came and she was more strongly tied than before. Six months she must wait and then act. She was confused and young, and so ashamed of the mess she had made of her life. Her people were too poor to be burdened with the troubles she had brought on herself. The upheaval of the year 1929 came along, her father lost his job, the family had to move to another state. She was expecting another child.

She seldom left the house except when she accompanied her husband to the woods to study bird life. She had had no new clothes since she married and little before. She did not feel well enough to look for work, but tried and did earn a few dollars as a clerk. She bought a garment or two and was held in scornful contempt by her in-laws as hopelessly common. No breeding, no self-respect, no regard for family traditions---just common white trash.

She could not work long anyway. The second girl came and was now six months old. She felt old and experienced, as if she had lived through ages of volcanic passion and glacial fear. Tonight she must decide for herself and for her little ones, must do all the planning, for not one in the household would object to a house in the forest, a nest in a tree, or anything, for her and for the little ones. That she had learned very thoroughly already.

It was terribly hard to abandon her babies, so innocent, so dear. But a ray of common sense convinced her it was the only thing to do. They would be cared for better than she possibly could at present. In a few years she would claim them and take care of them. She would find out some way how they fared. If they were taken to any home in any tree, she would return and make such a row that something would be done for them by a charitable organization. Gone was her village pride...

Before dawn, she kissed her babies and stole out of the veranda carrying a small suitcase, rapidly surrounded house, her steps quickening ~~into a running~~ as birds sang in greeting of the day in the huge elm.

But she has not yet returned to claim her babies and no one knows where she is. No one in this village made any effort to find her. Her husband did not seem to mind much. He carries on his bird study at home.

His room is also his forest home. He studies the birds and is also all the birds in creation, from the tiniest humming birds to the raucous parakeet, sometimes he is all of them at once. The noise is terrific. He varies by being a dog, sometimes a little one, sometimes a big one, sometimes a whole pack. He has powerful lungs and good imitative powers. He never leaves his forest home, confine himself to his birds and dogs. His wife and children have ceased to be for him long ago.

Neighbors have complained, but nothing has been done about it. The houses on either side are empty because no one will rent them and the owners can not live in them because of the sudden and queer

barking or chirping at all hours of the day and night.

The little girls seem normal enough, so far, but mothers do not like that their children should have much to do with them, and they usually play by themselves. They are not as daintily dressed or cared for as the other girls on the street. If their mother should come to claim them, no one would object to their leaving the village.

If chance caused you to linger a while before that house, you would admire the fine old elm, would no doubt think the two little girls on the lawn were most fortunate in their environs, were being conditioned most favorably for a happy life. You could never imagine the psychic upheavals and eruptions that have occurred within that dwelling since it was built, what heat of fiery passion, what glacial chill has passed through the hearts and the minds of its inhabitants. The village will note every change of the little girls, unobtrusively, and always wonder what has become of their mother.

Now let us consider a more cheerful subject, the village rummage sale.

R U M M A G E S A L E

You may say, What has all this to do with buying pajamas? I would answer, A great deal. To distribute one's patronage, one must know the people of the village, their aims, their backgrounds. Quality and price are not all there is to buying if one will consider the ultimate good...

You might ask, Should I buy them at a rummage sale? Of course not. But the rummage sale is a fixed institution in this village and it might interest you to know more about it. At one time I did not think as highly of this bi-annual event as I do now. At one time I dared even to ask--for rhetorical purposes only--did we built this fine edifice so that we may dispose of our cast off garments twice each year? I, harboring the odd idea, then, that a Temple was built mainly for religious and cultural purposes. No one answered my question as I well knew no one would. Now I am beginning to believe that this may have been one of the many reasons why the Temple was built and a worth while one at that.

For what is the purpose of religion, of cultural activities of any kind? To make life seem worthy of the effort, to fill in the time with pleasant tasks, to bring congenial people together, to give purpose to the otherwise empty days, to stimulate one to do good. In its way, the rummage sale does all that.

Spring and fall seem to be the best seasons for these sales. The seasonal housecleaning swells the rummage bag. Almost every group that is not purely social, plans for a sale of this kind.

The Hospital Guild probably has the biggest sale, our small group, the smallest. The poor are always with us, and no one lacks customers.

The more I consider the rummage sale the greater it looms in importance. It becomes a ritual which ushers in the spring and bids farewell to summer. Could I ever have held it in anything but the highest respect? I must have been very young, then. Young folk have such queer notions.

Permit me to digress. Speaking of youth, there are a few young people here who lament that living in a village deprives them of all possibilities of studying LIFE, just like that. ~~In~~ ^A large city, New York, preferably, could teach them so much. There each would almost immediately begin to compose the world's best painting, literature or music, as each one's talent lay. Nothing really ever happened in the village. Not a thing. Dear deluded youth, reaching out so courageously, carrying its standard high! Not one of them would ever consider the humble rummage sale as a good vantage place to study life. Life will have to ^{creep} come on them unnoticed, entangle each in her web, then their eyes will open on reality and they will not scorn the multitudinous variety of the ordinary.

But let us let youth go its dreaming way and return to our rummage.

The sale is usually held in an empty store which the owners donate for two or three days gratis. The sale is conducted by the older women of the group who have a marvelous time at it. They come at nine, bring along their lunch, and remain all day. The younger

To be continued - very soon.

members do their share of the work of collecting, arranging and selling the numerous articles donated, but the leadership, the managerial part, the honor and the glory, just naturally belong to the few older women without whom a rummage sale in the village simply could not be imagined.

Rummage sales are grand affairs, really, from ever so many angles. So very much has been written about so very many things--all the way from cabbages to kings, inclusive--- but so very little about the soul-revealing, benefit-distributing, all-prevalent institution, the semi-annual village rummage sale.

There the poor and the rich meet at close range to discuss the worth of a baby's cast off shoes, to haggle a while and to gracefully come to a compromise. I am merely the wrapping person and until a bargain is struck, can observe and meditate. This is my first rummage sale. I sold things for a while, but made a terrible mistake and was demoted. So with quite dignity, I wrap... I feel innocent of any wrong doing and there were extenuating circumstances, for how should I know that the richest spinster in our group would own that kind of a coat? And still want it. So I wrap and like it.

You ever try to wrap things neatly in old newspapers? Almost invariably when the article is covered with print and tied ready for the waiting customer, the paper breaks and the heel of a slipper or something sticks out and the job has to be done all over again. Ha, me! Let's forget my troubles and look round.

As you enter the store in which the sale is held, having admired the window display of colorful hats, alarm clocks, toys and so forth

over which hangs a sign announcing the sale and by whom, you³⁶ may have difficulty, unless you know your village who-is-who, to differentiate between the rummage buyers from the rummage sellers. If you are at all philosophically inclined, you may put that in your pipe and smoke it. Or roll it in your cigarette, if you belong to the feminine genre.

Near the door sits a sweet, white haired woman with a metal candy box in her hands of which she is very careful. That is the cashier. She accepts each small sum with a glad smile, makes change, stops to wrap a bill about the little roll, and keeps her eye on the incoming and outgoing customers.

Inside the store women's clothes in varying degrees of disrepair and style ~~hang~~ hang on racks on one side; men's clothes on the other side. Several tables have piles of articles with an attempt at arrangement. On the floor are piles of shoes, men's, women's, children's. Prospective customers stroll about, examine what there is for sale, often ask the price or size of an article. Some of the sales women have followings. These greet their patrons most cordially and show them merchandise for sale, giving each article as it is sold to me to wrap; following each customer to the door and giving the purchase price to the cashier.

It takes me but a few minutes to recover from the shock of being ignominiously demoted from sales lady to wrapping person and I begin to discover blessings in my misfortune. I have plenty of leisure to watch the show.

I have wrapped several parcels, mostly children's things, for a tired looking woman who puts them in the shabby pushcart with her youngest while an older child hangs on to her hand. She tells me, while I struggle with my wrapping, that hse has two other children at home, in school, and they need so much! Bride and worry mingle in her expressive face, prematurely old and uncared for but hallowed by love. As she passes the cashier at the door, the white haired lady selects toys from the window and gives each child one.

"You bought a lot today. Take care the baby does not ~~through~~^{throw} out the bundles."

"I take care, thank you. I got two more home, two boys, two girl I wash the clothes and fix'em just like new. My husband, he fix the shoes. He a good man. Good by, lady." Proudly she pushes her baby entirely surrounded by parcels wrapped in newsprint out of the store while the slightly older child clings to her arm. A shadow covers for a moment the face of the gentle cashier as if a light had been turned off. What wealth! A husband, a good man! and four babies to love, to work for... Butvchange must be made, this is no time for brooding.

Another of the older women has come up with a dollar bill.

"Seventy-five out of one. A practically new pair of gentleman's trousers practically given away for nothing. What can you do these times? If they do not ganef, they want it for nothing," she sputter while the cashier slowly makes change with a hand that trembles a little.

The man, a husky looking workman

The man, a husky workman, takes the change and the parcel, and turns to the pile of men's shoes. A young girl with an impudent grin on her freckled face is looking at a red dress on the rack of women's clothes. So he remains to look at shoes.

The capable sales lady with the short curly white hair who had sold him the trousers, knowing he has at least seventy-five more cents to spend, comes to him smiling and suggests he might try on shoes at the back of the store.

The workman continues his investigation in shoes but glances occasionally at the girl. That red dress would look well on her. Wonder where it got that tear down the front. Looks new. Probably some rich woman got into a fight in one of those night club booze riots. Those rich! Rooshia gave them what they needed. Now a poor, honest working girl will wear it... Well. it is taking her a long time, may just as well try on some shoes. A dime will buy them. She will probably ask fifty cents, the ²neve of that old gal!

The saleslady at the rack of women's things is tall and thin with not a trace of makeup on her face. Her dark hair is drawn back from her face with no attempt at softening effect of wave or curl; her clothes show no great regard for the current mode. She hates to assume the responsibility of selling a red dress, really magenta, with no back and a tear down the front--practically no front either---to this forward looking girl with toil scarred hands. What on earth made Mrs. Shallot send such a dress to a rummage sale. New, and torn so brutally. She really is morally bewildered. She shows the girl a black dress with high neck and long sleeves

sleeves, very suitable for such a person, but the girl laughs and insists on the red.

"Well, try it on then, behind that screen in back. You are a bit stocky, it may be too small."

The girl laughs aloud, "No need to bother, mem. It will fit me all right."

"Can you pay two dollars for it?" is the depressed sales lady's final attempt to stop the sale and to ease her conscience.

"And it is not worth that--tear and all. I'll be giving ye a dollar and that is more than any wan else would."

The grim saleslady takes the dollar and hands me the gown to wrap. She hands the bill to the cashier who whispers, "I never thought any one would buy that torn dress. Mrs. Shallot wore it only once. Must have had an accident."

I carefully smooth out the folds of the gown, red lace over silk quite lovely but for that horrid gash. I wonder what sudden, unbearable eruption of human emotions had rent that lace and silk and crumpled the silver flower corsage.

Too pretty for newspaper. I hunt among the stuff in back and find a box for it and place it in the reddish hands of the girl who takes it with a sneer of contempt mixed with daredevil audacity. For a fraction of a second a look into her hazel eyes fringed with black lashes. Gone are the toil worn hands, the neglected skin, the young body coarsened by hard work, I see into her soul.

She had worn that dress, also just once. There was no need to try it on; it fitted perfectly. It became her youth much better than

the ageing form of her mistress. A woman thin as a rail with gray in her hair trying to keep her man by dressing in that! Backless dresses were not made for her kind of back. Poor man, kind to every one and she gabbing at him all the time and ready to tear him to pieces if he did not tell her where he was every minute of the day. How they did carry on! Couldn't they separate or get annuled or something? Their little boy was sickly and that kept them together. An orphan asylum would be better than a home like that. So she spend all day in a beauty parlor and puts on a dress like that and he laughs and laughs. The row was terrible.

But they make up and the next night they go to the movies. So she keeps near the boy's room in case he should wake up and tries on the dress just for deviltry. It is just lovely. So she fixes her reddish hair like it shows in the style book. Puts a little rouge on her face and powders herself and even tries to do her nails with the doodads on the dresser. The mistress' room is next to the boy's so she amuse herself while they are gone. Now she is at a ball and is dancing with the master. Round and round they dance to heavenly music, so sweet it makes her breathless with joy.

Bang, crash--they have returned and hell broke lose.

"You thief! You--you--you---I shall have you arrested! How dare you put on my dress and dance in my room? Tell me at once what else you have stolen. Where have you hidden what you have stolen? " Holy Mary in heaven, how she screamed.

"Stop it, stop it, " he laughed, " Now I can see it is a pretty dress---"

But she lets out a yell as if he had murdered her and comes for the girl with hands like ^{claws} ~~claws~~, tearing at the dress, and would have torn the girl's eyes out too if the man had not stopped her.

He took hold of her wrists and dragged her off the girl from whom the dress was hanging and whose shoulder was bleeding and threw her on the bed, slapping her face to stop her screaming.

He gave the girl two weeks' pay and a little extra to keep her mouth shut and sent her right away. But the mistress had not kept her mouth shut and the girl could not get work and might just as well jump into the river for all that rich woman cared. And she had worked so hard for them too, and had meant no harm, just pretend for a little while...

She leaves the store head up; the workman recklessly pays a quarter for his shoes, which I wrap quickly, and goes after her.

As the time nears noon, customers become rare, the work slackens. The younger assistants go home. The older guard remain. The sweet, white-haired cashier and the lady with the curly white hair as well as one whose coat I nearly disposed of--fortunately the customer refused to buy because it lacked style--remain. They had brought sandwiches and a thermos bottle with coffee. I merely linger.

The Lady of the Coat comes up to me, loitering near my stack of newspaper-wrappers, and says in acid tones: Aren't you going home for Luncheon?"

I, too, go home for lunch. There are many people on the street as I leisurely stroll along. A large proportion of the men and women carry parcels, large parcels, small parcels, single packages, or several, but all neatly done up in plain paper. Even one that has a parcel, or parcels, walks with dignity, with self respect, with just pride of ownership. Each has selected what he needed, what he could afford to buy, and is now taking his purchase home where it will add to the household good, whether in food or by an article of clothing. Not so, think, go the rummage buyers with their bulging, newspaper wrapped packages. Advertising their poverty they hurry along, heads lowered, eyes raised to none, fearing recognition from a chance acquaintance, the shadows of helpless discontent obliterating the daylight.

I must do something about it, I must! And in time for this afternoon's business? Abolish poverty? Too big an order for so short a time? Get out the car and deliver all that I wrap? The cure would last but this afternoon. No, there must be a way that will forever do away with newspaper wrapped packages that ~~advertise poverty~~ ^{that on the demeaning level} ~~the~~ ^{non}. I stroll along, several women pass by me, scurrying quickly, holding newspaper wrapped parcels for there are several sales in town, and the solution comes to me. And is so very simple, I am ashamed of myself for not thinking of it before.

When I return to the rummage sale, the back of my car is filled with bundles held together by twine. They are light, I carry two with me as I enter the store.

The lady whose coat I nearly sold, an excellent coat which she has worn many years, comes up and looks very suspiciously at my parcels, saying,

"Sure there is nothing there that may cause us trouble? Even a rummage sale must not get mixed up with the police—"

"Now, have a heart," I plead, "of course the coat is good for several years yet—if it were mine—but for you, why I supposed you were donating it so that some poor, deserving woman would have the pleasure of it and get yourself one of those—now—dyed ermine. Brown looks so well on you!"

Her face relaxes, slightly, "Well, what have you there?"

"Listen, my dear, and you shall hear," I begin, putting my parcels on the counter on top of all the old newspaper, strike a pose, and declaim, "A good worker should always aim to improve every department in which she may be placed, no matter how humble. Donating, collecting and selling rummage is of vast importance than merely wrapping it, a very humble task. But I aim to improve it. Behold! These are bags, empty, clean, in which groceries and so forth have been delivered to my house, these I shall use in place of newspaper. I shall work with greater expediency, the customers will be satisfied, return again and again, our rummage sales will be famous!"

One of the younger salespeople holds out a child's sleeping garment for me to wrap and says, disrespectfully,

"Hire a hall sometimes and tell us all about it—" I take the garment, insert it in a bag, fold the bag across the top, presto, all in a moment. ~~The sweet cashier had watched and heard, comes up~~

A rather sad looking workman is buying shoes, underwear, anything
t the woman in charge of the children's department suggests the little
ones with him may use during the winter. I wrap them neatly as he
pays a trifling sum—even for rummage—for each item. He is working
part time and his children are motherless. Each of the three children
and their father carry neat packages that might have been bought in
any store as they file past the gentle, old cashier.

She comes up to me, her tin candy money box in both hands, "That
was a very good idea, very," she says in her sweet, low voice, "I
shall always save my bags now. No paper at our next rummage sale!"
I feel my mistake about that coat has been cancelled by a large
number of brown, empty, paper bags. More customers arrive; I attend
to my work with an inner satisfaction.